

# **INTERFACE OF HISTORY AND FICTION: THE ZIMBABWEAN LIBERATION WAR NOVEL**

**By**

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**NOVEMBER 2009**

# **INTERFACE OF HISTORY AND FICTION: THE ZIMBABWEAN LIBERATION WAR NOVEL**

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for the  
degree of

**DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

in the subject of

**African Languages**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**NOVEMBER 2009**

## DECLARATION

Student number: 4310-995-0

I declare that **Interface of History and Fiction: The Zimbabwean Liberation War Novel** 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.



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**Signature**

30 September 2009

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**Date**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge first and foremost, the efforts of and the selflessness shown by my Promoter, Professor Davie E. Mutasa. His encouragement and belief in me made me walk what appeared to be an unwalkable doctoral research journey. I am also very thankful to my Co-Promoter, Doctor Malekutu L. Bopape, who, together with Professor Mutasa, convinced me that I was intellectually tall each time I felt I was short. These two men's views and expert guidance helped significantly in shaping this thesis.

My gratitude also goes to the Financial Aid Bureau (FAB) which offered me a bursary that enabled me to pursue doctoral studies with the University of South Africa. I am further thankful to Professor Zifikile Gambahaya, my mentor and colleague, who allowed me unfettered access to her library and other resources. I am also grateful to my long time comrade-in-arms, Tavengwa Chinyuku Gwekwerere, who thoroughly edited my final draft and made very useful comments and suggestions. My selfless brother Eventhough Ndlovu inexhaustibly assisted me in translating Ndebele novels and transcending certain enigmatic experiences. For this kind of unexampled love, I am forever grateful man. I also thank my junior brother, Paul Muhwati, who carried out interviews for me in Mhondoro. Equally, I also want to thank Loveson Gopo for assisting me in the initial stages of the research. I am also thankful to all the Zimbabwean writers and editors who responded to my questionnaires as well as those who managed to set aside part of their precious time for an interview with me. It would be very unfair for me not to express my gratitude to Veronica Kunaka who assisted me in ways too numerous to mention here. Last but not least, I would like to thank all the people with whom I shared ideas.

Having paid homage to all these benefactors, I must evoke the memory of two men whose teachings have made a lasting impression in my life. The first, of course, is my late father, Peter Muhwati, a barber and general hand, who with his very very little income persevered in order for me to see many doors at school. His many sacrifices are the reason why I am where I am today and where I will go tomorrow. My father's reincarnation at the intellectual level is none other than the late Professor Emmanuel Mudhliwa Chiwome, the master teacher and moulder of minds who shaped my

intellectual world. I owe my manhood to the teachings and principles of life imparted by these two men. Wherever you are, Peace be your home my fathers! Above everything else, thank you, God, my maker.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the love of my heart, Euritah, *amai VaMasimba*, with whom I have shared the worst including losing two lovely sons in a row, Takunda and his brother we did not have time to name. The cross precedes the crown. Your presence, dear, made possible this research, otherwise I could have resigned. Remember I carried out this research during the hungriest and thirstiest of times in the history of Zimbabwe, but you managed to perform the multiple roles of 'father', mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, Barclays Bank employee and the result was of course; our collective buoyancy and my continued focus on this research. I will not forget to also dedicate this research effort to my hardworking, strong and authentic mother, Sarah Lupahla and my dear son, Masimba Elisha.

*Ndinotenda Baba Jowani vakatenda kutumwa nedare rengirozi mugore ra1931. Ndinotenda zvakare bhaibheri guru rinonzi Matangi riri kuverengwa nhasi munyika yeBudiriro. Iri ibhaibheri rine mabasa makuru nokuti zvakaitwa mhiri kuGalilea zviri kuitwa paMatangi, muZimbabwe.*

Also special dedication to myself, in particular my autogenous philosophy of struggle and victory that has taught me how to 'make of every apparent setback a new point of attack, how to use every momentary retreat as an opportunity for a run and leap forward, how to find in defeat the means for victory'. The struggle for life is long. The search for fulfilment and contentment in life is tough but victory over challenges must be the first order of a Shona/African person's business.

## **ABSTRACT**

The research examines the interface of history and fiction. It predominantly focuses on historical fiction on the Zimbabwean liberation war written in Shona, Ndebele and English and published after the attainment of political independence in 1980. Historical fiction on the liberation war is both biographical and autobiographical. Consequently, the study comes to the conclusion that historical fiction is a veritable stakeholder in the history issue in Zimbabwe. It becomes another type or source of history that cannot be papered over when dealing with the nation's history. In a nation where liberation war history is not only taken seriously, but is also a vigorously contested terrain, historical fiction becomes part of those discursive contestations, particularly on nation and nationalism. It is in this regard that the study problematises the interface of history and fiction by reasoning that historical fiction published in the early 1980s largely advances a state-centered perspective which views history, nation and nationalism in positive terms. This discourse uses history in order to argue for a single nation that derives its identity from the heroic and symbolic guerrilla characters. Nationalism is exclusively presented as humanising and as being the sole legitimate political brand capable of leading the nation. On the other hand, historical fiction written in English and published in the late 1980s onwards represents alternative historical truths that contest nationalism and debunk official definitions of nation. This discourse leads to the pluralisation of perspectives on nation and nationalism. The focus on historical fiction published in three languages used in Zimbabwe is a conscious attempt to transcend ethnicity in critical scholarship. Discussing novels in Shona, Ndebele and English, which are the three main languages in Zimbabwe, makes it possible for the study to draw reasoned conclusions on the bearing of time, language, region and background among others on historical representation. This undertaking brings to the fore how literature responding to similar historical processes appears moderately conjunctive and principally disjunctive. Correspondingly, it also shows various trends in the development of liberation war fiction in Zimbabwe.

**Key terms:**

Historical fiction;

Nationalism;

Nation;

Liberation war;

Contesting representations;

Historical representation;

Literature Bureau;

Zimbabwe/Shona/Ndebele literature;

History of violence;

History as opposition;

History as instrument of hegemony



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 CONTEXT AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The research critically examines the growth and development of Zimbabwe's liberation war novel written in three languages used in Zimbabwe, namely, Shona, Ndebele and English. The novels examined in this research are exclusively written by black Zimbabweans. In adopting this approach, however, one does not lose sight of the fact that there also exists a vast body of creative works by white Zimbabweans on the armed struggle. These will fall outside the purview of this research because the purpose of this study is to understand how black Zimbabweans have rendered the meaning of the Zimbabwean experience. Of major concern is the novels' depiction of the multifaceted nature of the liberation war history. Fictional interpretations of liberation war history spawn an intellectual surface and discursive turf upon which the subjects of memory, nation and nationalism can be engaged, interrogated and discursively broached in the neocolonial phase of the country. This is so because liberation war history is important to contemporary and future Zimbabwean realities – political, economic, ideological and sociological.

The Zimbabwean liberation war is one of the fiercely contested historical terrains in the academy, political circles and the nation at large. It is an indelible, lived and living reality, a hotbed of controversy, contestations, contradictions, inconsistencies, mysteries, truths, half-truths and untruths. The major aspects of the liberation war that have elicited controversy include the militaristic, logistical, ideological, social, political, gender as well as psychological. Writers who write in three of Zimbabwe's written languages also become part of the contest and controversy in the battlefield of historical signification and memory contestations. These writers, who depict history through fictional images, can arbitrarily be classified into three broad categories. The first category comprises writers who directly participated in the liberation war as guerrilla fighters. Their account of the war is based on first hand experience. The second category consists of writers who are not former guerrillas but experienced the war as professionals (teachers, nurses and others) who assisted guerrillas in the

areas they worked. Again, the other assumption is that writers in the second category lived in areas where they had direct contact with the war, that is, guerrilla fighters, Rhodesian forces as well as other armed forces. In the third category are voices that reconfigure the war from the figment of their own imagination and from popular stories told about the war. It should be noted that this classification is not exhaustive.

The study has four goals. First, it assesses and explains the interface of history and fiction as well as the nexus between the fictive interventions on public memory and the politically and intellectually volatile subjects of nation and nationalism in the neocolony. Second, it explains various trends in the Zimbabwean liberation war novel. It engages the heterogeneity that characterises this novel in terms of vision, sensibility and aesthetics of history. Third, it analyses the place and status of the Zimbabwean writer as historian while simultaneously providing insights on the liberation war novel's contribution to the overall development of Zimbabwean literature, which has largely received acerbic criticism from most literary scholars. Fourth, it critically examines the historical narratives with a view to unravel the various forces that have shaped the growth and development as well as the sensibility of the liberation war novel. The purpose of engaging in such an intellectual initiative is to try and situate the Zimbabwean liberation war novel within the broader frame of the socio-political history of the Zimbabwean novel and general political and economic realities. This is important because a number of canonical literary scholars in Zimbabwe have left out the liberation war novel when writing about Zimbabwean literature in general.

Writers who write in the Shona language largely come from Mashonaland, Manicaland and the Shona speaking areas of the Midlands. On the other hand, those who write in Ndebele come from Matebeleland and the Ndebele speaking areas of the Midlands. Novelists who express the war in the English language come from Mashonaland, Manicaland, Midlands or Matebeleland. Due to the variations in the linguistic media writers use in recreating the liberation war, the study assesses the bearing of language, ethnicity and region on the writers' flirtation with national history. The writers' idiosyncrasies are also part of a congerie of issues under exegesis in this study.

The novel examined in this research chronicles the liberation war in retrospect. It falls within the ambit of historical fiction which documents, critiques and celebrates Shona and Ndebele people's engagement in their history through acts of memory, invention and re-invention. The Shona and the Ndebele people who are the two largest ethnic groups in Zimbabwe are some of the major participants in the historical process. Various literary creators with different social, cultural, historical, ideological and intellectual backgrounds have assumed the sacred obligation of archiving national history through fiction. Even though there could be other personalised reasons, writers use literature to try and recreate the liberation war, mainly as part of historical regeneration.

This research is motivated by the fact that the liberation war novel is an important field of enquiry in the development of Zimbabwean literature. One cannot develop a profound appreciation of the trends in Zimbabwean literature or what Wild (1992b) has called 'A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature' without a conscientious and perspicacious exegesis of the Zimbabwean liberation war novel. Despite this realisation, critical scholars have not synchronously analysed the liberation war novel written in Shona, Ndebele and English languages. It is important to synchronously locate this novel written in all languages in the vast literary trajectory of Zimbabwean literature as a way of discovering the continuities, discontinuities and direction of innovation in the Zimbabwean novel. Except for a few cases, most Shona and Ndebele novels written during the colonial period have been accused of championing a morbid consciousness triggering what most critics have termed an underdeveloped literature. At the forefront of such accusations have been Chiwome (2002) and Ndlovu (2001).

These literary scholars argue that the colonial environment was not conducive for the development of a liberated and liberating literary consciousness. The major culprit is presented as the Rhodesia Literature Bureau which imposed themes on writers writing in Shona and Ndebele. Writers who wrote in the English language also felt the restrictiveness of the Rhodesian system such that most of them ended up publishing abroad in order to escape censorship at home. This gave rise to some of the internationally acclaimed Zimbabwean writers like Mungoshi (1975), Nyamfukudza (1980) and Marechera (1978). Consequently, the liberation war novel which follows in

the aftermath of independence becomes some kind of an acid test in the development of Zimbabwean literature under 'liberated conditions.' Whether the liberation war novel written in the aftermath of independence offers a meaningful paradigm shift in terms of commitment, vision and responsibility is worth exploring.

At the same time, the liberation war continues to be a source of history and a platform for engaging various post-independence realities. This is corroborated by burgeoning productions that continue to talk about the war up to date, directly or indirectly. Similarly, despite the fact that it is almost three decades now since the war ended, different writers writing in different languages continue to provide different perspectives on the same historical experience. As indicated before, the liberation war is a subject for critical debates in various academic fields including sociology, history, psychology, religion and literature. While this is the case, literary scholarship on the Zimbabwean liberation war novel has to a large extent been limited to researches at the level of Bachelor of Arts Honours Dissertations and a few Master of Arts Theses in the departments of African Languages and Literature and English. The Ndebele liberation war novel has not been afforded any meaningful and significant critical attention, tentatively because ZAPU's (Zimbabwe African People's Union) role in the liberation war has been a sensitive issue in neocolonial Zimbabwe. Thus, it is a major challenge for literary scholars to come up with comprehensive views, suggestions and remarks that take into cognisance all novelistic creations in all literary languages that thematise the war of liberation. It is important to generate ideas on how writers across the political, linguistic and regional divide dialogue on people's history for the benefit of the nation at large. By studying different literary voices under a single conceptual frame, the study intends to unravel the dynamics of historical representation and its implications on national consciousness as well as the credibility of the literature in question. It is counter-productive for critical scholarship to continue on the path of fragmented appreciation of the Zimbabwean liberation war novel when this can be avoided. In view of the aforesaid, the research, therefore, attempts to achieve Walter Kamba's call to scholarship, which is summed up as, "...to extend the grassroots studies of the war from Manicaland and Mashonaland into Matebeleland" (quoted in Bhebe and Ranger, 1995a and 1995b: 1).



## **1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to unravel the depiction of the liberation war in its multifaceted nature in fictional works written in the three literary languages of Zimbabwe, namely, Shona, Ndebele and English. The focus on works written in different languages and different historical dispensations is meant to provide the researcher with an opportunity to draw reasoned conclusions on the manner in which Zimbabwean authors from different spatio-temporal and linguistic backgrounds have been creatively rendering national history and ideology. It also affords the researcher an opportunity to collapse into one comprehensive voice what so far has appeared to be a fragmented study of the liberation war novel. At the end, it should be possible to appreciate points of convergence, divergence, complexity, bias, objectivity, subjectivity, etcetera, and the impact that literary works have had on historical understanding and contemporary politics. In terms of contemporary politics, the study fully appreciates the centrality of liberation war history to political goings on in Zimbabwe. In this connection, it aims to assess the bearing of fictional images on contemporary debates on nation, nation-state, nationalism and conflict resolution, wherever permissible.

At the same time, the study intends to assess the manner in which writers negotiate the thin line between history and fiction. This intellectual exercise is prompted by the realisation that there are various ways of harnessing and husbanding a people's history and the contention herein is that fiction is one of them. As such, writers cannot expect to be excused from the task of historical regeneration that must be done. As historians using fictionalised images to dialogue about people's past experiences, writers' literary creations must be subject to relentless and searching criticism.

### **1.2.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to:

- (i) Describe and explain the factors that shape and condition the writers' vision and version of liberation war history.

- (ii) Develop an appreciation of the diverse images on the liberation war as depicted in fictional works.
- (iii) Identify and explain creative trends in the liberation war novel in relation to the overall development of Zimbabwean literature.
- (iv) Explain the impact of fictional images on discourse on nation and nationalism, consciousness, policy as well as authenticity of the war novel as a potential source of historical information.
- (v) Explain the relationship between history and fiction.

### **1.2.2 Research questions**

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- First, what is the nature of the relationship between fiction and history?
- Second, can fictional works be relied upon as alternative sources of history?
- Third, what forces fashion and condition the choice of fictional images?
- Fourth, what are the overt and covert implications of such fictional images on consciousness, policy, transcendence as well as discourse on nation, nationalism and conflict resolution?

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH**

A universal and detailed study of Zimbabwe's liberation war novel is long overdue. It is this study that Walter Kamba thinks would make "it necessary to include the role of ZIPRA as well as the role of ZANLA..." (cited in Bhebe and Ranger, 1995a and 1995b: 1). No researcher in Zimbabwe has so far offered a synchronous and comprehensive study of the liberation war novel in all three of Zimbabwe's literary languages. Such an exercise would make it possible to understand patterns and trends in historical configuration in literature written in different languages, yet, depicting the same historical experience. Existing research is characterised by what we have identified as pockets of critical scholarship on the liberation war. As highlighted before, these have been in the form of Bachelor of Arts Honours Dissertations, Master of Arts Theses and a few published papers which seem to take a generalised view of the liberation war novel while some publications just mention it in passing.

Dissertations and Theses have at most narrowed their focus to the study of a novel or novels written in one of the national languages or a comparative study of two novels, one in Shona/Ndebele and another in English. This marks the absence of a much needed comprehensive literary study that looks at the liberation war novel as an important component in understanding the dynamics of the development of Zimbabwean literature. It is important that Zimbabweans get a full understanding of how literary cooks writing in all of Zimbabwe's literary languages project the nation's liberation war history. A proper understanding of how writers portray this history is occasioned by the fact that, major political decisions that have a direct bearing on the social and economic well-being of citizens, including the definition of nation in the post-1980 dispensation seem to revolve around the war of liberation. Since literature contributes to a people's evolving consciousness about their history, we feel that a work of this nature and magnitude is long overdue. The literary circle remains broken if the liberation war novel does not find expression in an all-embracing study about the war against colonialism. Such a work is of paramount importance to scholarship in several ways. Schools, universities, the reading public, historians, writers and other interested stakeholders are likely to benefit from such a study. More importantly, it speaks to the continued 'Search for a Zimbabwean Identity' (Kahari, 1980) and the search for historical and political authenticity and truth, which Fanon (1967: 39) defines as "the property of the national cause."

The urge to study liberation war novels written in all three of Zimbabwe's written languages comes from the realisation that, years after the attainment of political independence in 1980, contemporary critical practice in Zimbabwean literature continues to reflect rampant ethnicity, regionalism, tribalism as well as the continued division of the nation along groundless linguistic and ethnic lines. The few literary critics that try to address the Zimbabwean liberation war have often not been different from the creative writers themselves who write as if Zimbabwe is made up of the Shona people only or the Ndebele people only. This has institutionalised a moribund and tribalist criticism of literature in Zimbabwe. Going beyond this linguistic chasm has been as difficult as teaching iron how to swim. When critical scholars fail to traverse language barriers in a single nation and further entrench rigid and stultifying positions by writers, they undermine the nation building responsibilities of

scholarship. The nation patiently awaits scholarship rooted in the quest to discover and celebrate the life-affirming and historical participatory relationships that obtain among the various 'ethnic' groups that make the Zimbabwean nation. The argument for the need to rivet our gaze towards commonness and twinness has been emphasised by Ani (1980: 1), who notes that:

Our oppressors have emphasized ...differences in language, and customs - even physique - from one society to another. They do this with good reason. It is an emphasis that serves their objectives. Until we learn that it serves our objectives to emphasize the similarities, the ties, the unifying principles, the common threads and themes that bind and identify us all as "African," we will continue to be politically and ideologically confused.

It is possible to notice, in Zimbabwean critical practice, the recrudescence of a literature of Mashonaland and a literature of Matebeleland modelled upon colonial administrative structures. This subverts the concept of nation while varnishing the concept of tribe. Aidoo (1998: 47) has presented this tendency by Africans to carry on with the policies of the coloniser as a "warmed up left over from colonization."

This research transcends the tendency to split Zimbabwean literature into seemingly irreconcilable and antagonistic categories. In this regard, it adds to the very few critical voices that exemplify the need to go beyond narrow and narrowing ethnicity. Some of these attempts include Wild's (1992b) *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* and Gaidzanwa's (1985) *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature*. Otherwise most literary scholarship perpetuates the colonial tradition of ripping things apart and splitting aspects of the whole. Thus, it has maintained the rigid dichotomisation of the country into the so-called dominant tribes which are the Shona and the Ndebele.

The research takes into cognisance the understanding that, criticism, if well conducted, has far reaching consequences on pedagogy, consciousness and participation. In a nation where literature is taken seriously in schools, colleges and universities, the Manichaeian approach to critical practice continues to keep the nation apart. Therefore, scholarship that fails to embrace 'unanimism' in its study of Zimbabwean literature degenerates into narrow scholarship and concretises separatist thinking. It perpetuates the philosophies of difference which have become

entrenched in Africa. Our contention is that our differences have already been overemphasised to us by our colonial oppressors and their messengers and the game now has to change. It does not make much intellectual sense for our literary scholars to masquerade as intellectual giants of Zimbabwean literature when what they know is a fraction of the national literature. The cultivation of a common national consciousness should start with the academics themselves.

As hinted above, since the study targets one of the most important topics in Zimbabwe today, that is, liberation war history, it is able to engage various debates related to nationalism(s) in general. Life in the neocolony is inseparable from conceptualisations and operationalisations of this nationalist history. In other words, the processes of political democratisation in Zimbabwe are hamstrung by the legacy of the war of liberation and cast in official history as the illegal regime change agenda triggered by Western forces working in cohorts, purportedly, with indigenous opposition forces. Official reference to the war of liberation is the handy stratagem at the disposal of the establishment, which uses history to present itself as legitimate. The liberation war is critical in the official construction of discourses of 'heroism' and 'patriotism' which are associated exclusively with those who took up arms against colonialism. The current posturing of the Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) ZANU (PF) establishment as an establishment of brave men and women and liberators hinges on the interpretations of the war of liberation. In the foreseeable future, it is possible that the history of the liberation war and interpretations of this history will continue to exert influence on the direction of Zimbabwean politics. This makes it urgent to debate the history of the liberation war in various intellectual fora and make it possible for multiple and often interlocking dimensions of the war of liberation to be available to, and easily understood by the majority of the Zimbabwean people. This research is part of the effort to demystify and make intelligible an important aspect of the Zimbabwean experience in history. We are able to problematise and hypothesise on images on liberation war historiography within the context of discussions on nation, nationalism, history of violent pasts and conflict resolution. These are important topics that help illuminate the contest and congruence between fiction, history and politics. As a result, the unfolding debates enhance the appreciation and reception of fiction or art in general.

## 1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The study is largely comparative in nature. The advantage of embracing a comparative approach, as already underlined, is that it becomes possible for the researcher to assess conceptual similarities and dissimilarities in narrativity and among writers constructing images on the same historical experience. It is also possible to look at the diversity of historical experiences as occasioned by region, language, ethnicity, background and period and place of publication as well as the authors' motive or agenda. The study's main sources of information on the Zimbabwean liberation war are black Zimbabwean liberation war novels in Shona, Ndebele and English. These constitute the primary sources of information that provide the images and ideas which the study analyses in order to appreciate the history of the liberation war and its impact on national consciousness. Cross references are also made to other literary works on the liberation war in the form of poems, drama and the short story; and this is done with a view to illuminate the discussion of various issues on the subject under investigation. The selection of these primary texts is based on what the study characterises as historical fiction on the liberation war as explained in chapter two of this study. It would be impossible not to make reference to other non-liberation war novels in Zimbabwe as a way of highlighting similarities and differences in literary trends, although these are not part of the study's primary data. Published sources in the form of critical works and historical works will provide background and theoretical information on the liberation war, as well as act as authenticity yardsticks. Historical texts are important since the major thrust of this study is to discuss the interface of fiction and history. As a result, the researcher constantly refers to historical texts in order to ascertain the link between history and fiction. Other critical resources such as unpublished sources in the form of dissertations, seminar and conference papers also provide information on what others have already done.

Since this is a scientific inquiry into the interface of history and fiction, the researcher embraces the qualitative research method and incumbent research tools. The qualitative method dovetails perfectly well with the Afrocentric theoretical paradigm, chosen as the epistemological code for this study. The reason being that in both instruments, interactive and participatory social engagement is the non-negotiable

*modus operandi*. The researcher harnesses the views of different categories of people with a view to avoid the possible rarefaction of the discussion of the interface of history and fiction. However, by virtue of the varied nature of the qualitative methods, the study embraces those methods that fall within the purview of epistemologies that include sampling, in-depth interviewing, questionnaires and analysis of texts. Burgess (1984: 102) describes an interview as “a conversation with a purpose.” Similarly, Mason (2003: 226) tersely characterises it as, “the art of knowledge excavation [and construction].” Interviews include the use of questionnaires, structured questions in a face to face interaction and unstructured questions which have “the flexibility and sensitivity to context and particularity” (Mason, 2003: 231). Structured questions make the researcher follow a chronological pattern in asking questions.

The advantage that the qualitative method affords this study is its insistence on depth. It also helps explain the reasons why liberation war fiction is what it is in terms of theme, character, plot, sensibility and orientation. This study is also a critique, an aspect quite vital in qualitative research. Ambert, Adler and others (1995: 881) have it that qualitative research

...seeks depth rather than breadth...Second, the aim of qualitative research is to learn about how and why people behave, think, and make meaning as they do, rather than focusing on what people do or believe on a large scale. Third, the goals of qualitative research can be situated on several levels...Fourth, in addition to its critiquing function, qualitative research frequently falls within the context of discovery rather than verification...This does not mean that qualitative research occurs in a literature vacuum, unconcerned with the contributions of previous research. A final goal of qualitative research is to refine the process of theory emergence through a continual “double-fitting” where researchers generate conceptual images of their settings, and then shape and reshape them according to their ongoing observations, thus enhancing the validity of their developing conceptualization.

The above justifies the researcher’s adoption of the qualitative method since the study of liberation war fiction in all languages leads to hypothesis formulation and conclusions that are buttressed by textual evidence. At the same time, the production and reading of fiction is a social experience while the war of liberation is a shared Zimbabwean experience that connects participants and non-participants alike. It is this indubitable sociological nature of both the liberation war and fictional narratives

that compels us to adopt the qualitative method since, “qualitative research always involves some kind of direct encounter with ‘the world’, whether it takes the form of ongoing daily life or interactions with a selected group...” (Gerson & Horowitz, 2003: 199). The method is also context specific which makes it appropriate to study liberation war fiction in its proper context. Therefore, by conducting in-depth interviews, using both structured and non-structured questioning methods, the researcher intends to derive first hand information from participants. The main categories of participants or interviewees include writers, Literature Bureau Publishers and academics (both historians and literary critics).

Individual interviews provide the opportunity to examine the nexus between the particular experiences and general factors ‘as they unfold in the lives of individuals’ (writers and former fighters) with a view to problematising and expanding theory and conceptualisation processes. Interviews with authors which involve face to face interaction and use of questionnaires in areas inaccessible to the researcher provide information on the literary cooks themselves. The main reason is to let individual writers provide their own side of the story, particularly factors that have shaped their representations of the liberation war. Such a task helps to avert the tendency to homogenise factors that influence the production of fiction. It brings out idiosyncratic actions that influence creativity. Information with regard to their status as historians, factors that affect their vision and sensibility is crucial in helping readers and this researcher appreciate the production of fiction. We also derive information on writers’ intention, an aspect that the study takes as an investigative parameter in exploring the limits of the relationship between fiction and history. The main thrust in these interviews is to engage in fruitful dialogue with the writers, learning together with, rather than interrogating them. This information is used in relevant chapters as part of ‘enhancing the validity of the developing conceptualisation process.’ It is also vital for hypothesis testing and setting. We also use interview material from other researchers especially Wild’s in her research titled ‘Survey of Zimbabwean Writers – Educational and Literary Careers’ (1992a).

Interviews with academics who teach literature, which also includes historical fiction on the liberation war, shall be conducted with a view to develop a broader appreciation of the critical literary consumers’ understanding of the place, status and



identity of liberation war fiction across languages in Zimbabwe. Academics are responsible for generating scholarship which is expected to illuminate and clarify a people's artistic and cultural discourse. For that reason, their intellectual views cannot be ignored in a study of this calibre. The researcher engages selected and accessible academics from the Departments that teach literature in Shona, Ndebele or English as well as the History Department, particularly at the University of Zimbabwe. The engagement of academics and students in this qualitative engagement is an exercise intended to draw comparative conclusions on how different fiction consumer categories regard and view similar fictional products evolving from the same context. This is critical for shaping theory. Above all, it provides the researcher with part of the information on investigative parameters, particularly on authenticity and reception of liberation war fiction.

Last but not least, the researcher interviews ex-combatants. An attempt is made to strike a balance between male and female ex-combatants wherever possible. Fortunately, some of the ex-combatants are fiction writers who have recreated the Zimbabwean war of liberation using the novel. This category is intended to provide information from the point of view of those who actually fought in the liberation war.

Interviews with all groups of people are based on purposive sampling. The researcher selects those categories of people who are 'strategically' placed to provide information that can be considered representative. Every attempt is made to strike a balance in terms of gender and diversity of backgrounds in order to reflect larger trends. This is what Gerson and Horowitz (2003: 204) advise as follows:

The sampling strategy must provide an efficient way to answer large questions with a comparatively small group of people...In choosing a sample, the goal is to select a group of respondents who are strategically located to shed light on the larger forces and processes under investigation.

However, sampling is also affected by such issues as availability of resources and accessibility of respondents.

The qualitative method also has its own weaknesses. For instance, the use of formalised structured questions tends to undermine flexibility in dialogue with

respondents. The researcher hopes to overcome the inflexible nature of structured questions by using unstructured questions as well. In addition, subjectivity is a major handicap in qualitative research. Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2003: 184) argue that there can be problems in terms of revealing and concealing of information:

As a classic relation of research desire – the desire to reveal counterpoised by the desire to conceal – on both the part of the researcher and the researched, in many ways the classic aspect of research surveillance [can affect dialogue].

A sample of these interviews will appear in the appendix of this study. Since the researcher's understanding of Ndebele is rudimentary, we shall put to use the experience that we have gained in teaching Trends in Zimbabwean Literature at Honours Level as well as Zimbabwean Literature in the Context of African and Related Literatures at Masters Level. These two courses are offered in the Department of African Languages and Literature at the University of Zimbabwe. We shall also utilise the services of research assistants in Shona and Ndebele.

## **1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW**

There have been relatively subdued interest in the study of the Zimbabwean liberation war novel by some of Zimbabwe's canonical critical scholars. Most of the critics seem to have a predilection for novels written during the colonial period or have at least expended their energies on the colonial novel. This is despite the fact that some of their seemingly all-embracing titles generate the impression that their respective researches offer a comprehensive coverage of Zimbabwean literature, the liberation war novel included. Such deceiving titles include Chiwome's *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (2002), Zhuwarara's *Introduction to Zimbabwean Literature in English* (2001), and Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992b). Without taking anything away from these respectable researchers, the titles can deceive an unassuming researcher interested in understanding trends in Zimbabwean literature. Novels that talk about the liberation war are either absent or cursorily analysed. It is mainly research at Bachelor of Arts Honours and Master of Arts levels which has shown interest in the Zimbabwean liberation war novel, which research is, however, undermined by limited scope and coverage of issues.

Kahari's (1990) *The Rise of the Shona Novel: A Study in Development, 1890-1984* is a generic survey of the Shona novel written during the colonial period and the early years of independence. This study constitutes the core of this prominent critic's views on the Shona novel. He explores the developmental history of the Shona novel from a formalist point of view. He provides summaries, biographies and critical insights that illuminate the developmental trajectory of the Shona novel in the colonial period and makes it easy for any researcher on the Shona novel. Kahari's position is that the novel written in the colonial dispensation falls into two categories which are the Old World novels (romances) and New World novels. He argues that old world novels depict an imagined pre-colonial past while New World novels talk about Shona people living in an industrial setting. While Kahari's analysis of the Shona novel is useful as it proffers a foundation for the study of the Shona novel, this research specifically focuses on the liberation war novel in three of Zimbabwe's written languages. Liberation war novels have not been dealt with in Kahari's study.

Chiwome's *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (2002) develops from, and critiques Kahari's critical approaches to the study of the Shona novel. The ideas conveyed in this book derive from his doctoral thesis titled, 'Factors that Underdeveloped Shona Literature with Particular Reference to Fiction 1950's - 1980's.' Chiwome dwells on the same novels analysed by Kahari while raising a multiplicity of factors that have engendered Shona literature whose vision is convoluted and stultified. He contends that the Shona novel, apart from a few examples, emblematises the abandonment of responsible creation and commitment to qualitative literary development. Chiwome characterises Shona literature as literature that vindicates oppression by varnishing it. For that reason, he argues that the Shona novel has blundered and stammered in "Spelling Our Proper name." While Chiwome's study has got its own weaknesses, the views that he raises on the direction of innovation and literary creativity among Shona writers furnish useful insights into our appreciation of the liberation war novel, a sequel to the novel written and published in the colonial period.

Like other prominent critics on the Shona novel, Chiwome simply makes passing reference to novels that remotely talk about the liberation war, particularly Chimhundu's novel, *Chakwasha* (1990). This is despite the fact that his is a 1996 and then updated 2002 publication when a number of liberation war novels have been

published. It is this gap that this study fills in what Chiwome has called 'A Social History of the Shona Novel.' This is fundamental because a true understanding of the 'Social History of the Shona novel' remains remote and incomplete if the liberation war novel is not considered.

Gambahaya (1999) analyses creative trends in Shona and Ndebele poetry published after 1980. She particularly focuses on the dialectic of nationalism and colonialism. Her critical vision in this doctoral thesis is to explore the responsibility of the African artist and an attempt to examine whether or not the artists truthfully and creatively articulate and respond to the central concerns of the post-independence Zimbabwean community. Gambahaya is one of the few literary scholars who have attempted to transcend the language barrier in Zimbabwean critical scholarship as she discusses both Shona and Ndebele poetic discourse. While she focuses on poetry, her study contributes significantly to our understanding of trends in Ndebele literature. It makes it possible for the researcher to follow debates on the Ndebele novel from an informed perspective.

In another study that is not yet available for circulation titled *Zimbabwean Literature in Indigenous Languages: Crossing the Language Barriers* (2003), Chiwome and Mguni also discuss the Ndebele and Shona liberation war novel. They do not discuss the liberation war novel written in English. In one of their short chapters titled 'The War Novel', the two scholars provide useful critical summaries on some of the liberation war novels in indigenous languages. Because the liberation war novel in Chiwome and Mguni's work is analysed in a context where the critics are focusing on other thematic concerns in Shona and Ndebele literature in general, it does not get the critical attention that a genre of its nature deserves; given the impact that the history of our liberation war has had on the direction of the neocolony – politically, economically and sociologically. The ideas they raise contribute towards the study's discussion of liberation war fiction in general.

Ndlovu's (2001) *Ukuhluzwa Kwamanoveli esiNdebele Aka 1956 Kusiyafika Ku1971* is a bold attempt to give value and authenticity to African languages in the academy. The tendency in Zimbabwean scholarship is to teach literature in indigenous languages in English. Ndlovu explodes such colonial litanies and sets in course a

new tradition that foregrounds indigenous languages. But like other prominent critics at the centre of critical scholarship on Zimbabwean literature, he mainly focuses on novels written during the colonial period. He does not focus on the liberation war novel. The main thrust of Ndlovu's study is to unravel the influence of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau in fashioning the sensibility and aesthetic orientation of Ndebele novelistic productions in the colonial period. He also analyses the individual writers' contributions on the quality of the Ndebele novel written during the colonial period. The views that are raised in this study are invaluable in that they provide this researcher with much needed background information on trends in the Zimbabwean novel written in the Ndebele language. While Ndlovu's research does not discuss the liberation war novel in Ndebele, his views make it possible for us to develop a profound appreciation of the traditions of the Ndebele novel in relation to other indigenous literatures.

Veit-Wild (1992b) is one of the few critics who attempt a study of what the researcher understands as Zimbabwean literature despite her confession that: "Assertions about specific Shona and Ndebele texts must however be considered tentative as the author's access had to be mediated by translations and reference material" (1992b: 6). She is one researcher who has conducted extensive studies on the biographies of many a Zimbabwean writer. Her representative study is *Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992b), which captures her conceptual and critical orientation. The burden and responsibility of her study is the need to elaborate the common experiences that shape Zimbabwean literature. Though Wild sets herself this task, her textual analysis is narrow and at times premised on wrong epistemological assumptions. It is also fraught with conceptual oversights triggered largely by her foreign background. Her study is more useful when used for understanding the backgrounds of some of Zimbabwe's canonical writers. While the title creates the impression that the study is all encompassing, particularly in terms of thematic coverage, the liberation war novel is mentioned very briefly. It is accorded only a few paragraphs towards the end of the book.

Grand titles such as Chiwome's and Wild's generate potentially misleading analytical impressions when in fact they do not articulate a comprehensive study of trends in Zimbabwean literature in Shona, Ndebele or English. While their ideas are important,

this study commits itself to the examination of one of the subgenres in the development of the Zimbabwean novel. As a result, it fills this yawning gap in the broad understanding of trends in Zimbabwean literature. Wild's study is nonetheless important as she delves into the biographical details of some of the writers who focus on the liberation war.

Zhuwarara's *Introduction to Zimbabwean Literature in English* (2001) is to a large extent centered on works that thematise other issues apart from the liberation war. He focuses on those authors who have gained substantial international acclaim like Mungoshi, Marechera, Nyamfukudza, Dangarembga, Vera and Hove. The majority of these authors' novels are written and published during the colonial period when most writers were not keen to write about the Zimbabwean war of liberation. Even in the novels with a remote relationship with the liberation war, Zhuwarara's focus is on other themes like gender, as is the case with Hove's novel, *Bones* (1988). It is difficult for one to say that Zhuwarara's work offers a comprehensive introduction to the Zimbabwean novel in English if it does not discuss the liberation war novel. The war itself has received a lot of attention from Zimbabwean writers who write in English to the extent that it merits attention to any well-intentioned introduction to Zimbabwean literature. At the same time, Zhuwarara's work is a 2001 publication when a number of liberation war novels have been published.

Gaidzanwa's *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature* (1985) examines the dominant images of black women presented in Shona, Ndebele and English literature by black writers in Zimbabwe. Most of the novels that she critiques are predominantly written in the 1970s with a few, particularly in English, published in the early 1980s. She observes that Zimbabwean literature tends to stereotype the black woman. This is largely the case with works written in Shona and Ndebele. Such a vision has subversive consequences on the development of the nation because women constitute the bulk of the population and the 'materially and intellectually' disadvantaged. While Gaidzanwa does not study the liberation war novel, her views are useful in this study because they reflect the direction of creative consciousness in Zimbabwean literature. Whether there is any notable paradigm shift on the Shona/Ndebele liberation war novel's creative consciousness is a question worth exploring. Gaidzanwa is one the few Zimbabwean critics who have been enterprising enough to

go beyond narrow critical approaches by analysing the novels written in Shona, Ndebele and English languages.

Like Gaidzanwa's work, Mashiri's Master of Philosophy (MPhil) thesis titled, 'Interpretations of the Authors' Vision of Women in the Shona Novel' (1994) focuses on the images of women in the Shona novel. Mashiri's study is relevant here because it raises some critical insights on the place and status of women in the liberation war novel. Another Dissertation that is similar to Mashiri's analysis of women is titled 'Images of Women in Selected Shona War Novels' (2001) by Musendekwa. Musendekwa (2001) examines the images of women in a few selected Shona novels, particularly their role as participants and victims during and after the liberation war. These views are important as they relate to some of the novels that will be discussed in this study.

Moyana's (1999) doctoral thesis titled, 'An Historical Study of a Selection of the White Rhodesian Novel in English, 1890 – 1994: Content and Character' examines white Zimbabwean writers' representation of the white experience in Africa. The research covers experiences that include the first liberation wars in the 1890s as well as the expropriation of African resources by the white settlers. It is clear from Moyana's thesis that a discussion of the white experience simultaneously entails the discussion of the black experience. Crucially, Moyana offers a comprehensive discussion of the white writers' depiction of the armed struggle, which is also the central theme in Shona, Ndebele and English novels under investigation in this research. Her thesis argues that African nationalism is conceptualised through skewed racial lenses which posit African people as incapable of thinking on their own. While the current study examines the black liberation war novel, Moyana's views on the representations of African nationalism in the white Rhodesian novel help illuminate a number of issues, particularly the dynamics of historical representation. Since Moyana has already dealt with the war novel written by white Zimbabweans, this research will only make occasional references to it.

Primorac (2006) is one of the prominent white critics of Zimbabwean literature. She has carried extensive research on the Zimbabwean novel, including the liberation war novel in English. She has also published some articles in which she contributes

significantly to the debates on Zimbabwean fiction. Most of her researches are carried from a postcolonial perspective and related epistemologies. The conspicuous quality about Primorac's work is the tendency to be overwhelmed by the temptation to use language that makes it difficult to develop a sound appreciation of Zimbabwean literature in general and the liberation war novel in particular. For instance, in a chapter where she deals with the liberation war novel in *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* (2006: 127) she outlines her task as follows:

In this chapter, however, I do not treat 'the war' as a thematic, but as a spatio-temporal category...will...read Chinodya's and Kanengoni's texts against the background of other novels/ novellas whose chronotopes contain a space-time inhabited by armed combatants in the second chimurenga. It is to that kind of text/ space-time that I will apply the expressions 'the war novel' and 'the space-time of war.'

Some of the language might be difficult to penetrate for an ordinary follower of Zimbabwean critical scholarship on the liberation war. The obsession with articulating theory significantly dilutes the value of her scholarly ideas. Nonetheless, her views remain useful to this study in that they show how the liberation war experience in Zimbabwe is appreciated by non-Zimbabweans.

Muponde and Primorac's *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* (2005) is a collection of critical essays on Zimbabwean literature, including the liberation war novel. Various contributors such as Kaarsholm, Muchemwa and Chennels provide critical insights that are vital in appreciating the direction and character of critical practice on Zimbabwean literature. The ideas they generate are useful in this study whose concern is the Zimbabwean novel but with special reference to historical fiction on the liberation war.

Sithole's *Zimbabwe: Struggles-Within-the-Struggle, 1957-1980* (1999) is a soul-searching rendition of the internal politics of Zimbabwe's liberation movements that was originally published in 1979. It explains these as internecine in-fights and contradictions triggered by regionalism, tribalism, greed, hypocrisy, logistical and ideological differences among others. It revisits Zimbabwe's history which has largely been seen through the lenses of official dogma. The author presents his task as:



This work deals with the in-fights within and between Zimbabwe's liberation organisations, namely, the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU); the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU); The Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI); the African National Congress (ANC); and the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front (ZPF). This work deals with the liberation organisations in relation to themselves, and in relation to each other (1999: 1).

His analytical insights into the largely unsaid history of the struggles within the Zimbabwean liberation struggle are important in understanding the challenges that characterised the struggle for independence. Sithole's work is also significant in that he is one Zimbabwean scholar who started critiquing the war of liberation even before it was over. His work and the present research are therefore bound by a shared concern with historical truth and the search for multiple perspectives in interpreting Zimbabwean liberation war history. Some of the issues presented in Sithole's are also portrayed in historical literature on the liberation war and, this becomes another way in which Sithole's work, which is both historical and critical, is significant to the current study.

Bhebe and Ranger (1995a and b) in their two volume publications namely *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (1995a) and *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (1995b), manage to bring together views from different contributors on the war of liberation. Some of the contributors were guerrilla fighters and others were Rhodesian military personnel in the armed struggle. The first volume analyses through comparison and contrast, the military and logistical strategies of the major parties in the war which include Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA), Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Rhodesian forces as well as other complications that characterised the war. A lot of emphasis is placed on soldiers in the war. Their second volume focuses on society, beliefs and experiences of brutality at the hands of the guerrillas, dissidents and the fifth brigade as well as the impact of the liberation war on people's sense of identity as Shona, Ndebele or women. Bhebe and Ranger's work is useful because it crystallises views from diverse scholarly angles. It also provides the much needed unsaid historical information on the liberation war. Because Bhebe and Ranger constitute the major voices on Zimbabwe's liberation war history, their works feature prominently in the discussion on the interface of history and fiction.

A few Honours and Masters Dissertations have also examined the Zimbabwean liberation war novel. Mpondi's Bachelor of Arts Honours dissertation titled 'The Shona Novel's Depiction of the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe' (1993) offers useful perspectives on the direction of innovation in the Shona liberation war novel. Mpondi examines the strengths and weaknesses of the Shona novel's portrayal of the liberation war. His central argument is that "a true novel about the war of liberation in Zimbabwe is yet to be written" (1993: 2). His critical perspectives are crucial as he focuses on a number of Shona novels. While the present research benefits from Mpondi's views, it embraces a broader and all-encompassing approach to the study of the liberation war novel in Zimbabwe. The researcher advances the contention that a synchronous exegesis of the liberation war novel in Zimbabwe is fundamental in developing an in depth understanding of Zimbabwean literature.

Muwati (2000) in his Bachelor of Arts Honours dissertation studies Choto's novel, *Vavairo* (1990) and Kanengoni's novel, *Echoing Silences* (1997) as a counter-discourse to Mpondi's claims about the absence of a true liberation war novel in Zimbabwe. His study which focuses on novels written in Shona and English leaves out fiction on the liberation war novel in Ndebele. That being the case, Muwati's Honours research project provides intellectual inspiration for the present study which sets out to address various issues left suspended at B.A. Honours level.

Furusa's (1991) Honours study entitled 'The Zimbabwean War Novel and the Struggle for National Liberation' perpetuates colonial hangovers that present novels written in English as a true epitome of Zimbabwean literature. When one reads what he calls the Zimbabwean war novel as shown in the title, one comes face to face with the reality that all novels he examines in the research are in English. There are no Shona or Ndebele novels in Furusa's work although the title states that it focuses on the 'Zimbabwean War Novel'. The researcher advances the hypothesis that this is a misleading and narrow appropriation of the label Zimbabwean. While Furusa's ideas are useful, this study seeks to go beyond such narrow divisions and labels that asphyxiate literature and history in rigid and seemingly insurmountable linguistic ramparts.

## 1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by the teachings of what this researcher conceptualises as a Zimbabwean aesthetics, which is presented within the broader context of Afrocentricity and incumbent African epistemological assumptions on the role of the story-teller / writer and the critic or audience. Such aesthetics derive from Shona and Ndebele cultural and philosophical foundations as enunciated in the role of the traditional story-teller, *Sarungano* in Shona or *Umethi* in Ndebele. These traditions are an integral part of our identity and shared experiences. The responsibilities that the Shona and Ndebele people place on their *Sarungano/ Umethi* in the traditional context are similar to the ones placed on the novelist today. The novelist, who is a product of this story-telling tradition with its demands and expectations, is expected to carryover from the *Sarungano/ Umethi*. The traditional story-teller is a respectable member of society whose social function compels him or her to be a teacher, historian, philosopher, healer and critic. In other words, he or she is expected to be a vessel and an avatar of functional, lived and liveable ideals that have the potential to equip society with an empowering and ennobling consciousness.

It is this understanding that Achebe (1989: 40) presents in one of his titles as, 'The Novelist as Teacher'. It is also this philosophy which undergirds the entire spectrum of the teachings of Afrocentricity. One hopes the Zimbabwean novelist deploys creative energy to the effect that it becomes indisputable to lay claim to the notion "that the soul of a nation is to be found in the temple of its literature and arts..." (Obote in p'Bitek, 1986: vi). The researcher searches for analytical tools and aesthetic canons from within the Shona and Ndebele cultural spheres because these are the main cultures that define Zimbabweans as Africans. A number of Zimbabwean critics have opted for foreign approaches and, in most cases, this has resulted in the distortion of literature or the generation of critical ideas and a language of criticism out of step with Zimbabwean realities because theories are products of specific cultural contexts. Over-reliance on European frameworks of analysis and interpretation disfigures knowledge about Africa as well as the role of the writer in the African episteme. The implication is that Zimbabweans in general and African people in particular are a people suffering from poverty of theory and also lacking a language of critical theory. Furusa (1998b: 78) has no kind words for

champions of this seemingly fashionable and apotheosised trend in contemporary scholarly generations to search for methodological criteria from the West:

To understand their own African cultures and the arts, languages and literature, media and communication, religions and oral traditions, they seek the guidance of Jacobson, Freud, Levi Strauss, Umberto Eco, Lacan, Noam Chomsky, Derrida, Karl Marx, Walter Ong, Bertold Brecht, Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. The list of European thinkers that African intellectuals imitate is endless.

Many other African scholars with African teachings at heart have argued for the advancement of self-affirming and self-defining aesthetics embedded in African cultures and African realities. Among them are Ezekiel Mphahlele, Mazisi Kunene, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ousmane Sembene, D. T. Niane, Okot p'Bitek, Chancellor Williams, Milton Obote, Maulana Karenga, Marimba Ani, Molefi Asante, Yosef ben-Jochannan and many others. In employing such aesthetics, we are fully cognisant of the changing environment in which the modern day novelist practices his or her craft. In the contemporary dispensation, the traditional story-teller is equivalent to the writer/ novelist. Analysing the liberation war novel using the teachings of Shona and Ndebele traditions has the advantage of centering the study within a specific and perceivable historical, political and cultural matrix. It is such centeredness that Afrocentricity advances in the pursuit of any form of intellectual inquiry and engagement. Asante, who came up with the term Afrocentricity, has described the theory as "placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior" (1998: 2). The scholarly standards envisaged in Afrocentricity are "severe and the questions uncompromising" (Ani, 1994: 24).

Thus, deploying Ndebele and Shona canons to understand Zimbabwean literature becomes an intellectually empowering experience in that it acknowledges the validity of previously marginalised cultural centers as potential generators of critical canons. It also helps African critics to avoid flight from themselves into other selves. Specific cultural and historical contexts generate equally valid aesthetic canons for the appreciation and interpretation of specific arts from that culture and history.

As pointed out before, the story-teller (writer) is a respected person who is burdened with the social responsibility of conveying effective moral, political, philosophical and historical teachings. This is crucial in illuminating the direction that society should

take. p'Bitek (1986: 19) has presented this responsibility of the writer as someone who

has a bundle of duties which are expected from him by the society, as well as a bundle of rights and privileges that the society owes him... Even death does not free [him].

For that reason, commitment, truthfulness and positive attitude become profoundly fundamental because these are the attributes of a *Sarungano/ Umethi*. Zimbabwean novelists, who are part of this tradition, and indeed the African tradition, are examined within the matrix of such cultural aesthetics and epistemological codes. Ideas on history, culture, sociology, politics, science and psychology must be anchored on a profound appreciation of the destiny of the community. Artists who talk about the war are part of this story-telling tradition which binds them to the truth. We deploy these cultural tools to analyse the writers' vision of history. For instance, in presenting the West African concept of "Sankofa" Stewart informs us that, "it is not taboo to go back to fetch what you forgot". Secondly, "we must go back in order to move forward" (2004: 3).

A proper understanding of the liberation war affords Zimbabweans a proper understanding of the dynamics of their history and the burdens imposed on them by such history. Writers' discourses on the liberation war are not just a record of past experiences, but are expected to clarify the present and illuminate the future. They have opted to fulfil the role of national historian by going back to 'exhume the past so it can be useful to us'. As depositories and granaries of national history they need to be subjected to thoroughgoing scrutiny. Niane (1965: viii) argues that the African novelist "occupies the chair of history." These insights are important as the study assesses the writers' engagement of Zimbabwe's past experiences whose bearing on the present and the future is profoundly fundamental. Within this operational frame, the study critiques the writers' fidelity to historical truth. Such truth is important because it has a bearing on policy formulation, national healing, rehabilitation as well as in the setting of the national agenda for national development and participation.

Literature is inextricably linked to these projects because as John Henrik Clarke quoted in Furusa (2002) says, "If literature is not for nation building, then it is for anything". People who operate on the basis of jaundiced historical knowledge are

likely to have a false start in the race of life. National history cannot be built on wishful thinking or a merry-go-round type of creative intellection. History informs action and shapes vision. Novels about the liberation war are examined on the basis of their immersion in national history because “we want to know...the whole truth, good and bad” (Williams, 1987: 19) since, “...anything against which the door is barred can cause trouble” (Achebe, 1988: 65). As Williams (1987: 47) clarifies that the preoccupation with historical truth is important because “from history we learn what our strengths were and, especially, in what particular aspect we are weak and vulnerable. Our history can then become at once the foundation and guiding light for united efforts in serious planning what we should be about now.”

## **1.7 SCOPE OF RESEARCH**

The research project is made up of seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction to the research. It outlines the statement of purpose, aims of the research, research methods, justification, and scope of research, conceptual framework and provides a review of literature on the subject under discussion. It explains the limitations of the research. This chapter is important because it explains the thesis. The second chapter is a general discussion on the development of fiction in Zimbabwe. It articulates and outlines the general framework for the exegesis of historical fiction in the subsequent chapters. It explains historical fiction, the responsibilities of the writer as a historian, including outlining the investigative parameters used in determining the nexus of history and fiction. Chapter three examines the representation of factors that made people join the war of liberation. The factors are divided into general or national factors and individual or personal factors. These contesting representations are given a nuanced interpretation within the context of nation and nationalism as well as Zimbabwe’s recent politics. Chapter four is a discussion of the experiences of guerrillas in the rear and at the front. Because the chapter is a discussion of two major historical spaces in Zimbabwe’s liberation war, that is, the rear and the front, it is a bit long. To have discussed the rear and the front in two separate chapters would have brought in some repetition in discussing the guerrilla experience. While guerrillas and peasants operated within the same spaces, chapter five is a discussion of civilian experiences in the liberation war. These experiences are discussed in the context of guerrilla presence as well as other armed forces such as the Rhodesian

forces, Auxiliary forces and Selous Scouts. Chapter six is based on a discussion of observations made from the research. It discusses these observations as a way of further clarifying the research and filling in certain gaps of information. Part of this undertaking involves an analysis of interview material obtained from writers, editors, academics and readers. Finally, it passes the study's position on the interface of history and fiction. The conclusion of this study, which is chapter seven, summarises the study's major arguments and conclusions while articulating the place of historical fiction in the development of Zimbabwean fiction in general. It clarifies trends, commonalities, divergences, theories and explains whether liberation war fiction reflects any development. The chapters have been arranged in this format to provide the best method for the researcher to articulate the study's argument.

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In its attempt to narrow the existing gap between literary scholarship and literary cooks by engaging various writers through structured and unstructured interviews, the research does not embody the views of all writers whose works have been used here. Many factors have hindered the researcher's ability to commune with all writers whose works are analysed here. A number of writers who wrote in the early 1980s have since changed their addresses. Publishing houses which are the main sources for the writers' contact details have not updated their files. This has made it very difficult for the researcher who has had to go to the old addresses only to be told that the person left the place almost a decade ago. Some writers whom the researcher could not visit due to financial constraints and other reasons were sent questionnaires. Nothing materialised from them. Sadly, the majority of war fiction writers, among them former combatants, passed on. The economic and political situation in the country has not spared writers, either. A number have moved to the Diaspora where they seem to be reluctant to give away their contact details despite assurances that their submissions are for academic purposes only.

The study's dependence on historical sources in order to validate and refute the relationship between history and fiction has its own problems. This is the case because history texts are not written from a neutral point of view. There are very few historical studies on ZAPU/ ZIPRA contributions in the liberation war. In this regard,

one finds that the academy overflows with ZANLA/ZANU history, an aspect which shows the politicisation of historiography in Zimbabwe. Connected to this discussion, one finds that scholars such as Bhebe, Ranger and McLaughlin among others constitute the canonical voices on Zimbabwe's liberation war history. In this regard, constant reference to these scholars' works is likely to create the impression that the research has heavily relied on a limited number of historical works. The researcher, however, takes this as a limitation of this study. The unstable political environment in the country, especially during the time field research was conducted, made it difficult to get views from former fighters and other participants because most of them were not sure about the use to which the material would be put. The researcher noted many instances of prevarication and self-censorship and this was triggered by the ultra-sensitive nature of liberation war history in Zimbabwe. Now that material from these field interviews is also used in this research may somehow lead to different interpretations of the same event.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter is an expository chapter which marks the scope of the research and the major aims. The research is largely carried out with a view to assess the manner in which Zimbabwean novelists writing in all three written languages which are Shona, Ndebele and English interpret the nation's liberation war history. At the centre of this endeavour is an attempt to explain the place, status and relevance of fiction as well as its relationship with history. Such a mission has been triggered by the fact that previous researches have not managed to harmonise discussions on the liberation war as depicted in novels written in different languages. The study's conceptual tools for such a mission are drawn from within the Zimbabwean epistemological and ontological paradigm.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERATION WAR FICTION: A GENERIC PERSPECTIVE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter outlined the nature of the study, particularly its informing arguments and conceptual frame. It explained the study's research questions, objectives and scope. This chapter, which is not necessarily argumentative, broadly and generally provides an outline and framework on the development of liberation war fiction within the broader matrix of Zimbabwean fiction across languages. Situating the discussion within the context of Zimbabwean fiction is intended to identify and discuss the continuities and discontinuities in the novelistic creative traditions. Equally, a discussion of the general background to Zimbabwean literature makes it possible to be in a position to highlight the diffusion of literary styles from one language to the other as well as from one epoch to the other; while simultaneously highlighting common successes and weaknesses in artistic strategies that are used to respond to the same or similar historical periods.

This chapter provides a platform and outline for illuminating the subsequent chapters by making generalisations which are essential for any form of analysis in studies of this nature. It attempts a characterisation of liberation war fiction within the ambit of historical fiction. While this is critical in contextualising the discussion, it also helps in appreciating the scholarly value of historical fiction, particularly the merits and demerits. The chapter also provides background information on some of the factors that have contributed to the qualitative and quantitative development of Zimbabwean fiction in general. The development of liberation war fiction and its authenticity and acceptance as a legitimate discourse in the Zimbabwean context is determined through a set of methodologies, which become the investigative and analytic parameters. These enable the research to distinguish between fiction and history, thereby avoiding the temptation of qualifying as liberation war historical fiction any work that makes reference to the liberation war.

## 2.2 CHARACTERISING LIBERATION WAR FICTION

The study situates liberation war fiction within the ambit of historical fiction. Historical fiction, which also constitutes historical narratives part of whose mandate is the representation of memory, imaginatively and creatively recreates a people's past and their history drawing inspiration from real life historical experiences. The architecture of the phrase or concept historical fiction combines two terminologies – history and fiction. A prima facie examination of the two may lead to a quick dismissal of their interrelatedness; and simultaneously emphasising their seeming titanic misalignment and incompatibility. Generally, history is largely associated with fact or verisimilitude while fiction tends to be associated with imagination and creativity. For that reason, historical fiction becomes a combination of 'fact(s)' and imagination/ creation. Viewed from this perspective, historical fiction becomes a form of history alongside other histories such as oral history.

Guided by this assumption, the researcher proceeds to argue that historical fiction, and in this particular context, liberation war historical fiction, is a creative/ imaginative artistic intervention and discursive instrument for negotiating the thin line between the past, the present and the future using images, characters and symbols as embodiments of historical action and memory. First, it can be realised while the historical process which constitutes its content is still in progress. Second, it can be actualised as a footnote to the historical event, that is, after the 'passage' of the event. In this regard, the events can be from the recent past or the distant past. It can also portend the future course of events. The creative element alluded to gives fiction the leverage that orthodox history does not usually have since creativity involves more than recording or capturing events. The creative aspect that underpins fiction production qualifies it as a critical tool in negotiating human experiences. This realisation has been presented elsewhere as:

The arts are the most immediately recognizable form of creativity. All art deserves laudation as the representative of the concept of creativity...Yet while the arts are among the highest forms of human activity, they grow out of the soil provided by the more modest routines of daily life. They provide people with opportunities to consider and communicate their reality and visions in new ways (Quoted from *Our Creative Diversity*: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, 1995: 81).

Writers who conduct dialogue with the community through historical fiction consciously or unconsciously do so out of the realisation that:

We cannot take [readers] on a field trip into the past, but we can recreate a sense of history so powerful that [they] enter imaginatively into the past and explore the “the conflicts, suffering, joys and despair of those who lived before us” (Huck, 1977: 469).

The same conceptual scheme is clear in Mensah (2004: 69) who explains that:

The purpose of the historical novel [fiction] is to make the reader experience the psychology and ethics of the past, not as a curiosity, but as a phase in mankind’s development which is of concern to the reader. The historical novel [fiction]...provides a tangible human portrayal of the historical trends of an epoch. Its principal characters should be nationally typical or decently average.

The most consistent aspect in the discussion of historical fiction, therefore, is that it emerges after a specific event or possibly during a particular historical event as already highlighted.

This view is also vindicated by Matthews (1901). While writing about the historical novel [fiction] in the European tradition, and tending towards disparaging historical fiction as a pseudo-construction, Matthews’ views are useful in clarifying the development of as well as the constitution of historical fiction. In an essay titled ‘The Historical Novel’, Matthews (1901: 7) observes:

The historical novel [fiction]...like historical drama and like historical painting, could not come into being until after history had established itself, and after chronology and geography had lent to history their indispensable aid.

In this regard, historical fiction must be as close to the source of history as possible if it is to have any value to the intended consumers. This is supported by Freeman and Levstik (1988: 331) who explain that:

Historical fiction – and history is more than a simple retelling of past events. Rather historical fiction is part of an ongoing process of interpretation in which [readers] can participate. Our suggestions are intended to encourage comparisons between historical fiction and the data from which historical explanation emerges.

As used in this research, liberation war historical fiction in Zimbabwe refers to all narratives, biographical and autobiographical works that draw their creative inspiration from Zimbabwe's liberation war in the 1970s and particularly written by black Zimbabweans.

In this regard, the liberation war is the major theme. Such narratives are published from 1980 onwards, that is, after the end of the liberation war which is the source of historical content. The liberation war can be classified as part of Zimbabwe's recent history. The war ended in 1979 through a negotiated settlement among the warring parties. While the narratives are works of fiction or products of imagination, they are also historical due to their reminiscences. In this study, the Zimbabwean war of liberation is understood as a process and not just an event. Therefore, all events and processes in the war, including the aftermath, provide the legitimate source for what the study conceptualises as liberation war historical fiction. The degree of historicity and historical narrativity in historical fiction is always contestable and this aspect is addressed in another section in this chapter.

The distinction between biographical, autobiographical and non-biographical or non-autobiographical work is difficult to decipher in Zimbabwean liberation war fiction because a number of authors are former combatants and their accounts are first hand experience. Even for the majority who are not former combatants, they have salient experiences about the liberation war. While this is a generalised characterisation which creates problems about whether any work that refers to the war can be said to be historical fiction, the researcher explains some of the investigative parameters that at least attenuate the difficulty in making the distinction between history and fiction. These are discussed in the next section where the study focuses on the writer as a historian.

### **2.2.1 The writer as a historian**

From an African centered point of view, the link between fiction and history is an age-old and established relationship. Niane (1965) unambiguously explains the connection between art and history. He uses the image of a griot who is the equivalent of a modern day writer. The griot is celebrated and respected because he

is the community's source of historical knowledge. Through art, he archives and safeguards the community's history for use at convenient times. Such an act is necessitated by the place of memory in human existence. People who lose memory are prone to degeneration. They find it difficult to lead authentic lives. As Niane (1965: viii) says:

The griot who occupies the chair of history of a village and who bears the title of 'Belen-Tigui is a very respectable gentleman and...has gone from village to village to hear the teaching of great masters; he has learnt the art of historical oratory through long years; he is, moreover, bound by an oath and doesn't teach anything except what his guild stipulates.

Niane reincarnates age-old teachings and assumptions that serve as signposts in both the reading and writing of African literature.

In reconstructing the above classical African discursive canons, Niane (1965) raises three notable points. The first and most conspicuous is that the artist is a historian. Secondly, there is no bifurcation between art/ fiction and history. Third is the fact that dialogue on history needs to be anchored on concrete knowledge and research and not mere wishful thinking. In the analysis of fictional narratives on the liberation war, the search for authenticity and truthful depiction of reality is one of the topmost priorities. It helps in appreciating the interface of history and fiction. It leads to informed conclusions on whether fiction can be relied upon as a source that illuminates the study and conceptualisation of liberation war history.

The intellectual need to discuss the interface of history and fiction, and in that regard present fiction as an alternative and legitimate source of historical illumination is crucially important. This is so because possibilities abound that some sections of society find this assumption repulsive and naive. To these, we refer to Motsa (2006: 13) who confirms our suspicions and at the same time unambiguously affirms the value of historical fiction:

Certain members of society may not even believe that literary creations can create and narrate 'history' from alternative sites as well as authorize versions of 'literary history' that can interrogate official historical accounts'.

It is against the background of the possible existence of 'non-believers' in the convergence of history and fiction that the search and revelation of truths in historical fiction becomes a very important undertaking. Commenting on the importance of truth in historical fiction/ narratives, Topolski (1981: 56) explains:

When we speak about the truth of such a narrative, the plane of reference is facts and not the author's trustworthiness. Of course, when we speak about the facts to which we compare a given narrative we mean that idea of those facts which is commonly accepted by historians – even though this leaves many issues on which there is no common agreement.

As a culturally recognised vehicle for historical expression, art/fiction transmits historical values from one generation to the other using images. These culturally derived canons provide wisdom which regulates the manner in which writers interact with history. They serve as “an axiological reference point for the purpose of gathering, ordering, and interpreting information about African people” (Keto quoted in Furusa 2002). Since the fiction writer occupies the 'chair of history', the imaginative recreation of history becomes a sacred duty that must be treated with a 'deep sense of reverence'. Fiction becomes important in illuminating historical consciousness and life in general. In the words of Furusa (2002), it is beyond African people's cognition that they had something called art/ fiction which was separate from their life as they lived it, live it and will live it. It is therefore within the parameters of this culturally sanctioned assumption that Chinweizu (1984: 13) writes of African literature that:

As far as we are concerned [literature] is simply a written part of that dialogue which a people conduct among themselves about their history. Their life, not some abstract categories or theories, is the stuff of that history.

In our view, the modern writer of fiction is expected to carryover with such time-tested assumptions. Such wisdom should be the basis for his or her creative efforts. It should define the creative turf and clarify the creative trajectory for the purposes of producing a fruitful artistic product.

The sacredness that characterises the 'chair of history' functions to subvert any profanation of a people's history. The Shona people of Zimbabwe have a saying which advises of the need to guard against careless use of words. The saying is

*'Mashoko haatambwi nawo'* which literally translates to (You do not play with words because they are sacred). This profound epistemology can be extended to historical fiction writers because we believe that the consequent profanation as pointed out above is principally realised through the generation of images and use of words uninformed by historical verisimilitude. This is why the griot, Djeli Mamoudou Kouyate, in Niane (1965: 1) says, "we are vessels of speech, we are the repositories which harbour secrets many centuries old...without us the names of kings would vanish into oblivion, we are the memory of mankind..."

The griot further adds:

I teach kings the history of their ancestors so that the lives of the ancients might serve them as an example, for the world is old, but the future springs from the past. My word is pure and free from all untruth (Niane, 1965: 1).

The griot declares with undiluted pride his commitment to aligning his oratorical capabilities to the people's true history. His declaration issues from an acute awareness of the relationship between art/ fiction and society. His statement is a profound philosophy of African literature. It lays the foundation for any well-intentioned African literary scholar and creative writer. For that reason, the argument on the convergence of history and fiction is not just a metaphysical supposition. History is not just a record of past events. It is a window into the future. Writers using fiction to represent history cannot expect to be excused from the task of responsibly harnessing history for the purposes of winning, affirming and securing the future. This has always been the 'traditional' relationship between art and history. It is discernible that there is a thin line between fiction and history. Fiction becomes one of the media through which writers and readers interact with their historical projects. Fiction increases awareness on the people's achievements and failures in their historical trajectory. Because history is very crucial in Zimbabwe today as it informs the direction of politics, economics and general sociological conditions, the study finds it repugnant not to discuss it in the contexts of nation, nationalism, violence, conflict resolution and issues related to restorative justice.

## 2.2.2 Investigative parameters

In order to fully appreciate the emphasis on historical authenticity and the need to avoid the temptation of presenting every work that mentions the liberation war as historical fiction, Mensah's observations are instructive. Mensah (2004: 69) explains:

[On] account...of the variety of forms and strategies which the historical novel is adopting in Africa...the character of the protagonist, the manner of characterization, the structure of the plot and even the tone of the narrator all depend on the perspective of the author, and the use to which history is being put. A fuller study of historical fiction would lead to a kind of taxonomy in which function, ideology and implied reader could be correlated with certain forms.

If unmonitored, the above set of points such as character, plot, intention of the author and narrator involvement can certainly compromise the value of historical fiction as history. It is in this context that investigative parameters not only proffer a methodology of analysis, but also provide the necessary checks and balances, thus leading to an informed conclusion on the interface of history and fiction.

This realisation in which historical fiction can be tampered with by various forces including the author's personal interests brings to the fore the difficulty of separating history from fiction and this is an aspect this study fully appreciates. It also becomes one of the limitations and risks of this research. In studying the relationship between fiction and history, particularly the role of the writer as a historian, the researcher applies a set of analytic and investigative parameters which take into account Mensah's (2004) observations as presented above. These parameters are intended to enable the distinction and relationship between history and fiction. They include such arsenal like authenticity of the historical material presented in fiction, the intention and involvement of the author, the reception or conceptualisation of the work by its intended audience, the social function of the texts as well as the narrative syntax of the discourse, since the syntax in historical texts is imposed by the author (investigative parameters are discussed in Fleischman, 1983). These also determine the quality and value of historical fiction.

These investigative parameters are complementary rather than contradictory. It is envisaged that their application in the examination of liberation war historical fiction



makes it possible for the researcher to overcome the temptation of qualifying as historical narrative any fictional work that talks about the liberation war. In this regard, they constitute a potential methodological safety net and foundation for determining the degree of historicity in given fictional narratives, while making clear the discussion on the interface of history and fiction.

As one of the investigative and analytic parameters, authenticity of the given historical images/ material is important in determining verisimilitude. Authenticity entails determining the degree of correspondence between fictional images and the actual historical facts as they are known or universally acknowledged by historians. This parameter makes possible the distinction between history and fiction as well as the thin line between history and fiction. We are able to pass judgment on whether the writer is a responsible writer who responsibly invests in the past for the purposes of national progress and record keeping. In the Zimbabwean context where history, particularly as it pertains to the liberation war, is inseparable from national politics and national development or lack of it, authenticity is a necessity. According to Fleischman (1983: 281):

The first and most obvious angle from which to approach the question of history versus fiction involves evaluating the authenticity of purportedly historical material: to what extent does the configuration of events and personages in a text correspond to historical fact, in so far as we ascertain, and to what extent is it merely fanciful invention, figments of the imagination...

Freeman and Levstik (1988: 331) also provide a series of questions which are important in assessing the degree of authenticity and historicity as well as the distinction of fiction and history in general. They put forward the following set of questions to explain the authenticity test:

Are the historical details accurate? What interpretation of history is represented in the story, and especially in the ideas and actions of the main character(s)? How has the author used characters to present points of view? How else might these events be perceived? How much invention is involved in the historical information?

While invention is unavoidable in fiction in general and historical fiction in particular, it should not undermine the historical authenticity of the material. In this research,

historical texts, personal experience and interview material constitute part of the authenticity test mechanism. However, we are not oblivious of the limitations that characterise the exercise. The narration of history in historical texts or even orally is to an extent subjective. In order to at least overcome this, there is need to refer to as many historical texts or sources as possible.

Apart from authenticity, the study of the distinction and relationship between fiction and history is also abetted by assessing the individual author's intention and involvement in writing about a historical event. Whether the fictional narrative was intended to be a true record of history or mere fancy is a question that cannot be ignored. The assumption is that different authors have different intentions and are also motivated by different factors to write. In the Zimbabwean literary terrain where editorial processes are crucial factors in the writing and publication of fiction, different literary historians may be inspired by different intentions and interests in line with their respective publishing organisations. Another aspect is that different writers come from different backgrounds and experiences. For that reason, it is hoped these, too, motivate the production of fiction and the author's attitude towards the history he/she creates. In the case of Zimbabwean liberation war fiction, it is interesting to note that writers come from and express themselves in different languages (Shona, Ndebele and English) and also write in different epochs (early 1980s, late 1980s, 1990s and beyond) which are informed by contrasting ideologies and economic realities. This is why the study exploits material from interviews with writers in order to unravel and explain their intentions. However, this has its own weaknesses since it is possible for the literary historians to equivocate.

Related to the above is the reception of the various fictional/ historical narratives by the target audience who include among others – teachers, students, historians and academics in general. Readers are likely to be drawn to fictions in which they find their past soundly represented and truthfully portrayed. Such fiction is as close to life and fact as possible. Authentic historical fiction is likely be embraced in interdisciplinary academic engagements. It is in this context that the reception of the texts can be taken as a method of distinguishing between fiction and history as well establishing the union between the two.

Narrative syntax is another analytic parameter that also makes possible the distinction between fiction and history. The narrative syntax in historical fiction is imposed by the author through such acts as emplotment. The concern really lies with finding out “How are events related to one another? Are they merely juxtaposed paratactically according to a rudimentary linear chronology, or are they subordinate so that causality is made explicit” (Fleischman, 1983: 291). As already argued, fiction can eclectically employ style and present events in a free manner. In fiction in general, style is also part of the content/message and reflects the author’s attitude towards certain realities. While the above analytic parameters have got their weaknesses, they nonetheless furnish the conceptual methodology which to some extent facilitates the distinction and relationship between history and fiction.

### **2.3 BACKGROUND TO THE LIBERATION WAR AND THE GROWTH OF HISTORICAL FICTION**

As already insinuated, liberation war fiction is a footnote to the war against British occupation of the ‘land between the Zambezi and the Limpopo Rivers’. Dumbutshena, in a foreword in Auret (1992: vii) characterises this war as “a history of the people who suffered and died, and of those who survived to witness the birth of a new Zimbabwe. It is a history of all the people of Zimbabwe – the big and small, the rich and the poor – with no particular concern with those who were or are in leadership positions.” In this regard, fiction recreates the war that was largely spearheaded by ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People’s Union) and their respective military wings, ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) and ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army). While there were other parties involved, these are subsumed under these two. Kriger (1992: 3), a historian on the Zimbabwean liberation war provides the statistics on the involvement of the two armies in the struggle:

At the end of the war, in December 1979, estimates were that 19,300 guerrillas out of a total of 28,000 inside Zimbabwe belonged to ZANU while the rest belonged to ZAPU...ZANU forces passed through Mozambique and operated mostly in Shona-speaking parts of the country, while ZAPU’S army, called ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army), operated chiefly in Ndebele-speaking areas in the west and south-west, infiltrating through Zambia and Botswana.

In the above excerpt, Kriger overlooks the fact that ZAPU also operated in Mashonaland. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, historical fiction about the liberation war also adopts the same military, ideological and regional differences, particularly those adopted in official history. There are very few exceptions to this rule where a writer from one region of the country depicts liberation war experiences in another region.

In official history, the liberation war is said to have “occurred between 1964 and 1980” (Bhebe, 1999: 10). At least, to the majority, the overarching objective was to dislodge British colonialism, do away with buccaneering exploitation while ushering a new political, social, ideological and economic dispensation in which everyone would participate and contribute, each according to their talents. The liberation war attracted a lot of interest at home and abroad. At home, peasants both male and female joined the war as combatants or supported the guerrillas as ‘water giving support to fish’. Fiction writers also come from this broad category of peasants. At the international level, many neighbouring and other distant countries got involved. Among them were countries like Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania. These became known as the frontline states and they supported Zimbabwe materially, logistically and psychologically. The war was costly in terms of human life, resources and dignity.

During the course of the war, a number of literary creators could not freely use fiction to talk about the war save for those who published abroad. The political and editorial conditions prevailing in Rhodesia made such an exercise impossible. Even for the few writers (those who wrote in English) who managed to publish using outside structures, the circulation of their literature at home [Rhodesia] was restricted. Some writers who wrote during the liberation war had to wait for independence while others published several years after independence. Examples in this category are writers like Nyamfukudza and Bvuma who raised the above in separate interviews with the researcher. Part of the reasons was that the Rhodesian government could not allow the publication and circulation of such literature, particularly if black Zimbabweans wrote it. It was considered political and was likely to commit the ‘sin’ of legitimising the guerrillas whom the Smith regime presented as terrorists. Moyo, a Shona writer who has also written historical fiction on the liberation war confirms the challenges writers faced. In an interview with the researcher he expressed that “war was not

acceptable...We could not write about it during the war (sic)". Responding to a questionnaire, Hleza, a Ndebele writer, reiterates Moyo's submissions:

I did not publish anything before independence...War is a very sensitive subject, writing about it while it was going on would have been a suicidal folly of the worst order. It would attract the same penalty from either the liberation forces or the Smith regime.

The only avenue for publishing was via the Southern Rhodesia Literature Bureau, itself a government department. At the same time, it can also be conjectured that people were preoccupied with fighting and the attainment of independence instead of creating historical fiction around the war. Oral artists seem to have been the ones who were very active during this time chiefly due to the adaptability of oral art. Some of these artists include Shona musicians like Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mutukudzi and Zexie Manatsa. There were also ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) and ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) choirs which sang from outside Zimbabwe. The Light Machine Gun (LMG) choir is one such ZIPRA choir which was based at Victory camp in Zambia.

However, the attainment of independence in 1980 and the consequent euphoria seemed to have 'liberated' conditions for writers to create fiction around the liberation war. In fact, independence became an occasion of overwhelming celebration to the extent that it attracted a lot of fiction writers, particularly in Mashonaland. For example, Kahari (1997: 2), a prominent critic of Shona fiction shows that between 1981 and 1990 the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau had published 61 books in Shona alone. More than ninety percent of these titles were on the liberation war. While Ndlovu (2001: vi), a critic of Ndebele fiction does not provide statistics he shows the profound impact that the Bureau had on the qualitative growth of fiction in Ndebele since the colonial period. This pattern is also palpable in the aftermath of independence. Ndlovu (2001: vi) writes:

*Kwathi-ke uhulumende wabamhlope ebona lokhu, wakubona kufanele ukuthi kube nguye olawula ukubhalwa kwezingwalo zesintu ngoba enanzelela ukuthi izinto ezibhalwe ezingwalweni ezifundwa ngabasakhulayo zilakho ukuthi zenze imibono yabo ihambelane lalokho okubhalwe kulezo ngwalo. Yikho wathanda ukuthi abone ukuthi kulezo ngwalo kubhalwa izinto ezingezukona imicabango yabasakhulayo.*

After the colonial government realised this, it saw it befitting that it should be the one to monitor or govern the writing of literary works in indigenous languages with the view that written works can influence children's opinions. It, therefore undertook to censor any material that could "spoil" children's mentalities.

Among the early writers of fiction on the liberation war were those that had firmly established themselves as literary creators during the colonial period as well as emerging ones trying their hand at creativity.

Right from the colonial dispensation, fiction writers in English used independent publishing houses or published abroad. This facility made it possible for them to avoid partisan editorial processes at home. This partly explains, as most critics on Zimbabwean literature have observed why literature in English depicts ordinary people's experiences in a relatively progressive manner. One such critic, Chiwome (1998: 159) explains:

Ironically, Zimbabwean literature in English addresses the ordinary person's problems more earnestly than literature which is published in Shona and Ndebele. One reason for this is that writers in English have a wider range of literary models to emulate than their counterparts who are encouraged by the Literature Bureau tradition to look inward for inspiration. Writers in English publish their works outside the country where the market is not as sensitive as the one at home.

Whether this also extends to historical fiction on the liberation war is an issue that will be investigated in subsequent chapters. Consequently, because of the combination of both new and old writers, as well as their diverse backgrounds, factors that affect the growth of fiction in this category are largely heterogeneous. It is this heterogeneity triggered by region and ethnicity, language, time of writing, place of publication, editorial considerations and idiosyncratic dispositions that make the writers' recreation of history proffer an intellectually satisfying experience on the development of Zimbabwean liberation war fiction. A fuller study of these factors is given in the chapter on observations from the research.

### 2.3.1 Background information on the writing of fiction in Zimbabwe

The story about the 1970s Zimbabwean war of liberation has been told from different perspectives. The Zimbabwean writers make a bold attempt to reconstruct history using the story. Among the Shona and Ndebele people, the story has been an important aspect of their social philosophy. Telling the story has been deeply embedded in, and inextricably linked to their chances of survival and attempts to come to terms with the vicissitudes of life. In the words of Ngugi and Mugo (1983: iv), the story has been one of the several mechanisms of giving people “courage and [urging] them to higher [and bolder] resolves in their struggle for total liberation.” What immediately comes to mind are the numerous folktales, legends, myths, epics and riddles through which African people have sought to explain themselves and the world in which they live. Sembene, in an article titled ‘Man is Culture’, has explained the centrality of art/ story among African people even long before the written word:

Even before paper and ink, man wrote the most beautiful poetry with his sweat on the ground: life equals food. Man’s persistence in the struggle to survive has created myths which have enlightened zones of consciousness and which enclose him in that nebulous and uncontrolled consciousness (1978: 2).

It should also be noted that the story can be used for propagandistic purposes.

As already noted, the end of the liberation war provides the writers with an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on history using fiction. The change in political ideology inspires creativity about the liberation war. One finds that even the government of the time had a lot of interest in the story about the just ended liberation war. Kriger (1992: 135) says that in the early years the government of Zimbabwe encouraged research on the war: “After the war, the new ZANU-PF government was astonishingly open to rural research, and many foreign academics took advantage of this new, and regrettably short-lived, openness.” This general interest buttresses the importance of the story and the uses to which it can be put. The liberation war becomes simultaneously a popular and ‘safe’ theme during this time. Researchers across disciplines – political science, history, sociology, psychology, literature and etcetera made significant attempts to try and capture the story about the war. Achebe (1988: 124) says of the story that:

To some of us the Owner of the world has apportioned the gift to tell their fellows that the time to get up has finally come. To others he gives the eagerness to rise when they hear the call; to rise with racing blood and put on their garbs of war and go to the boundary of their town to engage the invading enemy boldly in battle. And then there are those others whose part is to wait and when the struggle is ended, to take over and recount its story...the story is chief among his fellows...Because it is only the story [that] can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story, not the others, that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it we are blind.

While the story is important, there are a number of factors that shape its aesthetic direction and sensibility. It is in this context that the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau becomes an important instrument in fashioning the Zimbabwean story published after 1980, particularly in Ndebele and Shona fictional accounts. The Zimbabwe Literature Bureau was a continuation of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, formed as a government department during the Federation period, 1953 to 1963.

### **2.3.2 The Rhodesia Literature Bureau**

The Literature Bureau affected the development of literature in both the colonial and neocolonial dispensations. First, it was the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, which later came to be known as the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau. The Rhodesia Literature Bureau, as a government department was formed in 1954. It was a government institution whose operations were entirely funded by the government. Its main mandate was to promote the publication and development of literature in indigenous languages, particularly Ndebele and Shona. The mission statement of the Literature Bureau is presented in one of the information pamphlets presented to the researcher by Bisset Chitsike, a former editor of the organisation, as that of providing the following services:

- a. Helping aspiring authors by expert assessment of their manuscripts. About 5 percent of all the manuscripts are published.
- b. Editing the good manuscripts for publishing.
- c. Looking for publishers for the authors.
- d. Helping in the sale of the books by organizing tours using Book Vans.



- e. Publishing works which publishers do not want to publish.

In an interview with Chitsike who became one of the longest serving members of the organisation from 1969 to 1982 and then from 1986 until its disbandment in 1999, the Bureau was set up to

teach and encourage Shona and Ndebele people to begin to write in their own languages. After its introduction, we suggested that it should be involved in the writing and assessing of manuscripts. If the manuscript was a good one, we would recommend its publication with various publishing houses. It was a foregone conclusion that a book from the Literature Bureau was a good one.

Considering that the Rhodesian Literature Bureau was a government institution and its employees were civil servants, 'good' literature was that which occupied itself with peripheral and marginal issues that did not expose Rhodesia and its policies as racist and exploitative.

The use of the word good in any society or context is relative because literature does not serve the interests of all the people at all times. It either is good because it facilitates the entrenchment of oppression and, the obnoxious 'fear of freedom'. It can be good because it whets a people's consciousness and increases their ability to be critical and creative thereby enjoining 'the practice of freedom'. At the same time, there is also the danger of literature being used as a propaganda tool. The emphasis on good literature was itself one of the subtle mechanisms of patronising creativity. Usually such patronage served the interests of the reasons for the setting up of the Literature Bureau than the writers who were the producers of the works.

While the interviewed Rhodesian Literature Bureau officials consistently denied that the organisation was a censorship board, it nonetheless had a big influence in the direction that fiction writing assumed in the colonial period as well as after independence. Chitsike brings out the official view of such authorities in an interview with the researcher:

That is what makes me angry. It was never a censorship board. At no time would we have a written statement that if you write politics, your books would be banned straight away...There was no directive from

government that do not publish political books. It was only that people feared the unknown and also the fact that a white man headed the Bureau.

While Chitsike's disenchantment with scholars and writers who accuse the Literature Bureau for censoring their works is understandable, the fact remains that the establishment of the Bureau was purely for political and ideological reasons. In as much as the Rhodesia Literature Bureau might not have directly censored works, its role was clearly ambivalent. Part of this ambivalence is reflected in the manner in which Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956), the first published Shona novel, was dealt with by the Rhodesia Literature Bureau. In an interview with the researcher Chitsike revealed that:

His [Mutswairo's] book was banned when it had been published by the Bureau. The banning was lifted. It was only allowed to be published by removing the poem. If you remove the poem, the book was intact....

The poem in this novel was strategic as an instrument for nationalist mobilisation since it made appeals to the combative and militant legend of Nehanda to intervene. Nehanda is a Shona legend who is one of the architects of *chimurenga* wars against British colonial settlerism in Zimbabwe. Its removal diluted the nationalist orientation of the work.

Since this was the first Shona novel to be published, we surmise that the censoring of the work must have sent a powerful message to would be writers. It contributed towards the institutionalisation of various forms of censorship. The notable ones include patronage as censorship, self-censorship / internalised censorship as well as direct censorship. These forms of censorship have been given a comprehensive discussion in Chiwome (2002). Similarly, in a context marked by deprivation triggered by colonialism, most aspiring writers came from humble backgrounds. They could not raise funds to publish with independent publishing houses. Independent publishing houses were also not willing to publish literature written in indigenous languages.

The Rhodesia Literature Bureau's standards were narrow and restricting. They tended to truncate writers' options instead of diversifying them. Diversification is the hallmark of creativity. Instead of using fiction creatively, writers ended up preaching

and engaging in narrow moralising. Whether there is any paradigm shift in Ndebele and Shona fiction published after the attainment of independence in 1980 under the tutelage of the succeeding organisation, the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau, is worth exploring in the subsequent chapters.

Critics like Kahari (1997) have acknowledged the role played by the Literature Bureau in the quantitative growth of Ndebele and Shona literature before and after independence in 1980. For instance, Kahari (1997: 1) provides a cumulative picture of the body of Shona narratives promoted by the Literature Bureau in association with independent publishing houses since 1956. 1956 marks the birth of the first Shona novel, *Feso*.

1956 - 1960	5
1961 – 1970	14
1971 – 1980	42
1981 - 1990	61
1991 - 1996	18

Similar statistics are to be found in Wild (1992a: 107) who traces the quantitative growth of Shona and Ndebele fiction since the introduction of the Literature Bureau sponsored competitions in 1956:

<b>Years of participation</b>	<b>Number of writers</b>
1956 – 59	5
1960 – 64	5
1965 – 69	10
1970 – 74	19
1975 – 79	24
1980 – 84	30
1986 – 87	4

However, critics like Chiwome (2002) and Ndlovu (2001) mainly focus on the impact that the Literature Bureau had on the qualitative development of the Shona and Ndebele novel, respectively. For instance, Ndlovu, as already underlined, reiterates

the misalignment between colonial fiction and social realities of the Ndebele people thus:

*Ngakho-ke kungacina kuthiwa abeRhodesia Literature Bureau bacina besenza ukuthi abalobi laba bacine bengalethi ubudlelwano obumele bubekhona phakathi kwemibhalo yokuzibumbela lempilo kazulu okuyiyo abathatha khona lezo ndaba ababhala ngazo (2001: 116).*

Therefore, it can be inferred that the Literature Bureau influenced the writers not to depict the relationship that is supposed to be found between creative literary works and people's way of life – which is the essence of writing in the first place.

The Rhodesian Literature Bureau sponsored competitions in order to encourage writers to write in Ndebele and Shona. When asked by the researcher to comment on the criteria used in coming up with competition themes, Lordwell Manyika, who also had a stint with the Literature Bureau in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe said:

Competition themes were decided upon within the Bureau. The approach really was to choose the most interesting and most popular subject at the time. It does not pay to surprise the writer or make him write on a subject which the institution itself wants. Themes would be social, economic or political [and would be accompanied with terms of reference].

The unsaid position therefore seems to be that any writer who wished to be published had to religiously adhere to those terms, which, more often than not, were in conflict with the writers and the interests of the majority readers who are the legitimate beneficiaries of art. Reference to 'most popular' is similar to the use of the word 'good' as discussed earlier in this chapter. While competitions were good for increasing the number of fictional works in Shona and Ndebele, the possibility exists that they irredeemably stultified creativity and innovation, very important attributes in literature. This estimation is advanced because, argumentatively, once fiction production is determined by a competition, it departs from the age-old role of serving the people as it pays homage to the terms of the competition. It also makes its role ambivalent. The competition becomes the major preoccupation and not necessarily the subject matter.

When asked about the value and nature of the Rhodesian Literature Bureau-sponsored competition prizes by the researcher, Manyika said: “Prizes were given to the top 3 winners for each language. Substantial amounts were offered. I do not remember actual values.”

Like most institutions set up and developed by successive Rhodesian governments, such as the army, police, parliament and judiciary among others, the Literature Bureau was inherited intact at independence in 1980. Its operational mandate remained the same. The same people who had served under the Rhodesia Literature Bureau were the ones who now worked for the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau. It still remained a government funded department. In an interview with the researcher, Elvas Mari, a former employee of the Rhodesia and the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau stated that, “an obvious weakness of the Literature Bureau was that it was a government department...the government of the day would not be directly challenged in the stories submitted to the Bureau...writers would attempt to project the picture of the organisation...” Up to this stage, since its conception, underqualified staff manned the Literature Bureau. Chitsike (1989: 13) writes that:

Those who were employed to assess manuscripts in the past had such qualifications as an ‘O’ Level Certificate plus or minus a writing or teaching experience. They lacked and still lack training because there are no staff development strategies in the Bureau up to this day...

In support of the above, Elvas Mari, explained that “there were no major policy shifts”. As was the case in the colonial period, for example, the Literature Bureau continued to be headed by a white person, Krog, until Chitsike, a black person took over in 1986.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has provided the general discursive framework which is intended to illuminate the analysis of the actual historical narratives in subsequent chapters. Part of this task has been done by rendering a number of generalisations on the development of fiction in Zimbabwe. These generalisations constitute a vitally important conceptual foundation in the actual analysis of the texts themselves. They illuminate the direction that the study of liberation war narratives assumes in this

research. Of note, is the historical background to Zimbabwean literature in general and liberation war fiction in particular. The Literature Bureau and other editorial interventions have played an important role in the development of fiction. It becomes the task of the subsequent chapters to evaluate the extent of the impact. Since fiction develops against the background of such factors, the chapter has shown the necessity of developing a framework of analysis in order to avoid the risk of accepting any work that mentions the war of liberation as historical fiction. It is this framework, together with a host of other generalisations in this chapter that inform the study of fictional works in Ndebele, Shona and English.

## CHAPTER 3

### MACRO AND MICRO REASONS FOR JOINING THE LIBERATION WAR

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a framework for the study of historical fiction on the Zimbabwean war of liberation. It provided generalisations and hypotheses which now must be interweaved with, and at the same time proved or refuted in the study of the actual historical narratives. In this regard, this chapter begins by examining the macro or national and micro or individual factors which engineered historical agency pertaining to Zimbabwe's war of liberation. It proceeds from the premise that the intensification of the nationalist cause and the increasing obduracy of the Smith led Rhodesian government in perpetuating the place of Africans as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Baldwin, 1995:40) meant that the experiential landscape of the entire African population needed to be radically transformed. From the 1960s onwards, nationalist parties and their armies vacillated between a number of military operations ranging from 'sporadic sabotage' attacks, full throttle guerrilla warfare and 'fully militarised and mechanised warfare'. On the other hand, the Rhodesian forces also responded with brutal and counter-insurgent military operations that left civilian populations sandwiched between the hammer and anvil. It also introduced stiff and punitive laws to curtail guerrilla infiltration into the country and to discourage the population's support of their sons and daughters. One such piece of legislation was the Emergency Powers Act and the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act:

The Emergency and the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, both originally passed in 1960, formed the basis of the security legislation in Rhodesia. The main objective of the latter legislation was to stamp out guerrilla activity, thus guerrillas entering Rhodesia were charged with murder, commission of acts of terrorism and sabotage, and unlawful possession of arms, while the local population could be arrested on charges of recruiting or participating in guerrilla training, or for failing to report the presence of guerrillas and harbouring, assisting and concealing them (Auret, 1992: 63).

The civilian population provided the turf on which the contending forces canvassed for political legitimacy in an attempt to guarantee their survival and success. Any

pretensions towards neutrality and non-involvement in such a scenario were a farce. It is against this background that civilians found themselves in a situation in which they had to take sides as a survival strategy – voluntarily or involuntarily. Consequently, they became active participants in direct and indirect military aggression for or against the oppressor, who was responsible for the very system that deformed their humanity.

Interestingly, fiction writers in all languages delve into the legion of factors that prompted both men and women to either cross into neighbouring countries or simply become involved with the liberation war. These factors, which are macro / national and micro / individual, have been corroborated by history. Whether writing in the early 1980s, late 1980s or 1990s and beyond, fiction writers on the liberation war pay attention to factors that prompted people to fight. It is this awareness which links men and women's contributions to the struggle for liberation to specific causes rather than to an avalanche of arbitrary and abstract specifications which is the subject of the chapter. For instance, as Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 26) clarifies:

The methods of recruiting young men and women may have been similar and there may have been many common elements in the factors that drove both sexes into neighbouring countries. These factors, however, translated themselves into different experiences for young men and women – other variants being age, the economic backgrounds of the recruits as well as their level of education.

In the light of the above submission, the chapter provides explanatory evidence to sustain and corroborate the contention that, liberation war fiction gives eminence to an assortment of converging and contrasting versions and visions on the macro and micro historical factors that galvanised and marshalled the Zimbabwean progeny, both male and female, into active association with the liberation war. The convergences and contrasts are elaborately discernible in liberation war historical fiction across languages published in the early 1980s, late 1980s and 1990s and beyond. This is particularly the case in the manner in which different writers discuss the macro factors which are nationalist or national in orientation and the micro factors which are linked to personal or individual reasons. Liberation war historical novels analysed in this chapter in order to illuminate the above hypothesis are Sigogo's *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), Makata's *Gona reChimurenga* (1982),



Sungano's *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), Moyo's *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) and *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia Tungamirai* (2003), Tizora's *Crossroads* (1985), Chipamaunga's *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983), Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985), Musengezi's *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey* (1980), Hleza's *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992), Ndlovu's *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990), Choto's *Vavairo* (1990), Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) and Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* (1989).

Regardless of the converging perspectives on the factors that prompted people into the liberation war, there is a clarion pattern to the effect that; in terms of degree, fiction in the early 1980s, a time when Zimbabwe attained political independence, for the most part exudes a preponderate commitment towards articulating the macro or nationalist inclined factors. This is particularly the case with fiction that discusses the combatants' experiences. In this category, the micro causes, though present, are remarkably subsumed under the macro ones. At the same time, the liberation war in these novels is seen from a nationalist vantage point glorifying the guerrillas. On the other hand, and also in terms of degree, fiction in the late 1980s and beyond, particularly fiction in English tends to canvass and popularise the micro or individual factors. Shona and Ndebele fiction continues to vacillate between the general and the particular, a corollary of its association with the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau which was in charge of editorial processes in literature in indigenous languages. This literature shows the extent to which creative patterns get fossilised with very subdued space for innovation. Despite this realisation, the general or macro causes seem to be overshadowed by an avowed predilection for the micro or individual factors.

The above scenario where fictional images aimed at advancing targeted consciousness on why people joined the liberation war is somewhat evidently subservient to the ideology and politics of the time. Ngugi (1981: 7) explains the link between fiction and history or ideology in the following words:

The product of a writer's pen...reflects reality...in a certain way toward certain goals and a set of values, consciously or unconsciously held by him. A nation's literature...is then not only a reflection of that people's collective experience, but also embodies that community's way of looking at the world and its place in the making of that world.

### 3.2 MACRO OR NATIONAL FACTORS FOR JOINING THE LIBERATION WAR

In this discussion, macro historical or national factors are those factors which are experienced by the entire population and tend to have a bearing on the lives of the majority. In other words, these factors are realised nationally and collectively felt or shared. In discussing these factors, the study not only assesses their authenticity, but most significantly links them to the discourse on nation and nationalism in Zimbabwe because as Ranger (2005: 217) argues, “nationalism as a movement, or set of movements, and as an ideology, remains central to contemporary Zimbabwe and still requires a great deal of rigorous historical questioning.” In the words of Bhabha (1990: 1), a nation is ‘a symbolic force’ which “emerges as a powerful historical idea.” In Zimbabwe today, the liberation war significantly represents that ‘powerful historical idea’ that defines nation.

At the same time, the concepts of nation and nationalism in Zimbabwe have been interpreted differently at different times and by different demographic categories. The contesting interpretations revolve around the discourse on liberation war history. On the above, we share the same views with Primorac (2006: 3) who summarises the concern of her critical work as follows:

*The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* subscribes to the notion that there are different *kinds* of nationalism, i.e. that [t]he concept of the nation has a different content according to the way in which the social forces are aligned at any particular moment and the nature of the prevailing ideologies.

In the early 1980s, the abundance of fictional images depicting macro factors, particularly land, patriotic consciousness, segregation, poor amenities for Africans and Rhodesian brutality against the defenseless black population and all this inspiring a selfless laying down of one’s life in the service of justice and freedom, reflects the impact of the nationalist and socialist ideologies of the time. During this period, the writers’ attitude towards nation and nationalism is couched in celebratory terms and what Ranger (2004: 215) calls ‘patriotic history’ which ‘resents disloyal questions’. Ranger’s (2004) explanation of ‘patriotic history’ is that:

Patriotic history is intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition. It is an attempt to reach out to 'youth' over the heads of their parents and teachers, all of whom are said to have forgotten or betrayed revolutionary values. It repudiates academic historiography with its attempts to complicate and question. At the same time, it confronts Western 'bogus imperialism' which it depicts as a denial of the concrete history of global oppression. 'Patriotic history' is propagated at many levels – on television and in the state-controlled press; in youth militia camps; in new school history courses and textbooks; in books written by cabinet ministers; in speeches by Robert Mugabe and in [some works of fiction].

The spirit of the group and the collective based on nationalist consciousness seems to inform political thought as well as fiction writing.

Generally, the early 1980s was a period of independence euphoria and the attempt by the ruling elite to consolidate its power. As Moyo (1993: 7) says:

ZANU (PF) declared 1981 as 'the year of the consolidation of people's power' which, according to the President of ZANU (PF), Robert Mugabe, impelled the ruling party to 'adopt a more comprehensive and a more generous view of Government...' The need for such a comprehensive view of government was interpreted by the ZANU (PF) leadership and supporters to mean the establishment of a one-party state.

It was also in vogue to see the liberation war as a people's collective history of struggle against varying forms of oppression, particularly white racist rule which manifested itself through acts of law such as The Land Apportionment Act and the Native Land Husbandry Act which pauperised Africans by expropriating their only source of authentic livelihood – the land.

Once dispossessed of their land, Africans became second class citizens with no option but to work under slavish conditions on European owned farms, mines and factories. Consequently, nationalist or macro factors in early 1980s historical fiction become symbolic official celebrations of the triumphant nationalist ideology as the driving engine behind the struggle for the birth of the new nation. They underline the new nation's search for national symbols and its attempt to establish and discursively construct a purely national and shared identity all vital in nourishing and sustaining political legitimacy.

Historical fiction in the early years of independence tends to underscore the traditional and official conception of nationalism or 'patriotic nationalism' by merely pontificating about the collective love of nation, dedication, self-sacrifice, loyalty and patriotism. Discursively, it builds a case for so-called great nation builders whose penchant for national liberation has been mythicised and officially presented as unparalleled. Among such great nation builders are the nationalist leaders who have conferred upon themselves inimitable and ostentatious appellations as founders, souls and fathers of modern Zimbabwe, titles which give them exclusive rights over the nation-state and its resources while tending to exclude 'others'.

### **3.2.1 The nationalist ideology and mass mobilisation: fighting for indigenous resources and patriotic consciousness**

Dekker, Malova and Hoogendoorn (2003: 345) have this to say about nationalism in general:

The concept "nationalism" has different meanings relating to various levels of analysis: nationalism as an ideology, a movement, the process of "nation" and "nation-state" building, and an individual's orientation.

The five descriptors, operationalisations and conceptualisations of the term nationalism apply to this study albeit with some modifications. In the context of the war of liberation, nationalism was one of the ideological strategies and ideas for stirring active political consciousness in the struggle against colonial oppression. In this regard, the marketplace view of nationalism makes it essentially an anti-colonial ideology. It has continued to be viewed thus in elite circles (ZANU [PF] leadership) in Zimbabwe. According to Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, (2000: 6) "nationalism embodied the ideas of freedom, democracy, equality and restoration of the land to the people of Zimbabwe". In Zimbabwean liberation war history, nationalism further needs to be understood from two angles, both complementary. First nationalism arises from people's identification and affirmation of their indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. In this context, it becomes an innate feeling that is not superimposed on a people from above. People themselves embody, construct, direct and provide the blazing embers for its manifestation. Second, it gained its impetus from a cocktail of foreign ideologies including Marxism and socialism. This then

implies that in the Zimbabwe war of liberation, nationalism was a combination of both indigenous and external values that were seen as progressive. As already hinted, it should be underscored that in Zimbabwe nationalism has defiantly continued to retain the topicality it had in the pre-independence era.

It is against the background of the rise of mass nationalism in the 1950s that the first Shona and Ndebele fiction writers like Mutswairo in *Feso* (1956) and Sithole in *Umvukela WaMaNdebele* (1956) writing in the late 1950s invested their creative energies in an attempt to mobilise popular consciousness on the basis of people's past achievements, their strengths and weaknesses. *Feso* (1956) and *Umvukela WaMaNdebele* (1956) which are not liberation war novels are only discussed to provide background information on the rise of Zimbabwean nationalism in general, and the subsequent discussion on the nationalist orientation of liberation war novels such as *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986) and *Gona reChimurenga* (1982) among others. Writing on the sudden revival of past tendencies, particularly in the 1950s, Shamuyarira (quoted in McLaughlin 1996: 53) explains:

Past heritage was revived through prayers and traditional singing with African instruments, ancestral spirits were evoked to guide and lead the new nation. Christian civilisation took a backseat, and new forms of worship, and new attitudes were thrust forward dramatically.

As already indicated, fiction, too, looked back. The message in the works of fiction was that the pre-colonial African experience was characterised by civilised life whose defining elements were abundance, egalitarianism and heroic and collective defiance against any form of oppression. The basis for such an agenda of life was the ownership of land and other natural resources. Ownership of land made the Ndebele and Shona people subjects and not objects to be acted upon. It empowered them with a firm understanding that they were creators while simultaneously training them to 'abandon the idea of Africans as those who are only acted upon'. It facilitated agency and other transcendental endeavours, which are crucial for survival, creation and regeneration.

In another novel written in the 1950s titled *Murambiwa Goredema* (1959), Mutswairo, the author, laments the golden age the Shona people had before their lands were confiscated and with that their civilisation and organised life disrupted. By remapping

the contours of African memory, Mutswairo becomes anti-colonial and nationalist in his approach. Considering the period when the novel was published, a period which marked the rise of mass African nationalism, he is one of the few intellectual voices who clearly exposed the subversive impact of the so-called colonial civilisation. Of course his work partly suffers from some form of 'schizophrenic ambivalence' or 'psychic duality', an aspect typical of most African intellectuals of the time. His reflections on the lived experiences of the Chiweshe people are an attack on colonialism whose purported mission was to introduce and preserve civilisation. Chiweshe is one of the rural places in Zimbabwe which later had bitter experiences of the war as the villagers were forced into protected villages. These were meant to separate villagers from guerrillas and make it impossible for guerrillas to survive without material support.

In the same vein, fiction writers of the 1950s together with emerging political formations, appealed to Shona and Ndebele legends whose heroic exploits in the 1890s struggles against settlers were still fresh in the minds of the majority. The appeal to the past and its symbols of resistance became one way of rediscovering and restoring people's identity and dignity which had been subverted by decades of oppression. Displaced peasants had also begun protesting against the racist policies of Rhodesia. Both the Shona and Ndebele had lost their fertile lands and condemned to unproductive and overcrowded reserves as Ranger (1985: 137) explains; "...Shona speaking peasants were left in a state of increasing resentment and awareness...In the 1950s, however, a sense of Shona cultural identity belatedly emerged and this interacted with yet more intense peasant grievance to give them the main impetus to African nationalism." Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000: 86) provide an account of the Ndebele people's desires in Lupane and Nkayi showing an acute awareness of their conditions of deprivation and the aim of their struggle.

They had been condemned to very dense forests where human survival was impossible. In this regard:

Their aim was to replace what was from their point of view a bad state – one which removed people from a viable environment and dumped them in wild forests, one which commanded and demanded – by what

they dreamt of as a good state, which would cease discrimination, provide services, restore markets and be accountable to them as citizens.

African nationalist political formations such as the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress (SRANC), National Democratic Party (NDP) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) became actively involved in rallying people together. According to Dabengwa (1995: 25) one of the active members in the rise of nationalist politics in the colonial era, and a prominent member of the Ndebele as well as former Minister of Home Affairs,

both these organizations appealed to, and had membership across, ethnic and tribal groupings throughout the country. At that time the language one spoke did not matter: people made a conscious effort to understand languages other than their mother-tongue. The unity of the people against settler rule was taken for granted. Everybody was referred to as 'mwana wevhu' ('son of the soil'). This Shona phrase was untranslated because its meaning was comprehensible to all.

In the context of mass mobilisation, the nationalist ideology or movement supposedly provided a seamless rallying point in which all the people combined their energies to come to the defence of their nation. All black people were united by their collective hatred of the colonial master and the need to reclaim their heritage. In the words of Hoffer (1955: 129), this collective defiance against the white minority was precipitated by such colour-conscious realisations like "we are united by hating in common and being hated in common." The assumption was that all black people were victims of racialism and other debilitating Rhodesian machinations.

Consequently, most liberation war fiction writers writing in the early years of independence when the mood is that of nationalist euphoria generate images where people went to war because of the love of their nation as well as the love of liberation. Primorac (2006: 75) refers to these early war novels as the "Zimbabwean official narrative [and the] 'patriotic' master fiction of the [second chimurenga]." The fiction generalises and nationalises historical and moral agency. The characters in the fiction symbolise patriotic heroes who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of Zimbabwe. One of the macro or national factors, as previously noted, is presented as land. By depicting land as a critical resource of mass mobilisation, fiction generates images that are consistent with historical accounts on the liberation war. Every

Zimbabwean had been subversively affected by the Land Apportionment Act, which according to Moyana (2002: 54) “was not only the cornerstone of white economic security but also the cornerstone of all racism; socially, politically and economically. For this reason, it was the best agent for stimulating the nationalist impulse.” Moyana (2002: 92) also adds that:

Between 1945 and 1965 the land question continued to dominate all issues in Rhodesian politics. During this period Africans despaired of having their land grievances redressed and soon began to organize political parties intended to remove the settler government. Political independence became the ultimate goal of the new politics. The African leadership promised to re-allocate the land as a matter of top priority as soon as the achievement of political independence became a reality. To these promises, the African masses listened with enthusiasm.

Reference to ‘Africans’, ‘masses’ and ‘independence’ in Moyana’s account presents land as a macro and national historical factor which necessitated group effort. As a macro historical resource, land has continued to be a rallying point for resuscitating and remembering and re-membering the official nationalist ideology in post-independence Zimbabwe, particularly in times when it is threatened by new political currents. As Kriger (2003: 195) observes:

In the June 2000 parliamentary election campaign, ZANU (PF) again targeted its violence and intimidation on the rural majority. White farmers, African farm workers...all became prime targets because they were suspected to be MDC supporters...Invasions of the white-owned commercial farms began soon after a referendum in early February 2000, in which 55 percent of those who voted...rejected the government’s proposed constitution. Led by war veterans, land invasions were a deliberate attempt to place intimidating party campaigners close to their rural targets.

Liberation war fiction writers in the early 1980s and partly in the late 1980s and 1990s onwards show that land was a critical factor in mobilising for military aggression. It served as a rallying point regardless of class, ethnic affiliation and geography. Sigogo (1986), a Ndebele writer, depicts patriotic consciousness and sacrifice for the nation as part of the main factors that prompted people to take up arms. Land is one resource that provided a platform for patriotic commitment and collective historical agency. Sigogo’s novel, *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986) (I



was influenced by the political situation), is “inspired by one serious dimension of the ZAPU side of the war, namely, its emphasis on recruitment of personnel in preparation for a conventional war against colonialism” (Chiwome and Mguni, 2003: 139). It chronicles how the advent of the war impacts on two lovers’ personal plans. Lisho is a teacher at Wanezi and Phikezelwe, the girlfriend, works in a bank in Bulawayo and is actively involved in recruiting for ZAPU and ZIPRA. She is an active member of the ZAPU Youth League, being its chairperson.

Unlike his girlfriend who can be said to be a prism through which part of the ZAPU political operations can be seen, Lisho seems to be ignorant of the evils of the colonial system and is mainly preoccupied with his personal ambitions. As the war intensifies, Lisho takes up a job in Bulawayo despite protests from his lover, Phikezelwe, and brother, Ntakana. When he is called up for military service under the Rhodesian forces, his lover abandons him and their affair collapses. Phikezelwe escapes from prison after she had been captured due to her political role and she goes to train as a guerrilla fighter. The two are therefore fighting on different sides. Eventually, Lisho decides to join the guerrillas. At this point, it should be underlined that Phikezelwe’s political role in urban Bulawayo finds support from historians and scholars who contend that ZAPU mainly though not exclusively recruited from a proletarian background. Summarising Brickhill’s views, Bhebe and Ranger (1995a: 7) note that he says, “ZIPRA, however, could be described as proletarian in the sense that a high proportion of its recruits came directly from waged jobs in towns or in industry.” Correspondingly,

....60 per cent of ZIPRA’s recruits reported that they had been members of functioning branches of the ZAPU Youth League before they left the country to join the armed struggle. The largest proportion of these were recruited in the towns and cities, and it was in these urban environments that the clandestine structures of the party survived most effectively (Brickhill, 1995a: 67).

During a discussion between the two lovers in which their views are diametrically variant, Phikezelwe says:

*Mina, Thobela, angikwesabi ukubotshelwa ukufuna ilizwe lethu. Ngitsho lakho ukulifela mina angikwesabi. Kimi kungcono lokho kulokuthi ngiphilele ukuba yinja lesigqili sabanye abantu! (73).*

As for me, Thobela, I am not afraid to be persecuted for wanting our country. I am not even scared to die for it. To me that is even way better than living as other people's dog and slave.

The unmistakable current of anger in Phikezelwe's voice reminisces the forced movement of the Ndebele people into the Gwaai and Shangani reserves which were not suitable for human habitation. These reserves were dry and tsetse infested areas which were designated for Africans in order to pave way for European farms. Werbner (1991: 9) aptly calls such new 'homes' for African people in Matebeleland "remote land [and] even more arid and agriculturally risky zone." In the context of nationalist history, Phikezelwe becomes a character who embodies the totality of the history of oppression and the subsequent victory Africans attained after a protracted struggle nourished by self-sacrifices. She is also a character whose historicity is validated by historical signalisations.

Again, the Zimbabwe-is-larger-than-life current is unmistakeable. It certainly reverberates through the character's revelation of her determination to sacrifice her life for the nation. Historical agency is therefore nationalised. It is this political philosophy that nourishes official or so-called patriotic nationalist thinking. A nuanced reading of such submissions in the context of contemporary Zimbabwean politics may lead readers to come to the conclusion that, such individuals who feel that they went to war because they loved Zimbabwe more than anything else are likely to find it difficult to countenance any other perspective towards nation and nationalism. While the image projected in *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986) is supported by history, the same attitude leads to straitjacketed thinking on history and national politics.

Phikezelwe's determination to sacrifice for the national cause typifies the patriotic version of history and the nationalist disposition of some Zimbabweans who had been marginalised by colonialism. At the same time, she typifies the nationalist figures in contemporary Zimbabwe who have personified nationalism and nation by offering and encouraging, even through violence, what Ranger (2004) calls 'patriotic history'. She is selfless unlike her lover, an average African intellectual of the time who is obsessed with personal goals and plans such as work and marriage. As a civil servant working for a government department, the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau,

Sigogo's profession could also have influenced the portrayal of images of sacrifice that are consistent with the ruling elite's version of the liberation war. Violence against opposition parties since the attainment of independence in 1980 is meant to protect this elite or monolithic view of 'patriotic history.' For instance, in the parliamentary elections of 2000 as well as the presidential elections of 2002 when ZANU PF-sponsored war veterans unleashed violence on white-owned farms and the nation in general:

ZANU-PF was cast the sole representative of the liberation movement and African authenticity, while the MDC 'had abolished history'...The MDC's leader Morgan Tsvangirai was attacked for not having contributed anything to Zimbabwe's history, and indeed not understanding what it was (Alexander, 2006: 114).

Self-sacrifices triggered by an acute awareness of the injustice of colonial rule, especially land, are also shown in Nyamfukudza's novel, *The Non-Believer's Journey* (1980). Nyamfukudza (1980) clearly shows the Rhodesian segregatory policies by presenting a graphic picture of the change in the landscape as one heads from the then Salisbury to Mutoko, a rural area. While the writer does not provide evidence of characters who leave for the neighbouring countries because of land, he shows that deprivation of land was a touchy issue. In the novel, the protagonist's journey to Mutoko, which takes him through verdant white commercial farms and the desolate African reserves, is meant to highlight the Rhodesian segregatory policies and how they undermined black existence. All the adult passengers on the bus express their disenchantment with the lopsided state of affairs. It is such subversive policies that made some people join the struggle. Despite the fact that Sam is a detached intellectual, he cannot avoid noticing the injustice done to his people. The writer describes his reaction as follows:

He wanted to stand up and start lecturing them about the Land Tenure Act and the absurd injustice of granting six million black people half the land and the other half to two hundred thousand whites (Nyamfukudza, 1980:26).

Rhodesian injustice in land distribution undermined the dignity of African manhood and womanhood. It degraded African people by condemning them down the precipice of poverty.

Other historians such as Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000) are more specific about the gravity of the land issue as a rallying point for nationalist action in areas of Matebeleland (which Sigogo writes about). Moyana (2002: 46) observes that “one aim of the Land Apportionment Act was clearly to create such poverty among the African population...The pauperization of the African was a necessary prelude to his conversion into a “working hand” to work the lands and mines of the ruling class. To be a peasant is bad enough, but to be a landless peasant is destiny to destruction.”

Mabhunu, a character in Makata’s Shona novel, *Gona reChimurenga* (1982) (The champion of the liberation war) is a super-patriot who sacrifices his life for the liberation of the nation and its resources. However, like the majority of war fiction writers in Shona and Ndebele, the author vacillates between the macro/ national and micro/ individual factors. Nonetheless, it is the national causes that are more pronounced and which also become the avenue through which the author conceptualises the liberation war. The story centres on the indomitable nature of three guerrillas whose exploits lead to the liberation of masses in reserves like Murehwa and Macheke. It deifies the gun as the ultimate liberator from the tentacles of colonialism. Mabhunu, the central character, advertises his patriotism as:

*Ndakange ndazvipira kufa, kufira nyika, kufira upfumi hwayo, kudzora zvese zvakapambwa...* (Makata, 1982:20)

I had offered to die, to die for the country, its wealth as well as recovering everything that had been taken by force.

The commitment and patriotic tenor expressed here underlines the nationalist temperament which puts the nation first. Makata’s sentiments on the macro factors were echoed by a former guerrilla fighter interviewed by the researcher in Mhondoro, a rural area situated a few hundred kilometers south west of Harare, the capital city. He said: “I went to war in 1975. The major aim for going was to liberate ourselves from the oppression we suffered at the hands of whites.” At the same time, the commitment to sacrifice for the nation based on the volition to regain national wealth and resources obtains in Muzenda’s submission that: “Our major grievance was land...In our prayers we would therefore say, “*Fuma yenyika nhasi vakatora vakagovana paukama hwavo vepfumo jena*” (Our country’s riches the invaders took away and shared amongst themselves)” (Bhebe, 2004: 47).

As already underscored, this vision largely characterised part of the celebratory literature of the early 1980s. Writers, being the sensitive minds of their time, advance a creative consciousness that heightened nationalist sentiments. The message was that the new nation was born against the background of a shared commitment, shared history, shared vision and national agenda. This official nationalist rhetoric “is one of their [leaders] tools, supporting and strengthening the belief in the existence of “one nation” with a common origin, ancestry, consanguinity, and the perspective of “one nation, one state”” (Dekker, Malova and Hoogendoorn, 2003: 351).

It is also this sacrificial and collective awareness that characterises Phikezelwe’s vision in the context of Rhodesian politics. Phikezelwe and Mabhunu, therefore, become political symbols that radiate and disseminate nationalist patriotic consciousness. They transcend what is often seen as narrow obsession with personal interests. But such a macro approach to history in which the few patriotic and great figures fought and sacrificed for the rest of the citizens leads to the narrowing and closure of the political space. It helps an otherwise repressive system to retain legitimacy while marginalising other progressive forces that may not have ‘patriotic history’.

Nationalist patriotic consciousness is the same philosophy advanced in Moyo’s novel, *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) in which Kudzai, the central character and heroine, sacrifices her family for the nation. *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) focuses on the family of Kudzai and her husband, Andrew Mukombachuru. Kudzai lives and works in the rural areas as a nurse and is a staunch supporter of the guerrillas. Her husband who lives in Harare is one of the leaders of an urban-based party that backs the Rhodesian government. As a result of their different political persuasions, the two clash and Kudzai leaves for Mozambique. The novel ends with a landslide victory for Kudzai’s party (ZANU PF) and the two reconcile as husband and wife.

In the novel, Kudzai’s love for the nation is greater than that for her family. She even leaves behind her infant son so that she can take up arms to liberate Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe supersedes the welfare and integrity of her only child and husband. She asks herself rhetoric questions that manifest the depth of her love for the nation. *Asi ndorega kuenda kuhondo kundorwira kusunungura povho yose napamusana*

*pemwana uyu here?* (114) (Shall I not join the war to liberate the majority of our people because of this child). Certainly this attitude makes her a super-citizen and patriotic nationalist. She is different from the rest who have to be liberated by such selfless and patriotic personalities. It is this attitude that seems to inform the Zimbabwean political elite who feel that they liberated the *povho* (majority) and as such they can continue to moralise on them. It is also an attitude that bestows historical and moral agency in the nation on a few citizens. It sets the stage for, and justifies the domination of the majority by the minority. This creative version which typifies most of the early 1980s literary histories can be interpreted as “a ready-made model of...history that is written “from above”, in other words, history that is seen as resulting from the doings of one great leader” (Mensah, 2004: 70 & 77).

After she (Kudzai) has gone, she informs her husband, Andrew, in a letter that, *Ndine rudo rukuru kwauri asi rudo urwu rwatadza kusvika pano rwandiinarwo kuZimbabwe* (I have great love for you but this love has failed to match the love that I have for Zimbabwe). Joining the liberation war “perhaps out of patriotic duty” or the Zimbabwe-is-my-first-priority feeling as is the case with Kudzai also finds support through Sekai, a former combatant and one of the informants quoted in Lyons (2004: 108). She said that “she decided to join the struggle because [she] wanted to liberate Zimbabwe.” Another woman ex-combatant interviewed by Lyons (2004: 108) again said that:

She wanted to liberate the country because the British colonised us, and there were some jobs whites could get. I was eighteen years old when I joined. I had not heard about UDI [Unilateral Declaration of Independence – declared by Ian Smith in 1965] as I was too young. We wanted to liberate Zimbabwe. If you are a boy you can come to liberate Zimbabwe. If you are a girl you can come to liberate Zimbabwe.

Apparently, Kudzai has all the comfort that she needs in life. Her condition is not different from Simon Muzenda, the former vice president of Zimbabwe who is said to have made the “difficult choice of sacrificing a comfortable life and dedicating himself to that struggle for freedom” (Bhebe, 2004: 66).

In the novel, by sacrificing for the ‘*povho*’ (majority) Kudzai becomes a patriot. Such literature becomes a national memorandum conveying the message that it was out of

sheer selflessness that both peasants and youths took an active part in the struggle. While the author depicts the subversive impact of the liberation war on the average Shona family, his vision is directed towards the construction of patriotic heroines. He also advances the former ruling party's (ZANU PF) position on gender where women are said to have played significant roles in the war by fighting alongside their male counterparts. However, history seems to be uncomfortable with this version of ZANLA/ ZANU history as shown in Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000) as well as the Zimbabwe Women Writers anthology titled *Women of Resilience: The Voices of Women Ex-combatants* (2000). For instance, Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 2, 3 and 4) says:

ZANU had enough 'proofs' of female emancipation, upon which it could congratulate itself. The pictures showed women in trousers, marching aggressively with their guns – the living testimonies of the Party's success in a great revolutionary experiment...Many scholars succumbed to these high-sounding declarations and accounts given by ZANU's publicity organs...When researchers have used this propaganda, the resulting histories have sometimes been quite alien from real life experiences of those concerned. Some women written about have not been able to recognise themselves in these rather too scholarly accounts.

The clear message in these novelistic discourses is that the liberation war was fought by patriotic people who were motivated by the love of Zimbabwe. Essentially, such images were meant to recast nationalism in positive terms. They functioned to varnish and camouflage the pitfalls of national consciousness which had threatened to derail the progression of the liberation war. Such pitfalls are manifest in Sithole's idea of 'struggles-within-the-struggle', which is also the title of his book (Sithole, 1999). The new black elite in leadership positions encouraged such an image of the heroic and gallant nationalist history as it could be used in justifying and promulgating 'patriotic history.' It also justified the liberation war as a people's war and the commemoration of 'liberation war' nationalism as the sole legitimate political brand that liberated Zimbabwe from the tentacles of colonialism; and could still lead it till eternity. It would not be a far fetched intellectual assumption to read the sensibility and 'monolithic' view of nationalism propagated through macro factors as the ongoing concretisation of a one-party system. In the words of Primorac and Muponde (2005: xiii) macro causes are part of the "officially-sanctioned national identities" on 'patriotic history'. Evidence in this section shows that Ndebele and Shona historical fiction on

the liberation war share a common ideological vision, particularly as regards 'patriotic nationalism.'

### 3.2.2 Racial segregation

Blacks were discriminated against in every aspect of their lives regardless of age, class, ethnicity and level of education. They were abhorred and peripherised largely because of their blackness. The major areas in which discrimination was rife include education, accommodation, land, employment, transport, social amenities and others. It is against this background that Fanon (1967: 29) explains that:

The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans...the zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity.

Such discrimination dehumanised the Shona and Ndebele people. In the words of Baldwin (1963: 17) the kind of life that black people led in Southern Rhodesia "was intended that you should perish in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go beyond the white man's definitions, by never being allowed to spell your proper name." Such racial discrimination united blacks to fight against the Smith regime. It stirred the nationalist sentiment along racial lines.

In the education sector, there were schools for Europeans and schools for Africans. Conditions in African schools were pathetic. The Rhodesian government did not invest in African education as it left this task to missionaries. The result was an underdeveloped African education system. Sungano's novel, *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) (Kuda in the War) provides a graphic description of racial discrimination at the then University of Rhodesia. His novel is published in association with the Literature Bureau and narrated in the first person narrative mode. It is an account of Kuda Muhondo's experiences at home and abroad. He leaves Zimbabwe for Mozambique where he trains as a guerrilla fighter. He is elevated to the rank of one of the commander posts. At the front he successfully commands his guerrillas until he is seriously injured in one of the contacts. The novel ends when he is in hospital. This is



one of the few Shona novels that discuss liberation war experiences in the rear (Mozambique).

After passing his secondary school studies, Kuda Muhondo is one of the few Africans lucky to get a place at the local university, the University of Rhodesia (now University of Zimbabwe), “in a context where by 1967 80 per cent of Africans never finished more than five years of schooling and only 0.04 per cent of Africans completed a full secondary education” (Kriger, 1992: 71). However, life on the campus is characterised by asphyxiating racial discrimination where white students are accorded a privileged status. White students get more grants than their black counterparts despite the fact that they are doing similar degree programmes. Lecturers, too, do not conceal their resentment of black students. Kuda expresses his exasperation in the following words:

*Zuva rokutanga ndakagumbuka kunzwa mumwe mudzidzisi achiti, 'Ndine urombo kuti vamwe venyu vachange vachikundikana pano apa. Iyi haisi mhosva yavo asi kuti havangambogona ChiRungu sezvo rusiri rurimi rwavo. Pamusoro pezvo zvimwe zvinhu zviriri mumabhuku atichange tichifunda havazvizivi (5).*

I was disappointed on my first day to hear one of the lecturers saying, 'I am sorry to announce that some of you are not going to succeed in their studies. It is not their fault but the reason is that they cannot be competent in English since it is not their language. In addition, some of the issues in the prescribed books are foreign to them.

It is clear that the white man derives his sense of superiority and self-importance from keeping the African in a position of perpetual subordination. His existence is parasitic and he would not survive with a positive image if there were no black people. This is what Ephraim (2003) calls the 'pathology of Eurocentrism'. Black poverty is directly linked to such institutionalised behaviour that thrives on blocking and frustrating African agency.

Such structural and 'criminal' disparities were codified into law under the Rhodesian government. The racism in the education sector as depicted in Sungano's novel, *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) is similar to Martin and Johnson's (1981: 56/8) observation that:

In 1930 education was made compulsory for white children and eight years later this was extended to Asian and coloured children but up until independence in April 1980 the same basic right never included Africans...The Rhodesian Front embarked upon a deliberate policy of emasculating the African education system, enrolment in teacher training declined and budget cutbacks decreased school intakes. Higher school fees introduced in 1964 led to more pupils dropping out because their parents could not afford the fees.

As a literary historian, Sungano, in *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), also draws attention to the striking differences between Mount Pleasant, a suburb then reserved for Europeans, and Mbare, a squalid township for Africans. This comes out when Kuda visits his relatives for a beer drink over the weekend. The drinking places are unhygienic and overcrowded. No one is employed to clean beer mugs and patrons have to do it on their own. Beer drinking places were significant in propping up African consciousness as they provided a platform where oppressed people had an opportunity to express and rejuvenate their collective identity. As a result, Kuda comes to the conclusion that he should join the guerrillas in Mozambique. What is most striking in his decision to join the liberation war is the fact that he is offering to liberate all black people from racial discrimination:

*Mhinduro yakanga yangosara imwe chete yoga, kuenda kuMozambique kundotorawo yangu pfuti. Ndakanga ndafunga zvokutsividza zvese zvandakanga ndaitirwa, zvanga zvaitirwa vabereki uye mutema wose womuZimbabwe (23).*

Only one answer was left, that is, going to Mozambique to get my own gun. I had thought of revenging everything that had been done to me and all injustices perpetrated against my parents and every black Zimbabwean.

He sacrifices his life for the freedom of all black people whose lives were being undermined by discrimination. He is a typical nationalist who is inspired by patriotism.

As already indicated, he is mainly concerned about the condition of all black people and not just himself. The fact that racism was a macro factor is also echoed by a former combatant interviewed by the researcher:

Our parents were treated like animals and they were not addressing the issue of gender equality. This painfully forced us to go to war.

Imagine, they gave their domestic animals good treatment and hospitality than us which forced us to go to war.

Likewise, Phikezelwe in Sigogo's novel, *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986) also chronicles the discriminatory tendencies that made people like her sacrifice their lives. Sigogo says:

*Waqhubeka uPhikezelwe wamlandisela ngokwakusenzakala lapha ayesebenza khona - ukuphakanyiswa kwabelungu ngesikhatshana kodwa yena labanye abamnyama belokhu betshudula ndawonye okweminyaka engaziwayo. Wachaza ngokwakusenzakala emafekithari lakwezinye izindawo. Wangena lasezikolo wamcubungulela ngokwahlukana okwakukhona phakathi kweholo lamatitshala amhlope lamnyama. Wangena emapulazini abamhlophe waqathanisa ukuvunda komhlabathi wakhona letshebetshebe lasezabelweni zabantu abamnyama. Wasebuzake esithi, 'Yikho othi ngiphilele ukukubona ngithule kuze kube laphakade konke Lokhu?' (73)*

Phikezelwe went on to outline to him what happened where she worked – the promotion of white employees within a short period of employment while she and fellow black workers toiled endlessly without any elevation. She went on to lament what happened in factories and other places. She touched on the educational institutions and examined how differently the salaries for black teachers were pegged from those of white teachers. She contrasted the fertility levels of soils in white-owned farms with the sandy soils in the areas reserved for black people, and proceeded to ask, 'Is that then what you ask me to live for, and be mum about it for an eternity?'

Phikezelwe's emotionally charged lecture to her lover clearly outlining the colonial injustices closely resembles what Bhebe (2004: 115) summarises as the content of one of Muzenda's political treatises to youths in Masvingo. As Bhebe explains:

Muzenda instructed his youths and other party activists to educate people on the need to take back their country from the whites. He said people must be reminded of the way their land had been taken by the whites, forcing Africans into barren reserves, how the people were being robbed of their livestock through destocking...For the teachers and the police, the messages harped upon discriminatory conditions of service. White teachers and white police officers got higher salaries than their African co-workers because it was said their needs were less than those of white people.

Again, the rampant racialism in Rhodesia as seen by Phikezelwe also resonates with evidence provided by Davies (1975: 382), especially on differential working conditions. Davies exposes the racism in the teaching profession by explaining that:

In June 1971 a statement on the new salary scales for teachers was issued. These made a distinction between the salaries of standard qualified teachers in the Public Service (the schools directly operated by government which are nearly all for Europeans) and those in the government-aided schools, the United African Teaching Service. As most teachers in government schools are Europeans, and would therefore get higher salaries than their counterparts in the non-government (state-aided) schools...

Talking about disparities in wages between blacks and whites, evidence in Moyana (1988: 35) corresponds with images of segregation in historical fiction under discussion. As Moyana reports; “in the wage structure, the average white wage in 1969 was 1,361[pounds] as against the African wage of 138.” Experiences of racial discrimination in the manufacturing sector and other factories as noted by Phikezelwe above are again consistent with historical evidence. Kriger (1992: 55) observes that:

The manufacturing sector, despite its increasingly important contribution to economic growth from the 1940s, employed only a small proportion of African wage earners. The Europeans had a monopoly of the higher paid, skilled jobs – initially as artisans on the mines, and later in the manufacturing sector too. In the early days of Company rule, European artisans received high wages because their skills were in demand. However, statutory means were introduced in 1934 to guarantee Europeans skilled jobs at high wages and block the entry of Africans into skilled and semi-skilled work.

As Phikezelwe’s testimony above shows, people’s participation in the liberation war was triggered by “low pay, wide pay differentials, systemic obstacles to more skilled employment, and unequal pay when Africans and Europeans did the same jobs and had the same qualifications, embittered Africans against the colonial regime and white employers” (Kriger, 1992: 55). Seen from this angle, racial discrimination became a visceral macro historical resource that mobilised enmasse and conspirito the African progeny to wage a struggle for liberation. Comparatively, *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) and *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), Shona and Ndebele novels, respectively, present shared ideological positions and conceptual attitudes.

Similarly, Hleza's novel, *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) visualises the liberation war through the macro or national factors where racial discrimination was at the centre of prompting people to join the liberation war. The novel, which celebrates the military greatness of the guerrillas, recreates the liberation war in Gwanda south, particularly in Mapate and surrounding areas in Matebeleland. The writer captures in detail the plight of the villagers who suffered imponderable torture at the hands of the Rhodesian forces. Events linked to the abduction of Manama students by ZIPRA guerrillas in the late 1970s are also given extensive descriptive attention in the novel. Manama is one of the oldest Lutheran Church run secondary schools in Matebeleland which was caught up in the politics of ZAPU recruitment strategies. History has it that several school children and members of staff were at one point abducted by ZAPU guerrillas and taken to Botswana. In the novel, some of the youths are said to have joined the liberation war because of discrimination in the education sector and other colonial injustices perpetrated by the Smith led regime:

*Into eliyenzileyo...lina bantwana besikolo seManama ilihlazo lesinengiso esikhulu ebusweni belizwe lonke leRhodesia kunye lakuwo wonke amazwe omhlaba angaphansi kophiko lombuso wabamhlope. Inhlamba le elithuke ngayo uhulumende lisithi abansundu baphethwe kubi emfundweni njalo banyathezelwe ngesifu sensimbi evuthayo kwezombuso Welizwe, lobucuci, lobucindezeli okumele kususwe ngokukhala kohlamvu lombhobho kuyikugolomba okubi kakhulu (11).*

What you have done...children of Manama School, is detestable in the eyes of the entire Rhodesian nation and across the entire British Empire. The vulgarity that you have insulted the government with, claiming that blacks are maltreated in the education sector and are suffering from immense plagues under white rule, and are enduring gross discrimination that can only be dislodged through the barrel of the gun is massive and dangerous provocation.

The novel is published in association with the Literature Bureau. This partly explains why its sensibility is celebratory and nationalist even though it is published in the 1990s. As discussed in chapter two, the Literature Bureau was a government sponsored publishing organisation.

Choto's novel, *Vavairo* (1990) also reveals part of the racist thinking in Rhodesia through an encounter between Tsitsi, one of the female characters in the novel and a white landlady. In this encounter, Tsitsi is almost barred from entering the premises

of her aunt's white employer who stays in Borrowdale despite the fact that it is rather late for her to find alternative accommodation. The white female employer displays her racial hatred of the black people. She says to Tsitsi's aunt: *Imi vanhu vatema hamuna kunaka – ngaaende Kurukisheni kune vamwe venyu* (75) (You black people are not good, - Let your niece go to the townships where your fellow black people live). Even though the author does not directly link this to crossing the border, the statement reveals utter racial hatred which is nourished by a false consciousness of racial superiority. It is this collective hatred of black people which pushes black Zimbabweans to take up arms in most of the early 1980s narratives. The evidence of asphyxiating racism as presented in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) and other historical novels is similar to a real life account given by Desmond Manasa, a domestic worker quoted in (Pape, 1999: 257). He says:

When I was sixteen I went to visit my uncle who was a domestic worker in Greendale in Harare. That was in the early 1970s. When I got inside the gate and started to walk toward his kia, the old white boss came running out. He was screaming. Then he started firing a 22 pistol at me. That's what made me go to Mozambique.

Blacks were disadvantaged because they were considered an inferior race. As a result, they joined the war to put an end to a system that denigrated them. The overarching goal was the liberation of the country and its people from colonial bondage. In most of these novels, racial discrimination becomes a factor that affected the majority of blacks living in Rhodesia. Instead of disarming and arresting African political resistance, it actually fuelled the desire to eradicate it so that black people would regain control of their destiny. As a historian, Kriger (1992: 63) is therefore in agreement with the images in historical fiction when she puts forward the fact that, "racially discriminatory colonial policies were the source of numerous African grievances [which catapulted them into war]."

### **3.2.3 Rhodesian Forces' brutality**

Writers also identify the violence committed by Rhodesian forces as another important factor. They do not mention the violence perpetrated by guerrillas against civilians. The wholesale and indiscriminate destruction of villages and homes left many families vulnerable. The Rhodesian forces had adopted a strategy where they

would brutalise the unarmed peasants as a way of destroying the guerrilla support base. It was also an attempt to turn the peasants and youths; the mainstay of guerrilla warfare against the guerrillas themselves. Nonetheless, it engendered the opposite result as thousands of youths resolved to counter such brutalisation by joining nationalist forces domiciled in neighbouring countries. The Rhodesian security forces were indemnified against such acts of mass murder committed in the name of duty:

Under the terms of the Emergency Powers Act of 1960, a whole series of Emergency Powers regulations were drafted after 1965 to strengthen and supplement existing legislation. The Emergency Powers (Maintenance of Law and Order) Regulations, for example, provided the Government with the power to arrest and detain people without charge and to remove forcibly large communities of people to be resettled in "protected villages". It also sanctioned the destruction of property, clearance of vegetation, the confiscation of livestock and crops, the closure of business and allowed for the imposition of curfews (Auret, 1992: 63).

Ndebele's novel, *Kwakunzima* (1997) aptly captures the impact of the tactics of the Rhodesian system on mass mobilisation and commitment to take up arms.

Through the central character, Dingilizwe, the novel makes it clear that joining the struggle was triggered by such brutality. Dingilizwe resolves to cross into neighbouring Botswana to train as a guerrilla immediately after his parents' home is burned down by Rhodesian forces. Often, such violence led to mass desertions of youths and parents who would cross the borders to train to fight. Historians like Bhebe (1999) have shown that political organisations like ZAPU benefited immensely from the brutal Rhodesian tactics. The brutal counter-measures adopted by the colonial security forces simply drove out young men and women and the net effect of this was that

... the refugee camps in Zambia were soon flooded with young men and women who were simply itching to receive guerrilla training so that they could return home to fight. Indeed at one time in 1977 the Nampundwe reception camp had over 10,000 refugees (Bhebe, 1999: 104).

While Ndebele's novel, *Kwakunzima* (1997) is published in the late 1990s, its discussion of the factors that prompted people to join the liberation war converges with that of the early 1980s.

The above version of Rhodesian brutality is comparable to what obtains in Musengezi's novel, *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) where some unnamed twins whose mother perished in one of the Rhodesian counter-insurgent operations resolve to join the liberation war. Their home is also completely destroyed. This is expressed in the following: "*Mapatya apamba apa vachinzwa firo yaamai vavo, vakabva vashungurudzika zvikuru. Havana kupedza masvondo matatu vari pamusha, vakabva vangoyambuka voenda Mozambique*" (123) (On hearing of the death of their mother, the twins felt very disturbed. They did not last three weeks at home before crossing into neighbouring Mozambique).

As already underlined, while there is a modicum of convergence in terms of visualising the factors that prompted people to go into the war, literature in African languages in the early 1980s and 1990s is largely inclined towards articulating the national causes. The majority of Shona and Ndebele novels written in the first decade of independence 'euphoria' recreate the factors that galvanised men and women into the liberation war from a nationalist vantage point. The nationalist ideology and its appeal to the group serve as the rallying point for the writers' vision of the liberation war. Therefore, the discussion of the factors revolves around mass mobilisation and a pervasive patriotic culture and the need to put an end to suffering. As a result, the resultant image of the liberation war is that of voluntary and patriotic participation to salvage the entire nation. The nation looms larger than individual interests.

### **3.3 MICRO REASONS FOR JOINING THE LIBERATION WAR**

Micro factors are those factors which apply to the individual. They are expressed in historical fiction in both the early 1980s and late 1980s and onwards, even though they are much suppressed in the former period. As in the previous section, the study problematises the discussion of these micro factors, particularly those which appear in historical fiction in the late 1980s and beyond where they seem to be abundant; in fact the only ones. All this is done in the context of the interface of history and fiction.



Historical fiction written in English and published in the late 1980s and partly fiction in Ndebele and Shona published from approximately 1990 onwards largely and exclusively parades images that give voice to micro or individual factors. These emblemise “an alternative historical narrative capable of displacing patriotic history” (Ranger, 2005: 240). Arguably, the stuttering official nationalist narrative is subjected to searching reviews and criticisms. In Zimbabwean liberation war historical fiction of the late 1980s and beyond, group symbolism, which informs the patriotic nationalist discourse as evinced through the prism of macro factors is gradually discarded in favour of individualised discursive consciousness actualised through micro factors. Both macro and micro historical factors are legitimate factors in history but it is the timing that is critical in the context of Zimbabwean contemporary history and politics.

Focus on the individual and the micro factors in general, become a critique of the official nationalist ideology whose powering engine, as previously shown, is group uniformity. It is a subterranean representation of the renegotiation and demolition of hegemonic power particularly in a political context where “all ‘legitimate’ organizations were challenged by ZANU (PF) to join the ruling party as a way of proving their revolutionary and patriotic commitment” (Moyo, 1993: 7). It also marks the radicalisation of alternative and counter voices to insipid ruling elite dogma which sees nationalism as solely realised through uniform group effort, unquestioning patriotic consciousness and self sacrifice. Such counter-discursive perspectives amplify the imagination of multiple versions of nationalisms and ‘multiple versions of [nation] Zimbabwe’ as a counter-hegemony initiative. Fictional images in these works indicate that people did not simply join the liberation war because they were indefatigably patriotic, or because they loved the land and supported national or universal liberation. Images in this fiction point to the fact that many people joined the liberation war for individual reasons other than nationalism; among them evading criminal justice, escaping poverty and squalor at home as well as falling prey to abductions and other coercive apparatus. In this regard, it can then be submitted that:

Literature possesses the capacity to produce certain patterns of meaning and truths of their own which do not necessarily sub-serve claims of conventional history. The histories and truths that literature tells...sometimes...reject the protocols of representation of social processes captured in nationalist romances” (Motsa, 2006: 13).

Many factors are attributable to such a creative modality where micro factors as well as the predisposition to counter 'nationalist romances' are canonised as thesis in historical fiction in the late 1980s and beyond. Among them are the economy and general disillusionment with independence, a shift in political ideologies as well as the passage of time which affords writers both creative and critical space to review, reconfigure and redefine and renegotiate the historical turf outside the context of celebration. Generally, the late 1980s and the 1990s were characterised by growing frustration with the nationalist government. Rampant corruption, unemployment and increasing levels of poverty became the order of the day. Alexander (2006: 108) clearly describes the mood in this period:

The ruling elite's developmental programme, which was an important source of its legitimacy, came under angry criticism, as did its claims to the nationalist mantle. History was a heated focus of debate and challenging official narratives was a powerful means of making claims on the state and politicians.

The introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) worsened the situation as inflation rose putting food prices beyond the reach of many people. This culminated in violent demonstrations against the government which was accused of mismanagement. The former guerrilla fighters also confronted the state accusing it of neglect and in 1997 "they responded to the 'looting' of official war compensation funds by the political elite with protest and riot" (Alexander, 2006:108). In this regard, it can also be argued that liberation war fiction writers begin to use history as opposition.

This version of history is also attributable to the attempt by sidelined demographic categories to invest in the discursive terrain of national historiography by contesting an indigenous imperialism of historical discourse manifest through the narrow appropriation of nationalism and nation by those in political office. Ranger (2005: 219) seems to vindicate this supposition when he writes that, ordinary

people had been denied a history. But you could have too much history as well as too little. You could have too much history if a single, narrow historical narrative gained a monopoly and was endlessly repeated...Now it had become necessary to complicate oversimplification; to offer a plural history.

The critical discourse thus reflects the growing criticism of nationalism in the nation. Looked at from a comparative dimension, this critical perspective largely characterises literature published in English and in the late 1980s onwards. Shona and Ndebele literature, as already said, remains celebratory, or in very few circumstances vacillates between celebration and criticism.

### **3.3.1 Escape, avoiding prosecution and parental retribution**

The Rhodesian system curtailed and transgressed on the human liberties and dignity of African people. Most African institutions that were critical for harmony, balance, and synergic interactive behaviour were either destabilised or completely destroyed. The family was one such institution whose integrity and significance on communal harmony and normal child development was seriously compromised. The collapse and corruption of the family as a fundamentally constituted rallying point and controlling consciousness for the national agenda meant foreign values totally incompatible with the lived experiences of the Ndebele and Shona people crept in. Coupled with this, was the intensification of social, political and economic oppression which led individuals to make unusual choices in a changing and dehumanising context. Some of the choices included what the Rhodesian system called crime as well as other forms of delinquency.

It is against this background that writers view the experiences of young people who eventually decide to join the liberation war. On this aspect, Shona and English historical fiction express comparable positions. Most of the novels show that individuals crossed into neighbouring countries to join guerrilla armies in order to escape prosecution and persecution by the Rhodesian system. Thus the war becomes a safe haven for 'law breakers' who also cannot countenance the wrath of their parents and the Rhodesian system. Such individuals who are forced into the war by 'criminal' reasons and "agendas other than African nationalism and African majority rule" (Kriger, 1992: 170) include Benjamin in Chinodya's novel, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), Donald, Charles and Alexio in Mazorodze's novel, *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) and Mabasa in Musengezi's novel, *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984). Ndebele war fiction does not depict this reality and this represents some of the variations in trends in Zimbabwe's liberation war historical fiction.

While showing that young boys and girls join the war to escape from various crimes committed inside the country, writers in English and Shona do not blame them. They transcend the narrow victim-blame syndrome which ostensibly disempowers and disadvantages the oppressed.

Benjamin in Chinodya's novel, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) grew up in a family harangued by excessive religious dogmatism. His parents' blind following of Christianity denied children freedom of choice, movement and association. They were, therefore, brought up in a superficial world that fundamentally conflicted with the political and social upheavals of the time. Moyana (1996: 46) correctly observes that:

Chinodya reveals what life was like for a boy like Benjamin growing up in the upheavals of this time, yet cushioned from the significance of all these upheavals by a fanatical brand of Christian religion.

Life at home was different from life at school. It is this conflict of interests that leads Benjamin to openly revolt against his parents. When he accidentally amputates his young brother's leg, Peter, through an axe that slips out of his hands as he is cutting firewood, this is attributed to evil resident inside the young man. He is also forced by other township youths to take part in a politically inspired burning of a township beer hall and is subsequently arrested. He is caned and released after a stern caution that he should not participate again in an offence of the same nature. When he goes to Goromonzi High School for secondary education, he is forced to take part in demonstrations against forced conscription of blacks into the Rhodesian army. He is arrested but escapes at the slightest opportunity and goes to Mozambique. Benjamin's experiences reveal that he does not join the liberation war out of love of the nation or patriotic consciousness. He does so for personal and individual safety.

Benjamin is cast in the novel as a fugitive who takes refuge in the liberation war. Increasing focus on the individual dissects the nationalist myths which emphasised the notion of group uniformity. When one looks back, it becomes clear that Benjamin could not possibly fathom the thorough and determined beating he would get from his father. Secondly, he was already on the regime's criminal record of people who had committed politically related crimes. As a result, he escapes from possible

prosecution and persecution. This is consistent with part of the historical evidence as presented by Brickhill (1995: 67) who has it that; “many of them explain that they joined the army because they had to leave the country to avoid arrest for their political activities.” Third, Benjamin has to escape from an environment where everyone accuses him of having single-handedly contributed to the amputation of his brother’s leg. In this regard, the criminalisation of participation in the nationalist cause as depicted in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) is intended to function as a counter voice to the official nationalist narrative where patriotic consciousness is endlessly repeated. It advances a forthright perspective of history as opposition to memory dominion at the hands of a few. It similarly increases the novel’s aptitude to question, rupture, contest and deconstruct official historiography in the Zimbabwean polity.

For that reason, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) “focuses resolutely on the individual and refuses to generalize, thus allowing the individual to become emblematic of the national” (Primorac, 2006: 134). That way, the novel becomes a deconstruction of official hagiographical versions of personal and patriotic sacrifices for the nation and the majority of the people. It dismisses the grand narratives that parade national patriotic consciousness as the only force that galvanised African historical agency. It problematises discourses on nationalism, the uses to which they have been put as well as the interpretation of nation. In this connection, the novel becomes a vigorous contestation of the official version of the nationalist ideology or “nationalist historiography... [by moving] on to pluralist analyses and multiple questions” (Ranger, 2004: 215) and by unmasking the cleavages that characterise popular rhetoric on group homogeneity.

Discourse on national unity has been used as a political tool in the subtle disempowerment of ordinary people who have been encouraged to observe unity on the basis of official sacrifices in the liberation war, regardless of the cost. In this context, those individuals who would dare say something outside the ‘group’ become what the ruling elite circles refer as saboteurs, puppets and sell-outs. While writing about ‘ZANLA’s ideological orientation’ in the 1970s which Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000) argues ‘remained within the confining limits of nationalism’ her views are relevant to contemporary politics in Zimbabwe and the context in which this study examines micro factors. Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 39) writes:

The obsession with articulating a universal nationalist position within the organisation [ZANU PF] stifled debate on other political views. Any issues not immediately identifiable with the conventional struggle (as defined by the nationalist leadership) were [are] viewed as divisive...and...met with repression.

The violent repression of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and its supporters as a counter-voice to official nationalist thinking bears testimony to these assertions. The MDC is the biggest opposition party in recent years in Zimbabwe to challenge ZANU PF rule [official nationalist historiography] since the attainment of political independence in 1980. Primorac (2006: 177) shares almost similar views to the above:

In today's Zimbabwe, the ruling ZANU (PF) is striving to exert control over all aspects of the social production of space: spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces, claiming that this is necessary in order to reclaim and finally decolonise the nation... 'They (ZANU PF) want to create a whole generation that thinks in the same way as (President Robert) Mugabe'.

By shifting focus from the group to the individual, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) evinces that the discourse on nationalism and nation is not only kaleidoscopic, but is far from being commonsensical. Consequently, it cannot merely be imagined on the basis of the collective and the selfless as the sole legitimate conceptual fountains. As shown by Kaarsholm (2005: 4) this observation leads to the realisation that:

While there is no doubt that literature and writers may work to transmit ideology and help keep people's minds in bounds, they are also important in building democratic potentials from below, and in destabilizing powerfully established structures of mental authoritarianism.

The urge to escape from possible prosecution because one has committed a serious crime provides a counter ideological and intellectual framework through which the nationalist discursive narrative is questioned. The questioning amounts to criticism of the ruling nationalist elites who derive their legitimacy from domesticating public memory. In this regard, the emphasis upon the micro factors in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) proffers alternative versions of nationalism and discourse on nation in Zimbabwe. In the process, fiction becomes a

welcome intervention in the debates on nation, narration and national consciousness... [Chinodya's] conscious use of language to destabilize ways of seeing and interpreting a reality that has become commonsensical [historiography is an intellectually satisfying position that] shows that identities are not static...but are constructed as shifting, slippery, embedded in fragile ways within the language of representation (Motsa, 2006: 14/15).

In Mazorodze's novel, *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) three friends also join the liberation war because one of them, Donald, a physically bulldozing and yet psychologically diffident boy, has murdered two people, an old man and her daughter. The gravity of the crime and the concomitant punishment coerces the three to go to Mozambique to join the guerrilla fighters so that the law would not catch up with them. The author explains that:

Donald had nothing on his mind except escape – not even the journey in front of him – he had to get away from the police. He had no company in his heart, only two humanoid creatures helping him escape. He would not hesitate to destroy any one of these creatures if they came between him and his safety. Yet his second greatest worry (the first being safety) was that he had no courage to go anywhere without them – he did not know how to escape (9).

While it is Donald who delivered the murderous blows, Alexio and Charles are overwhelmed by the contagious effect of the serious crime considering the closeness of their relationship. Alexio, for instance, is numbed with self-immolating helplessness in the face of the crime committed by Donald. As the author writes: "He felt himself losing the zeal for life as he saw himself sinking deeper into a very criminal affair in which he had no chance of ever proving himself innocent" (26). The two are literally drawn into the liberation war by the pugnacious Donald and the need to escape from a serious crime.

Evidently, Mazorodze ascribes participation in the liberation war to micro and personal factors. The threesome are victims of juvenility. They are unconsciously propelled into the liberation war by their variant yet complementary youthful traits. It is not out of any conscious preparedness and patriotism and love of the country or its people that they join the liberation war. This speaks to the fact that the majority of fiction writers who publish years after 1980 contest the official view of nationalism and nation by articulating the micro factors, which hitherto had been relatively

relegated to the periphery of the nationalist narrative. The full-spirited abandonment of the macro factors by such fiction writers also becomes a protest against the ruling elite's tendencies to contain historiographical material and truncate the discursive intellectual and political space. Claims to a monolithic national discourse on the liberation war and nation have been used as invidious justifications for a hotchpotch of control mechanisms that have peripherised the majority of Zimbabweans. In this context, nationalism has been used as "a bizarre graft of carefully selected historical incidents and distorted social values intended to justify the policies and actions of those in power. At the same time development [has been] seen in the reductive sense" (quoted from, *Our creative Diversity*. Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, 1995: 94).

Some of the short stories in English published almost two decades after the attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe also privilege the micro causes over the macro ones. For instance, evidence to this effect comes out through Phillibon, a character in Chihota's short story titled 'When the Baobab Gets Fat' in *No More Plastic Balls* (2000). Phillibon is stampeded into the liberation war because of the desire to escape from possible arrest and conviction. It is said he always quarrelled with his employer "about his pay until he disappeared one day after stealing a whole leg of beef. He went to join the liberation struggle" (124). As indicated before, the war becomes a safe zone for people who wanted to avoid jail. This means that people joined the liberation war for reasons other than nationalism. A former guerrilla commander, Keven Masango operating in the Gutu area, south west of Zimbabwe is said to have remarked to one Catholic Sister Josephine "that not all who joined the struggle were good people" (McLaughlin, 1996: 232). Yet the view of history that has been institutionalised in Zimbabwe is that all those who joined the liberation war were patriots.

It can be argued that the contest between macro and micro causes in Zimbabwean liberation war historical fiction can be said to reflect an ongoing contest of ideas and hegemony between the ruling elite and the generality of the citizenry. In this context, therefore, nation and nationalism are vigorously contested sites between the ruling elite and the majority. This has been engendered by the conscious realisation that nationalism has been divested of its 'national' appeal to a point where it has become



a cocktail of warped self-seeking maneuvers and a justification for minority power and a *modus operandi* for paralysing the majority. The narrow conceptualisation of nationalism has led the majority to feel they are not part of the broader national entity. Therefore, the proliferation of micro factors in the late 1980s onwards inveighs against the petrification of discourse on nation and nationalism. Such consequent petrification, as already observed, ushers “an imbalanced definition of patriotism [which] carries with it the dangers of over-centralising [power]” (Deshpande, 1997: 1442). Fiction writers like Chinodya in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), Mazorodze in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) and others who give voice to micro factors are concerned with renegotiating nationalism by offering alternatives. Historical fiction on the war becomes a veritable stakeholder in the ongoing struggles against the nationalist party, ZANU (PF), which has presided over a crumbling economy, unexampled humanitarian crises and increasing state violence and impunity.

In the early 1980s Mutasa’s English novel, *The Contact* (1985), which sees the war through the prism of macro or national causes brings out a character who goes to the war because he is running away from possible prosecution. The sensibility in the novel is tilted in favour of nationalist glorification and the official narrative. Godwin Hondoinopisa, in *The Contact* (1985) is “a twenty-year old ex-crook from Salisbury who had left the country after killing a miserable white who had tried to forestall him when he was on the run after a bountiful raid in Mabelreign” (14). The gravity of Hondoinopisa’s crime is clearly overshadowed by the colour of his victim’s skin. According to the author, stealing from a white man becomes an act of rediscovering what the black man lost. It is the justice of redistributing wealth. In the pre-independence era, Mabelreign was an area reserved for whites only. It is the same white population that is responsible for creating conditions of massive deprivation which plunge black people into criminal acts in order to survive. In this regard, the author’s tone and sensibility links the murder to racial inequality which resulted in unequal development. Generally, the murder and violence committed by guerrillas against Rhodesians are celebrated in the novel, yet the violence committed by guerrillas against civilians or fellow guerrillas is not mentioned. This is one of the many early 1980s novels that celebrate the history of violence without exploring its consequences on individuals and even in the long term.

This is similarly the case with a teenage boy, Mabasa, in Musengezi's novel, *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) who decides to join the guerrillas in Mozambique precisely because he impregnated two girls who elope on the same day. In his discussion with Peter, a friend and school mate, to map out the way forward, he says:

*Ndakanga ndatoronga iyoyo. Dai ndakatoenda kare asi ndakashaya munhu wokuenda naye. Funga iwe panosvika vasikana vaviri musi mumwe chete. Mumwe kumahwani, mumwe kumanheru, vese vachiti vakaitiswa nhumbu neni...Zvisikana zvacho zvandisingade. Ini ndakanga ndatoronga zvekuenda kare (48)*

I had already planned that. I should have gone long back but I could not find someone to go with. Imagine a situation where two girls elope on the same day. The first came around one in the afternoon and the other in the evening, both claiming that I impregnated them. After all I do not love the girls. I had planned about going.

Even though Mabasa and Peter do not make it to Mozambique as they are fatally shot by the Rhodesian Forces, they were prompted into the war by personal reasons. History, as shown in Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 33) vindicates such micro factors. Nhongo-Simbanegavi writes that "young men also sometimes used the war to escape from the responsibilities of fatherhood, after making a girl pregnant." In early 1980s historical fiction, micro historical factors are overshadowed by macro factors. Even the sensibility in the fictional accounts themselves makes them a negligible factor which is given liminal narrative space.

The fictional images illuminating the factors that galvanise young people into the war provide a vivid pattern of converging perspectives in literature published in different languages and epochs – the early 1980s and late 1980s. However, the sensibilities and ideological and aesthetic orientation of the novels radically diverge. What is also striking in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) and *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) is that the writers focus on the experiences of the youth. While coming from peasant backgrounds, most youths of school going age had not yet developed a profound attachment to land. Unlike their elders whose dignity and livelihood lay in land ownership, young people were clearly adventurous. For instance, Donald's father is depicted showing frustration at his wretched piece of land. Yet this awareness of deprivation has nothing to do with Donald's

consciousness. For example, Donald's father shows his exasperation with the land, which indeed is indignation with the racially discriminatory policies of Rhodesia:

“This soil! This rocky – sandy – I-don't-know-what – kind of soil! Get a little more rain the crops drown, get no rain for a few days, the crops wither! Just what kind of soil is this?” The man protested to himself and started walking in silence (36).

Charles' father who lives in a posh 'European' suburb is daily hurled with racial insults by his neighbours who feel that he is an anachronism. In one instance, the author records the European neighbour shouting at Charles' father after their two children mix: “No matter how long your bloody little baboon plays with my son, it will remain black” (34 & 35). Alexio's mother is a struggling vegetable vendor while his father, a blind man is wasting away due to disease and age. Interestingly, as already noted, the three young men's backgrounds do not have any bearing on their political move and even consciousness. The author deliberately juxtaposes the boys' backgrounds and the forces that stampede them into the liberation war. Separation from their parents and communities by attending boarding schools meant that they were exposed to new freedoms and experiences leading to rabid and unchecked experimentation with life. Juvenile delinquency increased because of reduced parental control. Age determined the nature of causes. In many instances, youths ran away from mischief.

### **3.3.2 Poverty, unemployment and social insecurity**

In a context characterised by massive black unemployment for the many youthful school leavers, the liberation war became an alternative occupation. It became one way of circumventing unemployment and aimlessness. After spending a fortune on the education of their children, parents could not be blamed if they expected their sons and daughters to do better. This put pressure on young people to find something meaningful to do as a way of appeasing their parents or running away from the humiliation. Evidence in Samupindi's novel, *Pawns* (1992), Musengezi's novel, *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Nyawaranda's novels, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) and also Mujajati's play, *Rain of my Blood* (1991) shows that young men and women went to Mozambique and Zambia to join guerrillas to escape from unemployment. They did not go out of loyalty, dedication and patriotism.

Neither did they go in the 'service of justice and freedom and the collective interests of Zimbabwe.' However, this dimension is not reflected in Ndebele liberation war novels examined in this study.

Daniel, an eighteen year old young man in *Pawns* (1992) joins the war in order to escape from poverty and squalor at home. He lives a life characterised by mortifying and self-immolating embarrassment. After the tragic death of his father in a car accident, the family loses its sole breadwinner whose meager income of \$35 a month had made the family's living standards fairly comfortable. As the eldest child in the family, he is expected to contribute towards the general welfare of the surviving children and his mother. However, it is the mother who has to struggle by selling vegetables to feed the whole family and send them to school. At times the mother comes back empty handed because the vegetables would not have been bought. As a result, the family, including Daniel, goes to bed without having eaten anything and during these times, the mother would wish her husband was alive. This seriously affects Daniel as it undermines his dignity and essence as a human being.

*Pawns* (1992) is a novel that is difficult to simply categorise as 'fiction'. The writer, who is a former combatant, uses real life experiences and names from the liberation war. Verisimilitude is bolstered by the use of real life personages (Robert Mugabe, Edgar Tekere, Movern Mahachi, Didymus Mutasa and others – all prominent nationalists/persons in Zimbabwe), places and time. In terms of narrative distance, there is none as the author is very close to the event. At the same time, narrative immediacy abounds in this novel as readers get a blow-by-blow description of historical events. Thus *Pawns* (1992) underscores the conceptual compatibility of history and fiction. When one considers issues such as authenticity of the material, narrative distance, involvement of the author and reception, it becomes difficult to argue for the conceptual distinctness of history and fiction. He, like other writers who include Kanengoni (1997), Mazorodze (1989) and Ndebele (1997) depicts history from a privileged vantage point which enhances the historical value of the novel. In some episodes, it is possible to read the novel as a Mugabe eulogy.

In the narration of history, some scenes which may be singled out are Mugabe and Tekere's escape to Mozambique, the role of Nyafaru farm and its directors Guy and

Molly Clutton-Brock of Cold Comfort farm (Davies, 1975: 264) as well as the Monte Casino battle which historians like Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982) have comprehensively documented. Several incidents in Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) including names of real people, places, time and other details are consonant with historical evidence as provided in some of the historical texts such as McLaughlin's *On The Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (1996), Martin and Johnson's *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (1981) and to some extent Bhebe's *Simon Vengayi Muzenda & the Struggle for and Liberation of Zimbabwe* (2004: 171). The semblance is quite striking. Daniel's encounter with Robert Mugabe in Highfields and the subsequent journey to Nyafaru farm, the assistance they got from the Catholic sisters and their sojourn at Nyafaru farm as well as the assistance they got from Chief Rekayi Tangwena all resonate with historical veracity. For instance, as Ellert (1989: 37) reports:

Robert Mugabe knew he had to leave urgently. Within days of Maurice Nyagumbo's arrest Mugabe and Tekere crossed into Mozambique through the eastern highlands of Manica province. They were assisted by a Catholic nun, Sister Mary Aquina (Dr A. K. Weinrich) who drove the men as far as Inyanga where, with the aid of the late Chief Rekayi Tangwena they were guided into Mozambique.

In the novel, the family's debased material condition traumatises Daniel. Among the Shona people, the eldest child is burdened with the inescapable duty of fending for the family and ensuring its continuity in the absence of the father. Daniel cannot fulfill either of these. At his age, he moves around dressed in tattered and patched clothes. He has dropped from school. In fact, he is surrounded by a multitude of problems. In one of his monologues, he laments and languishes in self-condemnation:

For here I was, the eldest, and I could not find a job to fend for the family. I cannot even fend for myself. I still continue to be a burden to my already overburdened mother...*Amai* thinks I'm useless. She obviously compares me with dad. Hard-working, breadwinning dad. I'm just useless. Useless and a burden to Highfields and this earth (20).

Throughout the novel, and even when he finally joins the guerillas, his experience of going for days without food as well as the social insecurity of his mother, brother and sisters haunts him. As a result of excessive poverty and indignity, his life becomes

traumatic to the extent that he passes a vote of no confidence in himself. He therefore decides to join the liberation war out of desperation and in order to escape the poverty and squalor at home and to redeem himself. Chung (2006: 78) has it that the desperate situations of young Zimbabweans bred desperate people “whose lives were so bad that they had nothing to lose [and they] rose to take arms.” In addition, Daniel also wants to prove to his mother, and siblings Taona, Marble, Michael, the Highfields community and friends that he is not a useless person.

Daniel’s experience of joining the liberation war, which bears no relationship to national liberation or nationalist patriotic consciousness, is echoed in Maureen Moyo’s (a former woman combatant) submissions in an interview:

...so it was a way of running away from the shame, away from poverty, away from unemployment, from lack of education; away from all these things, to a place of safety...Yes, it was a place of safety, where no one would laugh at you, no one would see you. In fact...you hoped to come back...to come back a better person than [the others]...It was for selfish gain, especially for me; in my case, in my case for selfish gain, I would go there. Not that I would liberate my fellow sisters, I was not patriotic, I never looked at it that way...I had never looked at war at a national level, I would always think of myself (McCartney, 2000: 160-2)

These unambiguous micro historical perspectives dissect and debunk elitist versions of a single and exclusive ‘patriotic history’ and historical agency inspired by loyalty, dedication and ‘the collective interests of Zimbabweans.’ It is certain from the above that the liberation war becomes an avenue and exercise through which characters sought to pursue their individual agendas – in this case, the restoration of a battered self-image and self-worth. It also becomes a way of escaping from the ubiquitous mortification, poverty and penury around them. Responding to Angela’s question (his girl friend) whether he joined the war as a result of poverty, Daniel says: “I suppose one might say so. But at the time I really needed to prove myself, especially to my mother. I wanted to prove that I was not totally worthless, that I could do something worthwhile, something I could be proud of.” (151). In the words of Baldwin (1963: 67) Daniel represents “a people from whom everything has been taken away, including, most crucially, their sense of their own worth. People can’t live without this sense; they will do anything whatever to regain it. This is why the most dangerous creation

of any society is that man who has nothing to lose. You do not need ten such men – one will do.”

In the same novel, Daniel is puzzled why some of his colleagues whose parents were rich and they could enjoy three meals a day joined the war. Joseph, one of the Highfields guys who crossed at the same time with Daniel came from a rich background. Also Peter was the son of a businessman and he had everything at his disposal. When Daniel summons courage to ask Peter why he joined the war at the time when he is breaking down, Peter says: “We...each have ...our stories. They may be...different, but each and every one of us has his own story...” (65). Such presentations on and references to ‘our stories’ instead of a single story/version of history can be potentially read as conscious submissions by the author to diversify and pluralise discourse on nationalism. The inferred pluralisation of nationalisms in discourse on the liberation war in the late 1980s and beyond is a counter-charge to an official nationalism and at the same time a power devolution strategy. As already argued, this is precisely and crucially so because nationalism and a general discourse on the liberation war have been and continue to be used as power-building mechanisms and power-denying strategies by the ruling elite.

Zimbabwean drama, too, in the form of a play by Mujajati titled *Rain of my Blood* (1989) articulates the particular causes that prompted young people into the liberation war. After being expelled from school for questioning a history teacher Tawanda and Chamunorwa leave for Salisbury to look for employment. After failing to secure the much needed jobs, they end up scavenging for food from garbage bins. As a result, Chamunorwa resolves that “I will not spend another minute of my life scavenging for food from the dustbins of this devil’s paradise!...I am going out of the country. I am joining the armed struggle” (64). The two therefore join the war out of desperation and the need to escape from poverty. Initially, it was not their intention to fight. One can estimate that if they had secured jobs, may be the issue of crossing into neighbouring countries would not have arisen. Chung (2006) provides historical evidence which vindicates the individual experiences of young men like Chamunorwa, Tawanda and Daniel. Such experiences reveal that individual factors rather than a concern with national liberation or patriotic consciousness galvanised agency. As Chung (2006: 83) says:

I was beginning to understand the opportunism, born of the experience of deprivation that characterised township morality. This code of morality dictated that if one was in dire need, it was correct to utilize any opportunity that came one's way to improve oneself. Thus, if the Smith regime offered the opportunity to improve one's position through education, for example, one should welcome this opportunity. Similarly, if the liberation movement offered one a similar opportunity for self-improvement, it was correct to accept this opportunity. The issue of integrity and loyalty to one's principles did not arise.

For that reason, evidence abounds that in the late 1980s historical agency stands parallel to official versions of nationalist patriotic sacrifices. Evidence in historical fiction where young men and women joined the war as more of an occupation in a context characterised with massive joblessness finds resonance in Bhebe (1999: 104) who explains that "unemployment among school leavers was yet another factor forcing the young people to join the liberation movements as a form of occupation."

In the early 1980s historical fiction, Cephas in Musengezi's *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) joins the struggle because ever since he finished school he has been surviving on handouts from his father. He cannot find employment. Dependence on the father undermines his manhood and sense of self-dignity. The embarrassment that results from such dependence is what Baldwin (1954: 99) explicates in these words:

Men do not like to be protected, it emasculates them. This is what black people know, it is the reality they have lived with...It is not a pretty thing to be a father and be ultimately dependent on the power and kindness of some other man for the well-being of your house.

Even though Musengezi's novel, *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) depicts unemployment and poverty as part of the factors that made young people to join the war, it differs from *Pawns* (1992) and other English historical narratives in that its tone and sensibility remains that of the early 1980s.

Again, like other Shona and Ndebele writers writing in the early 1980s, Nyawaranda oscillates between the general and particular factors. However, the general sensibility is that of macro or national factors. In the novels *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and *Paida Mwoyo* (1987), he shows that young people were forced by poverty to participate in the struggle. Torapito and Makurume, two men in *Mutunhu Une Mago*



(1985) cannot fulfill social obligations such as marriage because they do not have the necessary bridewealth. They also have not been able to find employment and have already given up. Among most African communities, marriage is a marker of social development. It is a rite of passage from boyhood and girlhood into manhood and womanhood. When one comes of age, husbandlessness or wifelessness is derided as irresponsible social participation and negation of duty. In the words of p'Bitek (1986: 21) failure to marry is synonymous with "withdrawing from the battle-front of the tough struggle for realising oneself...full participation in societal life, being meaningful to one's society, contributing to the happiness of self and society by thought and deed." However, their ascendancy from the role of *mujibha* (highly trained liberation war male collaborator) to freedom fighters is strongly linked to patriotic consciousness. They voluntarily cross into Mozambique to join guerrillas in order to liberate Zimbabwe. It is this version of the struggle that undergirds the writer's vision throughout the novel. The particular reasons where the war had been taken as a pastime activity are banished to the margins. This is one instance where historical literature in Zimbabwe's African languages vacillates. It fails to articulate a clear position unlike historical literature in English. As previously explained, this is partly attributed to its long association with the Literature Bureau.

Similarly, Chipo, a young school girl in *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) leaves school to join the war because she cannot raise school fees. For the most part of her primary education, she had been having sex with the Headmaster, VaNyimo, in exchange for school fees. However, after VaNyimo's wife discovers the clandestine affair, he can no longer fund Chipo. Left with no option, she decides to cross to Mozambique even though she is killed before she has left the vicinity of the school. Chipo's experience underscores the vulnerability of young people and the girl child in particular during the war. The rural elite symbolising a bastardised African patriarchy supported by their earning power and collaboration with the colonial regime abused their relatively privileged positions. On the other hand, increasing levels of social insecurity meant that young people, eager to succeed, assumed the positions of their elders to actualise and reincarnate traditional customs like child-pledging. While in the traditional Shona set up, such customs were presided over by the elders, evidence in the novel shows a new form of child-pledging where the girl child is initiator, beneficiary and victim. It is unfortunate that the author does not pursue this theme

further which would have highlighted the condition of the girl child in a patriarchy-controlled colonial and war environment.

### **3.3.3 Victims of armies' recruitment and mobilisation strategies**

Fiction in the early 1980s, late 1980s and 1990s and beyond articulates clearly historical processes contingent on the exigencies of Zimbabwe's liberation war. Writers in Ndebele, Shona and English are faithful to history as they depict the military and logistical strategies of the fighting armies. Fictional images indicate that individuals did not join the liberation war voluntarily. Rather, they were prey to the ZIPRA, ZANLA and in some instances Rhodesian forces' recruitment strategies. This perspective finds expression through images in Tizora's novel, *Crossroads* (1985), Mazorodze's novel, *Silent Journey from the East* (1989), Makari's novels, *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) and *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia Tungamirai* (2003), Sigogo's novel, *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), Ndlovu's novel, *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990), Hleza's novel, *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) as well as Ndebele's novel, *Kwakunzima* (1997).

Recruitment, which was closely linked to the attempt to gain national and international legitimacy and authenticity, was critical to ZANLA and ZIPRA attempts at survival. The game of numbers and the pressure from frontline states (Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana and Tanzania) and other international sympathisers forced the two nationalist armies to employ a bewildering array of recruitment drives. Tungamirai (1995: 36 and 40) observes that:

In 1967 the OAU, influenced by the rival ZAPU lobby, made it clear that, unless ZANU showed greater military activity it would lose the recognition which had followed the highly publicized Battle of Chinhoyi (28 April 1966). In order to increase its recruitment the Revolutionary Council had no option but to use the same method as that employed by ZAPU; that is, of press-ganging...[Again] Major General Vitalis Zvinavashe (then known as Sheba Gava) recalled that in 1967 when ZANLA was being pressed by the OAU to show evidence of recruits and when Tanzania was threatening to close the Intumbi ZANLA training camp in Chunya unless ZANU could demonstrate its commitment to the struggle by having an army under training, ZANLA recruiting officers launched an armed attack on a ZIPRA recruiting camp called Luthuli in the Mumbwa area in order to disperse their

recruits...ZANLA's objective was to scatter the ZIPRA recruits, pursue them and press-gang them for training with ZANLA.

Furthermore, the game of numbers became a debilitating pathological obsession that even undermined attempts to unify ZIPRA and ZANLA. For instance, Bhebe (1999: 64) recalls how the unification of the two nationalist armies under the ZIPA (Zimbabwe People's Army) brand and its operational efficiency was derailed by the need to boost the numbers of recruits. He cites the example of ZIPRA where, "instead of engaging in fighting ZIPRA combatants were urged by their commanders 'that once they arrived in Rhodesia they should desert, head for Matebeleland, get recruits and then leave the country with them for Botswana, from where they would be flown to Zambia for training.'" Dabengwa (1995) also blames the collapse of the Mbeya agreement in 1967 on ZAPU which was determined not to work with ZANU because the latter was numerically in the doldrums. Many individuals became victims of these recruitment drives and the game of numbers. They joined the war involuntarily. National liberation was not part of their agenda as they were not inspired by patriotism and loyalty to the Zimbabwean cause. However, once the recruits were taken, many of them committed themselves to the goal of fighting while others escaped at the earliest opportunity.

Written in the early 1980s, Tizora's novel, *Crossroads* (1985) provides fictional images in which one of the characters; David Velepini Moyo, a teacher, was thrust into the struggle through ZAPU's military and mobilisation strategies. The novel is about David, who is taken across the border by guerrillas. He leaves behind his newly wed wife, Priscilla. Left alone, Priscilla falls in love with Peter, a student, and they have a child together. Because Peter does not own up responsibility, and also because David has left, Priscilla suffers from severe psychological breakdown and is detained at Ingutsheni mental hospital in Bulawayo. When David returns from the front after independence, he discovers that his wife now has a child and is also insane.

David was a teacher at Mnene Secondary School when the staff and some students were forcibly marched across the border. In his own words, David reveals that:

I was teaching at Mnene Secondary School. One day the boys came and took us all across the border (30).

Mnene, like Chegato, Manama, Musume and Masase is one of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Schools on which Bhebe (1999) has written considerably. All Lutheran Church schools mainly in the Midlands and Matebeleland regions, together with their hospitals were seriously affected in the liberation war and their staff became active participants. While Mnene was not closed like other Lutheran Church Schools, its war history shows inordinate involvement in supporting the struggle. Mnene is located in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe, a hotly contested area during the liberation war because of its strategic mineral wealth. The Midlands province forms a melting zone wherein is to be found a cross-section of the Zimbabwean population – Shona, Ndebele and many other ethnic groups.

The Rhodesian forces fiercely defended the area because of its mineral riches which were very instrumental in sanctions busting. Because of this, rural peasants and the rural elite in the province were caught between three contending armies – ZIPRA, ZANLA and the Rhodesian forces. Since the Lutheran Church operated schools and mission hospitals deep in the rural areas, teachers and nurses became increasingly involved in the struggle.

Conjecturally, but simultaneously linked to the ZIPRA war machinery, forced recruitment from schools and mission hospitals dovetailed with the army's objectives and preparation of conventional warfare which needed educated personnel for various professional courses. As Sibanda (2005: 175 & 185) a historian explains:

In fact, 1976 and early 1977 saw an exodus of mature students from Mtshabeni Mission Teachers' Training College in Bulawayo, Matopo, Wanezi, all Brethren in Christ Schools, and Mpandeni, Cyrene, and Tegwane. This meant more literate guerrillas who could easily read directions and maps, all essentials of good soldiering. ZAPU also used this...to train its fighters in conventional warfare. Literate people made it easier for ZAPU to achieve two of its major goals: first, the training of at least a functionally literate army capable of operating sophisticated weapons and prosecuting a very complex psychological warfare...

Coercion and press-ganging were a crucial factor in joining the war. People did not always go to the war voluntarily. It should be mentioned that unlike most novels in the

early 1980s, *Crossroads* (1985) is not celebratory. As this study reveals, novels that are inclined towards the sociological dimension of the liberation war, of which *Crossroads* (1985) is one of them, are more critical of nationalism, particularly its disruptive character.

Another illustration of a case of coerced induction into the guerrilla armies comes out through Umzilakawulandelwa's experiences in the novel by the same title – *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) (A track not to follow). In the novel, Ndlovu, the author, recounts the atrocities committed by the Rhodesian security forces on the rural masses. He vividly captures the painful experiences of the masses who were caught in between warring armies. Masses' experienced unspeakable torture both at home and on the roads when travelling as they were subjected to horrendous experiences by Rhodesian forces. Through the narrator, Umzilakawulandelwa, who is a commander of a guerrilla contingent, the author records some experiences in the rear (Zambia and Botswana) where life seems to have been better than it was at home in Rhodesia. The novel ends with Zimbabwe getting independence wherein it articulates the ideals of socialism, which were generally people's expectations.

Umzilakawulandelwa narrates the events surrounding his abduction together with other passengers in a bus. He is subsequently taken to Mozambique enroute to Zambia:

*Kuthe ngekhefu lika-1974 ngenyanga kaMabasa, silokhusiphakathi kokunambitha lelokleza lothando, ibhasi engangihamba ngayo ngisiya ekhaya eGwanda yaphanjulwa ngabalweli benkululelo, abasehlisayo basiqhuba besisa kweleBotswana, lapho esathathelwa khona sayafundiswa ukuba ngabalweli benkululeko eZambia (94).*

It so happened that during the holiday of April 1974, whilst we were in the middle of savouring that episode of our love, the bus I was travelling in to Gwanda was re-routed by freedom fighters. They caused us to alight and then herded us to Botswana whence we were recruited as freedom fighters in Zambia.

The experience underscores ZIPRA's massive recruitment drives through abduction in the Midlands and other areas south of Zimbabwe. From this comes the realisation that people did not always go to the war voluntarily. The circumstances under which Umzilakawulandelwa is abducted and made to join the army are similar to that of

former ZIPRA combatant, Getrude Dube's, who said the following in an interview with Dube (2000: 15):

We had been on exeat holiday and we were returning to school. We were at the bus stop at Filabusi waiting for buses. It was quite late and some strange men approached us and asked where we were going. We told them that we were going to school. They said that nobody was going to school to learn while they were living in the bush and suffering. They ordered us to leave our luggage there and go with them. We left our luggage there, and left with them and crossed Shashe River. There were only two girls in the group. We travelled with them for quite a distance. Then they brought some women. It was apparent that these women had been found at a wedding because one of them was still wearing a wedding dress.

In Hleza's novel, *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) (River of tears) some youths are abducted at a Christmas party. Hleza also records in detail experiences at Manama secondary school, a Lutheran church school where, as already said, students were abducted by ZAPU cadres. For instance, he depicts an incident in which the guerrillas inform the school headmaster of their intention to forcibly take students to the rear bases for training:

*'Mphathisikolo, thina yithi labo elibezwa kuthiwa ngamaterrorist. Lamhlanje abantwana bonke siyabathatha baya empini,' watsho omunye wala amadoda qede waseqhubela umphathisikolo inhlamvu zombhobho ezimbili wathi, 'Ufike uwatshengise amabhunu uthi yithi esithethe abantwana' (80).*

'Headmaster, we are the so-called *terrorists*. Today we are taking all the children to war', said one of the men before giving the headmaster two bullets, then said to him, 'Go ahead and show this to the white soldiers, and tell them we are the ones that took the children'.

The whole episode is idealised to create an impression of guerrillas as formidable and fearless. It is in this region and other areas around Matebeleland that ZIPRA adopted its strategy of abducting people and taking them across the border. Reporting on the Manama incident, Bhebe (1999: 174) reports that guerrillas

told their captives that by abducting them they had acted illegally both according to international law and the Botswana law. But they had taken the Manama pupils and others by force "because they thought that if they relied on persuasion alone it would take a long time to gather sufficient manpower for the liberation struggle."

Clearly, what Hleza recreates through historical fiction is similar to the widely publicised Manama abduction of students on 30 January 1977. Lyons (2004: 109) also underlines this historical perspective when she writes that:

Not all were voluntary recruits. Some young girls and boys were press-ganged or “abducted” from their schools and forced to join the fighters. In January 1977, ZIPRA guerrillas took the children from Manama Mission School and marched them to Botswana at gun point. They were later airlifted to Zambia.

The midlands and Matebeleland areas were propitious for ZIPRA and ZAPU because of their geographical location which made easy passage into Botswana, an exit passage to training camps in Zambia. The main targets were schools, that is, both students and staff. Therefore, various characters like David Velepini Moyo in Tizora’s *Crossroads* (1985), Umzilakawulandelwa in Ndlovu’s *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) and the Manama students in Hleza’s *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) become victims of ZIPRA recruitment strategies. In this regard, the authors recreate through fiction images that are corroborated by historical facts.

Coercion was meant to deal with the problem of few recruits trickling into training camps. With the escalation of war and ZAPU’s military strategy aptly captured in Brickhill’s (1995: 48) title ‘Daring to Storm the Heavens: The Military Strategy of ZAPU 1976 to 1979’, there was need to boost human resources. Commenting on the few volunteers who crossed into neighbouring countries much to the chagrin of nationalists, Bhebe (1999: 103) writes that: “For a long time ZAPU’s recruitment, like its infiltration of the guerrillas, was greatly hampered by the Zambezi river, so that the party depended on a trickle of young men who went to Zambia to escape unemployment in Rhodesia.” However, the adoption of coercion and abduction as recruitment strategies paid dividends. Bhebe (1999: 171) further acknowledges ZIPRA’s successful recruitment drives mainly as a result of abduction as follows: “In their southern Front ZIPRA were more noted for their recruitment programme than for their fighting. It was in fact in this area of their war activities that they performed some of their most heroic and daring acts...”

Josia Tungamirai, a character in a biographical Shona novel by Makari called, *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia Tungamirai* (2003) (Liberation war heroes: Josia

Tungamirai) became a guerrilla fighter after applying for a scholarship to study abroad. The novel is a celebration of the life history of Josia Tungamirai from childhood up to the point when he took command of the Air Force of Zimbabwe as its Air Marshall. In the novel, Josia Tungamirai is depicted as a highly ambitious young man whose determination to reach the pinnacle of academic excellence is unrivalled. After completing his Ordinary Level, he enrolls for Advanced Level studies. However, finances threaten to derail his ambitious plan until he applies for a scholarship to study abroad, which is granted. The letter sent to him reads: *Thomas, Tsamba yako takaiona tikagutsikana kuti unokwanisa kunoita dhigiri kuChina, saka mari yechikoro neyokukwirisa ndege ichabhadharwa nehurumende yeChina* (46) (Thomas, we acknowledge receipt of your letter and we are convinced that you are capable of studying for a degree programme in China. Tuition fees and air fares will be taken care of by the Chinese government).

When he arrives in Zambia he immediately undergoes military training. After some time Josiah awakens to the fact that the issue of a scholarship was a hoax:

*...ndakazonyatsoona kuti tsamba iya yandakatumisirwa yaiva yokundikwezva kuti ndiuye kuzobatana navamwe vairwira nyika yedu kuti tiitakanure mumaoko avapambepfumi* (78)

...I then realised that the letter that had been sent to me was a strategy to lure me so that I would join others who were fighting for the liberation of our country from the grip of colonisers.

The existence of an oppressive regime that subverted young people's ambitions for high academic achievements provided ZANLA with an opportunity to entice young men and women to the rear.

In the early years of the struggle, there were very few volunteers such that both ZIPRA and ZANLA had to rely on other means including press-ganging Zimbabweans living in neighbouring countries. Promises of scholarships for academic advancement became an effective recruitment weapon. Many young people saw this as an opportunity to circumvent the debilitating Rhodesian system that sought to barricade Africans in a laager of smallness and consequently keeping them in their "proper place". However, they ended up in the training camps in Zambia and Mozambique. The version of history in *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia*



*Tungamirai* (2003) is concordant with versions submitted by researchers/liberation war participants/historians like Chung as well as Bhebe. Chung (2006: 76&77) reports that:

Between 1965 and 1972, ZANLA had suffered a severe shortage of recruits...I soon came to see both the positive and the negative aspects of the liberation struggle. One of the features of that period was that both ZANU and ZAPU used forced conscription: young Zimbabwean men were captured and forced to join the ranks of the liberation soldiers. This included the forced conscription of many students who left colonial Rhodesia in search of scholarships in Universities overseas. One such conscript was Josiah Tungamirai, later to rise to the top leadership of ZANLA.

In Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) (You had to be brave), the author traces peasant sacrifices and tribulations through the unbreakable and heroic character of Mberikwazvo. Despite exposure to advanced levels of torture at the hands of the Rhodesian forces, Mberikwazvo does not release any information on the whereabouts of the guerrillas based in his village. The image of guerrillas in the novel is that of superhuman beings. In the novel, the author briefly mentions similar factors based on coercion as responsible for making people join the liberation war. This comes out through Tinotonga, one of the guerrillas who recounts his background to Mberikwazvo just before a *pungwe* (an all-night gathering) called to punish the traitor who betrayed Mberikwazvo to the Smith regime.

After leaving school, Tinotonga fails to get employment. He is lured by a man promising to offer him and others employment after going through training outside the country. It was never his intention to join the war of liberation but he soon finds that he has been duped. He narrates his experience to Mberikwazvo as:

*Isu takanyatsozvionera kuti zviya zvokuenda kukosi zvaiva zvimwewo izvo. Ko, zvakanga zviru zvokuvanzwa here? Takaudzwa kuti kurwira nyika raiva basa romunhu wose womuZimbabwe. Tose takarangana zvokutiza bva, taichengetwa samabhanditi chaiwo. Vakatanga kutidzidzisa zvechimurenga asi ini ndaiva ndisina basa nazvo nokuti ndakanga ndakamirira zuva rokuti nditizire kumusha (56)*

We saw for ourselves that talk about going for courses was just hot air. It was not a hidden fact. We were told that it was the duty of every Zimbabwean to fight for the country. All of us conspired to run away, but alas, we were kept under strict guard like prisoners. They started

teaching us about *chimurenga* but I had no interest in that because I was only waiting for an opportunity to escape.

Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 14) explains and periodises such ZANLA recruitment strategies as “the organisation’s clandestine recruitment exercise for the rest of the decade after 1966...[in which] they...secretly recruited men from Rhodesia, luring them with false promises that they would secure jobs in the neighbouring countries. Instead the desperate job seekers were enlisted for quasi-military training.” Often this was not a very successful strategy. Part of this evidence is shown by the fact that, for the duration of his stay in the training camp, Tinotonga is flooded with an insatiable desire to escape. He is not interested in fighting. The thought of going back home forever lingers in his mind until one of the forced recruits who tried to escape was killed when a grenade he had wanted to use to defend himself detonated in his hands. Many young men like him were killed in cold blood by the guerrillas as they tried to escape and go back home. Many also died during the taxing military training because psychologically they had not prepared themselves for it. Their bodies and muscles readily succumbed to fatigue and hunger because of the discordant connection between mind and body. From the above evidence, it appears Tinotonga was a victim of the ZANLA recruitment drives. His experience shows that coercion, both direct and indirect was widely used in recruiting.

While these Ndebele, Shona and English novels are published in disparate historical epochs that are characterised by contrasting ideologies, they moderately converge in terms of their vision and version of the factors that prompted people to join guerrilla armies, but radically differ in terms of sensibility, tone and vision. It should also be pointed out that *Crossroads* (1985), though published in the early 1980s, is not incandescent with the euphoria that characterised other English war fictional works like Mutasa’s *The Contact* (1985), Chipamaunga’s *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983) and Mahamba’s *Woman in Struggle* (1984). Rather, it offers a somber account that takes into account the pain and subversion of social balance wrought by the war. *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia Tungamirai* (2003), published almost over two decades after independence vacillates between celebration of individual and elite heroism and providing a critique of the war. It pays undiluted attention to the military while *Crossroads* (1985) is much more concerned with the plight of civilians, especially the rural elite – nurses and teachers. This vacillation characterises fiction in African

languages in Zimbabwe which has a long history of patronage by the state funded Literature Bureau. Again, most of the literary histories published in the early 1980s and in Shona and Ndebele generally represent the war from a celebratory standpoint whereas most novels in English in the late 1980s onwards are critical of nationalism.

Fiction writers also show that most of those who fought on the side of the Rhodesian forces were forced to do so. They were victims of the Rhodesian forces' recruitment strategies. Failure to comply resulted in incarceration and loss of employment. While fighting on the 'wrong' side, Lisho in Sigogo's *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), who values non-commitment to the struggle and any form of military engagement is drawn into the war through 'Call Up', to the Rhodesian army, as it was called. After assuming duties in his new post, he receives a letter from Llewelin Barracks inviting him for military training as a Rhodesian soldier. He is subsequently deployed in Silobela where he fought for some time before he decides to run away. Similo in Ndlovu's *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) suffers from the same fate as that of Lisho. He is one of the few educated Africans during that time who had a 'good' salary working for an insurance company. He is coerced into serving in the Rhodesian army. Faced with a massive shortage of fighting manpower, the Rhodesian government turned to enlisting the services of blacks. He narrates his ordeal in the following words:

*Mina ngangicatshulwe yikubuthwa kwabantu bonke abalemfundo...ukuthi bayekulwa besehlangothini lwesitha. Mina ngangisebenza kunkampani yenshuwalense, ngilesikhundla sobuphathi. Ngaba ngomunye kwabokuqala ukubizwa ebuthweni. Ngahamba ngingafuni lakancinyane. Ngangingathini, kambe sibanjwa ngamandla. Owayesala wayethenjiswa inkantolo lokuxotshwa umsebenzi (128-9).*

I had been irked by the act of conscription of all educated people into the enemy camp. I used to work at an insurance company as a manager. I became one of the first to be called to serve in the army. I was very reluctant to go but then what could I do? If you refused you risked being incarcerated and sacked from work.

It appears educated black professionals were mainly preoccupied with personal welfare. Similo's concern with his job rather than the liberation struggle is also shared by Sam and Lisho in Nyamfukudza's *Non-Believer's Journey* (1980) and Sigogo's *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), respectively.

Bonzo, a student at Waddilove High School, in Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) is detained for one and a half years with the option of joining the Rhodesian forces to buy his freedom. When he eventually gives in he becomes part of the Rhodesian forces and escapes as soon as he gets the opportunity. The use of such clandestine and surreptitious methods could also have been contributed by increasing casualties suffered by all armies, and in the case of the Rhodesian army, shortage of voluntary white male recruits. As Chung (2006: 121) explains:

Meanwhile, inside Rhodesia, a strong anti-war movement had begun, with many young white Rhodesians refusing to participate in the war against blacks. Instead, they fled the country to settle in Britain, causing an unhappy generational rift in many white families. These young whites were seriously disillusioned with Smith and the unwinnable and self-destructive war that he had embarked upon. The war had to be fought by older white men. The manpower shortage was so severe that the Rhodesian regime began to recruit mercenaries from Europe [and conjecturally, black professionals working for the system].

Fictional evidence in Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985) is consistent with history as readers see mercenaries like Zebron and Judah, two Jewish brothers as well as Gaileman who had fought in Vietnam. In Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992), the Viljoens, a white family in Rhodesia are deeply divided over their son's refusal to fight in the war. Mr. Viljoen laments: "But today's youth are good-for-nothing. Gone are the days of real courage. In my day I'd be out there making the bloody terrors [terrorists] shit in their pants and run like rabbits... I hope I'm not going to have to hide my face in shame when your turn comes. Your grandfather walked away with medals in the Second World War. You will live up to him, won't you, Jimmy?" Jimmy, the son, coolly responds, "It's just that I do not feel the same way as you do about the war" (30 & 31). Similar evidence also comes from Godwin's novel, *Mukiwa* (1996), in which the narrator is forced to join the Rhodesian force straight from school. He is also denied an opportunity to study at Cambridge University until after he has served in the Rhodesian police for a number of years. This fictional evidence on liberation war history is crucial to questions raised by Bhebe and Ranger (1995a: 16), two seminal historians on Zimbabwe's liberation war who have it that: "The question of recruitment, for instance, is worth pursuing. How far were the Blacks who fought in

the Rhodesian forces conscripts or ‘volunteers’? How far were the Whites, for that matter?”

However, in novels like Sigogo’s *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), Ndlovu’s *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) and Mazorodze’s *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) discussed above, all young men who were forced to join the Rhodesian forces become useful in the struggle for Zimbabwe’s liberation. They provide information on the planned attacks and military targets of the Rhodesian forces. They also let guerrillas through road blocks. Partial evidence supporting the above can be observed in Moorcraft and McLaughlin’s (1982: 181) explanation that “Rhodesian plans to conscript Africans for the first time from 1978 netted some recruits, but many hundreds of others fled into the bush or across the heavily guarded borders to join the guerrillas rather than serve with the Rhodesian forces.”

### 3.3.4 Vengeance mission

In Sigogo’s *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), Ndebele’s *Kwakunzima* (1997), Musengezi’s *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Mutasa’s *The Contact* (1985) and Chipamaunga’s *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983) revenge is projected as one of the factors that catapulted individuals into the struggle. Joining the liberation war provided the opportunity to possess a gun, and above all a military background that would cow most civilians into unpressured submission. As a result, images in the above novels bear testimony to the fact that some individuals were motivated by the need to seek revenge. In Sigogo’s *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), Lisho, who has been serving under the Rhodesian forces, comes home on a week’s leave. He is told of his girl friend’s fate, Phikezelwe, who had been arrested for possessing arms in her house in Bulawayo. The author expresses the pain this caused to Lisho and his decision to revenge:

*‘Besinikwe ikhefu lezinsuku eziyisikhombisa kuphela. Emva kwalezonsuku siyafuneka njalo empini. Kodwa mina angisabuyeli. Lami ngiyachapa ngiyejoyina abalweli benkululeko ngiphindisele linto eyenziwe entombini yami’...waphetha izinyembezi sezigeleza ezihlathini zakhe (218).*

‘We have been given only seven days as leave after which we are to return to the war front. I am, however, no longer going back. I am also

going to skip the country and join the freedom fighters so that I can avenge what has been done to my sweetheart', he said with tears already streaming down his cheeks.

He instantaneously decides to join the guerrillas so that he can revenge. However, his plan to join them as a platform for revenge is disrupted when he is thoroughly beaten by freedom fighters on his way to Bulawayo. He is admitted at Mpilo hospital until the end of the war. This fictional experience echoes real life historical experiences as shown by Prudence Uiri in an interview with McCartney (2000: 62) who says that before joining the war "what I did was I wrote her [her mother] a letter and said, 'I am going; I want to liberate my father.'" Apparently, her father had been arrested because of his involvement in politics. Dingilizwe in Ndebele's *Kwakunzima* (1997) goes to the war armed with a desire to revenge the destruction of his parents' home by Rhodesian forces.

Bruce and Tom in Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985) and Chipamaunga's *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983), respectively, have a determination to destroy white hypocrisy. Their fathers are of European descent. They were abandoned and disowned by their fathers who could not stand being accused by their white fellows of going to bed with African women. As a result, they grew up without paternal care. They were burdened with an orphan and outsider's tag, with their mothers struggling on their own while their fathers were still alive. At the same time, they were not accepted by the whites as their kith and kin. For instance, Ellert (1989: 48) explains:

Because the Rhodesian Defence Regiment consisted only of members of the Coloured community, whites disparagingly referred to the unit as the Rhodesia Dagga Regiment because of the popular notion that Coloureds were a useless bunch of layabouts who did nothing but smoke dagga (Marijuana) and drink *dop* (brandy). These racist attitudes manifested themselves in the scant regard which some JOCs had for the welfare of RDR units under their command. An illustration of this contemporary attitude came during 1977 when 'E' Company IRDR out of Mtoko were posted to guard a bridge and after six weeks they received their first re-supply of rations by air drop. After a further six weeks it was suddenly learned that nothing had been heard from the call-sign...

This attitude reflects the general abomination of the Coloureds in the mainstream white society. Fiction thus captures this aspect in a manner that is corroborated by

history. In the case of Bruce, the writer reports that: "Bruce grew up with a deep anger against his father which broadened to encompass all whites and what he felt they stood for...He wanted to kill, 'the pigs'; a name which he gave to all white people" (13). The father denies responsibility despite the fact that he is a very successful businessman.

Tom is a product of the relationship between Marwei, an African woman and Truss, a white man. His maternal relatives have not been able to fully integrate him as one of their own because he symbolises their daughter's lost opportunities. Marwei was a brilliant female student training to be a teacher. After being impregnated by Truss, she turns into a hopeless drunk and whore. Again, Truss has not been able to accommodate Tom as he remotely supports him. Tinashe, the author's voice of reason and hero in the war tells readers that:

...Tom, repelled by the hate in his own family – levelled mainly against him – the hypocrisy of his father, Truss, who had kept him at a safe distance while at the same time trying to establish his closeness to him by sending him to school – disgusted and horrified by all this, had turned to guerrilla warfare as a means of redressing his grievances (290).

Peter in Musengezi's novel, *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) is very specific about his target. He is determined to avenge the savage beating he received at the hands of the black Rhodesian police member, Samusa. He suffered permanent injury, including a broken rib and has to be hospitalised for some time. After his discharge from hospital, he tells his friend, Mabasa, that; "*Zvino inini shamwari...Ndichatofa newangu chete...Samusa ndiye wandiri kuda kunyatsoti dzvi*" (47) (Now, my friend...I will die with someone...Samusa is the one person that I want to manhandle). Apparently, Samusa is Peter's tormentor.

The contribution of emotions of anger to the ultimate decision to join the war also comes out in an interview with a former ex-combatant which was carried out by the researcher. He said: "I went to the war in 1976 after I was beaten by whites. They had asked us who had exactly burnt the Rutendo Bus and a National Breweries Lorry and we denied because we did not know. I wanted to come back and revenge."

Lyons (2004: 114) explains the experience of one of the female ex-combatants and now an internationally acclaimed writer, Freedom Nyamubaya as:

Some women did not join simply to liberate Zimbabwe, but to use the nationalist struggle...for personal reasons. Freedom Nyamubaya admitted that one of the reasons she left to join the war was because she did not like the fact that her headmaster had not given her a scholarship. She said that she had wanted to get a gun and kill him. So, in 1975 Freedom Nyamubaya left Rhodesia with ten boys and was the only female at the time to arrive in Tete, Mozambique... It was only after the political education she received that she gained an appreciation for the armed struggle and understood the different participation of all the actors at different levels in the war...

Nyamubaya's experiences are similar to Peter and possibly Lisho's motivations for joining the guerrillas in Musengezi's *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) and Sigogo's *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986), respectively. As already underlined, the micro or individual causes in fiction published in the early 1980s are eclipsed by the national factors as well the historical sensibility in the novel which is tilted towards 'nationalist romance.'

In Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992), Angela and Crispen, both victims of Rhodesian counter-insurgency operations resolve to join the liberation war after their violation. Angela is raped by a Rhodesian soldier in full of view of her brother, Crispen. The experiences of rape force her to resolve to join the war. The same also applies to her brother, Crispen, who was forced to witness his sister being raped by the Rhodesian soldier. After the ordeal, Angela decides to join the liberation war in order to revenge. To this, Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 30) lends support:

It is not inaccurate to say that sexual harassment by the soldiers was one of the reasons young women left for the liberation struggle, with the aim of returning to avenge the wrongs done to them. Young men also took the sexual violation of their womenfolk as a personal affront to their manhood; this often drove them to get military training and guns so they could come back and reinstate their power.

The discussion in this chapter has shown that in a number of instances Ndebele, Shona and English novels raise similar perspectives on liberation war history. But there is evidence to the effect that literature published in the early 1980s largely



depicts nationalist causes while fiction published in the late 1980s and beyond, particularly fiction in English, expresses the personal factors.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has offered a comparative exegesis of historical fiction in Shona, Ndebele and English published in different historical dispensations. Importantly, this fiction offers historical images and detail that correspond with history as expressed in historical textbooks and oral sources. In addition, historical fiction in the three languages and coming from different regions in the country shares salient commonalities, and also has remarkable differences. Through an explication of macro and micro historical factors, the chapter has shown that to a very large extent, fiction in the early 1980s promotes the macro or national factors, which also become the avenue through which the writers conceptualise the war. The factors are underpinned by an overawing patriotic consciousness in which the national interests loom larger than the individual's immediate concerns. Fiction in the early 1980s can therefore be characterised as a renaissance of group consciousness in that it represents history from above. The nationalisation and generalisation of historical agency in the early 1980s cannot be separated from the politics prevailing during that time. Fictional images shrouded in patriotic culture "as symbolic appeals to the war became vital assets in the ruling party's power-building strategies" (Kriger, 2003: 62) and in promulgating an official version of nationalism as the only legitimate political ideology, movement or idea.

Historical fiction in the late 1980s onwards, particularly in English and a few voices in Shona and Ndebele in the 1990s is largely tilted towards the micro or individual factors. The difference between fiction in the early 1980s and late 1990s onwards is that in terms of sensibility, the latter approaches the war through the micro historical factors. It particularises and demystifies the nationalisation of historical agency. The individual characters' background and upbringing is vividly described. This becomes an attempt to show that the person who later becomes a guerrilla is just an ordinary being with no superhuman qualities. Thus, micro factors become a renaissance of individual consciousness in which the writers systematically question and demolish official nationalist historiography. Accordingly, the abundance of micro factors as a

counter voice, leads to the pluralisation of discourse on nation and nationalism. At the same, the different authors' predisposition to articulate macro or micro factors provides unalloyed testimony that "national memory is constructed through a complex process of contestation" (He, 2007: 44). This creative disposition in which writers from Mashonaland, Matebeleland and writing in all languages show causes why people joined the war is important in illuminating debate on national participation. It casts the liberation war as a movement in which all people participated; and not only one type of character – the patriotic, ethnic group or political organisation.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE REPRESENTATION OF GUERRILLA EXPERIENCES IN THE REAR AND AT THE FRONT

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined the various factors that mobilised characters from different classes, ages and backgrounds to take up arms or cross into neighbouring countries to train as freedom fighters. It showed that people went to war for various reasons and, linked the discussion of these reasons to discourse on nation and nationalism in contemporary Zimbabwe. This chapter, which develops from the previous, is divided into two major sections which critically examine guerrilla experiences in the rear and at the front. In Zimbabwean liberation war history, the rear refers to the frontline states which hosted Zimbabwe's liberation movements. These frontline states included Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Botswana where ZIPRA and ZANLA had their training bases and refugee camps. The front refers to Zimbabwe where the actual fighting between guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces took place. In this regard, the chapter concentrates on the historical authenticity of the writers' handling of the experiences of guerrilla recruits in the rear and guerrillas in the battlefield, while attempting to show the resultant political, social and ideological implications of the authors' rendition of historical images.

The chapter argues that historical fiction in Ndebele, Shona and English significantly contributes towards the illumination of guerrilla experiences in the rear and the front. This is a point vindicated by Bhebe and Ranger (1995a/b: 3), who are some of the prominent historians on liberation war history in Zimbabwe in their discussion that: "For whatever reason, publishers have been reluctant to accept guerrilla life-stories. The result of all this has been that the guerrilla experience has come to us through fiction rather than through history and autobiography." The historians' acknowledgement of the vast contributions that historical fiction has made in enhancing the understanding of guerrilla experiences clarifies the intricate connection between fiction and history; while simultaneously acknowledging liberation war

historical fiction as a legitimate and authentic discourse that cannot merely be wished away in matters of liberation war history.

Historical fiction in this chapter is characterised by selective forgetting and selective remembering of historical events. This leads to plural and conflicting literary historiographies. Historical fiction published in the early years of independence in all languages and, generally fiction in Ndebele and Shona published beyond the early eighties recreate images of guerrilla fighters in grand terms. Part of this historiographical paraphernalia is envisaged in the manner writers compete to see who among them would depict the liberation war as a great and soothing war, and the fighters as great fighters. Battles with Rhodesian soldiers are simplified and the narrative syntax of the fictions limited to a linear style that proceeds from preparation for the battle in the actual battle zone, victory during the contact and then independence in 1980. Again, historical fiction published in the early 1980s, particularly Shona and Ndebele, tends to comprehensively and conveniently forget that the liberation war was dual in character. For instance, the only Shona narrative that attempts to remember the rear, Sungano's *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), does so sparingly and often selects gloriously pleasant events. The same also applies to *Ndangariro* (n.d), an English narrative published in the early 1980s. (The novel was published in the early 1980s because, ZIMFEP, the publishers, disbanded in 1985). *Ndangariro* (n.d) remembers pleasant history that abounds in cordiality. Ndebele historical fiction published in the eighties is largely silent on events that took place in the rear, except through scant reference. In any case, the volition to remember the rear in narratives published in the early 1980s is dwarfed by the manner and amount of space given to military contacts at the battlefield. The scarcity of background information on guerrillas' experiences in the rear palpably makes the guerrilla characters in these narratives inevitable heroes. Readers are forced to see the guerrillas in combat or preparing for a very big battle without clear knowledge of where they are coming from, what they have gone through and whether such experiences are capable of moulding a 'hero' or a 'victim'.

Historical fiction in English published in the late 1980s onwards conspicuously evades remembering and glorifying nationalism. It represents the struggle for independence as a very complex historical process. Thus, its representation of the

rear and the front is characterised by penetrating and even transgressive renditions that probe and open new vistas on the liberation war. In some of the English fictional narratives, a concern with the rear experiences towers over images of the liberation war at the front. What transpired at the front is irrevocably linked to processes and events in the rear. For that reason, by making readers abidingly develop an appreciation of the liberation war experiences in the rear, writers invite their readers into understanding why the liberation war took so long to be won and possibly, why individual guerrillas behave the way they do – during and after the war. Viewed in this context, it can be argued that to a large extent, fiction in English gives legitimacy to all historical spaces in the war. The fact that this historical fiction is published several years after independence makes it critical. Again, as already said, there is growing disillusionment with nationalism in the nation during this time and, as it were, historical fiction becomes a discourse of protest. In the light of this observation, the chapter advances the contention that historical fiction in English published in the late 1980s and beyond offers possibilities for historical deconstruction, reconstruction and contestation, which are vital in democratising the national agenda for development and nation building. Nonetheless, the dual fictive discourse, that is, fiction published in the early eighties and that published in the late eighties and beyond, remains instrumental in the construction of plural national historiographies.

#### **4.2 REMEMBRANCES OF THE REAR AS ZONE OF PLEASANTNESS: CELEBRATORY HISTORICAL FICTION**

Fiction writers in Shona and Ndebele depict the experiences of men and women who crossed into neighbouring countries to train as guerrillas. Writers who depict experiences in the rear attempt to show the complex and diverse nature of the Zimbabwean liberation war history and “...the unstable and shifting space of the armed struggle [because the struggle] remained *dual* (the *rear*, in Zambia and Mozambique, and the *front*, in Rhodesia itself” (Primorac, 2006: 126). Similarly, the authors show an undisguised volition to transcend fictional narratives that only preoccupy themselves with military contacts at the front. They attempt to break the culture of silence on events that transpired in the rear. This aspect marks some innovation in fictive historiographical representations on the war, considering that a number of narratives have tended to avoid the rear as a legitimate historical space and thesis thereby bowdlerising history. Put together, there are about sixteen Shona

and Ndebele war novels examined in this research. Yet only one Shona and one Ndebele novel make reference to the rear. The other two Ndebele novels just make some passing reference.

The undisguised selective remembering and convenient forgetting of certain rear experiences remarkably underlines the value of liberation war history, in particular, the issue of space in national and nationalist politics in the aftermath of independence. For instance, the remembrance of the glorious experiences in the rear in Sungano's novel, *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) and partly Ndlovu's novel, *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) reveals the extent to which Shona and Ndebele historical fiction largely connects when it comes to celebrating nationalism. Interestingly, both novels are published in association with the Literature Bureau, which, as already explained, was a government controlled organisation.

Written and published in the early 1980s, *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) is the only Shona historical narrative on the liberation war in the early 1980s to the late 1990s to dedicate a few pages to liberation war historical experiences in the rear. In doing so, it abundantly remembers those historical images which foreground ceremony, pomp and happiness more than suffering, fatigue and trauma. It varnishes and camouflages the difficulties that recruits experienced in the rear camps. The narrative dwells mainly on physical training in the camp, an obvious aspect of the military profession. It masks the physical pain and emotional trauma that was consistent with the taxing military exercises in the rear spaces as this was often a new experience for recruits, some of whom had romantic accounts of the war at home. The novelistic vision of recruits' experiences is diluted by the general celebratory tone that underpins the entire fictional narrative. Thus, the selective remembering of and the subsequent canonisation of the rear as glorious can be said to be in line with the political mood that officially characterised the 1980s when Zimbabwe attained political independence from Britain.

Through the central character, Kuda Hondo, life in the rear, including the actual military training is depicted as enjoyable and emotionally satisfying. This is largely so because Kuda befriends, Kadiki, one of the guerrilla commanders who treats him like a blood brother and provides him with some of the guerrilla secrets capable of

making his stay comfortable and memorable. Kadiki, who is said to be a good, friendly and capable trainer, advises Kuda against making his educational qualifications known because it is said that there are other uneducated commanders who are not happy with the presence of educated recruits. Evidence to the effect that chances of obviating danger associated with professional jealousy once one met a friendly confidante is also given by Prudence Uriri, a former combatant, who, when interviewed by McCartney (2000: 69) had this to say:

In my case I was very lucky. The very first camp that we went to when we arrived in Mozambique – at Seguransa – there was this very nice girl called Queen. She was also in form two when she left, so we talked a lot. She had been there for a long time; she was at this base because she was a girlfriend of the camp commander...She gave me a lot of information about what it was like in the camps. You don't have to show that you know this, you just have to pretend you don't know anything, you can't talk slang, you don't talk English.

Similar evidence corroborating the fact that it was possible that recruits could enjoy their training and also the fact that there were good commanders in the liberation war is supported by accounts from some of the participants. For instance, the recollections of Prudence Uriri affirm the above:

Once I got there we really started serious training; every morning we were running and doing some physical exercise. It was also real fun. Agri Chimunuka was the trainer...He was a good commander...He was a very, very good person...and he was also a very good trainer...I liked him, he was some kind of ...he was very tough and difficult but that was what the training was all about. I liked him (Prudence Uriri in an interview with Irene McCartney, 2000: 80).

In *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), the conditions prevailing in the training camp are presented as conducive for the creation of a formidable fighter that Kuda eventually becomes.

Food is said to be abundantly available in the training camps. The impression created is that the recruits led healthy lives. Food abundance fundamentally becomes a metaphor and political myth for prospects of future abundance, greatness and the capacity of the military idea to transform the nation politically, socially and economically. As already indicated, there is good rapport between the recruits and

their trainers or seniors. Fighters feel comfortable and secure. The picture of the liberation war that is presented is that it is a process that restores and guarantees human freedoms, that is, a humanising and dignity-affirming mission. The bouncing and healthy life-style of the recruits is reflected in Kuda Muhondo's recollections on life in the camp: "*Ndakatora chikafu changu chaive chakawanda uye chiine nyama nomuriwo...*" (37) (I collected my food ration, which was quite plenty and comprising meat and vegetables...). The writer's images of abundance do in fact play down the painful experiences of recruits in the camps as shown in the works published in the late 1980s and beyond. A former combatant whose name is Carine Nyamandwe revealed in an interview with Phiri (2000: 2) that "meat was not available." In any case, food could not have been in abundant supply as Kuda Hondo claims because the camps survived on donations and handouts from well-wishers.

Hypothetically, one can even hazard to say that the image of camp life in the narrative is a miniature manifestation of the image of the new nation that the nationalists claimed they would create. The nationalist parties ZANU (PF) and PF-ZAPU formed the first black government even though ZANU PF was the victorious party. While some events in the narrative are supported by history, generally the tendency in the early 1980s was to idealise the nationalist movement, the war and the guerrillas. Seen from this perspective, it can then be said that the jubilation that defines Kuda's life in the camp potentially becomes an ideological statement on the nature of nationalist patriotic consciousness and 'patriotic history' because he is one of the numerous characters in Zimbabwe's African languages historical fiction who joined the war because of love of the nation, as illustrated in the previous chapter. At the same time, such fictional images become part of the "stories about the origins, identity and purposes of a nation [in that they] constitute an integral part of the ideological foundation for national identity and nationalism" (He, 2007: 44).

As noted above, remembrance of historical events incandescent with a patriotic feeling that simultaneously abounds with cosmic vibrations of 'patriotic history', loyalty and national commitment is incontrovertibly in line with the official or patriotic nationalist ideology of the early 1980s. Perspectives to the contrary had no legitimacy in this phase. Evidence showing that the selective remembering of nationalist events in the rear as well as the urgency to suppress certain nationalist truths in the early



years of independence was a political act comes from Simon Muzenda, a former vice president of Zimbabwe in an abridged version of his interview with Bhebe (2004: 231). He said that the president of ZANU PF, Robert Mugabe, sent him “to the airport to go and ask them [the formerly detained rebels who had refused to be part of the patriotic front] not to make statements that would be prejudicial to the party’s success during the coming elections.” These rebels included Rugare Gumbo, Henry Hamadziripi, Joseph Taderera and Crispen Mandizvidza; disgruntled members of ZANU who had been detained in underground jails before being transferred to Mozambican jails. They were charged with conspiring to overthrow elected leadership; and with the signing of the Lancaster Agreement they were now returning back to the country.

While a few oral accounts support the kind of historiographical representation as shown in *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), the overarching impression is that camp life went beyond physical training and good working relations between recruits and their trainers. In a summarised version of Simon Muzenda’s views, Bhebe (2004: 216) further explains that “living conditions in the camps were difficult and contrasted sharply with the way members of the Central Committee lived and conducted themselves in expensive hotels in Maputo.” Nonetheless, the novel *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) opts for, or at least chooses to remember the simple and easy-going side of the war in the rear camps. Through such images, it can be argued that historical fiction becomes an instrument that functions to build and increase regime and political legitimacy of the ruling elite in the neocolonial dispensation.

Ndlovu’s novel, *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) also provides a brief insight on what life was like in the rear. This comes out through Mzilakawulandelwa, who, when in Botswana, finds life in the hospital far much better than it was back home (then Rhodesia). He had been captured while receiving treatment at the home of uMaZondo, a female traditional healer. He is sent to a hospital where he somehow meets his wife, a nurse who helps him escape to Botswana. The nurses in Botswana are friendly and the meals are fantastic. Mzilakawulandelwa is even taken to Berlin for further treatment while his wife is sent to Romania to further her studies. The writer creates the impression that conditions in hospitals are symptomatic of the entire rear space. In this regard, he does not talk about any other experiences,

especially those prevailing in camps such as Victory camp, Freedom camp and Nampundwe – all of them ZIPRA camps in Zambia.

Nonetheless, the sending of Mzilakawulandelwa's wife for further training abroad is consistent with ZIPRA policy on developing a highly technical and literate force. As such, those with some bit of education were often selected for advanced technical studies in warfare. In an interview with Dube (2000: 25), Gertrude Moyo, a former ZIPRA section commander said: "The Chief of personnel used to come from Lusaka and choose for himself the people he wanted. He would ask for a particular qualification like those who had grade seven, form two or form four." While such images are historically true, the sensibility is that of celebration, an aspect that defines Shona and Ndebele historical fiction to a very large extent. The rear becomes a zone of comfort with numerous possibilities for personal advancement. Yet in other novels published in the late 1980s and beyond, recruits yearn for the day they would be sent to the front because conditions in the rear are unbearable.

As shown in this section, there are very few novels that refer to life in the rear in Shona and Ndebele historical fiction because of the sensitive nature of the subject. The rear as outside space, therefore, appears to have been marginalised for political expediency. For instance, history shows that the rear was a hotbed of violent contradictions, complexities, conflicts and inconsistencies. Guerrillas fought among themselves while others were victims of wanton murder. In an introduction in Sithole (1999: iv), Muradzikwa has referred to these bloody episodes in the context of Zimbabwe's nationalist movements as "the ghastly internal atrocities" and "gruesome murders" in the country's history of liberation. The political character of space in Zimbabwe is such that 'nationalists' are interested in the actual battlefield because it is the one that provides immediate symbols of regime legitimacy in the form of guerrilla fighters and their guns.

#### **4.2.1 Images of cordiality: relationships between male and female guerrillas**

Historical fiction on the liberation war published in the early 1980s and most of the fiction in Ndebele and Shona published in the early 1980s onwards remembers first and foremost, the cordial connections among guerrillas of discrepant genders, ranks

and backgrounds. It conveniently forgets difference, conflict and polarities of any nature. Mahamba's *Ndangariro* (n.d) (published in the early 1980s because the publishers, ZIMFEP, disbanded in 1985) is important in this regard. In this work, the author explores the theme of love or romance in the war. As men and women fought and trained together, romantic feelings were inevitable. Mahamba chooses to remember those scenarios in the rear in which romantic feelings were voluntary and never went beyond the sexual encounter as this was against the military code of conduct. In this regard, the author creates relationships that celebrate harmony and equality between male and female guerrillas in the rear.

Mahamba's *Ndangariro* (n.d) is about Ndangariro and Dzikinurai, female and male guerrilla recruits without any rank, respectively. The two are naturally, mutually and amicably drawn towards each other without either of them being dominated. Their romantic attraction is presented as genuine. Historians such as Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2006) give evidence which supports the existence of love relationships between male and female guerrilla recruits in the rear. As Nhongo-Simbanegavi (ibid: 59) explains:

The environment and the camp set-ups provided opportunities for active sexual interaction. Although each camp had a predominant function, there was much overlap...As the male and female living quarters were in close proximity, and as boys and girls often went out on their own to gather firewood, or poles and thatch for use in construction, there was nothing to prevent sexual relations between them, even though Party laws forbade it.

Mahamba describes in detail how the two lovers have profound respect for each other's body. Their romantic adventure is limited to kissing and fondling outside the 'sacred' organs. Their level of sexual discipline is inimitable. After the war they return home with plans to marry but Ndangariro's parents refuse to accept Dzikinurai as their daughter's fiancé. They want to choose a partner for her. But being an ex-combatant, she dexterously uses her combat skills and military experience to outface such restrictiveness in society where young men and women are not allowed an opportunity to name and define the world as they please. The story ends as a moral account that parents should not choose partners for their children. Of course, all the credit for sexual discipline in the rear and the subsequent victory over unwilling parents goes to the liberation war as a revolutionary and revolutionising process.

*Ndangariro* (n.d) is critical in trends in historical fiction on the liberation war in that it engages the subject of women's sexuality and sexual relationships in the broader matrix of nationalist politics as realised in the rear. The narrative presents the liberation war as a political process that leads to the rethinking and reconceptualisation of romance and love-based relationships. Quite crucial is the fact that it invests in the politics of the body, mainly by operationalising it as a slate for inscribing history as well as a method of representing historical content and ideology. The body is used as a turf for inscribing nationalist legitimacy and dispelling ubiquitous stories about the sexual violation of women by senior guerrilla commanders. It is portrayed as a zone of comfort, shielded from possible exploitation by what the author conceptualises as a humane nationalism. In creating this version of liberation war history, Mahamba is aware that:

The body is a site of menace from which Zimbabwean stories of sexually and politically vulnerable identities emerge, and it is also from the same site that new strengths can be constructed from a collapse of the menacing male body" (Muchemwa & Muponde, 2007: xvii).

The two lovers, *Ndangariro* and *Dzikinurai*, do not engage in sex because ideally they are not yet married. It is possible that the author (Mahamba) who is female and was also in the rear during the war intends to prove the womanhood and purity of those who joined the liberation war. In this relationship, the romantic experience is characterised by amorous phrases such as, "strong yet tender hands" and "warm loving lips..." (56). The gentle kisses and fondling between *Ndangariro* and *Dzikinurai* express the body as a vital resource in deflecting the pressures and emotions of war. They are also expressions of the profound veneration for the male-female body through allotting it emotional satisfaction and general physiotherapy. In the case of the 'menacing male body', nationalism facilitates its transformation as shown through the image of 'strong yet tender hands.' Such a transformation makes possible harmonious and mutually beneficial man-woman relationships.

*Ndangariro* and *Dzikinurai* have their own rendezvous which they both discovered. At the same time, it is not physical beauty that defines their romantic experience. For

instance, Dzikinurai is drawn to Ndangariro not because of physical beauty or her sexuality. He says:

Ndangariro I do not deny that you are very beautiful but believe me that is not what drew me to you. It was your seriousness, genuineness and humanity as well as the questioning mentality I detected during commissariat classes that attracted me to you (14).

Dzikinurai's statement rises above mere sexuality and femininity. It acknowledges, first and foremost, the equality between man and woman as well as the womanhood and humanity of the other gender.

The rear is depicted as a field of romance, natural attraction and war. Emotions flow naturally without any prohibition. Girls, too, make advances to the extent that there is reciprocity with each party playing its expected role. By projecting such a picture, Mahamba is intent on proving that it is possible to be a wonderful lover and a guerrilla at the same time. According to the author, the war did not disrupt natural processes and cultural and social expectations, a position vindicated in Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000) above. History also has it that sexual relationships among ordinary guerrillas were based on mutual consent. Ndangariro and Dzikinurai's relationship does not end because the war has ended.

The cordial romantic experience involving male and female guerrillas in the rear in which the body is a respected site is contrasted with another one at home between John and Tsitsi, also in *Ndangariro* (n.d). As depicted in the novel, John and Tsitsi have no liberation war credentials and do not have any relationship with the nationalist ideology. John is depicted as a bad lover who only wants to exploit Tsitsi's innocence. He brutally assaults her and leaves her stranded in a hotel far away from home just because she refuses to have sex with him before they are married. She has to call one of her sisters who comes to her rescue. The John-Tsitsi relationship appears to be one in which one partner, the male, imposes choices. Therefore, domination and control of the female body, rather than mutual affability define the relationship. In fact, Tsitsi's romantic experience with John is nightmarish and scandalous. John demands sex before marriage in sharp contrast with Dzikinurai:

He forced her onto the bed and told her that the last thing he would tolerate was to be threatened by a woman on whom he had spent so much money, a woman coming out of the bush...He started beating her up. She screamed but he gagged her with a towel, he kicked and beat her like he was demon possessed. She started to bleed through the nose and mouth... (50).

The author is certain that John's romantic consciousness is informed by and at the same time typifies a 'traditional' patriarchal consciousness in which a woman is just an object of sex. According to the author, such patriarchal consciousness leads to the dehumanisation of the female principle. It similarly undermines positive gender relations which are vital for nation building. In order for John to be a good lover, he needs to have gone through massive reorientation in the liberation war. He also needs to be liberated from what Mahamba perceives as centuries of gender misorientation. Mahamba's perception of the role of the liberation war on romantic consciousness appears to be based on the premise that the pre-war Shona and Ndebele societies were brazenly male-centered to the extent that even courtship and lovemaking also became instruments within the control of the male gender. In this regard, women were deprived of the power and choice to determine and participate in romantic schemes that they help in instituting. It is in its attempt to reverse this so-called pre-war gender scheme that *Ndangariro* (n.d) can be said to 'idealise' love and romance in the war. The polarisation of characters' relationships into good and bad certainly affords the author an opportunity to celebrate nationalism as a liberating movement, idea or ideology which led to a massive reorientation exercise. Perhaps, as already explained, *Ndangariro* (n.d) seems to depict a stage in ZANLA history when the party ZANU had adopted a more liberal approach to relationships due to the influx of recruits and also the idleness resulting from détente. However, it remembers and canonises one type of relationships.

Considering that the undated narrative is a product of the early 1980s when a number of women combatants were struggling against social prejudices, it becomes a discourse of homecoming meant to facilitate their acceptance into the general fabric of society. The narrative is thus intended as a critical corrective in a context where true stories and 'prejudices' about the sexual abuse and rape of women were rampant in the rear. Because of the war stories about the rape of women by guerrilla

commanders, “ordinary Zimbabwean men shunned these women soldiers and selected marriage partners on the basis of Zimbabwean marriage customs rather than revolutionary ideals that have no firm footing in society” (Gambahaya & Magosvongwe, 2005: 7). For that reason, the positive relationship between Ndangariro and Dzikinurai is intended to varnish the social standing of returning women ex-combatants in society. An expression by an unnamed woman during ceasefire at a time when most women combatants were returning home is instructive. This woman, quoted in Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 76) is reported to have said in 1979:

Did you see the passengers in that other bus. They were all full girls, unspoilt. They seem to have known better what they went to Mozambique for. It's such a break from those others with lots of children.

The integrity of the returning women ex-combatants is clearly evaluated in terms of the state of their bodies. That this woman observer praised the returning women as ‘full girls’ and ‘unspoilt’ and rebuked those ‘with lots of children’ shows that the body is crucial in representations and perceptions of nationalism in Zimbabwe. Thus, Ndangariro’s ability to look after her body becomes part of the beauty and purity of nationalism. It makes her a heroine who went to war and executed it with a clear agenda. The same image is a celebration of the war as an expression of cultural nationalism. According to Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 76):

War-time sexual and marital experiences have significantly determined the way women perceive themselves and the way society regards them, boosting or undermining their confidence in themselves as women. So often, society has critically viewed this aspect of their lives and judged them on it.

The narrative politicises romance within the embankments of the nationalist movement, thus making romance a symbolic configuration of the nationalist movements’ successful reorganisation and re-presentation of gender equilibrium or balanced gender relations. Because Ndangariro and Dzikinurai do not engage in sex, the message is that sex was not the ultimate priority in male and female relationships in the rear. Recruits were able to uphold Shona traditional moral codes which forbid sex before marriage. Mahamba’s images of women in the rear as disciplined is an

attempt to deconstruct social perceptions that associate women returning from the war as wild and prostitutes.

Despite its attempt to cast nationalism in positive light, Mahamba's novel, *Ndangariro* (n.d) remains at the level of contrived fiction whose version of history is an extension of official propaganda on the extent to which the war improved gender relations. It advances a 'romantic' image of sexual relationships in the war. Its cultural nationalism lacks historical depth. Against this background, historians like Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 76) have called for 'more research' on 'the predicaments that women experienced in Mozambique' because "women encountered numerous problems in the camps, many of which were imposed on them because of their sexuality." The most worrying aspect in the narrative is the writer's silence on relationships between senior guerrilla leaders or the so-called chefs and ordinary guerrilla recruits. This silence, which probably is a result of the time when the narrative was published, has the potential to make it an accomplice in the abuse of many innocent female recruits who "were clearly vulnerable to the exploits of disgraceful seniors" (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 2000: 61). This crime is fully exposed in Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) and Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997). These are published several years after the attainment of independence. It can be argued that Mahamba's presentation of one version of gender relations in the liberation war potentially raises readers' suspicions about the author's layer of intentions. It is possible to think that the author insinuates that those women who fell pregnant or got diseases and were labelled as prostitutes were reckless. At least they had not mastered the Party's revolutionary nationalist objectives, unlike Ndangariro. They are to blame for their condition which is not of their making. This kind of official thinking is presented by Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 75):

Few in the predominantly male leadership of the war stopped to think that women did not just fall pregnant on their own and that their babies had male fathers. Generally, the opinion was that women were careless, which is why they fell pregnant, and so they could not be counted on to assume important responsibilities.

This official and patriarchal thinking means that women remained marginalised and were denied any historical agency.



#### 4.2.2 Remembrances of the rear in non-celebratory historical fiction

Liberation war historical fiction under examination in this section is published mainly in the late 1980s and beyond and is largely written in English. Some of the narratives include Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997), Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) and Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992). Only one Ndebele narrative, Ndebele's *Kwakunzima* (1997), compares favourably with novels written in English in that, like the former, it also depicts the painful experiences of the recruits. Generally, the absence of Shona and Ndebele fiction points out the fact that this literature avoids those aspects of liberation war history that cast nationalism in negative terms. Because the rear is a very sensitive space in nationalist politics, we argue that Shona and Ndebele historical fiction, which has a long tradition of generating state-centered perspectives, conveniently forgets this aspect. This also brings out the discrepancies that exist in trends on Zimbabwean literature on the liberation war. Having said this, mainly English historical fiction in this section remembers historical images and other detail which cast the rear as a problematic space; a space which in the words of Marechera (1978: 1) typifies a

House of Hunger where every morsel of sanity was snatched from you the way some kinds of birds snatch food from the very mouths of babes. And the eyes of that House of Hunger lingered upon you as though some indefinable beast was about to pounce upon you.

Emphasis is on the vulnerability of the ordinary or individual guerrilla recruits. This makes it different from narratives in Shona, Ndebele and English published in the early 1980s which tend to look at the rear from a celebratory standpoint.

#### 4.2.3 Rhodesian aerial bombings of camps in the rear and other complexities

Ndebele's novel, *Kwakunzima* (1997), which is published several years after independence, is less celebratory of life in the rear. It underscores the difficulties that recruits and refugees went through in neighbouring countries. Life in the camps is depicted as excruciatingly difficult. There are massive shortages of food, clothes, bedding as well as aerial bombing and internal fighting which put the lives of the recruits at risk. Commenting on *Kwakunzima* (1997), Chiwome and Mguni (2003: 145) argue that:

The writer is one of the few that record hardships in a refugee camp at Nampundwe, Zambia, around 1979. He breaks silence over life in the war rear beyond the borders of Zimbabwe: recruits are short of clothes, soap and weapons for self-defence, except for the guards. These details are corroborated by history.

Fictional images in *Kwakunzima* (1997) echo evidence from history in the sense that Nampundwe was one of the reception camps for refugees which got overwhelmed with rising numbers of people escaping from Rhodesian brutality. In this regard, the consequent complex experiences come out through Dingilizwe, the narrator and author's voice of history.

The large numbers of refugees meant that resources were stretched to the limit. Living conditions also degenerated, thereby seriously compromising the health and integrity of inmates. For instance, Dingilizwe recalls that:

*Ukudla komuntu ozimeleyo ohleli kuhle kwakungekho lapha kodwa okomuntu ohluphekayo kwakunengi sibili. Into eyayihlupha lapha yisepa lezigqoko. Mina ngangilokhu ngigqoke engangisuke lazo ekhaya, lazo zasezizinjobo. Kwakungelanditshi, Ngakho sasigeza njalo sigezisela esifuleni esasiseduzane. Inalithi sasizenzela ngencingo besesithatha intambo zamasaka empuphu sithunge ngazo. Kwesinye isikhathi impuphu yayiphela, ize ibuye ngemva kwensuku ezimbili loba ezintathu (18).*

Food for someone intent on healthy eating was just not there here; but that for the sufferer was abundant for sure. Soap and clothes were a problem here. I was still putting on the very clothes that I had left home with, and they were now rags. There were no bathing basins. So we bathed and washed in the nearby stream. We had made needles out of wires and we would then take strings from mealie meal sacks and use them for sewing. At times we would run out of mealie meal, and it would come after two or three days.

The scarcity of food in the camps as shown in Ndebele's account of history published in the 1990s contrasts sharply with images of abundance in the camps as highlighted in *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), a creation of the early 1980s. While it can be argued that the two writers are representing experiences from ZIPRA and ZANLA camps, respectively, conditions in the camps were relatively similar. In *Kwakunzima* (1997) recruits go for days without food. A former ZIPRA cadre said about experiences in the camps that: "When we started to fight for the country, we went to Botswana and

from there to Zambia, where we stayed as refugees. Everything was in short supply. Airplanes came and bombed us” (Werbner, 1991: 165). Similar experiences obtained in Mkushi, a ZIPRA training camp in Zambia as revealed in Getrude Moyo’s interview with Dube (2000: 22) that “there was a grave shortage of food. Sometimes we would go for two or three days without food. We would just drink water, and others would eat wild fruits.” In addition, the physical training is presented as physically enervating. Due to the shortage of blankets, nightfall turns out to be a nightmare for the young recruits who have to endure the trauma of sleeplessness. There are deadly Rhodesian bombings in the camp which result in heavy casualties.

The panic stricken refugees, alias recruits, desperately flee in all directions. In one horrendous incident, the narrator portrays images of recruits during an attack by the Rhodesian air force in which some of them are running without heads as reflected in the following incident:

*Egijima engasela khanda, selihle laqunyelwa entanyeni yizicucu zamabhomba...abanye umuntu esebhebha ngoba ethelwe yilokhu okuthiwa yinaphamu (napalm) okunjengelambazi (19)*

Running without a head, which would have been chopped off right on the neck by small pieces of bombs...some would be ablaze because they would have been hit by napalm, a porridge like substance.

The confusion and horror in the camp as well as the painful deaths caused by napalm as depicted in *Kwakunzima* (1997) appear in line with historical evidence presented by Joyce Sithabile Ndlovu, a former ZIPRA combatant, who, in an interview with Nkala (2000: 96) recalls that:

People were running in all directions, and the camp was all smoke because they had bombed the armoury first and it was exploding, filling the whole camp with smoke. Each person was running, trying to get to safety, but it was difficult to get a place to hide because they had started by burning the tall grass where we were supposed to run and hide. Again there was a river we were supposed to cross. In addition to it being wide and deep, napalm had been poured into the water. We saw others burning, but still attempting to get into the water and cross the river...We were told that if napalm is poured on your body, it is better to roll yourself on dry sand because sand does not have oxygen. Some people had been sprayed with napalm. Because of the confusion, they ran into the river because they thought that

under normal circumstances water is used to put out a fire. The water was also burning because napalm had also been poured into the water. Those who ran into the water were heavily burnt...

The picture is frightening. It resembles genocide. As reflected in the oral accounts of the former combatants above, Ndebele's *Kwakunzima* (1997) makes no attempt to eclipse the vulnerability of guerrilla recruits and refugees in the rear because being a refugee in one of the camps in Zambia, Ndebele, the author, saw for himself the horror in the war.

As the Rhodesian bombs come down on the recruits, *Kwakunzima* (1997) shows that they have no guns to defend themselves save for the guards and this again finds support from a testimony by Joyce Sithabile Ndlovu in the same interview with Nkala (2000: 110). She says that "the day we were bombed, we were not yet allowed to keep our guns with us, so whether we [would have] fired back or run away as we did, that I cannot say because it did not happen that way." Analogous experiences are also obtainable in ZANLA camps especially during the time when the Rhodesian government embarked on a crusade to destroy rear bases. As Prudence Uriri a former combatant informs McCartney (2000: 78) in an interview that: "Some of us had guns, but not all of us. It was mainly the guys who had guns, people like security guards who guarded the camp. They had guns but the majority of people were not armed."

The degree and level of vulnerability and exposure in the camp underscores human plight in a war situation. Most notable is the fact that Ndebele in *Kwakunzima* (1997) notes the absence of comfort and joy in a war situation even though the fact that "many people suffered psychologically and some actually became mentally disturbed" (quoted in Nkala, 2000: 99) as a result of these horrendous military operations is not captured. Silence on the debilitating psychological effect of the war characterises fiction in Ndebele and Shona. Like other writers in Zimbabwean fiction in African languages, Ndebele depicts images limited to physical injuries, death and general vulnerability only.

The repetitive use of the word '*kwakunzima*' throughout this fictional account of liberation war history underlines the difficult and complex position in which the

recruits find themselves in a rear camp. The writer creates history from an insider's point of view since he was there in the camps and experienced and witnessed the events as they happened. The first person narrative embellishes this understanding and fundamentally narrows narrative distance between the narrator and the event. While Ndebele (1997) does not delve into the psychological debilities caused by such shortages, his account of the liberation war in ZIPRA camps is also supported by Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000: 146) who comment on the ubiquitous hardships in the camps as follows:

Those experiences were in part owed simply to the hardship of camp life – the food shortages and harsh discipline, and the intensive Rhodesian bombing campaigns of the last years of the war. But they were also owed to the divisions which marred ZAPU and ZIPRA and, much more powerfully, the relations between ZAPU and ZANU...

Ndebele's version of liberation war history in *Kwakunzima* (1997) becomes a critique and a deconstruction of the romantic accounts of the 1980s as well as the official nationalist ideology especially on rear experiences. His vision is premised on stressing the pain and difficulty that accompanied the war in the rear, rather than the pomp and fanfare that authors such as Sungano in *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) appear desperate to impose on readers. It appears that the author, who, at one time was a refugee, is not able to romanticise rear experiences as he personally experienced the hardships. His concerns speak more to authenticity rather than an attempt to gratify the status quo.

Whereas some writers in African languages in Zimbabwe seem to maintain rigid creative traditions, Ndebele breaks with the trend as he abandons celebration, particularly on life in the rear. Although celebration is an indispensable facet of life, it has the potential to limit and truncate critical reflection especially when taken to be the only vocation of life. It must not interfere with the search for national truth. A balance between celebration and critical reflection is unavoidable when it comes to taking action that is transformative. The pattern that one observes in trends in Zimbabwe's liberation war fiction published from the late 1980s onwards is that the difficulties that the recruits experienced in the camps also translate into their experiences at the front. There is therefore a direct correlation between the writer's image of rear experiences and battlefield images. *Kwakunzima* (1997) clearly

illustrates this. Although the guerrilla fighters record some victories, the writer emphasises the fact that contacts with the Rhodesian forces were never easy, an observation also made in Chiwome and Mguni (2003: 148) as:

The novelist notes danger that comes from monetary rewards that are put upon heads of freedom fighters. The rewards pose much danger to the fighters. In areas with thin vegetation like Bulilimamangwe, fighters have problems of finding adequate cover. This does not make their task easy as they are greatly outnumbered by the enemy.

In the same vein, events in the rear as depicted in Mele's novel, *Impi* (1987) find brief expression through radio broadcasts. These are mainly limited to Rhodesian bombings of camps like Chimoio and Mkushi. The author emphasises how such brutal Rhodesian acts emotionally pained ordinary peasants at home as seen through Jubela and Mafu, two elderly peasants in the novel. The above mentioned broadcasts are not a figment of the writer's imagination. They are part of memory validated by historical accounts on the war. Broadcasting war propaganda to peasants and guerrillas in Zimbabwe was one aspect that both ZAPU and ZANU intensified during the late 1970s as Bhebe (1999: 104) explains:

By 1977 Radio Maputo and Radio Lusaka were beaming a lot of propaganda by ZANU and ZAPU concerning the escalation of their efforts and the successes they were scoring and the two parties were urging the sons and daughters of Zimbabwe to come forward and take up arms to topple the oppressive colonial regime.

#### **4.2.4 Physical training, violence, death and the resultant psychological trauma**

Liberation war historical fiction writers in English whose works are published in the late 1980s onwards consistently and uniformly depict the recruits' experiences in the rear as devastating and dehumanising, unlike most of their counterparts in Shona and Ndebele who seem to vacillate (with the exception of *Kwakunzima* 1997). They focus on the plight of the ordinary guerrilla recruit who becomes an epitome of the operational dynamics of the nationalist idea, movement, or ideology. The transformation from civilian life to military life is depicted as a complex and often traumatic an experience. Young boys and girls from school find it difficult to adapt to a new existential experience punctuated with severe shortages, excessive violence and rigorous military exercises. The encounter with such an experience engenders

widespread victimhood, vulnerability and helplessness. More significantly, it brings severe psychological trauma and mental illnesses. This is triggered by the fact that the young recruits were not mentally prepared for the novel encounter. In an interview with McCartney (2000: 66), Prudence Uriri, a former combatant, reveals that after about four weeks:

I started to feel that life was much tougher than I had expected. I was not really prepared for this kind of tiredness in the sense that everything that you did was a response to a command. You didn't have the freedom to go out of the gate; you had to report to someone. I was not used to that, and a lot of people were not used to that...It was such a sudden change. You are not prepared for the new things. You didn't even have information of what things were going to look like, and suddenly you had to be part of it and expected to take it. You missed your family and friends, and those things you were used to and wanted to do yourself.

This becomes one important aspect that differentiates fiction in Shona and Ndebele from fiction in English. Cause and effect are made explicit. Whereas the former talks about shortages of food, clothing and bedding among other things, fiction in English goes further to show the resultant psychological impairment. In this regard, fiction in English affords readers an in-depth analysis of the guerrilla and human condition in general. This is critical in redefining national policy on healing and rehabilitation since these have largely been done on the basis of physical injuries. Redefining is crucial in knowledge production. Writers who bring out the psychological effects of the liberation war seem to be writing from an insider's perspective as they are former combatants, save for Chinodya (1989). These include Kanengoni in *Echoing Silences* (1997), Samupindi in *Pawns* (1992) and Mazorodze in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989). The fictional accounts on liberation war history exude a high degree of narrative immediacy.

In the novels under study in this section, what undermines the humanity and beingness of the recruits in the rear are not just the shortages of basics, but the violent and complex nature of the war, especially those complexities and violent practices which make independent choices a luxury. The narratives give a vivid description of the history of nationalist violence and its effects on guerrillas during and after the liberation war. *Kwakunzima* (1997), discussed above, which is the only narrative in indigenous languages to talk about violence in the rear, does not pursue

its effects on the affected after the attainment of independence. At the same time, it mainly identifies the Rhodesians as the sole authors of violence and not the guerrillas and their commanders. Historical fiction in English depicts the guerrillas as part of the vilest perpetrators of violence as will be shown. Through characters like Munashe in *Echoing Silences* (1997), Fangs in *Pawns* (1992), Benjamin in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) and Advance Chimurenga in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989), all of them far from being heroes, the authors underline the existence of torture in the rear and solely perpetrated by fellow guerrillas, mostly at the behest of the commanders. They particularly focus on the psychology of torture and how it compromises individual dignity, security and sense of self. The tortured guerrilla recruits suffer permanent emotional and psychological damage. Against this background, the research argues that historical literature in English published in the late 1980s onwards is more inward looking, and quite crucially, is characterised by a “tendency toward greater open-mindedness, which serve[s] as a basis for the presentation of a more complex historical narrative that no longer ignore[s] the shadows in [Zimbabwean] history” (Podeh, 2000: 84).

*Echoing Silences* (1997), written by a former combatant, Kanengoni, depicts the experiences of young recruits in Botswana and Zambia as shown through Bazooka, Munashe and others whose names are not given. In particular, it highlights the disfigurement of the body as a result of ruthless violence perpetrated by fellow guerrillas, as already said. It recreates images that project liberation war nationalism as vile, revolting, dehumanising and paralysing. It partly does this by focusing on the internal contradictions of the movement which increase the vulnerability of the participants. *Echoing Silences* also emphasises the self-immolating potential of the nationalist movement, rather than its liberating powers. In other words, it emphasises what appears to be an insatiable propensity of the nationalist movement to incapacitate and injure the body – emotionally and physically. This version of liberation war historiography proffers a forthright counter voice to the early version in Sungano’s *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), Ndlovu’s *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) and Mahamba’s *Ndangariro* (n.d) which suffers from a “fear of telling the truth” (Davidson, 1981: ix). Furthermore, the same version of historiography opens up and increases intellectual space and opportunity to contest discourse on nation and nationalism by moving from singular to plural and transgressive interpretive positions. This marks a



state of affairs in which historiography is creatively and critically marshalled to advance the democratisation process in Zimbabwe, which involves, among other things, the vigorous contestation of “the exclusive and intolerant nationalism” (Alexander, 2006: 116) sanctioned by the ruling elite (ZANU [PF]).

Kanengoni’s *Echoing Silences* (1997) powerfully demythologises the official mythology of the liberation war as shown in *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) and Ndlovu’s *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990). The young recruits in the historical narrative are cast as victims of the very historical process that sought to liberate them. Camp life destroys their balance and sanity to the extent that when they are finally sent to the front, their perception of the war as a liberating process is tragically compromised. The camp is depicted as “a virtual penitentiary in which no one emerges victorious” (Muwati, 2005: 84). The young recruits curse themselves for having ever joined the liberation war. As already insinuated, this becomes paradoxical in that the war which is intended to liberate and guarantee a pluriformity of freedoms dehumanises instead.

Max, a young man in *Echoing Silences* (1997), whose war name is Bazooka, is mendaciously accused of being a witch by security. The historicity of the guerrillas’ fear of witchcraft or sorcery is endorsed by evidence from Werbner (1991: 150) who explains that:

The guerrillas feared the attack from sorcerers as food poisoners and the betrayal by *batenges* ‘sell-outs’ as agents or informers by the Rhodesians. The two things were not easily separated: the sorcerer and the sell-out were often equated in practice or were labels different people used for the same victim of suspicion...On the basis of suspicion, and sometimes after a trial, the guerrillas punished suspected sorcerers, often by severe beating, or by torture to death.

In the narrative, the accusation of practicing witchcraft lands Bazooka in very serious trouble and punishment. His body is exposed to severe torture that permanently immobilises his self-esteem, self-confidence and dignity as a man. He suffers both physical and psychological injuries. In narrating Bazooka’s ordeal at the hands of the senior guerrillas, the author recounts the pathetic experience as follows:

Bazooka was a silent, thoughtful, stocky fellow in the same platoon as Munashe, who did not have any friends. Unfortunately, during military

training at Chimbichimbi in eastern Zambia, his sorrowful eyes and general loneliness got him into trouble. Security suspected that he was a witch and the man was briefly detained for interrogation. Even after the torture and the beatings, they could not find any corroborative evidence and released him...He was only released when he eventually confessed that he was indeed a witch and was willing to relinquish his evil ways and be rehabilitated (5).

Detention, solitary confinement, the torture and the beatings are expressions of the extent to which the guerrilla leaders in the novel intend to inflict maximum damage to the body. As if physical torture is not enough, Bazooka is forced to make a false confession. Thus, both the physical and psychological geography of the body suffers massive abrading. These ways of punishing the body signify the entrenched nature of the history of violence that has continued to characterise the nationalist party's (ZANU [PF]) transactions with its political nemeses. After this mishap, Bazooka is completely withdrawn as he finds it difficult to associate with others. Withdrawal, which is a symptom of the deep psychological damage suffered by this young recruit, is a consequence of torture. His only companion becomes the bazooka (gun). By hooking himself to the gun and nothing else, it is a measure of the extent to which his humanity has been compromised by the torture. The whole experience of torture and the consequent trauma inevitably makes characters like Bazooka very difficult to fit into civilian society in peace time. The use of violence against guerrilla recruits was widespread in the camps. It dealt a serious deathblow to consanguinity and feelings of self-worth. Unlike the image of the camp in *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) where security and comfort abound, *Echoing Silences* (1997) shows that the camp was a very hostile environment. As previously hinted, the authors of the hostility and insecurity are presented as the fellow guerrillas and not just the Rhodesian forces as in *Kwakunzima* (1997) and most other historical narratives in African languages in Zimbabwe. Thus, African languages fiction in Zimbabwe endeavours to sanitise nationalism by camouflaging its history of violence.

Just like Bazooka, Munashe is also subjected to excruciating torment and coerced to emit sounds that gratify his tormentors. Because what he is forced to say as a result of the torture is against his conscience, Munashe suffers serious psychological impairment. He is coerced to say that he is a spy sent by the Rhodesian forces only because he is seen reading a book. The exchange between Munashe and the

section commander who “flipped carelessly through the pages” is rendered by the author as follows:

“What’s this?”

“It’s a book.”

“Stupid! Do you think I am blind?”...

“Is *this* what *they* gave you to come and spy for them?”

Munashe did not understand what was happening. “You can take the book and read it if you want to,” he stammered.

“Who told you that I can’t read?” the young commander challenged him (6).

The existence of forced confessions in the camps is an aspect also confirmed by Chung (2006: 136) when pointing out that “confessions were being extorted by extreme torture.” As indicated above, the torture triggered by the fact that one is seen reading a book fundamentally reveals the widely documented conflict between the illiterate or semi-literate and literate guerrillas in camps. Ranger (1999: 696) also identifies the existence of the abrasive relationship between the educated and the uneducated guerrillas, which he explains as the “neurotic fear of spies that prevailed at Zanla camps in Zambia and Mozambique and which led to virtually all educated recruits being accused of espionage.” The acute violation of the body signals what in the novel appears to be general helplessness and vulnerability of the body at the hands of nationalism. Historiography is marshalled to articulate “the stand the writers have taken towards their leadership, [particularly ZANU PF]” (Veit-Wild, 1993: 111).

Munashe abandoned his university studies where he was doing economics to join the liberation war. In an interview with McCartney (2000: 68 & 69), Prudence Uriri, a former ex-combatant, also provides testimony which lends credence to evidence of the open hostility between the educated and the uneducated guerrillas:

In most cases the other thing that happened was that the first groups of people that went to the war were less educated than the later groups. There was a big internal conflict amongst the forces...some people feeling that they were the ones who started the war but that positions were now being given to the latecomers who had been to school, those who could write so they could write reports, and those who were selected to train other people; for example, in political orientation. You had to be able to read those Mao books that were the basis of our orientation. So there was a bad attitude between those who went to war first – before they had gone further with their

education – and those who came later, because later some people even came from the university. Others had been working in towns and some had been to high schools, and this was not the case with most of the people who went to the struggle during the early days.

The subsequent forced public confession traumatises and mortifies Munashe. The mental trauma that Munashe experiences needs to be understood against the stigma associated with being labelled a sell-out in the war because it would mean losing all friends and consociations. Again, it is a new experience for a young man like Munashe. The author describes the impact the forced confession had on him as: “To have admitted to something he had not done gave rise to a strange, persistent sense of shame” (9). The Shona people have a proverb which says *nyadzi dzinokunda rufu* (shame is worse than death). The persistent sense of shame leads to alienation from self and from the group. It divests him of a sense of self worth, an attribute that no human being can afford to forego and still remain human.

Such experiences of torture through forced public confessions become part of the permanent sad war memories that torment both Bazooka and Munashe throughout the struggle. The recruit who eventually becomes a guerrilla is dehumanised right from the onset. When viewed metaphorically, the camp as depicted in the novel can be said to symbolise the nation and the idea of nationalism years after the attainment of political independence, which also is the time when the novel is published. During this time, individuals, particularly the so-called ordinary people, are very vulnerable to the machinations of the nationalist party, ZANU (PF), whose intransigence and general stranglehold on matters of nation narrows options and choices in life.

Of note is the psychological trauma the two guerilla recruits, that is, Bazooka and Munashe experience after their respective ordeals. Fanon (1967: 202) explains the subversive nature of torture and its power to trigger moral and mental contamination by drawing attention to the fact that, “torture, as might well be expected, upsets most profoundly the personality of the person who is tortured.” It is mainly the human mind which suffers permanent damage from torture. However, the psychological impact of the war has been underplayed in early narratives which tended to focus only on the physical impact of the war and in particular, the guerrilla body’s capacity to withstand suffering and violence associated with war. Writers like Kanengoni in *Echoing Silences* (1997) recount the damaging war experiences with a view to show that the

liberation war did not just do physical damage, but that it also had imponderable psychological consequences. In other words, it caused severe mental suffering which needed, and still needs to be attended to in independent Zimbabwe.

The shift from the physical to the psychological space of the nationalist movement, idea or ideology, is an intriguing creative aspect in liberation war historical fiction in Zimbabwe. This is a clear case in which the body is instrumentalised as an intellectual resource and terrain of historical and political representation. Liberation war historical narratives published in the early 1980s restrict their remembrance of the body to the physical realm, whereas those published in the late 1980s and beyond remember the body not only in terms of the physical, but the psychological realm as well. Inclusion of the psychological slate is part of the dynamics of moving from monolithic to complex and plural interpretations of the nation's history. The consequent complication and pluralisation of historiography is reflective of the fluid and shifting identity and tone of discourse on nation and nationalism in Zimbabwe, especially several years after independence. The physical space is readily available, public and linked to the group philosophy in official nationalist discourse whereas the psychological space is restricted, private and rather linked to individualised consciousness. When viewed in the context of the politics of transition in Zimbabwe, this discursive glide demonstrates how nationalism has shifted from the public arena (meaning popular) to the private space (no longer popular with majority). It also reflects that the challenges that Zimbabwe is facing need conscientious examination rather than superficial visitations.

*Echoing Silences* (1997) also depicts a woman combatant who is made to torture Munashe. She ties Munashe's testicles with a string as a form of punishment. This is in addition to the severe beating which leaves his eardrums damaged, face puffed up, lips torn and eyes unable to open. Given both the biological and symbolic value of testicles in defining, naming, affirming or refuting manhood and, by extension, fatherhood, it can be said that Munashe's dignity and humanity is irreparably compromised. The genitally focused torture 'unmans' Munashe. Furthermore, the image of a woman playing with the balls of a man not only renders Munashe a victim, but the torturer as well is also dehumanised. Baldwin (1995: 66) has explained this perpetrator-victim dialectic thus: "It is a terrible, an inexorable, law that one cannot

deny the humanity of another without diminishing one's own: in the face of one's victim, one sees oneself." Choosing a woman to torture Munashe because he is suspected of espionage completely transposes her and gets rid of the gentility expected of women. It is also paradoxical in that where one is supposed to relax, enjoy and feel pleasure, there is pain. Munashe's experience of torture at the hands of a woman combatant vindicates Muchemwa and Muponde's (2007: xvii) explanation that, "men who belong to marginalised masculinities can be feminized through rape and torture. Current political cultures are sustained by the manning of many sites of identity so as to efficiently man women and children and to thoroughly unman other man."

At another level of analysis, the incident also shows that women in the war were also capable of carrying out crude punishments just like their male counterparts. Nancy Saungweme, a former combatant, said in an interview with Musengezi (2000: 52) that she was brutally assaulted by

some women, who were long-standing members of ZANU and members of the general staff...The ground was wet and muddy. We were ordered to lie face down. We each had one hundred lashes with a sjambok. For two weeks I could not sit; my buttocks turned purple. Even today they bear the scars. They ordered us to sing as they beat us. '*Rangarira vakuru zuva riya rawakasiya vanamai vachichema.* (Remember the day you left your mothers crying). For me the beatings were worse than the bombing I experienced as I crossed the border into Mozambique. Other women were doing this to us. Maybe they so much wanted to be like men, to be tough and cruel like them.

At the same time, the privacy, respect and restraint between men and women, as well as between individuals that informs dignity and human sovereignty compared to other animal species loses value in the war. Bvuma, a poet and former combatant like Kanengoni, captures this loss of privacy in one of his poems which appears in *Every Stone that Turns* (1999). The degrading war environment, where relieving oneself is divested of the routine and normal privacy is spectacularly captured in the poem 'Private Affair'. Bvuma (1999: 6) recalls that:

We squatted there exchanging fantasies over stinking shit  
We chewed nostalgic bones from back home...

As you pushed a rough stick between your mal-nourished

bottom and pulled upwards twisting to wipe you sighed  
and reminisced 'shitting used to be a private affair.'

The above poem dramatically captures the absence and loss of comfort in the natural act of passing stool and, this represents a very subtle form of human degradation. The war violates both the physical and the psychological constituencies of the human being. Talk about 'shitting' may seem insignificant yet its execution is inextricably linked to human self-worth. Bvuma (1999) therefore captures a very subtle form of psychological dehumanisation, just like Kanengoni (1997). In the case of Munashe, the experiences of torture in the rear become a permanent part of his psychological nightmares during and after the war of liberation. He never recovers as his life becomes a contest between the traumatised and tortured past and the traumatising and torturing present.

In another case showing the vulnerability of guerrilla recruits in rear camps, Munashe observes a young man

in nothing but soiled underpants...His arms were tied with copper wire around the elbows behind his back so that he looked like chicken being held by the wings; his chest was abnormally pushed out...Munashe looked at his arms and saw the bulge that had formed between his shoulders and he wondered what wrong the young man could have done to be punished in this way (6).

The incident shows the heartlessness of the punishers. They, too, have been mentally conditioned by the war to mastermind and administer such heinous forms of punishment. The improvisation seen in the method of torture becomes a symbolic statement on the general war environment or the idea of nationalism in the rear and its impact on the human psyche and human behaviour in general. Most crucial, however, is that the kind of terror visited upon the body is an indictment of nationalism. Tortured in his nude state, paraded in front of bewildered onlookers and the body tied with wire just shows how the body is considered an expendable resource. The graphic description paints an odious image of the liberation war, which paradoxically is eulogised by the elite as the unexampled historical feat that ever happened to Zimbabwe. Through this image and many others in *Echoing Silences*, Kanengoni unravels incongruities between official discourse and history as experienced by the participants.

Due to idleness and aimlessness and the large numbers of recruits in the camps, discipline deteriorated. This period which Kanengoni (1997) presents through fiction resembles what in Zimbabwe's liberation war history is called *détente*, meaning a halt in fighting due to internal problems within ZANLA and talks aimed at ending the war. Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 59) explains that "with the ZANU leadership in Zambian jails on allegations of assassinating their own Party leader, Herbert Chitepo, there were no training programmes in place to absorb the recruits throughout 1975. The camps were full of young people with nowhere else to go...The result was prolonged idleness and a deterioration of morale and discipline."

As shown in the preceding argument, the central character in *Echoing Silences* (1997), Munashe, is an 'anti-hero' but not a flaccidly hopeless pessimist. He becomes the prism through which readers come to terms with the devastating impact of the liberation war and the history of the violent pasts in Zimbabwe. In this regard, Kanengoni in *Echoing Silences* (1997) forthrightly portrays the sufferings and traumatic experiences of the guerrillas during Zimbabwe's war of liberation. He lays emphasis on the viciousness and dehumanising nature of the liberation war. It should be made explicit that in most of the liberation war fictional narratives written in the English language and published in the late 1980s and beyond, anti-heroism is not synonymous with non-commitment or detachment; it merely manifests a human condition in which the individual is very vulnerable, while expanding vistas of historical representation. It is also a counter-discourse to official historiography and history viewed exclusively through the prism of heroism. One therefore notices the construction and subsequent evolution of a vigorous contest between heroism in Shona and Ndebele fiction in the 1980s, 1990s and twenties and anti-heroism in English fiction in the late eighties onwards.

Historical fiction on the liberation war is inalienably and inextricably linked to the ongoing politics of memory representation and contestation in the neocolonial state that Zimbabwe is today. Kanengoni (1997) and others like him represent a volition to pluralise liberation war historiography and memory representation. They seek to construct and advance a conceptual pedagogy of history wherein anti-heroism (victimhood) is also a legitimate discursive centre on accounts on the liberation war.



They debunk the operationalisation, canonisation and promotion of the heroic view point by showing that there are numerous and; equally legitimate historical alternatives and perspectives that potentially increase national consciousness and in the process set the tone, agenda and basis for restorative action taking.

This vision contributes significantly to the covert and overt contestations of nation and nationalism in the neocolonial era. The promulgation of the victim image of the guerrilla is not unrelated to the construction of plural or multiple nationalisms intended to contest and debunk a moribund and bigoted nationalist discourse maintained and perpetuated by the state. The pluralisation and diversification of historical images and vantage points is consistent with the population's commitment to challenge a monolithic historical narrative which has served as a bastion for hegemony. Ordinary people represented by ordinary guerrilla characters in the form of Munashe and Marx are also claiming a stake in nationalist history, which is a passport to access the national cake.

Let it be remembered that *Echoing Silences* (1997) is published in the late 1990s, some of whose experiences include “devastating drought and economic hardship [and] disaffection [which] spread through the country as a whole” (Alexander, 2006: 108). Significantly, the publication of *Echoing Silences* in 1997 also coincides with the demonstrations by the ex-combatants from the 1970s liberation war against the “party-state” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007: 78) which they accused of neglecting and betraying the goals of the struggle. Interestingly, Kanengoni is one of those ex-combatants, meaning he cannot totally be dissociated from the thinking that he mobilises and marshalls historical resources from the liberation war with a view to register disenchantment with the nationalist regime in power since 1980. Again, the majority of the populace is harangued by social and economic conundrums, most of which are blamed on the nationalist government which ushered in the abhorred Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). ESAP resulted in the retrenchment of many breadwinners, reduced government intervention in social security leading to unprecedented levels of poverty and a life that “can be characterised as precarious, and nourished by roots that go no deeper than the daily contingencies of living” (Raftopoulos & Yoshikuni, 1999: 8). For example, the

researcher's father, an office orderly and sole breadwinner, was retrenched during this time, plunging the family into very serious trouble.

Mazorodze's novel, *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) similarly depicts experiences in the rear as psychologically, physically and spiritually excoriating. The novel, which is episodic, devotes a large amount of space to guerrilla experiences in the rear. It describes in great detail what appears to be a horrendous and trauma-inducing experience in the camps. From the young recruits' point of view, the instructors use excessive violence on them during training since they do not show any merciful attitude as is the case in *Kuda Muhondo* (1985). In fact, there seems to be some kind of war between guerrilla recruits and those training them. Ill recruits are exposed to torturous exercises that further exacerbate their physical and mental condition. Alexio recounts how one such group of ill recruits is handled by a group of trainers:

In no time the over-enthusiastic instructors were upon the group of ill recruits like dogs on a stray cat. In no time enormous amounts of dust were hurled into the air by the ailing recruits trotting on the spot (126).

In another incident, Alexio (whose guerrilla name is Advance Chimurenga) who is unwell is struck several times with a stick. He is then made to knock his head against another recruit to the extent that he regrets ever joining the so-called liberation war. Reporting on the psychological impact this incident had on him, the author reports that Alexio "felt so demoralised that life or death could have meant the same thing ..." (127). In an interview with McCartney (2000: 67), Prudence Uiri expressed related feelings when she stated that: "I felt very bad. In fact I, personally, felt that I had made a mistake to go and join the war." A former guerrilla interviewed by the researcher said that "the type of training we were receiving was much harder." Again, the sad experiences during training are similar to Mavis Nyathi's (former combatant) views in which she says that "the whole training process was an unhappy event. During training you hated all the instructors, all of them" (Mavis Nyathi in an interview with Madonko, 2000: 142). In *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) all the instructors are friendly and likeable.

It is emphatic in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) that military training in the camps becomes one of the numerous processes that trigger mental suffering. In this

regard, the author underscores the psychological and traumatic consequences resulting from the violence and physical exercises. Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000: 146) explain the nexus between the violent physical training and mental trauma in the camps:

The training camps played a central role in guerrilla accounts. It was here that the recruits were given war names, symbolizing their transition from civilian to soldier. And it was here that they were trained in warfare. The rigorousness of this process was often a surprise...It was also a period in which many suffered the most traumatic experiences of the war.

The painstaking military exercises force the young guerrilla recruits into making daring and dangerous decisions including abortive and yet costly attempts at escape. At one point, Donald Dinkaka attempts to escape and is subsequently arrested and locked up for several months in a maximum security jail underground. Similarly, Mabhunu in Samupindi's *Pawns* (1989) is another recruit who is captured after he attempts to return home. He is given forty-five cuts while the rest of the recruits are made to sing and cheer. As a result of the severity of the punishment, he dies. The author shows the punishers' indifference to Mabhunu's death; which indifference is reflected in the manner "the remains are gathered together and discarded" (71), just like that!

Conditions in the camp always made it difficult for many recruits to go through training. Many young recruits were killed as they tried to resist being returned to the camps. When interviewed by McCartney (2000, 67), Prudence Uriri, a former combatant who experienced life in the camps said that:

In fact a lot of people tried to run away at that time because there was a lot of suffering...they were caught before they could go very far, either by the Mozambicans, who brought them back to the bases, or by comrades. They would be put in prison or they would be given punishment. The main punishment was that you got thoroughly beaten up or you were sent to prison where you were also beaten up, or received some kind of torture within the camp, depending on the case. If your case was considered a light one, you would be imprisoned in a small hut; if the allegations against you were considered treacherous, you would be put in the underground prison.

During training women are also treated in the same manner as their male counterparts. For all their femininity, no preferential treatment is accorded them. Evidence in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) indicates that women are equally harassed just like their male colleagues. Many a time their clothing would be torn during the vigorous exercises with the result that their sensitive parts would be exposed. Advance Chimurenga is affected by such a scenario making him confess that: "It was always a distressing sight to see women going about with mucus dripping out of their noses and dirt piling in their grooved bodies" (133). The experiences of a former guerrilla fighter, Rufaro, interviewed by Lyons (2004: 188) confirm the fact that women and men received the same military training and, were treated equally during military exercises:

The men didn't treat us like women. They made sure that if he says "this," you do "that." Even when we went for judo, he would give you a man to try. But women had no say [what went on in the camps], because when you are a recruit you have no say, you just take orders.

Apart from the ubiquitous physical violence, *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) highlights camp conditions which made life very difficult. The environment in which the recruits lived threatened psychological balance. The increasing number of recruits in the rear as already alluded to made it difficult for the ZANLA and ZIPRA armies to provide for them adequately. For instance, Mazorodze in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) paints a graphic scene in which the recruits bath together in 'messed' up water. His description of life along the Pungwe River is supported by Chung (2006). The Pungwe River serves twelve base camps. The narrator is so close to the event to the effect that the reader feels the painfully asphyxiating emotions. While the experience of bathing together was also practiced at home, it is the quality of the water and the lack of options that is worrying. Collective bathing meant that the various diseases in the camps quickly spread among recruits. The same water is again used for drinking and cooking purposes. Describing the repulsive scene in the river, Mazorodze in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) summarises what was going on in Alexio's mind at the time:

However, what was not easily understood was how anyone could bath in a river where more than half of the people in there had their skins rotting with measles and the rest molested by one skin disease or the other...When one of the comrades started working on the other's

body, the stone went breaking the pregnant pimples which immediately let out their stinking contents – a mixture of rotten blood, brownish pus and fresh blood. After the scrubbing (to which the one being scrubbed responded by closing his eyes tightly) the body of the one being bathed was smeared with a slippery brown-black substance with the sickening smell of a rotting wound...The whole area had a sickening smell of rotten wounds – a smell so bad that Alexio vowed never to bathe in the river under any circumstances. What he was not aware of was that the large camp was built along one river and consisted of Bases One to Twelve which meant that one base's bathing water would become another base's drinking water a few kilometers downstream (100).

Emphasis is on the psychological effect of such conditions. The conditions are mentally frightening and their impact permanent. It is always difficult to outlive such sickening memories.

The internal struggles as well as the détente exercise affected the proper administration of the liberation war. Those who were tragically affected were the ordinary recruits. In the novel, food shortages undermine the health and immunity of the recruits. At one point during détente, they eat one meal in three days. This makes them very vulnerable to diseases. It is during this time that Wilfred Mudhe in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989), a recruit from the same school with Advance Chimurenga and Donald Dinkaka dies as a result of severe malnutrition. Chung, the first Deputy Minister of Education in independent Zimbabwe was at one point an inmate of Pungwe iii (a camp which Mazorodze also writes about). In her reminiscences, Chung (2006: 194) says that “one of my most vivid memories of Pungwe 111 was the severe shortage of food. Long lines of freedom fighters would queue up to receive a handful of *mangai*, dried grains of maize that had been boiled. In addition, each one received a bit of salt, literally in their hands as there was a serious shortage of plates. This was the meal of the day. I found the *mangai* quite inedible, as it would soon give me a severe stomachache.” As a result, the mortality rate among recruits is said to be alarming:

Comrade Advance Chimurenga was alarmed by the rate at which his fellow comrades were dying – an average of five a week! One day he was in one of the companies that went to dig the graves. Five graves were dug and the comrades – mere moving skeletons – laboured with picks and shovels heavier than themselves, digging eternal resting places for their comrades-in-spirit who had passed away (102).

These cases of high mortality in camps due to a number of reasons have been corroborated by Carine Nyamandwe, a former combatant interviewed by Phiri (2000: 4 & 9). During the interview, Carine Nyamandwe had the following to say:

We were given duties, and the platoons took turns or rotated the duties. For instance, one platoon would go to the graveyard while others did other duties. A lot of people were dying – there was so much sickness – malaria, fever and diarrhoea. As a result people dreaded going for duty at the graveyard. It is not an easy task to handle the dead. Sometimes nine or more bodies were buried within a short space of time...Experiencing death is always painful – even if a family member dies one never feels comfortable – so just imagine so many people dead.

Witnessing these traumatic events leads to depression and withdrawal such that when training finally resumes, Advance Chimurenga goes through the paces “with the consciousness of a somnambulist” (130). Just like Munashe in Kanengoni’s *Echoing Silences* (1997), Advance Chimurenga finds it difficult to regain his sanity, a clinical condition known as adjustment disorder.

Samupindi’s novel, *Pawns* (1992) emphasises the preponderance of physical violence administered mainly through the whip. However, unlike fictional narratives in Ndebele and Shona, it establishes and simultaneously underscores the nexus between physical violence and psychological despair. The whip pervades the guerrillas’ lives in the camps. It is consistently and ferociously used during training, meal times and other instances when the young recruits are accused of any misdemeanor. It is a symbolic representation of the history of nationalist violence which engendered neurosis, death and continues to define politics in the neocolony. For example, Fangs, the author’s voice of history says:

If one lags an inch behind the whip descends, as it does on the back of a recalcitrant mule. If we don’t respond other instructors vent their whips as well...As we crawl the gaps between the trainees widen. The instructors lash their whips (91).

Consequently, the deaths of recruits due to physical violence become a daily phenomenon in the historical narrative. The violent and callous punishment of recruits is further seen in the experience of Joseph, a guerrilla recruit, who is caught while attempting to cheat the system and get himself a second portion of food. As

punishment, Joseph is “given a ten-liter dish full of sadza and powdered milk to devour. Above him the cane hovers. Joseph lowers his head into the food, tears running down his cheeks. The chanting continues.” (87). As a result, he defecates in full view of his colleagues. The cruelty of the punishment and the subsequent shitting traumatises and embarrasses him. His friend, Daniel, is also psychologically devastated by the whole experience of violence to which his colleague is subjected. Because of the trauma, he tells readers that: “I force myself through the crowd, my mind blank I want to be away. Very far away. Away from myself. Away from everything. I find myself locked inside – outside” (88). Such reconstructions of rear experiences offer a sombre and sober account of the war without any pretensions at mystification and glorification. These experiences of pain and suffering are vindicated by ex-combatants’ accounts on rear experiences. For instance, in an interview with McCartney (2000: 68), Prudence Uriri remembers that “there was a lot of beating up. People actually had wounds that would go many centimeters deep into their flesh – I don’t know how many – especially on the bum: you can’t sit, you can’t talk, sometimes the whole body is swollen.”

Historical fiction in English published in the late 1980s onwards does not visualise the war as an experience affecting all fighters uniformly. It focuses on the dialectics between the war and the individual. It shows the extent to which individual recruits are helpless victims of the nationalist idea, movement or ideology. This is echoed by a former combatant who revealed in an interview that “there was a feeling of hopelessness in the camp” (Musengezi, 2000: 50). Tormented recruits are given the opportunity to express their feelings of disillusionment. The stream of consciousness is used to emphasise psychological suffering. In this regard, it can be argued that this style of authorship makes it possible for the fictional narratives to offer a penetrating insight into the traumas that individual recruits experienced as a result of the war. At the same time, the writers redefine the concept of enemy of the struggle by showing that guerrillas traumatised fellow guerrillas. Thus, by being more inward looking than Shona and Ndebele authors who search for violators from without the guerrilla circles, English fiction writers place the history of violence in perspective; establish its origins and even comment on its development. This vision of history aids in the critical discussion and understanding of the recent politics of violence in Zimbabwe.

#### 4.2.5 Male-female guerrilla relationships: a case of violence and power abuse

English historical fiction published in the late 1980s onwards engages the past, and it appears with a very clear objective to unravel internecine differences, conflicts, abuse of power by high ranking guerrillas as well as the incongruous ideological positions within the nationalist movement, idea or ideology. For instance, Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) depicts two different versions of relationships between male and female guerrillas – one based on rape, force, sadism and abuse and the other on mutual attraction. Through the traumatised woman recruit, Kudzai, the novel shows how senior army commanders acted corruptly and abused their positions of power. Such cases of abuse have been recorded by Chung (2006: 125) in her description of Tongogara, the commander of ZANLA. Referring to Tongogara (ZANLA Chief of Defence) Chung explains that, "...he, like many of the senior commanders, demanded the sexual services of some of the young women guerrillas who had joined the liberation struggle in their thousands." Kudzai is incessantly abused and raped by an unnamed senior guerrilla commander. She carries out three abortions in one year as seen in her confession to Munashe, who is her confidante and comforter:

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...Can you report a superior? Now something strange is happening to me. I no longer menstruate and I am not pregnant (56).

This experience is almost similar to what Prudence Uriri presents as her own experience in the war rear. She says:

My first experience was when I was in Chimoio, when I was at this Chitepo College. I was called out by one very, very big chef to go to his *poshito* at the headquarters...I went there and he wanted to sleep with me and I did not want that...So I chanced my way out and I ran away...As long as you didn't talk about it nothing happened. It's something that you can never talk about because it was not possible to talk about it or report the chefs. It was not possible. I mean, who would you tell it to, because the next guy is also more or less doing the same thing? They wouldn't take each other to court or make a case out of it (McCartney, 2000: 76).

Similar evidence comes from Rugare Gumbo and Emmerson Mnangagwa, both former ZANU guerrilla leaders and later government ministers who said that "there



was also the loose, licentious and not so moral manner of living of some leaders in Maputo and the abuse of female cadres by commanders...Mnangagwa remembers that there were many cases of pregnancy among female cadres in the camps, especially where commanders stayed" (Bhebe, 2004: 215). In *Echoing Silences* (1997), the violent and forced sexual relationship with a senior guerrilla commander traumatises Kudzai. She suffers permanent mental and physical damage. While attributing menopause to the harsh conditions in the war in general, Precious Takawira, a former combatant quoted in Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 86) explains that "women reported missing their periods during the war. Others seemed to have suffered permanent damage to their reproductive systems...[and] have not been able to bear children."

At one point Kudzai is arrested and imprisoned for refusing to go to bed with an unnamed guerrilla commander. In her second experience of forced sexual encounter Prudence Uriri says that the man who arranged for her to sleep with the chef threatened her with imprisonment: "How can you do this?...How can you do that to chef? You must come and talk otherwise you go to prison" (in McCartney, 2000: 76). Eventually Kudzai is shot dead by the same guerrilla commander. Her entire experience in the war is punctuated by a pervasive victimhood and helplessness. The above scenario exposes the paradoxes of the nationalist ideology, movement or idea. Simon Muzenda is said to have felt that it was a contradiction to wage a war of national liberation whilst at the same time the party harboured oppressive and abusive practices against women (Bhebe, 2004: 225).

Through Kudzai's experiences, the author exposes corruption and power abuse in the war. Force and punishment were some of the methods used by senior commanders to make young girls succumb to their wild sexual demands. The ubiquitous cases of female sexual molestation by senior commanders in the rear made Simon Muzenda in Bhebe (2004: 224) to sarcastically remind his colleagues in a Central Committee meeting about the widespread violation of young girls by guerrilla leaders:

In response to Tekere, Muzenda reminded the Central Committee that he had a daughter in the camps and he had personally arranged for his daughter to have contraceptive devices because he did not want

her to fall pregnant as a result of rampant raping by commanders which was going on in the camps.

For that reason, it appears the war did not empower all women but provided unscrupulous patriarchal figures with an opportunity to exploit women in a violent context that offered them new definitions of power and privilege. It appears that the realisation that the war made women more vulnerable than they were at home makes Chipso, Kudzai's sister, to remark that "women seemed to have been helpless in the war, not allowed to make any decisions, exercise any choice" (75).

In Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992), evidence abounds of chefs who had sexual relationships with young guerrilla girls. These are said to have abused their privileged positions by taking advantage of shortages of basics in the camps. Fangs poetically and yet sardonically reveals incidences of the abuse of women and power in the liberation war:

At the chef's houses  
Assistants to the chefs  
Mostly young women  
Not unbeautiful. ... Sex is prohibited, officially  
It is not indulged in, officially  
But apart from Nehanda there's Osibisa  
Another women's base, officially  
Special women's base, officially (99 & 100).

Nehanda and Osibisa were camps for pregnant women and nursing mothers. The tone is clearly sarcastic. The liberation war provided a new platform for skewed gender relations. It facilitated the development and subsequent entrenchment of a bastardised form of patriarchy with no regard for African traditions. Samupindi's (1992) vision is that the liberation war undermined and corrupted Shona cultural perceptions based on the notion of *unhu*, unlike the vision that is promulgated in *Ndangariro* (n.d). Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 60-63) explains how the war environment promoted a new patriarchal consciousness which became synonymous with the

senior officers [who] could easily manipulate their privileged positions of being the controllers and distributors of scarce basic supplies. They could exploit their position as decision-makers, as the ones who appointed people for various tasks in the struggle...They would then

'advise' them [girls] that the way to survive was to 'behave well' towards them (the officers). In this way some men ended up with several girlfriends.

Similar evidence also obtains from Prudence Uriri, who, in an interview with McCartney (2000: 74) made the revelation that "when times were very hard, sometimes it was not really a forced relationship, but there was a condition which forced you, as an individual, to get into such a relationship because of material benefit...There were some relationships; yes, of course, where people would really be raped." In *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), a senior camp commander attempts to use his position to have sex with Ropa, the camp's school teacher.

In contrast to these positions, however, Munashe and Kudzai get mutually attracted to each other. They both share the similar experience of having suffered severe trauma and dehumanisation at the hands of the war. In Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), Pasi Nemasellout falls in love with Ropa, the camp teacher. They are simply attracted to each other. These relationships are not based on abuse but on respect of each other's individuality as is the case in Mahamba's *Ndangariro* (n.d). In a related case, Pasi Nemasellout falls in love with another woman guerrilla, Nkazana. Like other woman combatants, Nkazana is tasked with guarding the supplies base away from the war zones. She had been together with Pasi Nemasellout at the rear but the latter had somehow forgotten her. She is somewhat perturbed by the fact that Pasi Nemasellout fails to realise her. She does not hide her displeasure which is made in reference to her womanhood that the war threatens:

I must have changed a lot, then...**Tashataka**, we are now unlookable...He must have thought we were men, **nhaika**. And hondo iri **mayazi, sha** (241).

Pasi Nemasellout and Nkazana spend the whole night indulging in sex. The whole act is consensual. It is quite elaborate from Nkazana's confession afterwards, that female combatants were very much concerned about the impact of the war on their womanhood. In the morning, Nkazana expresses her profound gratitude to Benjamin for having shared the night with her. She says, "Thank you, I needed it" (243). This terse expression of gratitude, with five words only, transcends mere emotional satisfaction. It shows she did not do it just for pleasure, but more importantly, for a profound physiological and possibly social function. On the same note, she cannot be

accused of immorality and loose behaviour. The difference between the relationships in *Echoing Silences* (1997), *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) and the relationships in *Ndangariro* (n.d) is that unlike in the latter work, relationships based on mutuality in *Echoing Silences* (1997) and *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) are counter-balanced by relationships based on violence, force and rape. Altogether, these relationships are important because they show the power of the human aspiration to dignified life even in the midst of dehumanising and traumatising conditions, such as are engendered by the war. They celebrate the human capacity to aspire towards mutual respect, dignity and self-respect.

One can conjecture that the night spent together is a reaffirmation of her womanhood and 'femininity' which the war had seemingly threatened. For that reason, Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) contextualises the sexual relationship between Benjamin and Nkazana. After the end of the war, the two live together as husband and wife. To support the Benjamin-Nkazana type of sexual relationships, historical evidence in Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 60) has it that:

For some people the war dragged on longer than they initially thought it would, thereby denying them the chance to settle down, marry and have children. This was a problem specifically for the more mature women whose potential as prospective wives was deteriorating as the years went by. For such people, sexual relations might have been a calculated strategy to secure marriage partners.

Overall, the predisposition to remember relationships based on consensual sex (which is not mentioned in celebratory discourse), rape, corruption and abuse of power in the 1990s delegitimises the official nationalist narrative. It achieves the dual objective of telling the truth and undermining the legitimacy of the official nationalist narrative as an instrument of hegemony. This dual semantics of history facilitates and adds to the minefield of controversies with regard to the nationalist movement, idea or ideology. It also pluralises and democratises meanings and interpretations on liberation war historiography such that there is no overconcentration on one perspective.

Historiography therefore functions as signifier of a strong political opposition to containment and dictatorship of both the past and people's right to choose,

associate, move and express themselves. This appears to be the logical conclusion since “a key aspect of Zimbabwe’s recent politics has revolved around contesting and creating national narratives” (Alexander, 2006: 119). Again, this image of guerrilla leaders as violent, corrupt, rapists and as people who engaged in sexual encounters when they were supposed to be fighting reflects the so-called ordinary people’s increasing loss of faith in their leaders who have mismanaged the national economy leading to greater suffering. Such leaders as symbolised by unnamed guerrilla leaders in *Pawns* (1992), *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) and *Echoing Silences* (1997) cannot continue to be trusted with the affairs of the nation-state and the well-being of the citizens.

#### **4.3 IMAGES OF GUERRILLA EXPERIENCES AT THE BATTLEFRONT: CELEBRATORY HISTORICAL FICTION**

Historical fiction in all languages published in the early 1980s commemorates and celebrates guerrilla battlefront triumphs over the Rhodesian forces. It is largely obsessed with a tendency to remember and represent the guerrillas as indomitable, indefatigable and superhuman. It chooses to dwarf the painful experiences and losses that are typical of war, especially insofar as they pertain to the guerrillas. Guerrilla fighters are awarded all victories in all their ‘very easy’ contacts with the Rhodesian forces. While it cannot be denied that guerrillas scored victories in some of the contacts, the novels make them appear as the only reality in a war that claimed and maimed the lives of thousands of Zimbabweans, guerrillas included. Extracting her data from *Africa Confidential*, Kriger (1992: 4) reports that: “When the war ended in 1979, official estimates of the war dead were 30,000 and almost the entire countryside had been affected. Today the estimated number of war dead stands at 40,000.” These numbers also include the guerrillas themselves whom the authors present as immortal and impregnable. Examples of historical fictions in this category include the following: Pesanai’s *Gukurahundi* (1985), Makata’s *Gona reChimurenga* (1982), Choto’s *Vavairo* (1990), Makari’s *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), Matsikiti’s *Makara Asionani* (1985), Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and *Paida Mwoyo* (1987), Mele’s *Impi* (1987), Hleza’s *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992), Chipamaunga’s *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983) and Mutasa’s *The Contact* (1985).

The advancement of the heroic paradigm of the liberation war leads to a discursive apotheosis of the guerrilla/ nationalist leader. Military action in all its manifestations revolves around the guerrilla leader, in most instances, the commander, whose presence; skills (administrative and military), knowledge and prowess easily dwarf the others. Other guerrillas are seen through this personality. In other words, history is seen through the life and experiences of one great leader. He embodies the general group invincibility and patriotic culture as hero and this becomes the methodology of history from above. At the same time, the guerrilla leader becomes an unforgettable role model who combines patriotism and fearlessness. It is easy for young readers in particular, to identify with this great and larger-than-life force as he is the authors' voice of history. This makes him more of a role player than an ideal fighter in a dehumanising war. For the young readers in schools where the majority of these novels are prescribed as set books, the liberation war becomes a memorable and inspiring aspect of Zimbabwean history. This explication finds support from Kriger (2003: 65) in her reasoning that official heroes were symbols of "the indefatigable collective will of Zimbabweans to be the makers of their own history" and of "the glory of the final victory in unity," and "were an inspiration to especially the youth to emulate the heroes' ideals, values and actions."

However, the danger is that such a sensibility promotes what can be termed "the cult of the leader and of personalities" (Fanon, 1967: 11) particularly in the aftermath of independence. Diallo (2007: 161) also argues that "this way of conceiving almost everything through the leaders and the elite is the method of elitist historiography." Because of the undisguised top-down memorialisation of history, celebratory fiction in Shona, Ndebele and English of the early 1980s can be said to generate images that sanctify the promulgation of an official view of history. While comparing the different novels, the study places them into sections according to specific themes. Where the themes connect, the novels are discussed under one section. For instance, even though all novels celebrate battlefield experiences, *Gukurahundi* is discussed individually because it directly draws its message from the ZANLA strategy of 1979 called *gukurahundi* (sweeping away chaff), and for the purposes of our discussion, it is crucial to emphasise this.

#### 4.3.1 Commemoration of the 1979 *gukurahundi* ZANLA strategy

Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985) uses fictional images to remember and commemorate ZANLA history, particularly the ZANLA military strategy known as *gukurahundi*. *Gukurahundi* was one of the military and political strategies that ZANU and ZANLA adopted when Mugabe took over the leadership of the party towards the late 1970s. According to official ZANU history, *gukurahundi* was intended to decisively demolish the colonial machinery leading to the 'year of the people's power' which was presented as 1980. Werbner (1991: 162) elaborates on the official ZANU position on *gukurahundi*:

*Gukurahundi*, as Mugabe named it, was the culmination of the people's war, the year when the storm of the nationalist struggle brought the victory of majority rule; the Lancaster House agreement, ending the war, was signed in December 1979. That was the *Gukurahundi* of nationalism, with its promise of moral renewal in the image of spring rains.

In a 1979 New Year's message articulating the *gukurahundi* plan Mugabe (1983: 27) said that:

Let every settler city, town or village, let every enemy farm or homestead, let every enemy post, nook or hiding place be hit by the fury of the *People's Storm*...Let us call this year therefore the *Year of the People's Storm – Gore reGukurahundi*. Let us proceed from the Year of the People to the *Year of the People's Storm* and storm right through to victory and the creation of a nation based on people's power.

This triumphant assurance of victory informs *Gukurahundi's* (1985) remembrance of liberation war history.

Thus, *Gukurahundi* (1985) is a novel that emphasises guerrilla military brilliance more than anything else. It is also important to observe that as is the case with the majority of Shona liberation war narratives published in the early 1980s; Gulliver automatically becomes the author's voice of history by virtue of being a guerrilla leader. This provides a clear model of remembering history from above. The narrative is written in the form of a travelogue. Gulliver and his group of eight guerrillas participate in an easy war in which their adversaries, the Rhodesian forces, are presented as a motley

group of tactless fighters. The writer celebrates the guerrilla fighters' unrivalled military greatness in a hyperbolic style that resonates with far reaching echoes of confidence and assurances of an unimpeachable victory. Of the nine guerrillas, only two die, and they are accidentally shot by their fellow guerrillas, a very rare phenomenon in Shona historical fiction on the liberation war. In this narrative, it is a creative and tactful move by the writer to preempt Rhodesian forces military abilities as can be seen at the end of the novel when the guerrillas take stock of their heroic accomplishments. Readers come to this conclusion since; besides these two no other guerrilla dies at the hands of the Rhodesian forces.

This belittles the Rhodesian army which fails to slay or capture even one guerrilla throughout all the battles. In describing events after the battle which claimed two of their cadres, the author records the high number of casualties suffered on the Rhodesian forces' side:

*Pahondo iyi pakashayika macomrade maviri asi hapana anoziva kuti mabhunu akafa mangani. Asi chokwadi ndechekuti zuva rakatevera kwakauya rori mbiri dzamasoja dzaiva dzakavharwa netende kuzotakura zvitunha (37).*

This battle claimed the lives of two comrades but no one knows how many soldiers perished. But the truth is that on the following day the Rhodesians brought two lorries covered with tents to ferry the bodies of their dead men.

A similar picture where guerrillas almost wipe out the 'enemy' without losing anyone in their ranks is also painted in Makari's novel, *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) (One had to be brave) when the author reports that,

*'Kwakafa masoja asingaverengeki...Kwakange kwafa masoja makumi matatu' (52 & 82) (There were countless dead bodies of Rhodesian soldiers...It was reported that thirty soldiers had died).*

In the contacts, the Rhodesian forces' competence in battle is belittled.

The above images which commemorate the military successes recorded under the *gukurahundi* operation also become part of the independence celebrations and the welcoming home of the guerrilla fighters as heroes. Correspondingly, they are



intended to commemorate both independence and nationalist history by projecting an epic image of the guerrilla as a liberator. As in Shona oral traditions where the victorious armies become legends, writers also sought to create legends out of the liberation war fighters. The new political regime needed such historiographical symbols which would in turn function as national symbols as well as symbols of regime and nationalist legitimacy. The symbolic value embedded in the absolutisation of guerrilla heroism as the only legitimate reality in the liberation war should be understood against the background that nations are essentially narrations (Bhabha, 1990). When seen in this light, then historical fiction in the early 1980s when Zimbabwe attained political independence sought to create a foundation for a 'modern' Zimbabwe based on myths of greatness and heroism. This view is consistent with Dawisha's (2002: 5) reasoning that "nations are created, nourished and sustained through the telling and retelling of their pasts. This process includes the myths, the heroisms, the unsurpassed achievements; the many obstacles that are confronted and overcome."

While on the one hand guerrillas are presented in glowing terms, on the other hand, Rhodesian forces are caricatured. For instance, the author reports their actions in a manner that is humorous. He creates *ndyaringo* (court jests) using history. *Ndyaringo* is a genre of Shona oral art that is based on humour and the need to entertain listeners. This comes out in the following incident:

*Pasina kana nenguva yose pfuti dzakatanga kurira dzichibva kudivi rokumavirira. Nyere dzakatanga kurira dzakananga mudenga chaimo...Dzabva mudenga dzakarira kumabvazuva, dzobva uku dzakazorira dzatarira kuchamhembe kunova ndiko kwaiva nechikwata chavarwi vorusununguko vaya...Nyere idzi dzaipfuura nomudenga chaimo zvokuti chero munhu aisumudza ruoko ari pasi dzakanga dzisingasviki. Dzobva kudivi ravanaMax dzakazoti hwa (6).*

Instantly, gunshots were heard from the western side. Bullets were fired straight into the sky. From there they were directed to the east and then to the south where the freedom fighters were based. The shots were very far away from the ground such that even if one raised his hand, he would not be hit. After they were fired in the direction of the guerrillas, they went silent.

From the episode, the author assumes the all powerful voice of narrator. He makes his position and attitude towards the Rhodesian forces very clear. The image of the

Rhodesian forces as tactless is idealised in order to project the *gukurahundi* strategy as impeccable. The same image caricatures an army whose presence resulted in an unprecedented loss of lives in the history of Zimbabwe. In the excerpt above, the Rhodesian forces are not just being wasteful but they are also exposing themselves through random firing as it becomes easy to tell the source of fire. In other words, they are alerting the guerrillas whom they have not seen at all. After observing the Rhodesian forces' folly, Gulliver and his men change direction. The time of the day is presented as 1:20am. The contrast between darkness and the fire from the bullets makes it easy to tell the source of fire. The folly of the Rhodesian forces empowers the guerrillas and makes their mission relatively easy. Overall, contacts with the Rhodesian forces are very easy thus fulfilling the meaning of the title, *Gukurahundi*, which essentially means the sweeping away of all the undesirables. The narrative remembers victories only as if there were no losses, too. The image of the armed struggle is divested of pragmatism as it is made subservient to political slogans and party military strategies.

In another battle, Gulliver and his platoon of guerrillas outwit the Rhodesian forces, killing all of them in the process. The collective impact of the eight weapons reflects the formidability of the group, who in all their contacts seldom miss their targets. Their marksmanship is surely extraordinary. Rhodesian forces are completely overwhelmed by guerrillas' firepower such that they fail to return even a single shot. Such phrases like "*hapana mumwe wavo akambonzi pferenyu*" (32) (none among the guerrillas received even a scratch) and "*hapana kana chakabva kuchikomo kuya*" (34) (nothing came from the direction of the hill [Rhodesian forces]) underscore the writer's vision and version of war. They go on a beer drinking spree celebrating their victory. Guerrillas become instant heroes. It should be remembered that *Gukurahundi* (1985) is one of the numerous Shona narratives on the liberation war published in association with the Literature Bureau.

At one point, Gulliver counts about seven Rhodesian forces as he guns them down one after the other. It is like they have helplessly presented themselves for slaughter. For the Rhodesian soldiers, history becomes a 'slaughter bench'. The author reports that: "*Pakarepo gomana richiimba zvaro rakatanga zvaro kuvanonga mumwe nomumwe. Vaakaverenga vaairova vachinyatsoparuma pasi vakaita vanomwe*" (37).

(While singing, the big boy brought them down one after another. Those whom he counted falling down were seven). In this one-sided encounter, the victims could have been more than seven. Individual fighters single-handedly accomplish heroic tasks. The guerrilla fighters' survival in the bush is directly a result of their military abilities because as the author shows, they do not need luck in order to survive as is the case with Munashe in *Echoing Silences* (1997). Equally, the 'big boy' image of Gulliver emblematises guerrilla formidability and nationalist greatness in which, the nationalist ideology is further seen as a 'Big Boy' ready to take over the direction of the affairs of the nation.

*Gukurahundi* (1985) becomes a thriller which boasts of fast paced action. It is at the same time a narrative about contacts which end up in guerrillas' victory. While acts of exaggeration and invention characterise the recreation of *gukurahundi* in *Gukurahundi* (1985), the ubiquitous celebratory and triumphant tone is certainly not without historical substance as Bhebe (2004: 227) explains:

By 1979, ZANLA forces were encircling the main towns of Harare, Bulawayo and the smaller urban areas along the Harare-Bulawayo railway line. ZIPRA forces too were pushing their lines of attacks from the Zambezi down the same line of rail. Both ZANLA and ZIPRA were claiming to be holding semi-liberated zones. Although [these] claims might have contained boastful exaggerations, there were things that could not be disputed. First, liberation forces had completely disrupted colonial control of rural African areas. White casualties, both civilian and military at the hands of guerrilla armies had by the end of 1978 reached unacceptably alarming proportions

In this regard, historical fiction celebrates these successful combat operations of guerrillas. Notably, the liberation war is quite an entertaining experience in which guerrillas have the luxury to enjoy their singing while firing at the same time. In the same vein, it cannot be untrue to say that this literature, which in a political sense is reconstructive or corrective about the image of the guerrilla given by the white community as terrorist, is a "discourse of guerrillas as soldiers" (Kriger, 2003: 64), although it over-legitimises the guerrillas as impregnable.

The end of the novel concretises the celebration of the military achievements of the guerrillas and the *gukurahundi* strategy. The guerrillas take stock of their accomplishments and the result confirms that they are indeed heroes of the struggle.

Like other historical fictional narratives on the liberation war published in the early 1980s; the war ends just because guns have been laid down. Guerrilla heroism is confirmed, affirmed and celebrated. Colonialism, in particular the battle against the Rhodesian regime, is therefore presented as the only challenge that history had bestowed upon the people of Zimbabwe. Once this is militarily overcome, there are no other challenges. People are invited to take a back seat, take stock of, and savour the military victories they scored in the just ended war. Certainly, *Gukurahundi* (1985) does not see the war as a revolutionary process in which “the physical overthrow of the oppressor does not in itself constitute a revolution...A revolution is in a dynamic rather than a static view. There is no absolute before or after with the taking of power as a dividing line” (Moyana, 1988: 10).

In this regard, the following extract reveals the conceptual narrowness of the novel:

*Saka uku ndiko kupera kwehondo. Vakaona kuti vakanga vapinda vari vapfumbamwe asi iko zvino vakanga vasara vanomwe...vachitarisawo zvavakaita ivo, vakaona kuti masoja ose avakauraya havana kuziva kuti vangani asi vavanoziva vavakanyatsoona vachifa vanopfuura zana rimwe...Vakadonhesa ndege nhatu dzorudzi rweherikoputa...saka uku ndiko kupera kwehondo (61).*

So this is the end of the war. They noted that when they started they were nine, but now seven were left...taking stock of their achievements, they did not know the exact number of soldiers they killed but those whom they saw dying are more than a hundred...They brought down three helicopters...so this is the end of the war.

The excerpt above points out the author’s jaundiced understanding of victory which is reckoned in terms of the number of slain enemy forces instead of being the creative process by which human beings overcome the challenges and contradictions of their lives. The author gives the impression that there was no other objective to the war except the killing of Rhodesian forces. These are ideas that have come back to haunt the neocolony in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where very electoral fraud against opposition parties is seen as victory against imperialism. As already discussed, the historiographical architecture of *Gukurahundi* (1985) as well as its general sensibility and tone derive from the late 1970s ZANLA strategy code-named *gukurahundi*. A close reading of the ending of the novel projects an unmistakable impression that the guerrillas, clearly marked as the ‘sole bringers’ of independence have accomplished

their task. Guerrilla fire power and military might have managed to create a liberated zone free from enemy attacks and visitations. The statement that '*saka uku ndiko kupera kwehondo*' (so this is the end of the war) above underlines the operational framework of *gukurahundi* strategy which is also supported by Bhebe (1999). The narrative appears to remember historical events of a particular period and specific military movement even though the memorialisation process is incandescent with exaggerations and very simplistic descriptions of contacts. For that reason, *Gukurahundi* (1985) can be said to be some form of official narrative on ZANLA military strategies towards the end of the war.

#### **4.3.2 Representations of Selous Scouts and guerrilla counter-insurgency**

Matsikiti's novel, *Makara Asionani* (1985) deals with the issue of Selous Scouts in the liberation war. The Selous Scouts were a special branch created by the Rhodesians in order to tarnish the image of the guerrillas. They used similar tactics as those employed by guerrillas thereby making it difficult for peasants to distinguish between genuine and pseudo-guerrillas. They succeeded in doing this because most of them had trained in Mozambique or were captured guerrilla fighters who were later enlisted to serve the Rhodesian regime. Stiff, quoted in Kriger (1992: 111), provides the following information about Selous Scouts:

A small but important force that was associated with the army was the Selous Scouts. They were used as pseudo guerrilla gangs and by the end of the war numbered 1,800; they were chiefly Africans among whom were some ex-guerrillas. In the words of their creator, their objective was 'to infiltrate the tribal population and the terrorist networks, pinpoint the terrorist camps and bases and then direct conventional forces in to carry out the actual attacks. Then, depending on the skill of the particular Selous Scouts' pseudo group concerned, their cover should remain intact which would enable them to continue operating in a particular area...perhaps indefinitely.

*Makara Asionani* (1985) therefore slightly differs from other Shona historical narratives on the liberation war mainly in its depiction of the complexity of problems that dogged guerrilla armies even though it retains the celebratory vision. As noted above, it prioritises the themes of pseudo-guerrillas known as Selous Scouts as well as guerrilla infiltration by the Rhodesian secret service.

The subject of guerrilla infiltration which the narrative handles is corroborated by accounts from some of the participants in the war of liberation. Chung (2006: 83) who is one of the participants in the war reminisces that:

One of the interesting findings from my participation in Zimbabwean politics in the 1970s was the discovery that many students and freedom fighters had entered Zambia through the support of the Rhodesian secret service, the CIO. Their task was to infiltrate ZANU and provide information back to the Rhodesian regime.

Mabhunumuchapera, the commander of a recently graduated contingent of guerrillas from one of the rear camps in Mozambique heads for Mhondoro, their operational area, without knowing that his detachment partly comprises Selous Scouts led by Muchadzidza. Muchadzidza and his group had gone through the entire guerrilla training in Mozambique without being detected by the authorities. Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982: 49) attest to the fact that the Selous Scouts comprised members “most of whom were black.” The rebel guerrillas (Selous Scouts) escape on the way and proceed to Mhondoro as an advance party to tarnish the image of the genuine guerrillas. But they first inform their masters who had sent them to Mozambique that they are back. They do this by contacting a white commercial farmer who then drives them to Harare, the headquarters of the secret service. This is also similar to an incident reported in Ellert (1989: 13) about “one man who deserted [his group] and headed to the Chirundu police post where he reported to the police inspector that he was an undercover Special Branch agent. He indicated where he had hidden his AK-47 rifle and kitbag before guiding the Rhodesians to the river crossing place.”

In Matsikiti's *Makara Asionani* (1985), it is the rebel group led by Muchadzidza that has most of the guns and ammunition. Meanwhile, Mabhunumuchapera sends back to the rear two of the remaining guerrillas for ammunition supplies and other reinforcements. Henceforth, these two groups which received similar training in Mozambique become avowed enemies (*Makara Asionani*). The novel's depiction of Selous Scouts, their operating methods and the trauma they caused on peasants is realistic and authentic in that it does not conflict with written history on the subject. For that reason, the novel ushers in a new dimension in Shona war fiction where the liberation war was far from being a simple military exercise in which the guerrillas scored victory after victory against the Rhodesian forces. While retaining the

celebratory sensibility, *Makara Asionani* (1985) evinces that the war was a complex experience in which the 'enemy' devised a hotchpotch of complex counter-measures. As the war progressed, the Rhodesian government developed new counter-strategies which complicated the struggle. This was particularly at the height of the war when there was a flood of recruits into neighbouring countries. Commenting on the Rhodesian secret service's strategies at this time, Flower (1987: 114) writes that:

The best recruits came from within our borders; the usefulness of their local knowledge and dedication far outweighed the usefulness of foreigners. It was an unending source of amazement to us that we never lacked local recruits for any murky or perilous calling...Later, we went with nationalist movements into Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and further still.

As a result of the Rhodesian secret service's underhand maneuvers, the 'enemy' was no longer predictable. The Selous Scouts masqueraded as real guerrillas and, it was often difficult to draw a distinction between them and real guerrillas because they had the same weapons as those used by guerrillas. They also employed the same strategies such as all-night gatherings which were mainly used by guerrillas as consciousness raising platforms. However, they maimed, raped, tortured and killed innocent peasants.

Selous Scouts' use of excessive violence was meant to make the peasants, the mainstay of guerrilla war in Zimbabwe, despise guerrillas such that when the real guerrillas later turned up, they would get no support. In particular, they targeted those peasants who had a well known record of supporting the liberation struggle. They turned the peasants' lives into hell and temporarily succeeded in disrupting guerrilla operations even though they could not prevent the victory. Guerrilla image needed a major overhaul because the peasants could no longer tell the difference between the pseudo-guerrillas and the genuine ones.

During a contact in which the renegades now joined by the Rhodesian soldiers try to apprehend the few remaining guerrillas, the latter emerge victorious. Despite the fact that Mabhunumuchapera's group has a depreciated stock of arms, they overcome their handicap by using a simple battle plan in which one of them pretends to surrender in an open space. With the Selous Scouts advised to hide, the Rhodesian soldiers fall into this trap with the result that all of them die without returning even a

single shot. The author tells readers of this battle experience that “*vose vakafiramo pasina kana akambodzorera fire*” (87) (all of them died on the spot without returning even a single shot).

In the meantime, sporadic battles between the deserters and the genuine guerrillas continue. The deserters have an advantage over their colleagues since they had taken possession of most of the arms. However, their victories are presented as merely temporary. The real big battle for supremacy begins when reinforcements (for the genuine guerrillas) eventually come from Mozambique. The two groups face each other just outside the village that had been terrorised by the Selous Scouts (Muchadzidza’s group). The village becomes a microcosm of the battle for Zimbabwe well marshalled by ZANLA and ZIPRA. The description of the battle sounds rather romantic. Guerrilla exploits are exaggerated. This is despite the fact that the Selous Scouts (those who had deserted) are also heavily armed and are beneficiaries of the same training as the ‘real’ guerrillas. No single genuine guerrilla dies in the big battle to regain control of Mhondoro. On the other hand, all the members from Muchadzidza’s group die painful deaths, as they are torn into shreds.

In this regard, *Makara Asionani* (1985) celebrates the successful military ambush and counter-insurgency operations of guerrillas. It also sends strong signals to the readers that the nationalist movement possesses a proud history of successfully dealing with those who oppose it. Equally, guerrillas become messiahs and saviours who bring joy to the tormented and traumatised peasants. After the victory, which marks the end of the war, peasants and all other people rejoice - ‘*Vanhu vakafara kwazvo paakapedza kutaura achivavimbisa kugara kwakanaka*’ (99) (People felt happy after he finished his speech with promises of a happy life). Such an ending in which the guerrillas overcome the enemy is similar to what Tungamirai quoted in Bhebe (1999: 93) presents as “our war ended as guerrilla warfare,” which is a distortion of history because the war in Zimbabwe ended through negotiations. The triumph of the guerrillas and the jubilation of the masses manifest the idea of liberated zones in which the guerrillas operated freely.

Another historical narrative in Ndebele, *Impi* (1987) by Mele, narrates the war in the Mapilabomvu area of Tsholotsho. Like other novels in Shona and Ndebele which



focus on guerrilla fighters, the work celebrates their victories over Rhodesian forces. The guerrillas are depicted as superheroes. The leader of the group, Bhazuka (bazooka), is cast as a formidable fighter who successfully commands his unit to counter the Selous Scouts and Rhodesian forces' reign of terror among villagers. Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000) show that the Selous Scouts were heavily deployed in Matebeleland as in Mashonaland. Therefore what *Impi* (1987) represents through fiction is supported by evidence from history. The clashes between guerrillas and Rhodesian forces/ Selous Scouts are given vivid descriptions which ultimately serve to stress that Zimbabwe's independence came through the heroic acts of its men and women. In all contacts, the guerrilla fighters prevail.

Published in 1987 when the bloody struggle between ZANU and ZAPU (not the concern of this research) in the aftermath of the liberation war has been calmed by the Unity Accord signed in the same year, the novel seems to reinforce and justify ZIPRA/ZAPU's role in the liberation struggle. It is the first published Ndebele novel in independent Zimbabwe that openly talks about the direct military contribution of ZIPRA/ZAPU. The first Ndebele war novel, *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986) by Sigogo, does not really deal with this aspect. It partly deals with the historical aspect of recruitment in preparation for conventional warfare. While historically correct, this makes it very amenable to official attempts that tended to erase ZIPRA from every 'significant page' of Zimbabwean history; presenting it as "a do-nothing army finally forced into inappropriate militaristic tactics by its Soviet advisers" (Bhebe and Ranger, 1995: 8). In the early to mid-1980s the history of ZIPRA/ZAPU in the war was a politically sensitive issue not to be broached in public.

With its emphasis on guerrilla victory, *Impi* (1987) typically celebrates the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare and the full-spirited military participation and contribution of ZIPRA. Whereas the Rhodesian forces' conventional warfare is impressive, guerrilla warfare is said to be effective. The art of surveying with a spotter plane, penetrating with jet-fighters and paratroopers, sweeping with ground forces, radio communications, tracking on horseback and the whole ground covered with war vehicles: it sounds like all an army needs to win any war. This is the impression given of the Rhodesian forces. They lead comfortable lives in camps where they have decent meals like tea in the morning including taking baths. On the other extreme,

lack of appropriate clothing, no vehicles, exposure to all natural and weather elements, no food rations – largely characteristic of the guerrillas appear not to be opportune conditions for a victory-seeking army. Even elderly peasants like Dingindawo and Hadebe empathise with the guerrillas' condition. They register their sympathy in an exchange which is recorded as follows:

*'Bona izulu elilomoya ongaka bebelicatshela ngaphi? Futhi bayahlupheka abantwana laba. Kambe abantu abazahlala benethwa njengenyamazana zeganga'... 'Angithi lemiyane ingaka iyabaluma khonale egangeni' (78).*

'Where were they hiding when this heavy rain was falling? And for sure these children are suffering. They are always caught by heavy storms while in the bush like wild animals'... 'And even then there are a lot of mosquitoes which bite them in the bush'.

In all earnest, the two armies seem mismatched. Yet in combat the guerrillas turn out to be powered and endowed with an inextinguishable moral and military conviction which easily dwarfs the enemy. Guerrilla warfare is shown to be superior over conventional warfare. The guerrillas are very confident of victory. Each time they are in the village they leave a message to the effect that when the Selous Scouts or Rhodesian forces come they should tell them to follow without any equivocation. The narrative similarly caricatures the Rhodesian forces who kill none of the guerrillas. In fact, it seems to emphasise that the Rhodesian forces were no match for the guerrillas. This is why both the Selous Scouts and Rhodesian forces fight part of their war against the defenseless and unarmed peasants.

In one incident in which the Selous Scouts fail to locate the guerrillas, they just fire indiscriminately and return to their camp. While their guns are aimed at no one, guerrilla guns are aimed at the imperial soldiers. This Selous Scouts' abortive gesture makes it easy for the guerrillas to plan properly and mastermind an attack that kills most of the Rhodesian forces. Part of the calculated battle plan involves ambushing the Rhodesian forces' camp and attacking when they least expect it. The well planned guerrilla strategy marks what the narrative projects as the wonders of guerrilla warfare. Some of the Rhodesian soldiers are captured and disarmed without any resistance. Once captured, they are driven off their camp and handed over to the peasants. The captured are to be used for political mileage. Battlefield images show

that the war is more difficult for the Rhodesian forces and peasants than it is for the guerrillas. The impact of the bazooka in this onslaught is immense. As already said, many soldiers die as depicted in the novel *Impi* (1987) while others are immobilised:

*Amasotsha amanengi afa amanye njalo alimala kakhulu...Kwathi ilanga selitshonile mhlalokho amasotsha athatha izidumbu zalawo ayefile ngePuma igcwele... (59 and 60).*

Many soldiers died and some were seriously injured...Around sunset that day the corpses of their colleagues filled a Puma army truck...

The fact that guerrillas successfully ambushed bush camps resulting in massive casualties on the Rhodesian forces' side is supported by evidence from ZIPRA history as given by some of the participants. For instance, Todd Mpisi, a ZIPRA Deputy Regional Commander quoted in Brickhill (1995: 51) says:

We made a lot of raids on bush camps...This was the most successful campaign I experienced in the whole of the struggle. We had very few casualties. We moved in small units unless we planned to hit bigger targets. We lost only 12 men, of which more than half were lost capsizing in the river crossing. In action we lost very few men...Enemy casualties counted were 32, but it should be more. We did a lot of mine warfare which is safe to our side and deadly to the enemy. They lost a lot of men.

Brickhill (1995: 61) further outlines that "the commander of the forces attacking Plumtree outlined the military targets in his battle plan as 'the police, the District Commissioner's office, the District Assistants, the RLI and RAR camps, and the Selous Scout camp and the post office.'" This seems to dovetail with part of the evidence given in *Impi* (1987).

In describing another contact, Mele in his novel, *Impi* (1987) records the following experiences:

*Kwezwakala yonke imihlobo yemibhobho khathesi. Kwezwakala isigwagwagwa samasotsha lesabalweli benkululeko. Okuphoswa ngezandla kufike kudubuke lapho okutshaye khona lakho kwakusetshenziswa yibo bonke. Amasotsha esebona sekutshaywe indizamtshina yawo aqala ukubuyela emuva khathesi. Abalweli benkululeko labo sebesizwa kungasaphindiselwa nxa bedubula labo babuyela emuva baze bayafika Emfuleni uGwayi (32).*

There were sounds of all types of guns now. There was the sound of the shotgun for the soldiers and the guerrillas. Hand grenades would explode where they would have hit and these were used by both groups. When the soldiers discovered that their helicopter had been hit, they started retreating now. Likewise, on hearing no return shots, the guerrillas also retreated until they reached Gwayi River.

While the author pretends to give a balanced account of the use of weapons, it is however the guerrillas who triumph. Phrases like "*Bathanyela wonke amasotsha*" (They wiped all the soldiers) and "*Babulawa bonke ababekule imota*" (All those who were in the truck were killed) characterise the liberation war in this novel. During contacts, the bazooka is superior. It is associated with unforgettable military victories. It overwhelms Selous Scouts and Rhodesian forces to the extent that they fail to return fire. This experience comes out in another contact in which all Rhodesian military vehicles are destroyed while many soldiers die. The survivors retreat to the nearest police camp which is also attacked by the guerrillas. Guerrillas pursue their enemies to make sure that they have wiped all of them. Events surrounding this battle are described in the following words:

*Yakhala ibhazuka kabili itshaya imota yamasotsha eyayiphambili. Abuyisela amasotsha lawo ephakathi kwezimota zawo ezazakhiwe ngensimbi elohlonzi olukhulu, uhlamvu lungangeni... Babulawa bonke ababekule imota. Kwasila amasotsha ayesemoteni ezimbili lazo ezahlaselwa zibalela kwalimala amanye amasotsha ayehamba ngazo. Zagijima lezo zimota zaze zayakuma koSiphepha, lapho okwakulenkamba yamapholisa, kwabulawa amapholisa amabili (102).*

The Bazooka sounded twice hitting the soldiers' truck that was at the front. The soldiers also fired back from their trucks that were made of armourplate, which could not allow the bullets to penetrate...All the soldiers who were in this truck were killed. Only the soldiers who were in the other two trucks escaped but were also attacked as they escaped and some of the soldiers in them sustained some injuries. These trucks sped off till they reached Siphepha, where there was a police camp, two policemen were killed.

Despite being outnumbered, the guerrilla fighters emerge triumphant. These victory images somehow find vindication from Bhebe (1999: 68) in his submission that: "Clearly Rhodesian settler power was virtually on the verge of collapse under the weight of guerrilla bombardment."

In this regard, while it is easy to dismiss the war in these novels as romantic, the novels appear to derive their sensibility from history. Invention is used to commemorate guerrillas as liberators and bolster the celebratory perspective. Guerrillas in the narrative also benefit from the dense forests in the region which they use to launch offensives against the Rhodesian forces. They also get information from local ZAPU leaders who cooperate in many respects. Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000: 143) explain that;

the dense *gusu* forests...offered essential cover and were often untraversed by roads. Guerrillas' knowledge of the bush allowed them to evade Rhodesian troops and to launch ambushes upon them when they were vulnerable; their relationship with local Zapu leaders brought them detailed intelligence on Rhodesian troop movements and provided geographic and topological information to facilitate the planning of such ambushes.

However, the novel ends on a rather ambivalent note. The ambivalence finds expression in the manner in which the writer vacillates between guerrilla feelings of betrayal/ disillusionment and celebration of independence.

#### **4.3.3 The 'enemy' as insipid and tactless: commemorating guerrilla military intelligence and victory**

As is the case with the other novels under celebratory historical fiction, novels discussed in this section, largely published in the early 1980s and a few Shona and Ndebele novels published in the 1990s, are obsessed with celebrating guerrilla military prowess and intelligence. They only differ in that Shona novels depict the war in Mashonaland as it was executed by ZANLA while Ndebele war novels depict the war in Matebeleland as it was fought by ZIPRA. Novels in English portray the war in Mashonaland because they are written by Shona speaking writers. The other difference is that some novels are more specific about the type of Rhodesian soldier being discussed, for example, Makata's *Gona reChimurenga* (1982).

Makata's *Gona reChimurenga* (1982) depicts the liberation war experience that revolves around the Guard Force, the Rhodesian forces and the guerrillas' spectacular victories against these. The Guard Force and the District Security

Assistants (DSAs) were generally a 'low calibre' armed group. Here is how Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982: 59 and 60) explain the Guard Force and DSAs:

Once the armed forces began to mushroom, low quality troops became a chronic weakness of the Rhodesian forces. The Guard Force was created in 1975 as a 'Fourth Arm' with the responsibility for manning protected villages...Because large numbers were required for these units at short notice, training was superficial...Had they stood against a determined, well-trained enemy they would have had little chance...The rank and file made up mainly of District Security Assistants (DSAs), was generally low calibre manpower, poorly trained, equipped (with 303 bolt-operated rifles) and led. The DSAs were in close contact with the African population of the TTLs [Tribal Trust Lands], which meant that they were in close contact with guerrilla operations, with consequently high, morale-sapping casualty rates.

While the novel's description of the 'contacts' between the Guard Force and the guerrillas finds massive vindication from history, the same cannot be said of the depiction of the contacts between Rhodesian forces and guerrillas. In at least half of their contacts in *Gona reChimurenga*, the three guerrillas engage the Guard Force who offer no resistance at all. In an encounter with one of the Guard Force members caught drinking beer with villagers, Mabhunu who is not armed at this point describes his adversary's lack of wit and cowardice as:

*Ndakabva ndasvikomira pedyo namaGuard Force. Akacheuka ndokubva tasanganidzana maziso. Hapana chandakaita. Ndakamirira kuti andibate asi ndakashamisika. Akada kuvhura muromo ndokuupfiga. Pfuti ipapo ainge akainongedza kurutivi. Mumaziso make maiva nokutya. Ko, zvino zvaainditya ndisina chandiinacho, iro zita chete rokuti gandanga raimuzezesa (23).*

I stood very close to the Guard Force member. He turned his head and our eyes met. I did not do anything. I waited for him to apprehend me but I was surprised. He tried to open his mouth but closed it. His gun was pointed away from me. He had fear in his eyes. He was afraid of me yet I had nothing, only the title terrorist frightened him.

The theatrical description of the Guard Force detail gives the impression of someone who has been given a gun for the first time, and does not even know how to use it. When Mabhunu demands that the Guard Force member hands over his gun to him despite the fact that he is not armed, the Rhodesian man does not resist. He is so easily disarmed as if one is unyoking a tired ox. It is observable that fighting against

such an 'army' "guerrillas enjoyed some notable, and popular, successes in stopping what a kraalhead described as 'all that nonsense'" (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 2000: 153). Though the description of the Guard Force detail could have been exaggerated to increase the novel's sense of appeal, it is remarkable that the event is consistent with the dynamics of a poorly trained army and 'low calibre manpower'.

The Guard Force were generally associated with numerous immoral practices including beating up villagers, taking up liberties with women and looting people's property. A Bishop Moyo interviewed by Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000: 151) describes them as "untrained people excited by carrying guns." In this regard, the perspective and context in *Gona reChimurenga* (1982) cannot simply be papered over. Because of the hyperbolic discourse, it is easy to generally dismiss the early 1980s narratives' representation of the war as romantic and simplistic. While understandable, a few critics in Zimbabwean literature have fallen into this trap. For instance, Chiwome (1998) and Furusa (1998a) dismiss these celebratory historical narratives in African languages without necessarily unraveling the historicity of some of the fictional images. Chiwome (1998) suggests that this fiction creates *ndyaringo* or *nyambo* (court jests) using the war. According to Chiwome (1998: 17) *ndyaringo* or *nyambo* were:

Highly dramatized narratives of events in the Shona oral culture. These accounts were often told at the *dare*, as a pastime or as serious news. They were dramatized and exaggerated to make them significant, entertaining, and memorable to the audience.

While the aspect of *ndyaringo* and influence from oral traditions is present, the study of historical fiction on any aspect of history should go beyond superficial analyses. Despite the glaring oversimplification of history, this is one instance where investigative parameters such as authenticity and intention espoused in this research become useful. It is also in this regard that the study of the interface of history and fiction becomes important. One is therefore careful to avoid a generalised dismissal of the narratives as simple and false.

In a separate incident in which the guerrillas encounter real Rhodesian forces and not the Guard Force, still the 'enemy' is easily disarmed. This group of Rhodesian

forces, which comprises white soldiers is said to be playing cards. Only white soldiers return fire even though all of them are subsequently killed. The incident is presented in *Gona reChimurenga* (1982) as follows:

*Ipapo masoja panzvimbo pokuti vamire tirwe vakatanga kutiza. Mabhunu chete ndiwo akamira odzorera asi nenguva isipi vakange vaperu...Kwechinguva ndakambozviyeva ndichiritsenhura gona reChimurenga. Ndakateerera zvangu dzichidairana, kwechinguva ndakambokanganwa kuti ndaiitei ndonakidzwa (58).*

Instead of them gearing for a fight, they started running away. Only the white soldiers returned fire though we managed to kill all of them in a very short time. For a moment, I admired myself operating the champion of the liberation (gun). I listened to the harmonious echoes from the guns and for a moment I forgot what I was doing as I was enjoying everything.

The guerrillas' military supremacy reduces Rhodesian soldiers to military buffoons. The one-sided description trivialises the war and turns it into a childish account. It does not sound like a real contact between two competent armies. The Rhodesian force is completely denied any maneuvers making its image unrealistic. Against the background of such images as presented above, it becomes difficult to understand why countless sons and daughters of Zimbabwe who committed themselves to the liberation struggle lost their lives at the hands of a supposedly insipid force.

Given such astounding evidence of excellent military combativeness and marksmanship as obtains in this novel and other celebratory historical fiction narratives, it boggles the mind as to why the war had to drag on for such a long period. Furusa (1998a: 201) raises a similar concern when making the point that:

One is left wondering why it took the Zimbabwean people so long to become independent if the war was so simple. The war novel in this category seems to be based on the falsity of historical myths of greatness. It romanticizes the important historical event. By writing history that suits the moment, it continues the Shona [and Ndebele] novel's limited artistic observation and thus fails to respond to our experiences with new scales of vision which create new paths that widen our literary range and plough the theme of historical progress more deeply.



War meant killing; you stop firing in a contact and you are dead. Images in *Gona reChimurenga* (1982) are very dangerous portraits of the war which present the process as a stroll in the park, in fact a circus. These are exorbitant images for a nation that desires to take itself, its origins and its future seriously.

In yet another battlefield experience, in which the guerrillas' battle plan, is foiled by a peasant woman who betrays their presence to the Rhodesian forces, the three guerrilla fighters still manage to outgun their enemy. In the incident, there are about five military trucks with armed white soldiers. The Rhodesian forces' numerical strength is seen as a nullity. The description of the battle is clearly one-sided. In fact, to talk of a battle in this context is an overstatement, Rhodesian forces are simply killed. They die so easily as if they had not been alerted to the presence of their enemy. It is as if the guerrillas' original battle plan has not been disrupted. This contrasts with the images in Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) where, once the guerrillas' initial battle plan flops, they are almost wiped out by the Rhodesian forces.

Nyawaranda's novel, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) (Impregnable fortress) is a more realistic and sincere portrayal of peasant participation in the struggle than of guerrillas. The title underscores guerrilla formidability. The metaphor of wasps (*mago*) in the title concretises guerrillas' fighting abilities and their military presence as an 'impregnable fortress'. From the title, it is clear that the direction that the liberation war is taking is that of an unassailable victory. Thus the author makes no pretension to camouflage his intention. Therefore, the novel commemorates the attainment of independence after a protracted military struggle in which the guerrillas also proved to be endowed with superior intellection. In an interview with this researcher, Nyawaranda, the author, had this to say about the title of his novel:

*Mutunhu Une Mago* is a political title. 'Mutunhu' refers to Zimbabwe and 'Mago' refers to the freedom fighters. In the novel, Zimbabwe becomes an impregnable fortress because of the fighters. It cannot be easily reached because it is well protected by the freedom fighters. The title *Mutunhu Une Mago* celebrates the presence of the freedom fighters in Zimbabwe.

The author focuses specifically on the Tanda community and neighbouring white farms. Guerrillas operating in this area dexterously liquidate both the white

commercial farmers and the Rhodesian soldiers. In most instances, the so-called Rhodesian soldiers are the white farmers who have constituted themselves as a garrison to 'their' land. On this aspect, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) creates historical images that are supported by evidence from Ranger (1985). This discussion will be illuminated in the next chapter.

In the first contact whose events are narrated by one of the party (ZANU) chairman, Matudza, the guerrillas and many civilians are caught unawares. Despite their state of unpreparedness, they quickly order everyone to lie down while they return fire. What is most astounding is that, of all the guerrillas present, only one returns fire while the rest are cheering. This clearly contradicts the gravity of the occasion as earlier pointed out:

*Pavakomana vose vataiva navo, mumwe chete chete ndiye akarwisana namabhunu acho akanga atinyangira. Vamwe vose vanamukoma kutoimba zvavo wena dzimbo dzechimurenga pfuti dzichirira kudaroko. Waingonzwa vokuza uya akanga achirwisa mabhunu, "Shamwariyeropa, sota bhunu iroro. Risote zvarinonzwa."... Paya pakazoiswa bhazuka pane masojapo, pfuti dzavo dzose dzakabva dzanyarara kuti zi-i, kana kuzomboti kosozve (33).*

Of all the guerrillas present, only one of them single-handedly repulsed the Rhodesian forces who were trying to catch us by surprise. All the other guerrillas were singing liberation war songs while the battle raged on. You could hear them urging their fellow who was fighting the Rhodesian forces. "Shamwariyeropa deal with that white man. Deal with him thoroughly..." When he finally aimed his bazooka at the spot where the Rhodesian soldiers were, all their guns went silent.

The account is very difficult to believe. It is far from convincing since the liberation war becomes more of a picnic than a life-threatening experience. These events in the battlefield fulfill the meaning of the title where guerrillas are conceived as 'wasps.' The liberation war becomes an entertaining exercise. However, evidence from a former combatant interviewed by the researcher points to the contrary. He said that "war is not joyous as one might think of. It was something very difficult. It was one of those hard times in life."

After this battle, the rest of the novel, particularly on the military aspect, is devoted to the guerrillas' attempt to apprehend Harrison, a white commercial farmer. Africans call him Zuvarigere, which appellation we shall also use. On the other hand, Zuvarigere is also making his own maneuvers to apprehend the guerrillas in the area. It is this battle of wits, the battle for both military and intellectual supremacy between the guerrillas and Zuvarigere that gives the novel its dynamism. The battle for liberation becomes a contest for military supremacy in as much as it is a struggle for political legitimacy.

The polarisation of the characters provides the writer with a dichotomous set up where one side is valued while the other is disvalued. As expected, the guerrillas' 'intellectual' capacities and military acumen prove inimitable. This style of historical representation provides a counter-discourse to a proclaimed white intelligence and supremacy which blacks have been made to live with for centuries. The endowment of the guerrillas with extraordinary qualities proves that whiteness is not an epitome of intelligence and intractable mental agility. Inevitably, this results in the reification of reality and the replacement of one hegemonic hierarchy of images by another equally hegemonic one. Guerrillas, the supposed representatives of the majority of peasants are endowed with superior intellect than the whites. This scheme is almost similar to what Bhebe (2004: 99) writes about Muzenda's open show of defiance and courage in the face of seemingly intransigent colonial machinery:

This type of bold and confrontational disposition of Muzenda fitted him well for the nationalist struggle he was about to enter. Colonialism very much depended on the white man's façade of being powerful, invincible and even dangerous to those who challenge his status. Courageous people such as Muzenda were very much needed at the beginning of the struggle to lead the way for the ordinary people by showing that whites could be challenged after all.

In the novel, the brave and intelligent guerrilla and the dull and stupid European dichotomy symbolises the dynamics that underpin the process of decolonisation. Decolonisation cannot be considered complete without emphasising, through restorative intellection, the intellectual capacity of the formerly colonised. The master-servant hierarchy must be dismantled. In the novel, the guerrillas become masters of intelligence and reservoirs of creative potential. Cesaire (1959: 155) summarises the

relationship between coloniser and colonised during times of colonisation and decolonisation:

In colonial society there is not merely a *master-servant* hierarchy. There is an implicit hierarchy between *creators* and *consumers*. Under good colonization, the colonizer is the creator of cultural values. And the colonized is the consumer... [The war] disturbs, however, precisely because it is creation. It upsets things, and the first thing it upsets is the colonial hierarchy, for it turns the colonized *consumer* into a *creator*.

To prove that the colonised 'consumer' has turned 'creator', the guerrillas send one of their own fellows to work as a guard at Zuvarigere's farm. He carries out the necessary reconnaissance needed for a successful military onslaught. Ironically, Zuvarigere thinks that the guard is sincere and working on his side. This irony which is felt throughout the novel raises the readers' suspense and makes the novel a military thriller. All of Zuvarigere's plans work to the advantage of the guerrillas. Guerrilla plans go according to script. Zuvarigere's intellect is deliberately underdeveloped in order to advance the myth of guerrilla invincibility and intelligence.

While preparing for the day when the guerrillas are coming, Zuvarigere entrusts the cleaning of guns to his guard, who, is in fact a guerrilla. As a result, the disguised guerrilla tampers with all the guns except his. When Zuvarigere orders that the guerrillas be shot, nothing comes from his gun. Telephone lines, too, have been disconnected. In the end, Zuvarigere is apprehended and made to issue orders that also put his fellow farmers at risk. Relying on surprise attacks as happens at the end of the novel when Rhodesian forces are ambushed as well as targeting areas of commercial interest to the state are realities also expressed by historians like Bhebe (1999: 98):

In terms of fighting ZANLA forces adhered to the Maoist approach of avoiding confrontation with superior enemy forces and concentrated on selecting enemy targets for destruction by "surprise attack, sabotage operations, ambush, and use of land mines." Such targets included all institutional and personnel expressions of the enemy's political, economic and social domination and exploitation in the communal areas, such as: military and police outposts, military and police convoys, white farmers and their homesteads, farm stores and cattle dips...

The novel ends with a big battle which signals victory and the greatness of guerrillas. Describing the battle which lasts for the whole night, the author reports that:

*NATO yamabhunu yaiti ikakosora, ikakosora wonzwa iyiwo AK yobvumira...paye panokosora Nato pachibva pambotonhora kuti zi-i...Musiyu hapana akazorara mumba nokuti mutunhu une mago wakanga wazodenhwa (126).*

The Rhodesian forces' NATO would cough and on the other hand, would be heard the AK's echoes...total silence would take over where the NATO would have coughed. No one was able to sleep on that day because the freedom fighters had started their job.

The personification of the NATO which is likened to someone coughing presents it as a sick machine that is gravely incapacitated. It is overwhelmed by the AK in this battle. The two big wars which result in the victory of the guerrillas despite Rhodesian propaganda to the contrary cast the impression that independence was attained militarily. This position deviates from historical truth as Zimbabwean independence was won through a combination of arms and negotiations. Nonetheless, these boastful images of a victorious guerrilla force are in line with guerrilla assault power in the late 1970s as Ellert (1989: 52) illustrates:

Units of both ZIPRA and ZANLA, in their respective operational sectors, were by now openly parading and showing military authority in rural areas which had long since fallen under their effective control. By the eve of the Lancaster House Constitutional conference in 1979 the security forces were confined in mine-protected vehicles moving by day in heavily armed convoys. Rural base camps were often subjected to attack by night with mortar, rocket and small-arms fire.

Nyawaranda's other novel, *Paida Mwoyo* (1987), whose major preoccupation is the place of educated professionals in the struggle continues with the glorification of guerrillas. In highlighting the professional interests of Tapera, a young school teacher caught up between the liberation war and his personal development, the novel partially pursues a similar theme of guerrilla tactical shrewdness and military greatness and intelligence. One guerrilla fighter disguised as a student enrolls at a school that is continuously dogged by the Rhodesian security forces' visits. When the school is forcibly closed and students and staff arrested, he single-handedly overturns the Rhodesian forces' apprehension of staff and students. After being

loaded onto an army lorry, he dramatically produces two rifles and gives one to a teacher. He orders all Rhodesian soldiers to freeze. He further tells them to drop their guns onto the tarmac and they all comply. In the shootout that follows, all Rhodesian soldiers are killed. These novels are obsessed with celebrating guerrilla military victories over the Rhodesian forces that are depicted as daft.

A similar picture of guerrilla military shrewdness and supremacy resonates throughout Mutasa's novel, *The Contact* (1985). The image of the liberation war in this narrative derives from the title. In other words, the writer focuses mainly on a series of contacts between the guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces. In total, the guerrillas are involved in five contacts in all of which they are triumphant. These contacts afford the guerrillas an opportunity to parade their military supremacy over an army that is said to be fighting for an unjust cause. What therefore becomes clear is that liberation war history is a series of military contacts. While other aspects are mentioned, they are easily dwarfed by the guerrillas' unparalleled military skills. However, unlike most writers in Shona and Ndebele the author attempts to show the susceptibility of guerrillas to tension resulting from waiting in ambush or in anticipation of the enemy.

As is the case with liberation war fiction in Shona and Ndebele in the early 1980s, Rhodesian soldiers die in unbelievably large numbers. The first contact results in the death of all the Rhodesian forces. For instance, Lieutenant Turnbull, a senior Rhodesian soldier who used to be the Member-in-Charge of the Mount Darwin area for three years reports that over eight hundred of his men died while they only managed to kill three guerrillas. Using a Rhodesian forces commander who is also white is intended to give legitimacy to the author's perspective of liberation war history. In many instances, the guerrillas' battle plans go according to plan. The Rhodesian forces act like a programmed machine as they do exactly what the guerrillas expect. Accordingly, it is easy for the strategically positioned and psychologically geared guerrillas to be "picking at the enemies like flies" (29).

In another contact, about forty Rhodesian soldiers succumb to guerrilla fire power while the guerrillas themselves only "looked tired and exhausted with bullet holes in their clothes, torn by the undergrowth and all the rolling and crawling" (32). The writer

deliberately undermines the credibility and military capabilities of the Rhodesian forces. At one point, all Rhodesian soldiers who had been tracking down the guerrillas in the area are caught swimming and playing childish games in a river. Their recklessness costs them their lives as they are handed over to local youths who callously slay all of them.

Guerrilla marksmanship is unrivalled. Hondoinopisa, one of the guerrillas brings down two helicopters while holed up a tree. Even during face to face combat, the guerrillas prove to be more superior to their foes, the majority of whom are mercenaries. The presence of experienced mercenaries in the Rhodesian army was due to the fact that

from 1974 the regular army was expanded, partly by encouraging foreign recruitment...Estimates of the numbers of foreigners serving in the Rhodesian forces ranged up to 2000, but a figure of 1000 is more likely (Moorcraft & McLaughlin, 1982: 29 and 46).

It therefore appears plausible to contend that the author is convinced that since the guerrillas are fighting for a just cause, their mission must be unstoppable. On the other hand, the Rhodesian forces who are fighting for no just cause remain vulnerable in the hands of history. This position becomes logical considering that in all the contacts described in the novel, Rhodesian forces fail to kill even a single guerrilla. The only guerrilla who dies, Marx, is a victim of a poisonous snake bite:

It was on the day of the storm that Cde. Marx died. In that dawn as they moved towards their retreating point the black mamba struck him four times before he slashed it with a knife (61).

Even at the point of death, the author makes sure that readers realise Marx's heroics, seen in the manner he kills the snake. In all the contacts described in the novel, guerrilla victories come so easily. The writer is celebrating history and independence through fiction. This attempt to minimise the loss of life and blood is rather counterproductive. While the war in the novel is one-sided, evidence from some of the accounts provided in ZANLA reports shows that there were heavy casualties on both sides. For instance, in a field report titled *Chitepo: Chitepo Operational Report, 17/1/78*, by B Chakamuka quoted in McLaughlin (1996: 127), readers come face to face with the following evidence:

As for the attack on the enemy side, a Father Muzungu, a reliable source of ours who stays near the camp, informed us. He pretended to sympathise with one black soldier he saw... The soldier told him only two of them managed to flee. It was reported that the enemy commented that the killing was brutal and ruthless. The total number of comrades present after the attack was 138 out of 162.

In fact, this was a combined guerrilla operation since guerrillas seldom operated in such large numbers. An obsession with heroism and the need to counter colonial myths should not supersede the search for historical truth and authenticity. The struggle for independence is belittled by such accounts. Ellert (1989: vi) expresses his reservations with regard to historical fiction which “devotes itself to eulogizing the frontier legend, reducing complex political conflicts and racial confrontations to the barest hagiographical simplicities and aimed presumably at an even simpler audience. It is impossible to accept this as credible military history. This is war portrayed as a blood sport rather than as a tragic and bitter human drama.”

Though Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) is celebrated by some Shona critics like Mpondi (1993) as an innovative contribution to fiction on the liberation war, it palpably represents memories of the battlefield through the prism of celebration and official dogma. Like other Shona novels, it oversimplifies the war by giving all major victories to guerrilla fighters. Rarely do they experience threatening difficulties. Despite the fact that it is published in the 1990s when fiction in English has already abandoned celebration, *Vavairo* (1990) typifies and simultaneously vindicates the existence of rigid creative trends in African languages fiction in Zimbabwe. This fiction seems to take long to adjust to changing economic and political realities in the country. It clings tenaciously to past trends and official dogma and is marred by some form of creative timidity which defies attempts at meaningful innovation. In the case of *Vavairo* (1990), its attempt to usher in a new creative vision by juxtaposing the war and its aftermath is handcuffed by the ambivalence in the novel's handling of the peasants' predicament in neocolonial Zimbabwe.

At the front, the description of contacts in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) is simplistic and reductionist. Part of the evidence is seen in one incident when Tumirai, the guerrilla commander, opens fire and all Rhodesian soldiers run away. They are denied any form of military prowess which makes it possible for them to react accordingly.



Turning their backs to the armed guerrillas seriously exposes them and turns guerrillas into instant heroes. Tumirai single-handedly makes things happen. In another incident, the Rhodesian forces are sharply contrasted with the guerrillas who are said to be firmly aware of military rules in the bush. Rhodesian soldiers are reckless. For instance, one of them betrays the groups' presence to the guerrillas through cigarette fire. His recklessness and lack of tact makes it easy for the guerrillas to locate their target. Consequently, all the Rhodesian forces die in an operation in which the combined effect of Tumirai's Bazooka and Danai's AK completely silences the Rhodesian Nato and FN. Guerrillas are given the image of a super power. The whole episode is presented as enjoyable as is also found in Hleza's *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992). The author describes the performance of the AK in the following words: '*AK yakarira zvainakidza kuteerera*' (84) (The AK sounded melodiously). His celebration of the effectiveness of the AK 47 is in line with Moorcraft and McLaughlin's (1982: 107) description of the weapon as: "King of the revolutionary battlefield...solid and reliable, even with a minimum of maintenance".

Hleza's novel, *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) glorifies guerrillas to the extent of mystifying the whole historical process. Guerrilla fighters win all their encounters. The novel also provides vivid scenes of images that presented guerrillas as mythical beings. For instance, it is said they could turn into cattle, trees, white people and old women. The same also finds expression in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) above. Guerrillas in the novel manage to wipe out the Rhodesian forces. While engaging the Rhodesian forces in a contact, guerrillas will be enjoying themselves whistling, shouting slogans, exchanging cigarettes as well taking shifts during a battle. As has been noted on other novels in this category, the liberation war becomes some kind of a picnic and an exciting adventure where guerrillas prove their supremacy:

*Bayadlala laba. Beza bengaka angathi bazokuhulwa labafazi. Libayekele ngizabatshaya ngingedwa; kungabi khona odubulayo. Lina lizabe likhuza kuphela. Ngifuna ukutshaya amabhunu kuphela ngitshiye abamnyama...Avala amajaha alaze langena ibhunu phakathi kwenkamba. Ayesentshintshana kuthi abadiniweyo bayephumula kungene abanye (52&104).*

They are playing. They come in such small numbers as if they are coming to fight with women. Just leave them I will deal with them alone, no one should shoot. You are simply going to encourage me. I

want to shoot the whites only and leave the black soldiers...The boys (as the guerrillas were known) surrounded the camp and the whites could not enter the camp. They were giving each other turns, when some were tired the other group would take over.

The presentation of battlefield images is simplistic, sensational and appears to caricature history. Nonetheless, in terms of victories which ZIPRA recorded towards the end of the liberation war, Bhebe (1999: 107-8) explains that:

ZIPRA in 1978 and 1979 made major thrusts which saw them gaining the upper hand over the Rhodesian forces in many of the African areas north and south of the Plumtree – Kwekwe railway line; these areas included Zowa, Chenjiri, Tsholotsho, Lupane, Lower Gweru, Gwanda, part of Mberengwa, Filabusi etc. The party had put in the country as many as 4,500 guerrillas by the end of 1978 and so much of the rural colonial administration had been demolished...

The major motivation in the presentation of such simplistic battlefield images seems to lie in the celebration of the manner in which “guerrilla war finally exhausted the capacity of Rhodesia to resist, and, while it did not enable the nationalist movement to take power, it paved the way for the final acceptance by the British government that it had to intervene” (Brickhill, 1995: 71).

Whistling, cheering and clapping of hands become symbolic expressions of a war that never threatened the guerrillas. They are shielded by the writer’s protective and rewarding pen. Guerrillas have the luxury to take a rest while the war rages on. Individual guerrillas earn heroic accolades from their fellows as they single-handedly mow down the ‘enemy’. The ‘enemy’ is a creation of the writer’s fertile imagination. In one instance, Mgandane, a guerrilla, puts his gun down and challenges a white soldier to shoot him. After failing to heed his call, Mgandane picks up his gun and reduces the Rhodesian soldier to pieces. The battlefield in the novel flows with rivers of white blood. Guerrillas are immune to death and defeat except in one incident when some die while others are captured. However, those who are captured are quickly rescued. The guerrillas are conferred with hero status right from the onset.

The “heroic sacrifice” myth gave [nationalism and the guerrillas] special honour for having sacrificed themselves for the nation. By extolling the military’s image, [nationalist] history circumvented the fundamental mistakes in the war policy and the

horrendous atrocities committed by the military [leaders] (He, 2007: 74-82). Since the production of fiction in African languages in Zimbabwe was largely through the Literature Bureau, itself a government funded department and its workers civil servants, memory was seriously domesticated. Hleza's *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) is published in association with the Literature Bureau. The mere existence of the literature Bureau represented the dominance of the state over memory production.

Again, Hleza's *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) also celebrates the exploits of guerrilla guns in the battlefield. The guns are described in such a way that young readers, in particular, would wish that they were part of the war in order to witness these guns for themselves. It celebrates the gun in the context of contacts. The narrative is vivid and comprehensive in its description of guns, capturing even the minutest details like their size, nature and exploits in the battle:

*Uthi ukhona omunye olesigudugudu phambili, kuthi ngemuva ube lenkalakatha yomlomo... Yayikhona le elezinyawo ezilamaketane kube khona lale ehlonywa amabhomba phambili... Lakhala ikhwelo ngakuthebula, yakhala yaqaqamba iZegeu kwangani yayisibiza unina eRussia ukuthi eze azoyithulisa... Yakhala wayizwa isithi qe-qe-qe-qe-gu-qe-gu-qe-gu-qe-e-e-e-e-gu-u-u-u! (59, 71, 102).*

He says there is another one with a big barrel in front, and at the back it has a big butt... There were also those with chained legs and those that can have bombs inserted at the front... There was whistling from the freedom fighters and the Zegue sounded as if it was calling its mother in Russia to come and stop it... It sounded and was heard sounding qe-qe-qe-qe-gu-qe-gu-qe-gu-qe-e-e-e-e-gu-u-u-u!)

Reference to Russia is a result of the fact that ZIPRA was sponsored by the Russians and as such, the author celebrates an assortment of guerrilla weapons sourced from Russia. According to Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982: 108), "most of these weapons and ammunition were of Soviet origin or design and included the extremely light and highly accurate RPD machine gun, the PKM machine gun with the long 7,62mm round, PPSHK submachine guns..." Again, the commemoration of guns in the narrative can be linked to the attempt to represent "Zipra as a unique liberation army in terms of its training, sophisticated weaponry, and military innovation" (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 2000: 141). Many historians such as Dabengwa (1995) and Brickhill (1995) have written that ZIPRA was the first guerrilla

army in Africa to successfully transform itself into a conventional army capable of engaging the colonial forces in conventional warfare.

The manner in which Hleza's *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) recreates the sound of the gun using lengthy and accentuated epithets overshadows the complexity of the war. Discourse on the gun casts an impression of formidability which unfortunately presents the guerrilla as immune. As a result, the gun becomes an important political, historical and emotional symbol in facilitating the dynamics of self-naming, self-discovery and self-consciousness. Similar views find expression in Mandaza (1986: 29):

It was this militancy, this belief that only through armed struggle could independence be won, that mobilised the Zimbabwean masses into the motive force of the struggle itself. In turn, it was the certainty of the demise of the colonial system that gave momentum to the struggle: the visible testimony of an African people now armed with the latest weaponry and for the first time maintaining an offensive against an enemy that had hitherto appeared invincible.

It is also worth writing that in the 2007 and 2008 Zimbabwean school calendar, *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) was one of the prescribed set books in Ndebele fiction. The new nationalist government used the war as political resource. Historical textbooks and historical fiction on the war were written for schools and the reading public in general. Whether well-intentioned, historical images as seen in *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) and other celebratory fictions reduce the liberation war into some form of sport. It becomes an entertaining experience in which the guerrillas are the major players and consequently the provider of entertainment is the gun, its sound and how it slays the Rhodesian soldiers. Operating in such a war environment, it is easy for the characters to be heroes.

#### **4.3.4 Non-celebratory historical fiction: history as complex**

This section discusses non-celebratory historical fiction. There are no Shona and Ndebele novels in this section as fiction in these languages maintains the tradition of celebration even in the late 1980s and beyond. In this regard, only historical fiction published in English abandons celebrating the battlefield, as previously hinted. In line with the conceptual thrust in this research, it is published at a time when people are

disillusioned with liberation war nationalism. Consequently, it tends to express this disillusionment by selecting aspects of history that counter official narratives of the history of the Zimbabwean liberation war. It depicts the liberation war as a complex historical process that cannot merely be seen in terms of heroes, contacts and military triumphs. It avoids simplification of the battlefield experiences by highlighting the “tragic dimension of nationalism that remains hidden after most aspects of the war have been highlighted” (Chiwome & Mguni, 2000: 171). It also avoids the chronic tendency in celebratory fiction to simply caricature the Rhodesian forces as insipid and tactless. The complexity of the war, which is seen through the prism of plural voices and multiple narrative styles, contrasts with what obtains in celebratory fiction where the guerrilla leader monopolises historical legitimacy. Ordinary guerrillas and the guerrilla leaders at the battlefield are all seen in terms of their individuality and vulnerability. The disposition to expand the base of nationalist history by giving agency to plural characters and narrative techniques is symbolically a move towards pluralising sites of nationalist historiography. In some of the historical narratives in English, the memorialisation of the liberation war solely through the experiences of the ordinary guerrilla rather than the guerrilla leader as is the case in celebratory fiction is a defiance of the pronounced top-down version of historiography in Zimbabwe’s politics of history.

It is also vastly noticeable that liberation war historical fiction written in English and published in the late 1980s and beyond conspicuously abandons the celebration of the gun. It ushers in a historiographical paradigm that inveighs against the construction and celebration of a heroic and intractable nationalism. It cultivates a culture of ‘forgetting from below’ and interrogating history from below (the concept of forgetting from above or below is part of the discussion in Pitcher [2006]). It exposes the falsity in certain mythical representations of national history. For that reason, this fictional discourse strives to become a ‘veritable redefinition of nation and nationalism’ by toning down the exploits of the gun, which in the words of Chiwome (1998) has been used to exploit and oppress in many circumstances, especially in the neocolony. In other words, it reflects what we choose to refer as controlled “gunophobia” and gun amnesia. This vision and version of historiography means that historical fiction in English confronts the tendency by elites to make use of iconographies from the liberation war for the narrow purposes of hegemony. By

adopting this position, we therefore contend that liberation war historical fiction written in English in the late 1980s and beyond then invests in the discursive turf of 'history as opposition', as consistently argued in this study.

Panoramicly, emphasis is placed on the individual soldier and the trauma he or she suffered because of the war. While in the earlier accounts on the war in indigenous languages, as has already been shown, the gun had served to shield the individual soldier and simultaneously making him a hero, later war novels in English foreground the exposed individual soldier. The gun becomes part of background discourse seen only in terms of marginality. It ceases to be operationalised as an epic character and major point of historical reference in creative liberation war historiography. Writers mainly present historiography in which the gun also has its fault lines and therefore incapable of attracting and meriting celebration. In fictional accounts such as Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997), Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* (1989), Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) and Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) evidence shows that military or gun power alone was not enough for one's survival, one also needed luck and protection from the spiritual world.

#### **4.3.5 The individual guerrilla as victim**

In *Echoing Silences* (1997), the liberation war is seen through the prism of a psychologically harangued ordinary combatant who is a victim rather than a hero. Ranger (1999: 696) characterises the novel as representing "the most intense expression of horror and disillusionment with the war yet published in Zimbabwe." Munashe, as the young soldier is known, is a vulnerable fighter from the moment he joins the liberation war as a recruit, at the battlefield as well as after independence. He is the only combatant character in Zimbabwean historical fiction on the liberation war who has no war name. He is called by his birth name, Munashe Mungate. In the war of independence in Zimbabwe, all recruits assumed pseudonyms

that reflected their new political awareness and their new role in the armed struggle. Combatants could not operate using their original names as that would have endangered their families who might have been victimized by the Rhodesian Security Forces, if it ever became known their father, son or daughter had joined the 'ters' (the Rhodesian short term for terrorists) (Tungamirai, 1995: 45).

When asked in an interview by this researcher why he created a character without a liberation war name, Kanengoni, a former guerrilla himself had this to say:

Yes, Munashe has no war name. He is just Munashe Mungate. In fact, it is an unconscious statement that the war was being fought by human beings [and] not by creations...It is an attempt to make the war as human as possible.

Chiwome and Mguni (2000: 171) concur with Kanengoni in their reasoning that the absence of a *chimurenga* name contrary to “the trend in war literature...is meant to underscore individuality [and humanness] in the war.” The abundant and unquestioning use of guerrilla appellations instead of their birth names in early 1980s narratives in particular and war narratives in African Languages in general has promoted an artificial engineering of liberation war history quite oblivious of the mortal side of the guerrilla. For that reason, Kanengoni’s iconoclastic rendition ushers an avant-garde of Zimbabwean liberation war history. It disentangles the body from the camouflage of *deus es machina* accoutrements, making it easier for the writer to argue for the vulnerability of the guerrilla body in a war situation. Other examples that are closer to *Echoing Silences* (1997) particularly on this aspect are Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) and Samupindi’s *Pawns* (1992) in which readers are exposed to the pre-guerrilla and guerrilla experiences of the protagonists, Benjamin and Daniel, whose *nom de guerres* are Pasi Nemasellout and Fangs, respectively.

Kanengoni’s *Echoing Silences* (1997) thus interrogates and remembers history from below by making an ordinary combatant the central character and voice of history. In other words, it privileges the bottom-up approach as a *modus operandi* of reconstructing memory. This way, the novel avoids what Barnes (1995) calls the “common historiographical treatment of war” wherein leaders are the major players. According to Barnes (1995: 118):

Wars are often summed up as the decisions of leaders and the movements of armies. It is often forgotten that these depend on ordinary soldiers, who make personal sacrifices to achieve advances and victories, and who suffer the consequences of retreats and defeats physically. But their experiences are usually obliterated in the manufacture of histories and may even be lost to popular memory.

Viewed this way, the above historiographical thrust in Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) is in contradistinction with other narratives that remember history from the top by assigning limitless and uninterrupted narrative agency to the commander of a particular guerrilla group.

During a battle carried out of desperation by the guerrillas at a place in the novel called Bopoma River, near Marymount Mission, Munashe is saved by a Rhodesian soldier, who in fact is his enemy. In this battle, the guerrillas had been completely outgunned by their adversaries. Their guns had not been enough to save them as they are also as vulnerable as their handlers. When Munashe comes face to face with a Rhodesian rifleman, he pulls his trigger only to realise that nothing is coming out. This realisation, which logically entails death, makes him involuntarily drop his gun. He is only saved by that Rhodesian fighter whom he had wanted to shoot and kill. The Rhodesian soldier then waves him on and advises him to proceed in a different direction unmanned by the enemy (other Rhodesian forces). Here is how the author presents the incident:

It was only when he came face to face with a Rhodesian soldier, his FN rifle pointing at him, the morning sun dancing on his brown and green camouflage, that he knew that his magazine was empty. And then he was afraid and his AK slipped to the ground (33).

The fact that Munashe drops his gun when he comes face to face with the Rhodesian rifleman shows that guerrillas were scared of death like anyone else. The image contrasts sharply and remarkably with images in Zimbabwean war literature in African languages in which the guerrillas stand up to challenge armed Rhodesian soldiers to shoot them. Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) scuttles the tendency in celebratory war novels to achieve a clear-cut demarcation between guerrillas on the one hand, and Rhodesian forces on the other. He captures the channeling of creative energy as a very complex phenomenon that defies easy categorisation. On the historical authenticity of the experience in which a Black Rhodesian soldier sympathises with his guerrilla adversary, as depicted in *Echoing Silences* (1997) above, a testimony from Gertrude Moyo, a former combatant, in an interview with Dube (2000: 27) will suffice:



While we were running away I fell down. A black soldier came and said to me: 'Sister, do not go that way, go the other way. That way you will meet the Boers. We black soldiers are in this for the money, and you are fighting for a cause.'

In the novel, the emphatic paradox of history inveighs against the canonisation of a super-history nourished by individual acts of heroism. Arguably, *Echoing Silences* (1997) therefore uses this episode to advance the notion that; at the battlefield, the gun alone cannot be said to have been the ultimate liberator. It makes clear the understanding that, the gun, like any machine, could falter. Possessing it was not a form of life assurance.

The AK in Munashe's possession is one of the most celebrated weapons in hagiographical discourse in early 1980s historical fiction on the war of liberation. It is portrayed as an unfaltering gun whose work rate and perfection during a battle trivialises Rhodesian forces' resistance. No guerrilla is allowed to die when he possesses it. As already indicated, it is given the status of an epic character competing for historical space and acknowledgement in the annals of history with the guerrillas themselves. Masweet Kunaka, a detachment commander for Goromonzi quoted in McLaughlin (1996: 178) has some sobering comments on the performance of weapons in a war situation. While his comments are made in the context of the role traditional religion played in the liberation war, they are nonetheless instructive, particularly with reference to guns that failed to fire:

In Goromonzi we spoke to a medium from Chikwaka which was not true to that area. It had just captured the place during the early years. Whenever we set landmines they would not detonate, bazookas would not work. It was then that I asked those of that area and was told we had to go to Birinaganywe in Marandellas. So we sent someone by bus there and he went with snuff and told him our guns were not firing.

In the novel, the incident involving Munashe and the Rhodesian soldier similarly debunks the promulgation of "narrow nationalism" (Fanon, 1967: 131) as evinced in the epic commemoration of the gun. It acts as a counter narrative to a fusillade of elite mythmaking maneuvers that employ symbols from the war of independence as a power legitimating exercise. Readers get the impression that *Echoing Silences* (1997) considers it presumptuous to idolise the gun as a paradigm of value and valuation; as a protector and guarantor of human life. The novel becomes a counter-

discourse to narratives on the war that celebrated the gun. As previously noted, the vision in *Echoing Silences* (1997) is therefore deconstructionist, revisionist and interrogatory. It dismantles one of the pillars of nationalist glory and claims for supremacy. Under given circumstances, nationalist victory is not just a result of its invincible firepower, but a result of a hotchpotch of forces.

Despite being armed, Munashe soon learns about the protective powers of the guardian ancestral spirits who manifest themselves in the form of wild animals such as the lion, his totem, and a “tawny bateleur eagle [that] sat on a dry branch at the top of the *mukamba* tree that stood next to the mouth of the cave” (13). Munashe and one of the guerrillas had sought refuge in this cave after a fearsome battle with the Rhodesian forces in which they were completely overwhelmed. Still in the cave, Munashe sees a lion that watched him closely and

then it grunted, as if in recognition, and walked majestically away. Munashe was mesmerized. The lions usually made their way to the water hole as the sun went down. What then was this one doing in the heat of the day? Was it a messenger from his ancestral spirits? He began to clap his hands and said loudly:

*“Zvaonekwa Shumba* (Thank you my ancestors)

*Honai ndiri ndega mumarimuka* (Look, I am on my own in this jungle)

*Ndinokumbira kuchengetwa* (I beg for protection)

*Nokuti ini hapana chandakatadza* (Because I did nothing wrong)

*Kuuya kuhondo dzaive shungu dzenyika* (Coming to war was a national cause)

*Motaurirawo vamwe venyu kumhepo ikoko.”* (Inform others in the spirit world)

The lion turned, stopped, looked back, and grunted before disappearing into the thick bush (12, 13).

This awareness dilutes overconcentration on and lionisation of the gun in the birth of the nation as well as the entire political equation. It also brings to the fore the fact that the struggle for independence was complex and should not be monopolised, given monolithic interpretations and even narrowed to one version.

The predisposition to expose the limitations of the gun at the battlefield, especially in the 1990s when the Zimbabwean economy has failed and the citizens suffering is consistent with the unfolding dynamics of questioning the effectiveness of the nationalist movement, idea or ideology in transforming people’s lives and the nation.

This thinking verily corresponds with the perspectives of one of the former guerrillas interviewed in the early 1990s by Barnes (1995). His name is X. When asked, “have the expectations that you had for Zimbabwe in 1980 been fulfilled?” his response is as follows:

No, my expectations have not been fulfilled. There are so many things that I expected to see after liberating Zimbabwe. But they have not been fulfilled. Basically Zimbabwe is still a capitalist society, and despite the fact that we are having a so-called people’s government, the situation is becoming worse and worse for the ordinary person than it was, even before independence. Unemployment is increasing and the prices are going up. Capitalism is gaining ground every minute! And the people are feeling the pinch every minute. For all this, I would blame mostly the people who are pulling the strings of power. And the most important thing which I think some other liberation movements should learn from the Zimbabwean situation, and possibly from some other situations, is that nationalism is progressive at some stage. But as the years go by we find that it is very easy for nationalists to stand for capitalism (Barnes, 1995: 136)

This bitterness filters into historiography, particularly the choice of images. Novels like *Echoing Silences* (1997) and others in the same class offer nuanced historiography which cognises the economic downturn, betrayal and desperation among the ordinary citizens. Historiography is thus marshalled not just as discourse of alternative historical truths and protest, but in order to evoke “a new consciousness and new options for social resistance” (Bond and Manyanya, 2000: xv).

Throughout the novel, battlefield experiences in *Echoing Silences* (1997) are consistently represented through the image of an ordinary guerrilla character under siege – physically, spiritually and psychologically. The historical narrative fundamentally underscores the fact that the war environment was not ideal for the creation of a ‘hero’. Instead, it dehumanised and brutalised the guerrillas to the extent that the majority lost any desire for surviving to see independence. While at the battlefield, Munashe sees the war as an “insatiable incinerator that would burn them all up, one after the other (21). He also expresses the devastating impact of the war on him in these words: “I am tired of not knowing what will happen to me tomorrow. I am waiting to die. I am tired of the endless killings. I am tired of everything” (24). He goes through the war like an automaton. The pressure of the war overwhelms young Munashe. Further to this, the abundant existence of words like ‘vulnerability’,

'helplessly', 'motionless', 'pain', 'dilemma', 'emptiness', 'remorse', 'fucking war', 'horrible war' and others in this narrative underscores the vicious and dehumanising character of the liberation war and nationalism to be specific.

In Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997), the battles with Rhodesian forces are very difficult and often result in a lot of casualties. During one such battle, more than half the section to which Munashe belongs is wiped out in a single attack by the Rhodesian forces. During this battle,

two helicopters suddenly emerged from behind the tree tops like sinister birds of prey and began to pound their gunships at the guerrilla positions, and they returned fire in a disorderly fashion...And then the two helicopters retreated and the Rhodesian ground forces, who had taken positions around the village, opened fire from the other side of the depression and Munashe knew they were completely surrounded and he thought, my god, this is war, and he began to shoot wildly, overwhelmed by the stinging smell of gunpowder while the Rhodesians kept closing in. The situation worsened while the section commander barked desperate orders at the fleeing guerrillas before he stood up and began firing from the hip. Then Munashe pulled him down, shouting at him not to behave as if he was insane, and gunfire blazed and cracked around them and there was nothing to understand (*Echoing Silences*, 1997: 9 and 10).

This is a complete reversal of liberation war historiography as seen in celebratory narratives. The episode lays emphasis on guerrilla vulnerability and insecurity during a contact. The fact that guerrillas return fire "in a disorderly fashion", the commander barking "desperate orders" at the "fleeing guerrillas" reflects the unpredictability of war. Kanengoni demystifies official accounts of courage where the image of the guerrilla has been that of a larger-than-life personality. Even guerrilla leaders who are associated with larger-than-life attributes in celebratory fiction are vulnerable. Rational decisions are difficult to uphold as observed in the manner in which the section commander stands up during the contact and is fatally shot. It is the compelling pressure of war which makes him behave like that. It is also a reflection of the mental pathology that results from excessive violence in the war. *Echoing Silences*' (1997) description of events in a battle scene is more realistic in that the narrative does not camouflage the vulnerability of the individual fighters. The images of fleeing guerrillas who also return fire in a disorderly fashion contrast with the images of guerrillas who are always on the offensive, confident and victorious. In the

battles fought by Munashe, survival precedes everything while escape becomes an immediate reaction, and hence a survival strategy. This description best suits the manner in which guerrilla war is executed. Kanengoni's (1997) rendition of this contact is authentic because he was there at the front as a guerrilla. In the battle mentioned above, the surviving guerrillas are later saved by ordinary villagers who help them to get in touch with one of the detachments operating in an adjacent territory.

The Rhodesian forces are represented as an equally competent army with vast tactful awareness and military shrewdness and, with as much zeal to win the war. This is unlike the images of the Rhodesian soldiers in Shona and Ndebele war fiction and war fiction in English published in the early 1980s in which they are depicted as military buffoons. The representation of liberation war memory in *Echoing Silences* (1997) is such that readers are left to evaluate on their own whether heroism was possible in such circumstances. Whether the liberation war produced heroes and veterans or war victims is certainly an issue that is not anachronistic to the image of war in *Echoing Silences* (1997). The narrative does not impose heroes on people as is the case with celebratory historical fiction in Shona, Ndebele and English (mainly early 1980s English fiction) and the practice by the ruling elite in the neocolony. In an interview with the researcher, Kanengoni said in relation to the contentious issue of heroism in Zimbabwe, that: "The process should not be done by participants – let it be done by outsiders. It is ordinary people who should do it." Equally, by generating historiographical discourse capable of amplifying debate on the use of nationalist narratives in the nation, *Echoing Silences* (1997) poses weighty intellectual perspectives on the suitability and usability of officially designated labels such as 'Heroes Day' and 'War Veterans' and whether these are the property of the people or the elite. This realisation makes one conclude that "while literature is a vehicle for the representation of history,...it does not behave passively towards history...Literature shapes and constitutes historical change" (Brannigan, 2001: 170).

In other instances, individual guerrillas become victims of the numerous internal struggles among the political leaders. Power struggles and internal rivalries in the rear seriously compromise the security of the guerrillas at the front. In the bush, fighters in Munashe's company go for days without any new military supplies from the

rear, thereby endangering their lives. They spend their days running away from the Rhodesian forces because their guns have either been worn out without any replacement or they have no fresh supplies of ammunition from the rear. This is supported by historical evidence on the liberation war. For instance, the *détente* (complete halt in fighting due to negotiations, detentions or infighting) which followed the death of Chitepo (chairman of ZANU who died in 1975) and the incarceration of the entire ZANU and ZANLA top leadership completely paralysed operations at the front. As Chung (2006: 99) explains:

The 300 freedom fighters who were inside Zimbabwe were now totally isolated, unable to get supplies of food, armaments, and other basic necessities such as medicines. Without any rear support, they were likely to be wiped out.

Confirming the shortage of guns and ammunition as depicted in *Echoing Silences* (1997), Chung (2006: 89) explains that "...there was also a serious shortage of guns and ammunition, making it difficult to exploit the many military opportunities that now presented themselves." Equally, in an interview with McCartney (2000: 67), Prudence Uriri, a former combatant, remembers that during *détente* (as depicted in *Echoing Silences* 1997) "there wasn't really much happening regarding the actual fighting even with people at the forefront. People would get stuck there because there was no provision [of ammunition] until such or such a unit had had it, or until an agreement had been reached on the united front." Such images of scarce military hardware contrast sharply with the glowing picture of abundant fighting weapons in the early 1980s fiction. Kanengoni, as already highlighted, (1997) manages these expositions because he is a former combatant who writes from an insider's perspective.

In the same vein, Mugabe (1983: 35) also talks "about the deliberate halting of reinforcements [through the *détente* exercise] to the battlefield as a means of exposing our fighters to the enemy." As portrayed in *Echoing Silences* (1997), the shortage of fighting equipment forced guerrillas to fight desperate battles for personal survival and not national liberation. An example is the battle at Bopoma (mentioned above) in which they had involved themselves in this battle "in a desperate attempt to break through the multiple Rhodesian lines and cross the border into Mozambique...Their idea was to create confusion among the Rhodesians so that at least some of the guerrillas might slip through the lines and cross the border..." (31).

What is striking in executing this battle is the guerrillas' desperation and vulnerability. The major concern is that of personal survival, not necessarily furthering the goal of national liberation as was the case with all major battles fought by guerrillas in the early 1980s historical fiction. It is clear from the tone that the guerrillas are even aware that some of their colleagues will not make it. Consequently, it dawns on them that "out of the thirteen guerrillas from the Chimanda detachment who had attempted to cross the border, only two made it" (33). The number of casualties on the guerrilla side is testimony to the fact that the liberation war was a very difficult experience.

Similarly, another young guerrilla, Sly, shows his vulnerability and traumatised condition through a series of questions. He feels very exposed in a situation where they have not received new supplies of ammunition and guns from the rear, forcing him to ask a series of questions not directed at anyone:

"Shit!" he cursed. "What exactly is going on? Is there still anyone out at the rear? If there are, why have they abandoned us? What are we supposed to do?" (24).

Munashe, too, asks himself similar questions reflecting a tortured mental universe: "What am I doing here?...Will I ever get out of this place alive?..." (12). Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982: 125) explain that "re-supply was a constant headache for the guerrillas [ZANLA], which faced periodic logistics crises." Due to problems also related to the issue of ammunition resupplies, Sly makes up his mind to leave the battlefield and go back to his parents although he does not make it as he is captured by the Rhodesian soldiers.

Questions bring to the awareness of individual guerrillas a new consciousness of events in the liberation war. The above questions in particular reveal not only the individualised but also the traumatised, anguished and impoverished condition of the guerrillas. The questions further amplify the understanding that the war was not some kind of picnic as shown by writers in Shona and Ndebele as well as some few writers in English. Psychic tension and hypertension triggered by inhuman practices and the pitiless atmosphere in the war tend to thwart the individual's resilience. Questions become the only avenue through which to release the sporadic emotional outbursts and psychological debilities caused by the guerrillas' failure to cope with wanton

violence as well as their own vulnerability. The use of questions, which to some extent resembles modernist and postmodernist aesthetics and sensibilities in this context is logical in as much as it captures convincingly and vividly the psychological devastation and resultant neurosis of those who were to be welcomed home as heroes. It provides the intellectual resource for deconstructing the idea of nationalism as all glory. This nihilist-existentialist outlook in *Echoing Silences* (1997) contrasts sharply with the optimistic tone in celebratory historical fiction.

The mentally debilitating and physically consuming nature of the liberation war forces the guerrillas to rely heavily on *mbanje* (dagga). The act of killing itself psychologically burdens young guerrillas like Munashe who, as the author narrates,

...felt overwhelmed with anger about the killing, the suffering and the desolation, the desperation, the loneliness and the endless pain; he felt angry, angry about the war. But what made him almost blindingly angry was that he had allowed himself to be involved in a war where the only prospect on hand was death and the infliction of death on others (27).

Given the mental trauma and the psychological pain that the liberation war exerts on the individual guerrilla, *mbanje* becomes some form of a life-support mechanism. The war itself becomes a force that towers menacingly over the vulnerable fighters. In this regard, *mbanje* affords the guerrillas in question an opportunity to temporarily escape from the brutalities of the war. Its extravagant consumption by the guerrillas derives from the desperate need to cushion the traumatised and tortured psyche. Commenting on the guerrillas' dependence on *mbanje*, the author writes that:

Indeed *mbanje* had already intruded into their ugly life in the desperate war. They smoked it in the morning and in the afternoon and in the evening and just before they trudged on during the night as they changed bases. It raised their spirits and it was the only thing, Munashe realized, that reassured him that he could after all survive the routine killings, the unabated savagery and the dying. And it had a special, almost mystical healing effect: he could literally decide what he wanted to think about, what he wanted to dream about, what he wanted to be, wanted to happen (23).

In an interview with Musengezi (2000: 50), Nancy Saungweme, a former guerrilla, said that "people looked for ways to escape reality. There was a plant called



*mudzepete* whose leaves could be rolled into a cigarette. If you smoked it you would get drunk for a week and you would forget about your problems.”

In handling the war as he does, Kanengoni in *Echoing Silences* (1997) introduces a new dimension to the discourse on Zimbabwe's history of struggle against colonialism. Other writers, particularly in the early 1980s tended to focus on physical injuries and death alone. Even their conception of the idea of victory is limited to success in inflicting physical injuries and death on enemy forces. This conceptual vision also impacted on the rehabilitation of former combatants which was just limited to the awarding of monetary rewards as compensation for physical injuries. In *Echoing Silences* (1997), the war went beyond physical injuries and death. The guerrillas in the novel suffer from serious psychological defects. The war completely destroys their balance and transforms them into mental victims. As a result of the severe physical and psychological torment Munashe experienced during the war, “...the end of the war, signaled by the signing of the Lancaster House peace agreement, was an inexplicable non-event...the war was like a monster whose head and tail none of us could envisage: something with neither a beginning nor an ending. It was almost impossible to imagine that we could outlive the war” (43). Writing about the Algerian experience of war and the resultant mental disorders, Fanon (1967: 201) has some sobering insights especially in his revelation that “today the war of national liberation which has been carried on by...people for the last seven years has become a favourable breeding-ground for mental disorders.”

*Echoing Silences* (1997) demonstrates that “war is rarely heroic or glorious, despite the many individual acts of bravery and selflessness” (Musengezi and McCartney, 2000: xi). As previously noted, this novelistic paradigm inveighs against the reproduction of national memory in a ‘strictly top-down’ fashion by moving towards complication and pluralisation of interpretive points. It creatively uses historiography to explore the double identity of the guerrilla fighter which in earlier discourse on the war had been viewed simplistically and monolithically. This ‘ambivalent identity’ which can be presented as liberator and victim, unblocks the narrow and narrowing nationalist discourse which sought to barricade consciousness and perception in ‘patriotic history’. It simultaneously proffers a congerie of options to move on to plural and multiple interpretations of nationalist historiography. In this regard, this

unblocking mechanism of war history neutralises and subsequently paralyses the elitist stranglehold on historiography for the purposes of hegemony.

Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) in particular and English historical fiction in general furnish discourse on nationalism and nation with a dual identity. In this dual scheme, the gun is not always dependable as the guerrillas remain vulnerable despite possessing it. The representation of memory in this manner avoids the canalisation of the past into a monolithic trajectory in which both the guerrilla fighter and the gun are impeccable liberators. Arguably, this dualisation of the nationalist rhetoric is consistent with trends in fiction in English, particularly in the late 1980s and beyond, to problematise and contest official nationalist historiography. The dualisation furnishes the syntax and semantics of interrogating and contesting official nationalist historiography and history. Once dualised, historiography glides from mono-interpretations to multiple and plural interpretations and meanings. In other words, historiography represented in this manner resists containment and encirclement. The fiction debunks the existence of a monolithic nationalist historiographical and historical identity, which as indicated, has seen the institutionalisation of certain liberation war icons. At the same time, this version of historiography becomes a radical challenge to the efficacy of the nationalist ideology or movement in transforming the lives of ordinary people who have seen very little change over the years. The nationalist ideology that led to independence in 1980 becomes what (Bond & Manyanya, 2002: 70) prefer to call an "exhausted nationalism."

Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) also represents images that bring out the difficulties that guerrillas faced in executing the war in the battlefield. Just like the configuration of war memories in *Echoing Silences* (1997), *Pawns* (1992) avoids the tendency to caricature the Rhodesian forces by showing that they also employed advanced military tactics and intelligence. As shown in the narrative, they were capable of launching successful surprise attacks. Such tactics often annulled the guerrillas' battle plans thereby exposing them to the 'enemy'. In such circumstances, heavy casualties were realised on the guerrillas' side. The toll of such surprise attacks on the guerrillas is recorded in a ZANLA report of an "enemy surprise attack" at Kadyamusume's village, near Avila, on 19 July 1978, in which

ten guerrillas died and four were injured, [which] relies on Fr Mukuwapasi's evidence: Bombed about 15 min after arrival, no chance to retreat...The information of the other nine killed was stated to us by Fr Mukuwapasi, a contact of us who works at Avila Mission. It was from this information that we proved these comrades were killed (ZANU Archives, File: Chitepo Section 2: Chitepo Operational Report, 17/8/77, by B Chakamuka (Quoted in McLaughlin, 1996: 127).

Unlike the earlier writers in indigenous languages who denied the creativity and agency of settler forces, later writers like Samupindi in *Pawns* (1992) and Kanengoni in *Echoing Silences* (1997) understand that "everything has got its own unique energy which must be acknowledged" (Achebe, 1989: 62)

In *Pawns* (1992), Fangs, the commander, is a leader of a conflicting group. The author describes how his battle plan fails to materialise as the Rhodesian forces had re-strategised. His initial battle plan had been undertaken by carefully choosing a site for an ambush where the

plan was to allow the convoy to get into the killing bag. Once there, the bazooka operator would open fire on the leading vehicle. This would stop the procession and act as a signal to open fire (130).

However, using their own military instinct, the Rhodesian forces drive empty military trucks with drivers only into the killing bag, while the other trucks drive slowly but cautiously into the same space. Taken by surprise, the guerrillas fail to quickly adjust with the effect that most of them are killed. War is thus presented as unpredictable; and victory is not always guaranteed. As a result of this tactical drawback, Fangs is traumatised by the loss of his fellow cadres. He feels that their death is his direct responsibility as commander. The whole experience psychologically harangues him and even emotionally affects the manner in which he relates with his juniors. He considers using marijuana like the guerrillas in *Echoing Silences* (1997) to cushion himself from the trauma resulting from a debilitating guilt conscience engendered by an unpredictable war.

In as much as Fangs searches for cushion from marijuana, he simultaneously appeals to God and Angela, a peasant girl. The fact that he tries to seek psychological support from unrelated sources which are God, sex and drugs shows

his mental vulnerability, human helplessness and utter confusion. Appealing to Angela, a peasant girl doing laundry for the fighters, Fangs says:

I am a dam wall about to give way and explode. I am a prison. The prisoners I hold clamour for release. I must divest myself of all this pent-up emotion. Angela (139).

In this case, he is appealing to an ordinary village girl whom he wants to have sex with. He stands in sharp contrast with guerrilla leaders in Shona, Ndebele and some English narratives in the early 1980s in which the leader is a shrewd battle planner and a paragon of chastity. Such guerrilla commanders whose military strategies do not fail to materialise include Tumirai in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990), Mabhunu in Makata's *Gona reChimurenga* (1982), Gulliver in Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985), Bhazuka in Mele's *Impi* (1987), Gadzirai Nyika in Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985) and Tinashe in Chipamaunga's *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983).

Another episode in which Fangs kills a young Rhodesian soldier of his age in a physical duet during the Mavonde battle seems to exacerbate his mental pathology. While he joined the war where killing or being killed is an everyday reality, this militates against his conscience. The conflict between his actions as a 'soldier' and his moral conscience triggers a form of psychosis that pursues him long after the war has ended. Earlier, he had made the resolve in a dialogue with self that: "This killing only earns one a soul torn and rent. I don't want to kill! I don't want to take part in the killing" (107). This feeling can be traced to his father's violent death in an accident when Fangs was still young. Reacting to the state of his father on the day of his burial, he says: "No, this could not be my father! I had never been so frightened in my life. I shook. God, I shook. I still shake. Now I shake invisibly, but I do shake" (20). Therefore, the fight with the young Rhodesian man seems to trigger part of that ineffaceable emotional experience.

The destructive potential of the war and the resultant psychological trauma in a war situation as captured in *Pawns* (1992) is not unrelated to evidence presented by a former combatant called Tarzan Muparadzi in Barnes (1995: 134) who remembers that:

...in the war, you do [things]...I was involved in a lot of killings when I was still young...You see? Therefore, you are likely to be affected mentally because you are involved in killings when you are too young. And witnessing some other horrible events.

The above evidence vindicates the psychological effects of the war that are fictionalised in *Pawns* (1992) and *Echoing Silences* (1997). Fangs and Munashe, the two guerrilla characters in *Pawns* (1992) and *Echoing Silences* (1992), respectively, are similar in a number of ways. They are very vulnerable and both have been dehumanised by the war. In an episode which typically shows war-induced neurosis, Fangs embraces Angela's decomposing corpse and spends some time holding on to it. Losing Angela, the only woman in his life and probably carrying his child inflicts permanent psychological damage on Fangs. Events in the war combine with his background to undermine his mental stability. Similarly, Munashe also kisses Kudzai's rotting corpse, completely oblivious of its state. He has to be restrained by fellow guerrillas who express shock at his behaviour.

Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) depicts the battle fought in the Chiduku Tribal Trust Lands just before the call for ceasefire became effective. This battle is supported by historical sources. Fangs and his group had planned to temporarily settle in the Rombwe Mountain as they move further into the interior to inform others about the ceasefire arrangements. The author's description of the area and the uses to which the Rombwe Mountain was put by guerrillas is also consistent with historical records. History shows that the ZANLA guerrillas operating in Rusape had used the Rombwe (Ruombwe) Mountain as their stronghold. Despite its relative safety, the mountain was surrounded by open lands and the Rhodesians monitored guerrilla movements from a nearby hillock. Just before this battle, which the author comprehensively describes, a number of guerrillas in Fangs' company plan to seek refuge in the Rombwe Mountain. However, the hurdle seems to be the vast open lands as these will expose them to the vigilant Rhodesian forces. It is important to refer to this incident in detail because the same battle is also captured by historians Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982). The blow-by-blow description of the events in the two sources, that is, *Pawns* (1992) as historical fiction and *Chimurenga: The War in Rhodesia* (1982) as history is profoundly vital for conclusions in this study. In *Pawns* (1992), the author remembers and represents the following details about this historical event:

Movement for such a large group carrying so many weapons proved difficult. But there was need for urgency. Extra precautions had to be taken to avoid detection by the Rhodesian forces...After three long weeks of walking they arrived in Rusape...So far they had avoided detection...They could see the Rombwe mountain stretched out before them, blue and majestic against the sky. The surrounding terrain was flat and densely cultivated. Rombwe was clothed in sacred cultural myths and embroidered with caves. These made it a natural stronghold for the Zanlas operating in the Rusape area despite the dangerous openness of the surrounding area (187 and 188).

However, the battle begins exactly the moment Fangs and his group are discovered by the Rhodesian forces who have been monitoring the movement of guerrillas in this area. In narrating events surrounding this incident, Samupindi in *Pawns* (1992) writes that:

The Rhodesian ground force surrounded the mountain. Trucks ferried in combat men whilst a Dakota dropped in paratroopers...The recoilless rifles and mortar bombs scythed across the Rhodesian advance...He spun round and fired like a demon. Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you Boers! His AK spat blind fire into the enemy. To his right two guerrillas fought with an anti-air gun which had jammed...Fangs continued to shout obscenities as he fired...[7.00p.m.] The battle was over. The Rhodesians had been repelled, despite their superior artillery...Ten guerrillas had been killed outright, a number lay dying, many had been seriously injured (190- 191).

As already indicated, the very same battle is also described in similar ways by Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982: 144-150). The following is an abridged description of the battle in Moorcraft and McLaughlin:

(The action described here was the last major battle between ZANLA guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces before ceasefire on 28 December 1979...) For years guerrillas operating in the Chiduku TTL 150km east of Salisbury used a large mountain, called Rombwe after a former tribal ruler, as a base. Because of its prominence, it was an ideal rendezvous point for groups infiltrating from Mozambique. The mountain lay 8 km from the main Salisbury-Umtali road. From Rombwe the guerrillas crossed the narrow strip of European farming land around the tiny hamlet of Inyazura to and from operations in the Makoni TTL. By 1978, about 500 guerrillas fighting in the region were using it from time to time...A well-worn path alerted the Rhodesian patrol to the presence of what was one of the largest ever concentrations of guerrillas inside Rhodesia...At two o'clock in the

afternoon the patrol stumbled on a group of guerrillas resting among trees near the crest. The ceasefire was still 10 hours away. Both sides opened fire simultaneously and the mountain top erupted in volleys of small arms fire. The guerrillas roared obscenities at the pinned patrol...The police patrol threw two white phosphorous grenades to mark its position. The lynx made two strikes on the guerrilla positions with napalm...The K-cars closely followed the Lynx strike and passed across the front of the widely spread guerrilla positions, pouring in fire. They were engaged by 12,7 mm DShk anti-aircraft machine guns the guerrillas had on the mountain...Despite the intensity of the action, only 15 guerrillas had been killed.

This is the last battle that Fangs fights before independence. He is seriously injured. The author tells readers that: "A bandage ran round his forehead. A headache splintered his head. Home. Twisted bodies. Contorted limbs...Home!" (191). As a result of Fangs' experiences, the end of the war does not bring any celebration to him:

He was frightened. He was frightened of things coming down to an end. He could not, did not know how to behave in any other world. He could not imagine coping with anything other than survival and pain. Memories of Angela still rocked his mind. Was he going to survive? How? (186).

The fact that the end of the war was a source of disbelief for the guerrillas finds support from the voices of ex-combatants like Tarzan Muparadzi, who, in an interview with Barnes (1995: 123) says "it was just a surprise to us, to me personally, at the end of 1979, when we heard about the cease-fire. We thought the war was still on. We didn't even think of ending at that time." In this regard, the battlefield experiences of Munashe in *Echoing Silences* (1997) and Fangs in *Pawns* (1992) closely resemble the feelings of the guerrillas at the end of the war.

As is the case in *Echoing Silences* (1992), guerrilla guns are not given the status of epic weapons in *Pawns* (1992). Samupindi, the author, is a former combatant. Readers are particularly made conscious of the 'nationalist' gun in operation in the author's omniscient description of the battle at Mavonde which lasted for more than three days. Fighters become desperate to survive:

Overheated guns began to jam. The base was almost surrounded. Fangs felt it in his bones. They were about to be done in...The

Rhodesians' artillery seemed insurmountable...The guerrillas hurled down grenades and launched mortar bombs whilst their machine guns spat lead downhill. They had begun to run out of ammunition...Some of the Zanlas who had run out of ammunition began to hurl stones. To no avail (178).

This battle is known as the battle of Monte Cassino and the events related to this episode are narrated in seven pages by Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982). While presenting a one-sided account which exaggerates the carnage, Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982), both white scholars with a Eurocentric bias, bring out the difficulty as shown in fictional images in *Pawns* (1992):

The survivors streamed from the camp as the Selous Scouts set fire to the total grass in the complex. The crowds of fleeing guerrillas ran into the waiting RLI stop-groups. One of the four machine-gunners in a single ambush position fired a thousand-round belt without taking his finger off the trigger – he later found 60 guerrilla corpses in his arc of fire. On the afternoon of the third day of the assault the small group of Selous Scouts stood on the charred summit of Monte Cassino. They had suffered two dead and one severely wounded. Around them, on the hill and in the grass on the plain below, lay the bodies of 3000 guerrillas.

The careful descriptive attention given to the military contact by Samupindi in *Pawns* (1992) brings out the desperation and vulnerability of the fighters despite possessing an array of guns. Readers note the failure of guns and the guerrillas' dependence on stone throwing in a war that officially was won through formidable, impeccable and faultless guns. Granted, guns were not always a guarantee that one would successfully defend oneself. Guerrillas are forced to fight for personal salvation unlike in early 1980s fiction when every nationalist gun and bullet advanced the cause of the nationalist movement by unflinchingly killing the intended target, that is, the Rhodesian forces.

In another episode, Fangs and his fellow guerrillas are caught in a surprise attack by the Rhodesian forces, making it impossible to use their guns. In this surprise attack, they lose five guerrillas including one of the most experienced veterans of the struggle, Medic. In describing this event, Samupindi in *Pawns* (1992) writes that:

At that instant gunfire broke from behind them! He spun round. They were too late and too confused to return fire. Volley after volley of fire



was released. Fangs himself failed to return a single shot in the pandemonium that followed. They only fired two shots, two ineffectual shots (131).

Again, when Fangs finds Angela, his fiancée's decomposing body he cannot cope with the feeling. As a result, he "turned his gun to his chest" (183) in a bid to kill self. Fortunately, he is rescued by fellows who hit him "hard on the back of the head and the lights went out" (183). Corresponding evidence obtains from Freddy Nyika, a former combatant interviewed by Barnes (1995: 122):

We were passing in the middle of the football ground, through the school, and they started firing. I was the only one who was shot, shot near the pelvis. Three of my fellow comrades ran away, they managed to grab my mortar...I actually wanted to shoot myself. We didn't like to be captured by the enemy...So I was ready to shoot myself, I had this pistol. But fortunately enough, I couldn't lift my hand to trigger the pistol. So I just lay down there unconscious.

Given such a scenario, it would be difficult to celebrate the gun as liberator. This is the reason why authors such as Samupindi in *Pawns* (1992) and Kanengoni in *Echoing Silences* (1997) look at the war as a dehumanising experience. They deploy fiction to contend that the gun cannot be dissociated from the dehumanisation engendered by the war.

Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) also brings out the mental distress that results from violent incidents in a complex and violent war. This dimension finds expression through Shungu Dzangu and Pasi Nemasellout, two young guerrillas who are forced to violently murder Mai Tawanda, a peasant woman. Mai Tawanda is accused of being a sell-out and suspected of poisoning one of the guerrillas. The savagery in the murder and in particular the violence they perpetrate severely traumatises them. In the case of Pasi Nemasellout, he feels guilty and fearful as he looks at the mesmerised crowd who have been forced to witness the murder of Mai Tawanda. He does not want to kill the woman as shown through the small root he picks up instead of a log as the commander expects. He only participates in the murder because he is afraid of the consequences that come along with disobeying the commander. The conflict between his violent actions and his conscience subverts his mental balance. His trauma is exacerbated by the similarity between Mai Tawanda and his own mother back in Gweru. Through the ordeal, Pasi Nemasellout persistently notices

that: "The woman's calves were fat and shiny. Her canvas shoes were still on her feet. He did not want to look at her legs. He did not want to look at her head" (208). As a result, the whole ordeal appears as if Pasi Nemasellout is flogging his own mother. The memory of Mai Tawanda's murder becomes a permanent part of his memory of the war. It continues to come back despite attempts to forget it. This drives him into confessing that:

If you took away the earrings and cut the hair and lengthened the skirt she might have looked like you...strange but I remember the time I used to look up from under the table and you were cutting bread and I saw you and your calves might have looked like hers looked or perhaps we were out near the factory working in that rice field near the ash hill where the little train the slug and Esther and I were catching locusts in the grass and you were bending over in the mud to plant the rice and your legs must have looked like that/ her voice was like your voice in the bedroom (217).

On the other side, Shungu Dzangu persistently talks about Mai Tawanda, particularly the manner in which she died. He remains vulnerable and mentally disturbed as shown in his confession that "a person doesn't die just like that, like a snake or animal" (226). Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, any murder, whether justified or not invites the wrath of the murdered person's avenging spirit.

As is the case in *Echoing Silences* (1997) and *Pawns* (1992), *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) also recreates images of guerrillas who run out of ammunition and have to spend most of their time guarding the base instead of fighting. Baas Die, leader of the guerrilla group explains to the District commander "...how their activities had been all but halted by the shortage of ammunition following the battle on the hill, in which they had lost several weapons [including an anti-air]" (238). Similarly, Baas Die turns his weapon on a fellow guerrilla after a dispute which involves the entire group. Luckily, the weapon misses the target and hits a tree nearby. The sound of the gun has the potential to expose them to the Rhodesian forces in the area, thereby undermining the nationalist cause.

Because of the consistency in conceptualising the gun through the prism of marginality, it can be argued that historical fiction plays into contemporary Zimbabwean politics. By marshalling a controlled and potentially moderate discourse on nationalist iconographies, particularly the gun, historical fiction in English writes

powerfully against the dangers of “narrow nationalism” particularly in a context where the gun seems to become part of the nation’s political psychology and conflict resolution mechanism. It debunks the history of violence and violent pasts which unfortunately have been used as political resource in the new nation. The notable shift from the gun to the individual human being coincides with changes in ideology in the nation as previously indicated in the preceding arguments. It also becomes a critique of the entire ideological paraphernalia of the new nation and the path it is taking. People who had sacrificed their lives in order to realise meaningful transformation become disillusioned as shown through the admission of a former guerrilla interviewed by Barnes (1995: 118). The former combatant, Tarzan Muparadzi, said in 1991:

Perhaps I can still succeed if I work hard. But I don’t know how much 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!

In this context, the gun philosophy increasingly becomes anachronistic as it has not translated into improved material realities for the majority. It can also be read as a call to the nationalist movement to transform its operational strategy from one based on violence and open show of force and brutalisation of opposing voices to a *modus operandi* consistent with the progressive resolution of challenges imposed by independence.

By creating images that unambiguously neutralise and dwarf the exploits of the gun or even drifting towards gun amnesia, the literary historians seem, in the words of Jonathan Friedman quoted in He (2007), to move in the direction of attempts at possibly reforming and reconstituting the nationalist idea. This raises an urgent challenge within the nation to construct and articulate a new political paradigm. This also poses a scenario where the gun (literally and metaphorically) cannot continuously be used as a bastion for political or economic ideology and conflict resolution. While merited with engineering the birth of the nation, writers also warn of the possible dangers and associated weaknesses. Because of the symbolic status of the gun in Zimbabwe, the way it is viewed at any given time is inseparable from the politics of the nation and conflict resolution. Suppression of the epic commemoration of the gun entails that writers are writing against the possible entrenchment of the

“cult of the gun” as this has consequences on conflict resolution and national development. An uncritical commemoration of the gun poses “a danger that...violence might survive as one of the legacies of the war” (Bhebe and Ranger, 1995a: 21). As such, its graphical redefinition and historical reworking symbolically “entails establishing a new political climate that will allow both criticism and political diversity without resort to violence” (Chung, 2006: 331). Viewed thus, fiction can then be said to use memory politics as a nation building tool. In the words of Moreno-Luzon (2007: 69), historical fiction in Zimbabwe participates in “the politics of memory, in other words, the massive use of the nation’s past for political ends, to legitimize or to attack the ruling powers, and to pass on values to its citizens.”

#### **4.3.6 Relations among guerrillas at the battlefield: juniors versus leaders**

In the late 1980s and beyond, most liberation war fictional accounts in English show that guerrilla fighters were not immune to conflicts, tensions and contradictions triggered by personal differences such as background, level of education, region, religion, age, time of joining the liberation war, rank, class as well as gender. Sithole (1999: 4) whose research focuses on the divisions within the nationalist movement in Zimbabwe says:

Where human beings are involved with one another and interact directly or indirectly, conflict, tension, and struggle are bound to exist and describe the relationships...Contradictions are a given in social and political life.

The proliferation of these internal rivalries and ‘struggles-within-the-struggle’ give expression to images of power abuse and corruption in the liberation war. Narratives which remember conflict among guerrillas fighting against each other at the front vigorously contest the image of the nationalist idea, movement or ideology as impeccable. They “reveal alternative, divisive narratives of war...marked by a wide-ranging reassessing of the nationalist [movement, idea or ideology]” (Alexander, 2006: 109).

*Harvest of Thorns* (1989) portrays a highly divided guerrilla contingent. Readers come face to face with several antagonistic camps within the same group. The leader of the group, Baas Die, has lost the respect of several of his cadres. Like most of the

guerrillas under his command, he is involved in illicit sexual relationships with peasant girls. The image of a guerrilla leader who suffers from serious moral contamination and human factor decay also comes out in other historical fictions such as *Echoing Silences* (1997) and *Pawns* (1992) and this is supported by history. For instance, Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000) and Chung (2006) provide evidence in which certain leaders abused their power for self-gratification. The issue of guerrilla relationships with peasant girls is fully discussed in chapter five. The contradictions and tensions between the leader and some other guerrillas give currency to class and power struggles in the nationalist movements. The concept of group which defines nationalism is severely compromised.

For instance, Mabhunu deliberately undermines the leader because he knows that he will not be punished since the leader also suffers from moral contamination. He disobeys orders, which amount to dereliction of duty. His delinquent behaviour exposes the whole group as Mabhunu does not guard his assigned position. The tension that exists between Mabhunu and the leader affects the stability of the entire group. Readers are made aware of the open hostility in the following excerpt:

Mabhunu Muchapera carried himself superciliously, giving Baas Die unrepentant looks that said he would know how to hit back if rebuked. Baas Die maintained a dignified restraint. Taking the silence for cowardly guilt, Mabhunu Muchapera grew more arrogant, as if he was itching for a confrontation. When given orders he responded tardily. One morning he simply did not go to his post. Baas Die thought this was enough (*Harvest of Thorns*, 1989: 219/20).

When a crisis meeting is called, the two are engaged in a bitter exchange that culminates in a shootout. Baas Die has to be restrained by Gidi Ishumba after he aims his gun at Mabhunu and the gun explodes, hitting a nearby tree. While Baas Die is certainly overcome with emotion, the same incident can be interpreted as a statement on the general use of force and violence in the 'settlement of difference[s]' within the nationalist movement.

In the entire liberation war, evidence abounds on the use of violence as a conflict resolution mechanism, particularly between the leaders and their juniors. Leaders are quick to use violence and examples that immediately come to mind include the Nhari and Badza rebellion, the *Vashandi* group 'led by Wilfred Mhanda and Sam Geza and

later a second group of old-style politicians led by Henry Hamadziripi and Rugare Gumbo.’ Historians such as Chung (2006) have singled out Tongogara, the ZANLA Chief of Defence, as an ardent believer in the use of violence to settle difference. For instance, describing events around the Nhari-Badza rebellion, Chung (2006: 133) explains that:

Tongogara’s reaction was to execute by firing squad the rebels who had been left in his custody [though] he was unable to destroy the latter two groups as effectively as he had done the Nhari group.

In this regard, the guerrilla contingent in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) can be said to symbolise the internecine conflicts that dogged the liberation movements since the 1960s when ZAPU and ZANU supporters fought each other in the townships. The danger with such a scheme of political temperament as exemplified by the commander, Baas Die, is that it can become entrenched to an extent where it becomes psychologically and politically acceptable even in peace times. Therefore, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) does not just expose contradictions among guerrillas; it also assesses the dynamics of conflict resolution in the war and how these continue to burden the present.

Throughout their experiences at the front, Mabhunu has very low respect for the leader. He considers him a coward and also seriously doubts his military skills. This is particularly emphasised in an encounter with the Rhodesian forces in which the injured Torai Zvombo was abandoned in a cave. Mabhunu had fought very well in the same battle. At the same time Torai Zvombo single-handedly repelled the Rhodesian forces who had come to pick their deceased. As a result of their valiant military acts, the two feel they are superior over the rest. At that hastily assembled meeting called to deal with difference, they emerge more divided than they were. The intensity of the divisions is captured in Baas Die’s mordant rebuke of his fellow guerrillas:

There’s not one among you I can count on...You’re all snakes in the grass, harbouring evil thoughts...Not one of you...shows you what I have for a group. Not a single one. All smiling to my face and plotting behind my back...Thankless bastards. You need a Hitler for a commander to shake you back to your senses (*Harvest of Thorns*, 1989: 227).

The language that Baas Die uses is not just sarcastic but derogatory as well. It underlines the rift between the leaders and the ordinary guerrillas. This prompts Chiwome & Mguni (2000: 172) to remark that, “apparently, the fighters are not united in their efforts to dislodge colonialism.”

The same meeting also exposes the hitherto unsaid class differences which threatened group cohesion. Baas Die clearly mocks his juniors. He makes them aware of his superior status and therefore difference from them. Throughout his tirade, he seems to hint that the rest of the group members joined the war out of desperation. As such he belongs to a higher class than them. Even in terms of education, he makes it clear that he is better than everyone. The fact that he sees himself as different from the other guerrillas comes out when he tells his juniors that: “Let me tell you. I had a job before I came here. I wasn’t looking for a job like you were. I know why I am fighting (223)...I’m older than you four” (227). The insinuation is that the other guerrillas were propelled into the war by desperation. Baas Die projects their level of political, intellectual and military consciousness as hopelessly and irredeemably cockeyed and jaundiced. He splits the group into the rational/ superior leader versus the irrational/ inferior juniors.

Another aspect that threatens cohesion in this group is age. This is corroborated by the fact that the leader openly tells others that he is older than them. Conjecturally, it can be submitted that he also believes that they are acting irrationally because of age. It is also possible to estimate that Pasi Nemasellout feels that he was made to kill Mai Tawanda because of his age and background as a ‘born-location’ and one “raised in the townships”. In early 1979, Blackson Chakamuka reported, for instance, about guerrilla relations that “there is little unity within the ranks...in all sectors” (McLaughlin, 1996: 231).

The guerrillas in *Pawns* (1992), like those in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), also operate in an environment riddled with strife and conflict. The guerrillas are alienated from each other and relate with each other from a distance. The absence of dialogical engagement increases tension and suspicion among fellow fighters who are expected to be united by the same cause. The leader, Fangs, is always contemplating and pondering on his own. The same also applies to others. The use

of the stream of consciousness elaborately projects an army that is fragmented and disunited. It also concretises the vulnerability of the fighters who cannot commune to lessen the trauma and tension brought about by the war. Fangs and the political commissar, Logistics, are engaged in silent acts of insidious scheming against one another. They grew up together and are aware of each other's past. Fangs comes from a very poor background and it is this background that he is trying to run away from by joining the war.

However, the presence of Logistics who knows everything from the death of his father and his family's destitution reminds him of that traumatic past as well as one embarrassing experience at school. In this embarrassing experience, Logistics had secretly retrieved a scissors from Fangs' shirt as they were playing soccer and taken it to the teacher. Fangs had forgotten to surrender it. The following day, Fangs was caned in front of the whole school:

The caning did not really matter...What bothered him was the stigma. He became the school's thief to be used as an example whenever the occasion arose...But he had never been able to forget the incident. He had never liked nor trusted Logistics because of it, despite all they had been through together. Memory had always threatened their relationship" (*Pawns*, 1992: 122).

In the war, Logistics seems to be jealousy of Fangs' ascension to the post of commander. He strongly feels that he does not deserve the post because he is uneducated. The post should have been given to him since he is better educated. Such antagonisms triggered by jealousy and feelings of superiority have been identified by McLaughlin (1996: 231) who explains that; "the fact that, as the war progressed, new recruits were younger and better educated meant that they...were not willing to obey less educated commanders". As indicated in chapter three, Fangs, formerly Daniel is a school dropout who could not raise fees to finance his education. Consequently, Logistics questions almost every move and decision that Fangs makes in his capacity as commander of the group. He even doubts the effectiveness of battle plans designed by the commander. The relationship between the two is therefore undermined by jealousy, background, suspicion and lack of communication. During training, Logistics also subscribed to the *Vashandi* ideology while Fangs was not interested in it. Logistics is also a tribalist, an aspect Fangs thoroughly despises.



Medics, another guerrilla character in *Pawns* (1992), is the oldest in the group and is a veteran of the war; having been part of the first recruits from Mount Darwin, northeast of Zimbabwe. He seldom speaks with his fellow guerrillas as they subscribe to different ideologies. He finds nothing in common with the other young guerrillas who joined the war at a later stage. The chasm between the veterans of the struggle and those who joined the war at a later stage is captured in Chung (2006: 162) who explains that “veterans [were those] who had fought through the worst rigours of the war. Brilliant militarists, they were generally not well educated. They distrusted both the politicians and the self-acclaimed Marxists. They were suspicious of intellectuals [and all young recruits]...” This description best suits the character of Medic in *Pawns* (1992).

Mazorodze’s novel, *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) represents sporadic clashes among guerrillas that come after planned battle plans fail to materialise and achieve desired results. In one instance, the guerrillas had waited in ambush anticipating that the Rhodesian forces would fall into their trap. When they fail to turn up, there is tension among the fighters. This tension is a result of the mental pressure of war, particularly as evidenced by the relationship between comrade Zvabhenda-Zvabhenda, the Platoon commander, and Dinkaka, an ordinary guerrilla. As they lie in ambush a white woman and her child drive past and are stopped by the guerrillas. In an open show of violence, Dinkaka shoots the woman and the baby at close range prompting a rebuke from the commander. When confronted, Dinkaka calls others “stupid baboons” and threatens to shoot them. Shootouts among fellow guerrillas were therefore not uncommon. The pressures of the war made such violent behaviour inevitable. Dinkaka, a guerrilla and Zvabhenda-Zvabhenda, a commander in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) are engaged in a harsh exchange of words. Dinkaka is a guerrilla who believes in the use of force all the time. He personifies the “trigger happy” type of guerrilla, as supported by historical sources. In describing cases of indiscipline at the front, McLaughlin (1996: 229) says that “the main types of indiscipline mentioned in ZANLA field reports were “trigger-happy” troops, “roving rebels” and “pleasure seekers”. Trigger-happy guerrillas were those who relied too much on force, rather than on political mobilisation.”

Eventually, Dinkaka is disarmed and subjected to severe beating which leaves him unconscious. Paradoxically, Chimurenga and Dinkaka are old time friends from Waddilove High School. They escaped into the war at the same time after Donald, now Dinkaka had murdered an old man and her daughter. The dialectical tension between emotions of friendship and duty psychologically traumatise both:

The two old friends stood face to face – both tortured by memories of the times they had been together. Through times of happiness and through times of sorrow, they had sailed together. Now they were colleagues in the liberation war in a situation which was probably the zenith of their time together here under the sun – the one pleading for mercy, the other passing judgment in terms of the rules of the revolution (*Silent Journey from the East*, 1989: 166).

The above description underscores the helplessness of the two guerrillas in a dehumanising war. Evidence of guerrilla indiscipline in the front and the subsequent punishment administered by commanders also obtains from ZANU Archives, *File: MMZ Province: Takawira Sector, Monthly Report, Jan-Feb 1979*, quoted in McLaughlin (1996: 176):

The ZANLA files contain reports of this disciplinary action taken in the Musami area at the beginning of 1979: Comrades James Tambaoga and Kuvamba Zvasiyana were taking beer and doing a lot of indiscipline in the front. They were in Detachment D. They were all criticised – given 35 cuts each and sent back to the front.

Cde Stewart Nyakanyaka led to the capture of a comrade after the comrade had been wounded. He was also in Detachment D (Mangwende). He was criticised – given 45 cuts and sent to the front again.

From the discussion, it is clear that history and fiction are connected.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

The guerrilla experience in the rear and the front is represented in converging and contesting ways in historical fiction published in all languages as well as different historical epochs. While historical information on the rear is suppressed in Shona and Ndebele fiction published in all epochs and English fiction published in the early 1980s, it is given prominence in English historical fiction published in the late 1980s

and beyond. These contesting representations of history become significant expressions on the political vicissitudes in Zimbabwe. While this is the case, the chapter has shown that Shona, Ndebele and English fiction published in the early 1980s celebrates nationalism. It selects and remembers images that project nationalism as a stable, sustainable and humanising ideology. The contacts with Rhodesian forces are very easy, simplistic and unconvincing to the extent that readers may begin to doubt if the liberation war was a war at all. This dimension is explained against the background of independence celebrations and the need, in particular by the ruling elite, to create heroes as models for the new nation as well as using those heroic images as political resource for regime legitimacy. Guerrillas and the general nationalist history of violence are commemorated without paying attention to the consequences of an uncritical celebration of violence. Images of guerrilla suffering and the violence committed by guerrillas on fellow guerrillas are avoided. Instead, the historical narratives celebrate the violence of guerrillas as 'supported by nature' and as liberating. Thus, they unconsciously contribute towards the institutionalisation of the use of violence in Zimbabwe, particularly as seen in electoral politics since 1980.

Historical fiction in the late 1980s onwards and written in the English language emphasises the violence and horror experienced by young recruits in the camps as well as at the battlefield. Because of this violence and horror, it represents the rear space and by extension the nationalist idea, movement or ideology as very unstable and unsustainable. Non-celebratory historical fiction in English remembers the liberation war in the battlefield as very complex, vicious, dehumanising and therefore incapable of engineering heroism and celebration. This fiction emphasises the history of nationalist violence where guerrillas are also victims and perpetrators of this violence. The battles with Rhodesian forces are very difficult and this increases the vulnerability and mental trauma of the individual guerrilla fighters. As the chapter argues, history is marshalled not only as discourse of verisimilitude, but more importantly, as discourse of protest and opposition. Thus, historical fiction in English published in the late 1980s and beyond contributes profitably to debates on the subject of violence, which has been extensively depicted in Zimbabwean fiction in recent years.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMAGES OF CIVILIANS: CONVERGING AND CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

It seems to me that the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe was quintessentially a people's war, in which the people were able to contribute much of their own experience and ideology (Ranger, 1985: 214).

Ranger's observation potentially deconstructs fictional narratives that tend to gloss over civilian contribution and presence in the war against colonialism through the reification of guerrillas as the sole historically legitimate 'freedom fighters'. Against this background, this chapter examines the writers' representations of the images of civilians in the war. It particularly discusses the impact of the war on the civilians at the individual, family and community levels as well as the civilian influence on the war. The civilian category in this chapter comprises peasants (mothers and fathers), youths (boys and girls), urban proletariat, educated professionals, farm workers and etcetera. It is this category that has been classified in Zimbabwean liberation war historiography as the 'man in the middle'. Civilian experiences are examined in this chapter within the broader matrix of guerrilla presence since both groups operated in the same spaces. The discussion of images of the civilians is critical in deconstructing myths which cast peasants as an amorphous mass of visionless and anonymous figures that wait for politicians and so-called liberators to moralise on and morph them. The discussion of peasants is critical in retrieving so-called ordinary people from the dustbin of history into which official dogma in contemporary Zimbabwe condemns them. It is cardinal in re-imbuing them with their historical agency – making it possible for readers to see peasants as a force that spoke out of its history and culture, with a view to create an African future steeped in freedom, dignity, prosperity and happiness. The chapter advances the contention that liberation war historical fiction written in Shona, Ndebele and English languages and published in all historical epochs appears relatively sincere and realistic in its handling of civilian experiences than those of guerrillas. While this is the case, elements of celebration can be noticed in fiction in all languages published in the

early 1980s and Shona and Ndebele fiction published in all epochs. English historical fiction published in the late 1980s and beyond is consistently critical of the effects of nationalism on civilian structures.

## **5.2 PEASANTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR: LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

Generally, historical fiction in all Shona, Ndebele and English portrays images in which civilians actively participated in the liberation war. In doing so, the peasants' motives for participating in the liberation war are not presented as uniform. While some peasants voluntarily participated, others were coerced into the war by different reasons. Historical fiction that represents peasants as voluntary participants often attempts to commemorate their political consciousness. Such peasants are depicted as embodying nationalist consciousness based on a logical desire to regain freedom and resources expropriated by colonialists, such as land. Symbolically, these emblemise, from the point of view of the ruling elite, patriotic citizens whose vision is anchored in 'patriotic history'. In Nyawaranda's novel, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), peasants exude high levels of political consciousness even prior to the coming of the guerrillas. The narrative portrays the experiences of peasants in Chengara Village in Tanda Communal lands. They live adjacent to a commercial farm owned by a white man, whom they call Zuvarigere. The radical and ebullient political consciousness of Nyawaranda's (1985) peasants in Tanda Communal lands is vindicated by history. Historians such as Ranger (1985: 150) have shown that "it was hardly surprising that the peasants of Tanda became some of the most embittered opponents of the administration." They had a long and well established history of revolutionary consciousness, which was vital in nourishing and sustaining guerrilla warfare. It can be argued that the peasants' political consciousness derives from their grounding in the oral heritage and traditions in which the history of black dispossession is articulated. As Fanon (1967: 90) notes: "For the propaganda of nationalist parties always finds an echo in the heart of the peasantry. The memory of the anti-colonial period is very much alive in the villages, where women still croon in their children's ears songs to which the warriors marched when they went out to fight the conquerors." Ranger (1985: 177) concretises the above thinking when he explains that:

By the time the guerrilla war began...peasants had a long tradition of understanding what had been done to them. They knew their land had been taken in order to establish white commercial farming and ranching; they knew that the Rhodesian state had discriminated in favour of white agriculture and had intervened in their own production in intolerable ways. Locally they fought during the guerrilla war for the recovery of their lost lands; nationally they desired a transformed state – a state that would back black farming against white, rather than the other way round.

Apart from being dispossessed of their lands by the Rhodesian government, the peasants in this region which both Ranger (1985) and Nyawaranda (1985) write about had contacts with some of the earliest political formations in Southern Rhodesia which include ANC (African National Congress) and NDP (National Democratic Party). Even the emergence of ZANU and ZANLA benefited from the already existing ANC and NDP party structures. Ranger (1985: 156) has it that up to the time of its disbandment, the ANC had “150 fully paid-up members” in Tanda while “the successor movement, the National Democratic Party (NDP), rose to 1700 or 62,3 per cent of the adult population.” Similar evidence obtains in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) where the peasants have well established party structures under their ZANU committee chairman, Matudza.

The chairman, Matudza, mobilises the already ‘embittered opponents’ of white commercial farming to engage in sabotage operations. Addressing the peasants, he tells them the following:

*Vakuru vakati asunya arwa. Munhu wose ngaasunye napaanogona, mukuru kana mudiki. Onai mapurazi ose avachena atakaghanurana nawo anongova masango zvawo asina munhu. Isu takangobatana mujecha muno musisatibhadhari...Varume navakadzi, ngatitorei mombe dzamabhunu...Ndiyo inonzi sabhoteji manje! Kutora mombe haisi mhosvaba. Bhunu harina kuuya nemombe munyika muno. Asi ini baba vangu vasati vafa, vakandiudza kuti Mukandabhutsu, baba vaiko kafanha Zuvarigere kacho, vakauya papurazi vasina nemombe vachidhonzwa vari mukarichi nedhongji rimwe chete! (3).*

Our elders told us that one who has pinched has fought. Everyone, young and old must try hard to fight. Just look around, all the adjacent white commercial farms are vast tracts of forests uninhabited by anyone. We are overcrowded in these sandy soils...Men and women; let us take away the white man’s cattle...That is real sabotage! Taking cattle is not a crime. The white man did not come here with any cattle.

Before my father died, he told me that when Mukandabhutsu, Zuvarigere's father, first came here, he had no cattle. He came here riding in a donkey-drawn cart.

The address marks out the nature of the struggle. The enemy is the white farmer who is the local manifestation of the oppressive Rhodesian state. It can be argued that the narrative portrays a political strategy consistent with official ZANU policy to involve the masses as much as possible. As Bhebe (1999: 99) explains:

In terms of political organisation and politicisation Mugabe called on ZANLA and local party activists to build "greater identity between the Party and the people by involving the people in the administration of freed areas through the creation of village and district committees under the general direction of the Party, as well as assigning them action programmes against the enemy..."

Peasants comprising men, women and youth get involved in the war by targeting Zuvarigere's farm, in particular his cattle. Young men led by Torapito and Makurume spearhead night forays into the commercial farms where they drive away cattle for eventual slaughter in the village.

The forays into adjacent white commercial farms presuppose the existence of a long history of hostility between the displaced and pauperised African 'farmers' and the wealthy white commercial farmers. Ellert (1989: 4) vindicates the historicity of these raids into white commercial farms:

In 1965 and 1966 Zhanda groups sprang up in many parts of the country. Groups of young men organized themselves in party political cells in the Tribal Trust Lands and by night moved into neighbouring white-owned farms, hamstringing cattle and sheep.

Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2006: 19) echoes identical sentiments when writing that:

Civilian men conducted 'hunting' operations into nearby white farms. Once the raiders had made it out of the settler farms, young women could join them to drive the looted cattle quickly to the relative safety of the villages. To the guerrillas, cattle raiding was mainly a nationalist strategy to undermine the settler economy, but to the rural population it was much more – it eased the burden of feeding the guerrillas. The rural people also saw it as compensation for the loss of their own animals at the hands the Rhodesian authorities.

Once the cattle are driven off the white man's farm to the village, slaughtering becomes a collaborative task involving youth, men and women. This comes out in the following excerpt:

*Varume vakanzi vachitanga basa. Nenguva dikidiki mitumbi yemombe yakanga yapunzika dzatemwa madatira...Utwu twukomana twomumushamo twakanzi tukwire mumiti yaiva panzvimbo pacho. Tukangoona bhunu chete twakanzi tuudze varume vaivhiya...Gare gare madzimai vakati vatanga kututa nyama kundonanika kuseri kwomusha. Ura vakandohusvinira kurwizi chaiko (6).*

Men were instructed to begin their work. Within a very short time, beasts had been slaughtered...Youths were told to position themselves up in the trees closer to where the slaughtering was taking place. They were told that if they saw the white man, they should alert the men slaughtering the beasts...After a while; women started carrying the meat to their seasoning places. They cleaned the offals at the river.

The collective effort of the rural masses to sabotage the colonial economy by 'pilfering' cattle meant for meat for exports and the Cold Storage Commission entailed that foreign exchange for the Rhodesian government also became erratic. Viewed from this perspective, it can be argued that the writer introduces and explores the economic dimension of the war of liberation.

The collaborative work and the clear cut division of roles among men, women and youths is evidence that peasants were also 'freedom fighters'. This fictional image of history potentially becomes a political and intellectual justification that the liberation war in Zimbabwe was not only waged by those who had guns in their hands. The shared and collaborative 'hunting' and slaughter of Zuvarigere's cattle typically reinforces gender and group identity in African communities and the war context in particular. It further becomes a platform through which peasants in Tanda construct and further whet their political and class consciousness. In this regard, the narrative clearly celebrates peasants' agency and self-conscious action which is buttressed by history. For men, the exercise affords them an opportunity to rediscover their manhood. Forays into the white commercial farms, which can be likened to hunting in the pre-colonial times, restore their social and familial obligations that had been undermined by colonialism and its various pieces of legislation. Raiding the white commercial farmer's cattle therefore became a manifestation of both tradition and



innovation. Before the coming of the white man and the subsequent barricading of large tracts of fertile lands and vast forests, hunting was an essential component of the Shona people's economy. Through game meat, they got protein and skins for various purposes. The 'hunting' in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) resurrected Shona values and living styles that were in danger of being extinguished by a constellation of racist and dehumanising Rhodesian policies.

Zuvarigere's farm and his imported big breeding bull (among those cattle slaughtered by peasants) which are at the centre of the contest between the peasants and the white farmer, emblematised the macrocosmic infrastructure of the Rhodesian political system and its policies. The farm boasts of very fertile soils while the adjacent village has poor soils that cannot sustain its inhabitants. It symbolises the unfair racial policies and unequal division of resources in Rhodesia. In this connection, land becomes the practical and ideological focus of resistance because it makes possible all other economic activities including cattle ranching, which the commercial farmers in the narrative have now monopolised. This is the context in which Ranger (1985: 14) reasons that:

In Zimbabwe peasant demands for their lost lands were part and parcel of a developed consciousness of the mechanisms of their oppression: of an understanding of the ways in which the state had expropriated them to the direct advantage of settler farming.

Peasants supported guerillas because of the need to reclaim their indigenous resources, particularly land and cattle. Among the Shona people, land and cattle do not just qualify as economic assets; they also have sacred and religious dimensions. It is for this reason that the majority of the peasants participate in the war against their marginalisation. This dimension brings the narrative's commitment to an official nationalist view of history.

The peasants' high level of political consciousness is further shown when they collectively refuse to render their labour to Zuvarigere as seasonal farmers. The withdrawal of labour, which according to the author emanates from the realisation of their power to influence change, constitutes part of the salient struggles with colonial capitalism. It is also both a revelation of and a celebration of the so-called ordinary man's agency. The farm manager who is sent by the white farmer to Chengara

village to recruit seasonal labourers returns without any one. This is despite the farmer's plea that his tobacco is rotting in the fields. These fictional images which are steeped in history are corroborated by Ranger (1985: 152) in the following words:

From the early 1950s, then, there was no doubt that the peasants of Weya and Tanda wanted to express their 'seething hatred'...The question was how they could do it...They began with an 'organised' refusal to enter into labour agreements with the new European owners of their homelands.

According to the image of peasants given in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and also supported by Ranger (1985), peasants become a force to reckon with. Nyawaranda, the author presents their class consciousness as a uniform collective patriotic consciousness. By the time guerrillas arrive in the area, the peasants' high level of political consciousness makes it possible for them to voluntarily attend *pungwes* (all-night-gatherings).

*Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) also depicts the concept of *utengesil/ kutengesa* (selling out/ betraying) in order to emphasise peasant nationalist consciousness in Tanda. It juxtaposes images of rural peasants with those of farm workers. The narrative depicts farm workers represented by the farm manager, Aphiri, as non-patriotic. Aphiri is a farm worker of Malawian origin who actively collaborates with his white employer in a surreptitious move to apprehend guerrillas. Through him, the author castigates people originating from other African countries as selfish and puerile. Malawians and Mozambicans are some of the foreign nationals that migrated to Southern Rhodesian to work in mines and farms. Their image in the eyes of the indigenous people has been that of inferior persons. In this regard, the author presents their patriotism as questionable since they are said to have no attachment to indigenous resources. The views of Rex Nhongo, a senior ZANLA commander quoted in Bhebe (1999: 40) buttress the narrative's version on the place and status of farm workers and other foreigners like Aphiri in the liberation war:

With regards to feeding, Rex Nhongo later recalled that they had problems persuading the Malawian immigrant workers who were the majority employed in the farms to give them food. But they had not the slightest problems obtaining food in the communal areas "because the people understood what we were fighting for" so that they even

willingly slaughtered their domestic animals to ensure that the fighters were supplied with fresh meat.

From a critical perspective, it can be argued that while the author is projecting socio-historical reality in Zimbabwean ethnic relations, his vision of a *mutenges* (betrayers) is narrow and stereotypical as there were many indigenous Zimbabweans who also betrayed the liberation war. The same image poses the danger of romanticising peasant consciousness as the author takes for granted that Shona peasants are a homogenous group with undifferentiated interests. He fails to take note of the fact that rural peasants certainly belong to different classes. This oversight, which is a result of the need to advertise commonness rather than difference, casts *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) as typical celebratory literature that sees nothing wrong among people fighting to replace the colonial legacy. While depicting history, fiction also has to be critical.

Makari's novel, *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) provides a slightly different view of peasant consciousness as compared to Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), even though both are celebratory narratives. In *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), peasants are not presented as a homogenous group inspired by shared ideologies and political beliefs even though this aspect is not convincingly dealt with. One category of peasants which is represented by Mberikwazvo (a village headman) exudes a high level of political consciousness. In fact, Mberikwazvo is made to appear more patriotic in order to authenticate the nationalist conceptual premise of self-sacrifice for the love of the nation and the struggle. He is fully conscious of the injustice visited upon his people in the area of land. The loss of lands is linked to the prevailing suffering and economic deprivation. The author carefully lets the reader experience Mberikwazvo's advanced political consciousness through his monologue which largely orbits around the structural and racial inequalities that have pauperised Zimbabweans and reduced them to second class citizens.

Living conditions in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) are depicted as unsustainable due to excessive demographic pressure on over-used and infertile land. After spending the whole day hunting in the nearby mountains, Mberikwazvo comes back home empty handed. The metaphor of nothingness, which contrasts with hunting expeditions in pre-colonial times when animals were galore because of the dense forests, is an

indictment of colonial policies which subverted African survival strategies. Characters like Mberikwazvo live in areas called reserves or Tribal Trust Lands, characterised by poor soils and overcrowding. This is the background against which Mberikwazvo readily commits himself to assisting guerrillas operating in his area. When he is subsequently charged by the Rhodesian authorities with failure to report the presence of guerrillas, he refuses to cooperate with them. Despite the administration of advanced torture methods whose severity elicit even a false confession, as is the case with Munashe and Bazooka in *Echoing Silences* (1997), Mberikwazvo remains steadfast, patriotic and unyielding.

Through Mberikwazvo's steadfastness in the face of the torture, Makari (1985) justifies claims of heroic peasant participation. The clear message is that peasants also went through massive forms of mental and physical torture even more than most of the guerrillas in the novel. This is justifiable but Makari's undoing is to idealise Mberikwazvo in his desperation to construct and popularise discourse of peasant heroism. Mberikwazvo becomes a role player as seen in the manner the author emphasises how he withstands torture in order to fulfill the meaning of the novel's title – *Zvaida Kushinga* (You had to be brave). The image of a steadfast peasant is the most ideal in the new political establishment – an enduring peasant who, despite the pain and suffering should be able to remain resolute, focused and patient while the government supposedly addresses his or her problems. The point we are making is that while the author might have intended to depict peasants as heroes, the political necessity of such characters for the new black officialdom cannot be underestimated.

Women peasant characters also play very significant roles in abetting the struggle. Their political consciousness is presented as highly developed. This becomes another instance in which *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) pays homage to the peasants as instrumental in the progression of the war of liberation. Makari's (1985) women characters become typical 'mothers of the revolution'. In a number of cases, guerrillas in the novel are shielded by peasants, mainly mothers, without whom they could have been killed by Rhodesian forces. Tinotonga and his colleague, both guerrillas, are rescued by a congregation of Apostolic worshippers who provide them with their religious regalia. Similarly, a peasant woman rescues a guerrilla who had

fallen asleep in her field after devouring large quantities of sweet cane. When the Rhodesian forces come across the sleeping guerrilla she thrashes him with a whip pretending that he is her mischievous son who has run away from herding cattle. As she does so, she orders him to go back to tend the 'abandoned' cattle. The trick works and the guerrilla is saved.

Hondo, another guerrilla is masked by peasant girls who force a long dress on him, a head scarf and makeshift breasts. This happens after Rhodesian forces arrive unannounced making escape very difficult. He appears like a woman such that one of the Rhodesian soldiers even attempts proposing love to her. What is worrying is that the whole process of transforming Hondo into a 'woman' is done in a split second. This makes the narrative, especially these episodes read like typical trickster or adventure stories. History borders on the melodramatic and other mythical occurrences which define Shona and Ndebele oral traditions. In these oral traditions, everything is possible; and this makes readers feel that the narrative has some influences from the oral experience. While the episodes are shrouded in hyperbolic theatrical renditions in order to conform to the undercurrent of self-sacrifice and bravery in the narrative, peasant participation cannot be simply wished away for political expediency. As previously hinted, the author's portrayal of peasants is premised on a critical understanding of their roles in guerrilla warfare.

Mele's *Impi* (1987) also gives expression to a radically ebullient rural nationalism incandescent with the desires for freedom, dignity and an end to insidious Rhodesian acts of political sabotage which dehumanise peasants in every aspect of their lives. Because of the brutality of the Selous Scouts, peasants fiercely support guerrillas. The excessive violence used by the Rhodesian forces to obtain information on the whereabouts of the guerrillas seems to be counterproductive. In fact, it hardens peasants' resolve and determination for self-rule while radicalising their political consciousness. The use of violence results in many peasants sustaining serious injuries. For instance, Mafu, an elderly peasant and active guerrilla supporter ends up in Mpilo Hospital in Bulawayo. Ncube, who is also one of the politically active villagers in *Impi* (1987) says:

*Sona isibhedhlela leso siyanceda sibili. Nxa uMafu esekhonangale kungcono sibili. Sesikwazi ukuthi uphilile (93)*

That hospital is very helpful. If Mafu is now there, it's much better. We are now assured that he is going to be well.

The author's high regard of the hospital as a critical intervention in the war can be linked to the fact that he was the hospital librarian during the time. Youths also cooperate with their parents as they carry food to the guerrillas.

The high level of political consciousness is also notable in the manner in which some villagers like Jubela, Ncube and Mafu critically discuss the political situation in the country. Comparatively, they prefer reports from radio broadcasts in Zambia and Mozambique than from within Rhodesia. It is in this regard that they are able to distinguish between propaganda and the general direction that the war is taking. In fact, the success of the war in the novel is a result of active and conscious peasant support. The villagers cook for the guerrillas after their food rations run out. Shona and Ndebele historical fiction celebrates peasant participation in the liberation war.

### **5.3 WAR AND INTRA-CIVILIAN RELATIONSHIPS**

Historical fictions published in all epochs articulate a historical disposition in which participation in the liberation war is not linked to patriotic nationalist consciousness alone. The fictions emphasise the divisive and disruptive nature of the nationalist idea, movement or ideology in terms of social harmony. Evidence in these narratives illustrates that peasant communities were negatively affected by the liberation war. The pre-war 'harmony' crumbled under the pressure of the war as some within the peasant body took advantage of the liberation war as a complex experience to settle old scores and grudges. As a result, the war became an instrument for renegotiating relations, power and space among civilians. Such historiographical material contrasts sharply with the foregoing discourse where narratives underline the unitary character of nationalism.

Moyo's novel, *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) reveals some of the often glossed over struggles within the peasant group. These are triggered by different material positions, an aspect which links nationalist consciousness to individual agendas rather than collective interests. Those people who lead relatively luxurious lifestyles become victims during the liberation war. In such circumstances, the liberation war

becomes a process that is exploited by those who lead debased lives to hit at those who have achieved reasonable levels of social success. Kudzai, who is the author's voice of history in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) and is also a dedicated supporter of the struggle, has this to say:

*Vamwe vedu havadi kuona kubudirira kwoumwe munhu. Kana munhu akangoita imba yakanaka kana kuve nemari kana mbatya dzakanaka, ndoda imba yakavakwa nezvidhina ikapfirirwa namarata, zvatoipa. Vamwe vanobva vakutora somutengesi. Vamwe vava kungoda kuurayisa vamwe napamusana petsinye kana shayisano (27).*

Others are averse to other people's success. If someone has a beautiful house, clothes or has money, particularly a brick house roofed with zinc sheets, then things go bad. Others take you as a sell-out. Others just make false reports which lead to innocent deaths just because they are cruel or jealousy.

As a patriotic nationalist, Kudzai's remarks underscore the pervasive nature of this problem. Evidence given by a number of historians, among them Kriger (1992) and Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000), indicates that many innocent civilians died as a result of localised jealousies.

In this regard, it can be reasoned that instead of advancing the so-called patriotic nationalist cause, peasant consciousness as shown in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) clearly opposes it. The unmistakable impression in the novel is that nationalism exacerbates the fissures and cleavages in rural communities. The internal and localised struggles among peasants reflect the complexity of the war and the problematics that underpin nationalism. Whether the liberation war is an ideological instrument capable of suppressing difference and cultivating unity is the major question that *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) poses. The novel's economy of discourse on peasants revolts sharply against the attempt to canalise history along the path of official nationalist historiography. Narratives that represent the sociological dimension of the liberation war are clearly not hamstrung by the interests of the state. The new government appears to have had entrenched interests in the image of the guerrillas, particularly their symbolic significance. The image of the guerrillas in the media, history texts and literature was/is a major political resource for the nationalist leaders at independence and, Kriger (2003) is therefore correct in referring to guerrillas as "assets" of the nationalist regime. Also considering that at independence, the new government compensated

and awarded guerrillas and not peasants, the impression is that the military and not the social aspect of the liberation war was of paramount importance for the new black establishment. This trend is repeated several years after independence in 1997 when the same government again paid former guerrillas a lump sum of fifty thousand dollars each; a move that triggered debate with many Zimbabweans arguing that everyone fought in the liberation war and must therefore be honoured. Alexander (2006: 109) addresses debates taking place after former guerrillas were awarded hefty payouts:

The economic crisis triggered by the payouts and the taxes imposed to pay for them also sparked massive demonstrations and claims from trade unionists and others that the war affected all: alternative views of the debts of war and of the ideals for which it had been fought were loudly voiced on the streets and in the media. All this marked a wide-ranging reassessment of the nationalist leaders' relationship to their divided constituencies and called into question their capacity to root their claims to political legitimacy in a particular narrative of the past.

*Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) further depicts another dimension of intra-peasant relationships in which the so-called dangerous elements of society are dealt with using the authority of the guerrillas. These mainly include *varoyi* (witches). However, possibilities still exist that those accused of practicing witchcraft could have been innocent. Such thinking is vindicated by evidence from Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000: 172) who explain that "guerrillas were drawn into accusations of...witchcraft based on local animosities." In the narrative, Kudzai explains to her husband how those accused of witchcraft are murdered by fellow peasants who would have been empowered by the guerrillas. Unfortunately, she does not locate the murder of suspected witches within the appropriate socio-cultural and historical context. Before colonialism, people suspected of being witches were ostracised, killed or cast out of society. With the emergence of colonialism and the subsequent enactment of the Suppression of Witchcraft Act by the colonial regime, people were prevented from dealing with witches as tradition had always mandated.

It is in this context that the liberation war can be said to have rejuvenated age-old Shona customary practices. Fellow peasants who were opposed to the existence of witches among them felt empowered to deal effectively with bad elements amongst them without any fear of reprimand from the colonial master. Guerrillas too feared



witches because of the Rhodesian forces' use of poison as a counter-insurgency strategy. The fear was largely precipitated by the fact that witches would be easily convinced by the Rhodesian forces to poison guerrillas. Nonetheless, the reincarnation and escalation of divisions and conflict within the peasant body as a result of nationalism certainly defies the tendency in elite circles to view nationalist consciousness as homogenous.

Samupindi's novel, *Pawns* (1992) also marshalls historical evidence in which peasant consciousness abdicates the nationalist goals of national liberation. This version of peasant consciousness exploits nationalism for 'agendas other than nationalist' liberation. The historical narrative explores this dimension of nationalist consciousness through the unfortunate experiences of the character, Mhangira. Mhangira is depicted as a hardworking peasant who is building a very beautiful house in his home area during the liberation war. He also leads a luscious lifestyle in comparison to other villagers. He manages this because he does some extra private work in the evening - repairing furniture, making chairs, wardrobes and so on. His position is similar to Murozvi, a patriotic peasant in Kangira's story titled 'Licked Blood' (2005). He, too, is a hard working builder who is gruesomely murdered because he is falsely accused of being a 'sellout'. In the case of Mhangira in *Pawns* (1992), his success drives some of the peasants who include Crispen, a youth and the two men contracted to build his house to conspire to mendaciously report him to the guerrillas that he is responsible for betraying the guerrillas to the Rhodesian forces. The conjured conspiracy theories come out clearly in one of the discussions involving the three men in *Pawns* (1992):

"Haven't you heard the rumour?" His eyes glinted with excitement. Was he going to be the first to tell the story... "He is selling the comrades out to the Rhodesian security forces." "What?" The old man's voice was loud with disbelief. How could a rumoured sell-out be walking about with his head on his neck. "During the weekend he comes here, and when he goes back to town, he informs on us." "It is even said that he is the one responsible for the murder of Kadira's family" (157).

Following this discussion, Mhangira is reported to the guerrillas. Without seriously thinking about the authenticity of the story, one of the guerrillas, Logistics, goes to Mhangira's home where he kills both the man and his wife in cold blood.

While peasants are depicted as victims of other peasants, guerrillas, too, become victims of a vicious cycle of peasant struggles and invidious schemes to sabotage each other. According to a peasant quoted in Bhebe (1999: 96), “the comrades had not the means or the time to find out the truth and they did not know the local situation, so that they tended to believe easily what they were told. That way we lost many people executed by the guerrillas, many of whom were innocent.” After realising his folly, Logistics is mentally traumatised by the fact that he has killed two innocent people. He is overwhelmed by a guilty conscience that makes him behave irrationally. At this point, his now irrational behaviour threatens group security. As part of the punishment and also in order to ensure security of the group, plans are made for him to be returned to Mozambique for rehabilitation and disciplinary action. McLaughlin (1996: 231) gives corroborating evidence which shows that “guerrilla leaders were withdrawn from Katerere for killing innocent people who had been labelled as witches or sell-outs by their neighbours.”

What is discernible from Mhangira’s experience is that he is a victim of his success. The other peasant categories are jealousy of him. They therefore use nationalism and the presence of the guerrillas to achieve their unscrupulous agendas. The three conspirators see their lack of success and woes as directly emanating from Mhangira’s achievements. They do not link their problems to the broader state policies which generally marginalise Africans. Kriger (1992: 21 and 171) characterises this reaction as “peasant anger turned inwards against other peasants [or] micro-level struggles within the Zimbabwean revolution.”

Looking back, it also becomes clear that earlier on, the two builders had been reproached about their slow progress yet they were demanding money now and then. This infuriated them. Crispen, too, is still to recover from the complete decimation of his family by the Rhodesian forces. The role of Crispen who is a *mujibha* (a trained local youth who helps guerrillas) in informing about the parents is echoed by Agness Ziyatsha in an interview with Staunton (1990: 171). She explained that: “It was not the old people, the villagers, who told on each other but the *mujibhas*. They were the ones who sold out on people by telling the comrades stories.” In addition, history still shows that some youth like Crispen became very

powerful as a result of the war. They used this power for vindictive purposes. Maxwell (1993: 374) illustrates this thinking:

The war also provided youth to get even with the rich and give vent to their ethnic prejudices. Thus one village of outsiders, of Jindwe origin, who were particularly socially mobile by virtue of their proximity to Elim mission, was subject to constant harassment by *mujibha* who beat and stole from it.

For that reason, *Pawns* (1992) shows that Crispen abuses his privileged position as *mujibha*.

In her researches in Mutoko where she conducted interviews with peasants and guerrillas, Kriger (1992) gives the views of one of the interviewees who says that “envy of better-off people operated among resident villagers as well as between them and migrants.” Related to the above are comments made by other villagers on why certain individuals were killed as ‘sell-outs’:

Some would go privately to the comrades and complain. For instance, if you were jealous of someone who had a lot of cattle...People might hate you because you have a lot of property; or maybe because you are cruel. It was just hatred. Maybe you have money to drink beer; maybe you have the same girlfriend; maybe you have a lot of property in your house...If relatives were against you, they'd make it difficult for you by reporting you to comrades. Relatives could be against you because you are wealthier than they are. You must not get too far ahead of them or else there'll be jealousy (Kriger, 1992: 189)

It can then be argued that nationalism triggers a serious sociological crisis and moral conundrum. The above intra-peasant contestations between the haves and the have-nots, the hard working and the indolent, the disciplined and the undisciplined set in motion a plethora of debilities and complexities that result in universal pawnhood in a war situation. In this regard, historiography gives nationalism a nuanced character in which it facilitated liberation but at the same time disrupted and fractured individual security and co-existence. This brings out the pitfalls of nationalist consciousness and guerrilla authority in general.

Mutasa's novel, *The Contact* (1985) depicts a scenario in which peasants use nationalism in order to settle grudges engendered by contests for political office.

Contestations for political office were mainly triggered by the Rhodesian government's attempt to control the powers of chiefs. Garbett quoted in Kriger (1992: 68) explains that:

Colonial policies also intensified dynastic disputes. In the pre-colonial past, an unsuccessful candidate for office could emigrate and establish a chiefdom elsewhere, but racial land legislation that demarcated African areas in the colonial period placed a ceiling on the number of chiefly offices, intensifying succession disputes. The pay associated with political office added to its appeal and heightened competition.

Homwe, a peasant and Rhodesian forces sympathiser has been eyeing the local Danga chieftainship. He feels that "...the people of Danga...had got the chieftainship of the area when he, the son of Danga, the former senior, was supposed to have it" (79). The interest in the political functions of the chiefs and the colonial government's readiness to use them to exploit indigenous people meant traditional ways of appointing chiefs had been usurped. For that reason, Homwe is determined to use the war to get rid of the incumbent chief so that he can get the chieftainship himself. He informs on their plans to hold an all-night gathering with the guerrillas. He passes very accurate information to the Rhodesian forces so that they would do the work for him. In addition to the chieftainship, there is the prize money of between \$500 and \$1000 that he would get if any of the guerrillas and Chief Danga and his people were to be killed. All this for Homwe is too good to resist. The opportunity to make quick money in the war, thus, sowed divisions as some could not resist the temptation. The newly acquired wealth would make them different from the rest. Again, as has already been said, the war became an instrument for invidious power contestations among peasants. Homwe's readiness to use the war to fight other civilians is similar to a case in which Chief Chiweshe in the Zambezi Valley

was involved in a succession dispute. His family had been replaced by another ruling line considered to have been loyal to the settler Government during the 1896-97 *chimurenga*. Chiweshe readily perceived the guerrillas as allies in his efforts to be reinstated to the chieftaincy. Such local disaffection combined with poverty to produce a population who were "easy meat for subversion" (McLaughlin, 1996: 75).

In this regard participation in the struggle is linked not just to the nationalist cause, but to localised struggles, “sheer hatred and local jealousies...” (Mpofu quoted in Bhebe, 1999: 96).

Nyamfukudza’s *The Non-Believer’s Journey* (1980) depicts a family that is already divided even before the coming of the liberation war. The Mapfeka family has a history of suspicions and endless quarrelling among its members. This long standing family feud forces many of them to use clandestine methods like witchcraft to fight their own kith. However, the advent of the war provides them with a new weapon with which to settle family grudges as Sam reflects:

Could it not be the main lesson, he wondered, that the decimation of a family whose promise of wealth had come from assisting in the defeat of the first Chimurenga rebellion was now, in retribution, being brought about by a more recent and successful phase of that same old war to defeat the settler white man? How else could one account for the way in which, when the war came to their area, they saw it primarily as the means to settle old scores. If a man tells you that his own brother is an informer, you are very likely to believe him (68).

The argument is that, while the Mapfeka family was already feuding before the coming of the liberation war, the war exacerbates the conflict and expedites the family’s collapse. At the funeral of one of Sam’s uncles killed by the guerrillas, the tension and antagonism among the present family members is highly palpable. In fact, the feeling of loss is eclipsed by the tension and hostility. The above arguments are akin to how Kriger (1992: 8) characterises the intricate nature of the war:

Zimbabwean peasants participated in the guerrilla war of independence only partly because they wanted to remove the racially discriminatory policies of the white minority government. More importantly, oppressed peasants saw in the breakdown of law and order during the war an unprecedented opportunity to transform oppressive village structures. While the guerrillas were persuading and coercing peasants to sweat and toil on their behalf, oppressed peasants were forging alliances with the guerrillas to try to restructure village relations. Unmarried peasant children challenged their elders, women battled their husbands, subject clans sometimes tried to usurp power from ruling clans, and the least advantaged attacked the better off.

Even professional people were not spared either by the war. In Nyawaranda's *Paida Mwoyo* (1987), VaNyimo, an incompetent headmaster is jealousy of his young teachers who are adept at their work and who constantly work hard to achieve higher academic qualifications. One such teacher is Tapera, pursuing Advanced Level studies by correspondence. VaNyimo's pathological resentment of the ambitious and hardworking Tapera leads him to use the war as a way of eliminating him in order to gratify his neurotic soul. This historical fiction published in different epochs and in different languages shows that nationalist consciousness was fragmented and fractured. Different peasants and other civilian categories participated in the war for different reasons. The majority sought to exploit nationalism in order to fulfill personal agendas. While Shona and English historical narratives reflect the above, there are no Ndebele novels that talk about peasant struggles as having engendered nationalist participation.

#### **5.4 IMAGES OF CIVILIAN–GUERRILLA RELATIONSHIPS**

Because civilians and guerrillas worked together in Zimbabwe during the liberation war, historical fiction also represents this historical fact. As a result of the sensitive and varied nature of the relationships involving civilians and guerrillas, especially as regards 'patriotic history', historical fiction published in different historical epochs and languages tends to advance contrasting images. This complex tapestry of relationships includes among others, relationships in which peasants dutifully or haplessly serve as parents and guerrillas as their sons; peasants as sell-outs and guerrillas as victims; sexual relationships involving civilian women in which the civilians are mere pawns in a war dominated by men; the excessive use of violence on peasants by guerrillas.

##### **5.4.1 Cordial civilian-guerrilla relationships**

Historical fiction in Shona and Ndebele published in all epochs remembers those relationships which are based on mutuality, trust and patriotic duty above everything else. Since this historical fiction is published in association with the Literature Bureau, it advances the view of nationalism as a collective and humanising project. In other words, it articulates what the ruling elite would regard as 'patriotic history' which

conveniently forgets the sexual violation of women by guerrillas of all ranks as well as the rampant use of violence against unarmed civilians. Ndlovu's novel, *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) creates images in which there is good rapport between the peasants and guerrillas. Peasants in the novel readily give support to guerrillas without any coercion. Their role as well as the easygoing relationship between them and the guerrillas is expressed in the following statement which reverberates throughout the narrative:

*Izakhamizi ngamehlo kanye lendlebe zethu. Ngakho akulanto esingayenza ngaphandle kwazo. Ngakho njalo sinanzelela ukuthi asizihluphi ngoba ziyikuphila kwethu* (1990: 7).

The villagers are our eyes and our ears. As such there is nothing that we can do without them. And we have to be careful that we do not harass them because they are the source of our welfare.

The repeated use of this statement in the novel is an attempt by the author to emphasise the cordial character of civilian-guerrilla relations. It marks the official position of the relationship between ZIPRA guerrillas and peasants in the operational zones. The supportive role of the civilians which made them vital asserts to guerrillas is also underscored by Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000: 161) who have it that:

Meeting guerrillas' logistical needs was the principal force behind Zapu's wartime expansion. Guerrillas' demands were far reaching: they relied on civilians for food, cigarettes, clothes, boots, medicine and intelligence. Women were responsible for providing and cooking food, washing and mending clothes. Youth were charged with scouting and carrying messages, delivering food and supplies to guerrillas, and a lot of other activities.

Similar evidence also comes from Bhebe (1999) who points out that ZIPRA had to abandon its initial operational strategy of relying on their own food stocks. Due to increasing numbers of their guerrillas in the front, they had to rely on peasants for food:

By early 1977...a decision was taken to make guerrilla units to stay permanently in the country. Even the initial system of relying on food supplies from Zambia had to be stopped in favour of obtaining the food from the country. The people were slowly accepting to feed

combatants as they saw the latter gaining the upper hand in the operational areas (Bhebe, 1999: 107).

ZIPRA guerrilla fighters are depicted in *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990) as characters who did not burden peasants; in fact they are a people-friendly army. They do not demand sumptuous dishes and are content with any relish. This comes out when one of the guerrillas says to a parent that: "*Lingazikhathazi ngesitshebo, lungisani sonaleso esikhona*" (11) ("Do not trouble yourself with relish, just prepare what is there").

The above fictional representation showing ZIPRA guerrillas' comfort with any relish is supported by evidence from parents who had contacts with them during the liberation war. In an interview, Elizabeth Ndebele in Staunton (1990: 188) recalls that "the Zipras did not mind what kind of food you gave them: they ate whatever relish there was." Similar information which corroborates the writer's version of cordial civilian-guerrilla interactions comes from Fibion Mtero, a ZIPRA Regional Commander quoted in Brickhill (1995: 70). He had this to say: "ZIPRA generally required smaller numbers of guerrillas to effectively cover an area, and in many ways imposed a lighter burden on the local population than ZANLA did." Each time guerrillas visit the village, peasants are portrayed doing everything they can in order to satisfy them. They receive information on the whereabouts and movements of Rhodesian forces. Actually, guerrillas feel very comfortable dealing with civilians.

At one point, *Umzilakawulandelwa*, the narrator and leader of a guerrilla contingent, is detained at Mazondo's place where he receives treatment after sustaining serious injuries in a contact with Rhodesian forces. Mazondo is a woman traditional practitioner, *inyanga* in Ndebele. He stays there for a very long time while the traditional healer does everything she can to save *Umzilakawulandelwa's* leg. The nature of his injury is such that he is completely immobilised making Mazondo some kind of a life-support machine to this guerrilla commander. The patience, love and courage that Mazondo shows are inimitable. Of course, there are instances when readers' tension is raised by the marauding Rhodesian forces who ransack her place but fail to locate the hidden guerrilla. During all this time, the healer remains steadfast and unshaken. Historians who have carried out research on liberation war experiences in Matebeleland have shown that "guerrillas regularly called on



*izinyanga* and *izangoma* or *wosana* spirits...to heal individual afflictions and injuries” (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 2000: 170).

Civilians’ support of the guerrillas can be fully appreciated when viewed in the context of the brutal treatment they receive at the hands of Rhodesian forces. Apart from the destruction of homes, the narrative underscores the fact that the Rhodesian regime imposed punitive measures on those civilians whom they suspected of supporting guerrillas. They are beaten and humiliated, including losing their cattle for failing to pay taxes. Moorcraft and McLaughlin (1982: 28) confirm the historicity of the above experiences as shown in *Umzilakawulandelwa* (1990). They have it that “collective fines were imposed on the affected areas; tribesmen were hit where it hurt most – their cattle were impounded.” Cattle are a very important symbol of status and wealth among most indigenous African communities; more so among the Ndebele where cattle ranching is one of the main sources of life since the region they inhabit is drought prone, and hence unsuitable for crop production.

Mele’s *Impi* (1987) recreates images of peasants and guerrillas who relate very well. Parents see all members of the guerrilla contingent led by Bhazuka as their own children. They express their pain and worry each time there is a storm. Some elderly peasants even go to the extent of praying so that the rains can stop because to them, such weather conditions affect their ‘sons’ (guerrillas). They prepare food for the guerrillas and voluntarily mend their shoes and clothes. However, the author is one of the very few in fictions in indigenous languages in Zimbabwe who just mentions in passing the fact that interactions between civilians and guerrillas as well as general participation in the war was not always a result of nationalist patriotic consciousness. Given evidence shows that some peasants supported the liberation war and obeyed guerrilla commands out of fear. While there is no direct evidence where guerrillas physically attack peasants, the author brings out this perspective through some peasants when discussing about the liberation war in general. Mahole and Nqola, speaking in different contexts say the following:

*Asazi ukuthi abantu bazaphepheta ngaphi bobaba. Amasotsha  
ayasitshaya, lalaba esithi ngabalweli benkululeko  
bayasibulala...Ungamncitsha njani umuntu othwele umbhobho nxa  
ecele ukudla? Lokhu Hadebe yikho ukuba phakathi kwelitshe*

*lokucholela lembokodo. Ungamncitsha njani umuntu othwele umbhobho nxa efuna akufunayo? (24 & 49).*

Gentleman we do not know where people are going to seek refuge. The soldiers are beating us and even those whom we call freedom fighters are also killing us...How can you withhold food from someone holding a gun? Hadebe this is exactly what people call being in deep trouble. How can you withhold something from someone possessing a gun when he really wants that thing from you?

The tormented voice is an indictment of the official version of sound peasant-guerrilla relations. Corresponding historical evidence is provided by Auret (1992: 71) who recorded the liberation war experiences of some of the peasants who were victims:

The rural population, "the man in the middle", continued to live in fear of both sides. One elderly man whose village was bombed from the air and who was forced to slash down his own crops, summed up his dilemma in these words: "If we report the "terrorists" they kill us; if we do not report them the police torture us. Even if we do not, the police torture us just the same, because they think we are setting a trap. We just don't know what to do."

In the same context, young girls as portrayed in *Impi* (1987) become vulnerable in a war situation. They find it difficult to uphold chastity and morality as expected by their elders. Both guerrillas and Rhodesian forces compete for their bodies. Therefore, sexual relations with fighters from both sides becomes a survival strategy for them. While in the narrative some elders are convinced that the young girls are loose and immoral, the author articulates the forces which explain their behaviour. In this regard, he does not blame the victims of socio-historical processes, as is generally the case in a number of narratives in Zimbabwe's African languages. It is in the light of the above that Mele's novel, *Impi* (1987), makes it clear that civilian-guerrilla relationships were not always a result of mutual cooperation.

Makata's *Gona reChimurenga* (1982) varnishes civilian-guerrilla relationships by depicting a unilateral version of history. The guerrillas are presented as very gentle when dealing with civilians. Their only enemy is the Rhodesian forces, who more often than not are also forgiven and allowed to go free. The leader of the group, Mabhunu, proposes to a civilian girl whose name is Thandi. The two become lovers. When the two meet and are about to make love; Mabhunu somehow pushes Thandi

away. As a result of Mabhunu's action, Thandi is confused and embarrassed by his actions as this probably generates the impression that her womanhood is questionable and detestable.

Mabhunu's ability to regulate his sexual emotions and act rationally in a situation that is purely emotional is meant to present him as a disciplined people's soldier who is fully conscious of his action and his relationship with civilians. He does not violate peasant girls and does not take advantage of his soldier status. He is fully conscious of the military code of conduct which forbids sex with civilians. For that reason, the writer's suppression of the sexual violation of civilian and youthful girls is intended to convince readers that guerrillas were a people's army, capable of disciplined conduct. They could overcome human sexual emotions and weaknesses in order to safeguard the sanctity of civilians. The unmistakable position advanced in this narrative is that youths were very safe in the presence of guerrillas. While disciplined guerrillas were there, the image of civilian-guerrilla relationships in *Gona reChimurenga* (1982) is narrow and appears to contradict history which has documented and recorded widespread cases of the sexual violation of civilian girls.

In another situation, Mabhunu and the other two guerrillas condone a peasant woman who had betrayed them to the Rhodesian forces and, in the process preempting their ambush. Because their battle plan is disrupted, they suffer severe burns as they try to move out of the cordoned off area being incessantly assailed by Rhodesian bombs. Despite going through this terrible time as a result of the woman's actions, they even give her money so that she won't collaborate with Rhodesians in the future. This artificial gesture of generosity and mercifulness finds no vindication from history. In fact, this is the only scenario in Zimbabwean liberation war fiction in which a 'sell-out' is allowed to go unpunished and even awarded a bonus for betraying the struggle and endangering the lives of the guerrillas. This romantic version of civilian-guerrilla relationships is intended not only to project guerrillas as a people's army, as already said, but more importantly as an army fighting for the justice and defense of the ordinary peasant, their detractors included. It presents nationalism as "incorporative and humane" (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 2000: 168). The narrow recreation of liberation war history camouflages guerrilla violence against peasants. The treatment of sell-outs and witches was always violent in the

liberation war. Maxwell explains (1993: 378) the nature of relationship between sell-outs and the guerrillas when he writes that “sell-outs, due to their selfish and individualistic nature, became identified with witches...the comrades dissociated themselves from witchcraft and killed sell-outs as witches.”

Other narratives such as *Vavairo* (1990) and *The Contact* (1985) also advance a version of history where civilians and guerrillas relate very well especially on matters of sexual contact. In Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) guerrillas do not engage in sexual relationships with civilian girls despite staying together in the bush for long periods. The violation of women is blamed on Rhodesian forces. This comes out through Charira, a peasant and staunch guerrilla supporter, who, when asked about the conduct of Rhodesian soldiers says, “*Kuno handisati ndaona zvavanoita, asi kuPfungwe uku ndiko ndakanzwa kuti kuri kurohwa vanhu nemasoja uyezve vasikana vari kubatwa repukesi*” (14) (I have not seen what they do here, but I heard that in Pfungwe people are being beaten and girls raped by Rhodesian forces).

The same also obtains in *The Contact* (1985) where Rhodesian forces under the command of major Nhamoinesu rape a woman and her daughter. They live them unconscious until a group of guerrillas comes to their rescue. On the other hand, Gadzirai, a guerrilla leader properly proposes love to Gamuchirai, a peasant girl. Overcome with romantic emotions, he kisses her but instantaneously regains his consciousness and releases her. After this incident, there is no further contact between the two until after ceasefire when marriage arrangements are made. Independence finds the two happily living together. Considering that Gamuchirai is a virgin, it can be reasoned that marriage at such a crucial point in the history of Zimbabwe becomes a reward for a dedicated guerrilla. Generally, historical fiction published in the early 1980s and Shona and Ndebele fiction published in all epochs is intent on presenting civilian-guerrilla relations as cordial. It achieves this by projecting the image of the guerrillas as morally disciplined. While the narratives show that guerrillas were capable of romance, this is only limited to few and brief kisses. In this regard, the narratives suppress the sexual encounter between guerrillas and civilian girls, emphasising the violent sexual acts of Rhodesian soldiers. This way, they advance what Ranger (2004) calls the ‘patriotic view of history.’

#### 5.4.2 Murder of civilians through public beatings: an act of coercion

Historical fiction in English published in the late 1980s onwards broaches the subject of the sexual violation of civilian women by guerrillas which had been muzzled in the early 1980s fiction and in Shona and Ndebele fiction in general. Thus, English historical fiction on the liberation war shows that civilian-guerrilla relationships were not always based on peace, harmony and respect for chastity and civilian dignity. The narratives project a scenario in history where both guerrillas and Rhodesian soldiers physically and sexually abused civilians. At the same time, civilians also collaborated with Rhodesian forces and used poison to eliminate guerrillas operating in their areas. The response from the guerrillas was usually characterised by unexampled viciousness. *Echoing Silences* (1997) which attempts to provide a balanced picture of history demonstrates that civilians assisted guerrillas in a number of critical occasions. In one episode when the entire Chimanda battalion is wiped out except for two guerrillas, civilians help them reunite with some of their colleagues operating in an adjacent area. They also help them bury their dead compatriots.

While such cordiality exists in the narrative, the images are eclipsed by the vicious responses of guerrillas on those suspected of risking their lives. It is through these dual images of nationalist history that the narrative draws attention to the fact that guerrilla presence elicited contradictory responses from civilians. Some civilians tried to counter guerrilla presence by forming alliances with the Rhodesian forces. Alternatively, they were made to collaborate with Rhodesian forces because of circumstances beyond their control. This move often increased tension between civilians and guerrillas thereby exacerbating violence. In Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997), Kachidza, an elderly peasant man poisons the food meant for guerrillas resulting in the death of two of them. The violent response of the guerrillas where they "became paranoid with rage and hit him with both their fists and boots...hitting everything in their way..." (25) before dousing him with paraffin and setting him alight leaves a permanent mental scar on Munashe's and Sly's minds (two young guerrillas with the latter setting Kachidza alight). The author does not blame the old man as a reactionary but contextualises his behaviour within the liberation war environment. When interrogated, Kachidza reveals that he had been promised money by the Rhodesian forces in the event that he managed to eliminate

guerrillas. At the same time, the civilians' use of chemical warfare against guerrillas can be linked to the cost of hosting guerrillas. The war became expensive especially for the peasants who had to provide good food, clothes and blankets to the guerrillas. In some instances, guerrillas became troublesome, indulging in sexual relationships with local girls. This is exemplified by the submissions of one parent interviewed by the researcher who lived in a ZANLA operational area: "Whether you liked it or not, you were forced to prepare food for *vanamukoma* (guerrillas). I never liked it. At one point they asked my husband to buy four pairs of jeans yet his salary was not enough to buy one. We were forced to donate chickens for meat and if you did not have chickens they would force you to sell some of your fixed assets such as ploughs. They did not want to eat vegetables."

In Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), Torai Zvombo consumes poisoned mushrooms given to her by Mai Tawanda, a peasant woman. The guerrillas carry out their investigations which lead to the discovery of the poison and a radio supplied by the Rhodesian forces. They quickly call for a gathering where the accused woman is publicly brutalised leading to her death. Mai Tawanda's experience shows the dilemma of most peasants in the liberation war. Her son works for the Rhodesian forces and is the one who had given her a two-way radio to inform him on the presence of guerrillas. Whether to support the guerrillas or to disregard her son and in the process compromising his job security is a difficult decision for Mai Tawanda. By highlighting Mai Tawanda's background, the narrative avoids blaming her as sell-out or a non-patriot. Rather, it exposes the complexity of war which leads people to make very difficult decisions. The use of poison against guerrillas and the violent responses as pointed out in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) is an aspect given vast description in Werbner's (1991) narrative on the Lupondo family where a mother and her daughter are brutally killed for suspected food poisoning (see pages 155-156). Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000) also describe in great detail incidences of food poisoning which resulted in guerrilla deaths and the complete breakdown of cordial relations between civilians and guerrillas.

*Harvest of Thorns* (1989) elaborately describes the violent murder of the woman showing its impact on peasants and those guerrillas who are forced to do it. The painstaking manner in which Chinodya describes the brutal murder makes readers

feel and experience the pain, violence and viciousness of guerrilla responses. The entire civilian gathering is traumatised by the callousness of guerrilla reaction. Headman Sachikonye pleads incessantly with the guerrillas, in particular the leader, Baas Die, to spare the woman's life. But Baas Die is adamant. The emotional pain reveals itself through the slow and painful cries which engulf the assembled peasants who are forced to ululate and whistle.

The violent treatment of suspected 'sell-outs' was meant to serve as a lesson to other peasants who harboured any 'sinister' motives against guerrillas. From the manner in which the woman is battered to death, the impression readers get is that the whole community is battered together with her and coerced to support guerrilla presence and nationalism. In fact, the punishment of the victim is more of community rather than individual punishment. One finds similar evidence of peasant trauma at the hands of the guerrillas in the manner in which Dzilo's wife in Werbner (1991) is kicked until her teeth fall. She is suspected of poisoning one of the guerrillas just like Mai Tawanda in *Harvest of Thorns* (1989). When narrating the ordeal to Werbner (1991: 154), one of the witnesses recalled:

Then one of them kicked her with his feet and shoes. He kicked her until he knocked her teeth out, there in the midst of us all, where we were sitting. We felt the pain, terribly, terribly. Oh, when I tell about it. I begin to tremble again. I tremble.

Other examples from history are described in Bhebe (1999: 112) who explains that "...an accused was arrested and brought before a large gathering of the local villagers...Justice there was none in the comrades' court, but the punishment of execution was public never in hiding." Bhebe (1999: 200) also describes the violent murder of a nurse at Masase hospital whom guerrillas suspected was a sell-out:

Everybody from the school, the hospital, and from the local villages, was invited to come and witness her execution. One of the comrades who had been her boyfriend was chosen to carry out the execution. She was told to say her last words and she repeated Jesus's message when he was crucified: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23: 34). The guerrillas promptly denounced Jesus himself as a common thief, who had stolen two donkeys before he went to Jerusalem for the last time. With that the boyfriend emptied a magazine of, some say 32 and others say 41, bullets into her head which was completely smashed. When the crowd was asked to file

past her they found that only her neck remained hanging on one shoulder with blood gushing out from it as if from a horse pipe...

Another parent interviewed by the researcher expressed similar feelings in her revelation that, "To watch a sell-out being beaten was something which was very painful – *waitonzwa sewabaiwa nemunzwa mudumbu* (you would feel as if you have been pierced by a thorn in the stomach). I remember Zideya's mouth, ears and nose were cut before he was shot dead." Given such horrifyingly consistent methods of dealing with suspected sell-outs, it is possible to argue that guerrillas extorted peasant support through violent coercion. Kriger (1992: 101) extensively discusses this aspect and concludes that "coercion directed at an individual can affect indirectly, as often intended, the behaviour of a wider audience." Brutalising people at *pungwes* became a form of psychosocial warfare in which the unarmed peasants were forced to comply with guerrilla policy and ideology. Moore (1995b: 386) argues:

Justice and terror had to be collapsed into one mode. It had to be executed efficiently and, simultaneously, had to create the maximum effect: the words of the guerrillas had to be seen as promises, not threats. The consequences of informing to the Rhodesians had to be exaggerated and dramatized beyond anything the enemy was able to demonstrate. The execution of justice was propaganda of the deed epitomized.

*Harvest of Thorns* (1989) and to some extent *Echoing Silences* (1997) portray through fiction images that are consistent with historical accounts on the same subject. While the same violence can be read as a counter-strategy to Smith's determination to win collaborators, it is also vital to examine violence and conflict resolution strategies in the rear camps, especially the treatment of suspected wrongdoers as discussed in chapter four of this study. There is a striking semblance in the manner in which violence is used against disarmed recruits in the rear camps and the guerrillas' treatment of unarmed wrongdoers in the battle zones. The culture of violence for those defending or claiming to defend the party (ZANU) seems to have continued into independence unmitigated.



### 5.4.3 Images of guerrilla indulgence: sexual relationships with civilian girls

Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) further recreates images of the liberation war in which guerrillas engage in sexual relationships with civilian girls. In the undisciplined guerrilla contingent in the novel, even the commander of the group who is supposed to lead by example sleeps around with local girls. The total collapse of discipline triggers friction with village elders who are opposed to the flagrant violation of the sanctity of their daughters. In one instance, Chinodya, the author, draws readers' attention to the fact that, as a result of the guerrillas' lack of discipline, "a man in the village complained that a comrade was having sex with his daughter. The man complained to Baas Die, charging the comrade with rape" (219). Drawing evidence from a Commissariat Report for 1978, McLaughlin (1996: 138) explains that "guerrillas were also aware of problems within their own ranks such as indiscipline and lack of understanding." The report further states that: "Comrades in this Sector (Chitepo) had problems during the beginning of the year and mid-year. They had been spoiled by pleasure-seeking and beer-drinking which led to taking liberties with women." A parent interviewed by the researcher said that "comrades threatened girls if they ever exposed their relationships. *Asi vazhinji vana vemacomrade vatinoziva*" (But there are many children fathered by comrades that we know).

Clearly, sexual relationships with civilian girls appear to have been a universal problem in the war. In this regard, young girls became a potential site for nasty contestations and conflicts between parents and the young guerrillas. Even the guerrillas in the novel are fully conscious that their behaviour has undermined relations with the community. This is clear from Baas Die's admonition of the recalcitrant and defiant Mabhunu:

The *povo* is confused and their patience is running out. You know our honeymoon with the *povo* is over, but you're behaving exactly like the Selous Scouts who are out to destroy our image (220).

The reality of the tension that guerrilla sexual relations with civilian girls caused is historically corroborated by Maxwell (1993: 379) who points out that "the breaking of the taboo on sex caused widespread resentment." Some of the guerrillas who do not have the courage to approach civilian girls openly masturbate. While Baas Die, the

Commander, cannot deal with the accused guerrillas because he is also part of the scandal, history has it that sexual offenders or “pleasure-seekers” were severely punished. For example a ZANLA field report illustrates that a certain guerrilla called

Cde Satan was disciplined with 45 cuts after agreeing that he had committed sexual intercourse with a certain girl called Chipo...Bob M was disciplined with 45 cuts after being proved that he was leading in corruption, e.g., drinking beer, smoking dagga and playing with girls in the forefront (quoted in McLaughlin, 1996: 230).

While the fact that Chinodya (1989) does not let the girls unravel their experience can be seen as a shortcoming, it is an indication of the total lack of power, choice and voice of the girls in a war dominated by men. Once approached by the guerrillas and told to come back during the night, young girls like Tunhidzai who is only sixteen use the war as an instrument to exploit the newly acquired freedom of association. She is able to meet her guerrilla lover under the guise of obeying guerrilla commands and serving guerrilla errands. Parents and guardians could not stop the young girls from going out late since they were afraid of being labelled as sell-outs. It is during one such occasion when Tunhidzai lies at home that she meets Pasi Nemasellout. She has her first sexual encounter though the guerrilla involved fails to break her virginity. In this regard, it can be argued that the presence of guerrillas compromised youths’ moral discipline and led to the breakdown of the strict social code of interaction among young boys and girls.

From Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), it is clear that the war undermined parents’ control over the mobility of their children. The children’s newly-found and liberalised gender interaction fast-tracked the young girls into early motherhood as they became willing and unwilling accomplices in the guerrillas’ search for sexual entertainment and macho fulfillment. The thinking that the war environment both in the rear and at the front liberalised gender interaction beyond the strict social code finds support from Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000: 60) in her explanation that:

Many young people probably viewed their being out of reach of the social sanctions of family life as an opportunity to experiment with sex, and others used it to relieve the stresses of [war] life.

In an interview with McCartney (2000: 168), Maureen Moyo's memories bring out the helplessness and trauma of civilian girls, especially those who involuntarily succumbed to guerrillas' demands for sex:

It was to me, as a woman, now looking back, I think that the war had been [part] of my life. There were many men...Imagine, Irene, we had to sleep and have ten men, or okay, seven men in a week. Different men, touching your breasts, touching your vagina, licking your breasts – licking all over. Ten – okay, seven – different men every week, every month, different people, touching you. Your body becomes nothing. And you lose respect for yourself as a woman...They would instruct you: 'Do this, suck my this, suck my that. Ten men – okay, seven men – a week, different people. It is something that normal women, woman, cannot do.

The interviewee says she was brutalised for saying no to sex with a guerrilla; a fact which reveals young women's helplessness in the liberation war. *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) uses historiography to dissect the nationalist movement, idea or ideology. It makes readers experience alternative views of nationalism, in particular its corrupt, immoral and disruptive character. As pointed out in the preceding chapters, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) is part of the narratives that contest nationalist authoritarianism by bringing out hitherto unheralded versions of the liberation war.

Samupindi's novel, *Pawns* (1992) is another narrative published in the 1990s which generates images to the effect that both guerrillas and Rhodesian forces sexually abused civilian girls. As already stated, Samupindi, is a former combatant. In his novel Angela's (a peasant girl) sexuality becomes a source of undisguised contestation between the guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces. The Rhodesian forces' counter-insurgent operations lead to the brutalisation of women who are said to be the most active supporters of the guerrillas. It is during one such callous operation that Angela is raped by a Rhodesian soldier. Her ordeal does not end there. Despite being raped, Fangs, the leader of a guerrilla contingent operating in the area and had earlier proposed to her is determined to have sex with Angela. He feels no remorse for his actions as he is after sexual fulfillment. The author unravels Angela's helplessness in the face of Fangs' advances. By clearly bringing out Angela's feelings, the author underscores the vulnerability of civilian girls in the face of a war dominated by men:

But how was she going to refuse without appearing disrespectful or insulting?...She found herself obeying automatically. There was nothing one could do but obey (136).

Angela's moral conundrum in the presence of a domineering guerrilla commander strikes a resonant chord with the revelations of an informant in Kriger (1992: 167) who explained that: "I know that if a comrade approached me, I'd be too frightened to refuse him." As the guerrilla commander in Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) kisses Angela, "she suppressed a shudder. She felt again a sense of violation. She felt that if she was given the chance, she would weep forever" (149). She is not given time to heal and recover. This way, *Pawns* (1992) emphasises the fact that the girl child suffered a double tragedy in the liberation war. While Angela subsequently accepts Fangs into her life as her man, the feeling that guerrillas abused their military positions to exploit civilians is indubitable.

From the above incident, Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) makes the guerrillas as human as possible. They were also capable of having sexual relationships with local girls. Often, such relationships triggered animosity with the peasant communities and cost the guerrillas the peasants' support which they could not do without. It also increased chances of peasants' siding with the Rhodesian forces, consequently endangering guerrilla security. In Shona and Ndebele communities, girl children are valued as potential transformers of the family's fortunes through the settlement of bridewealth or *lobola*. Their violation is not taken lightly. In earlier fictional narratives on the war, the leader is an incorruptible personality. Similarly, his relationship with fellow guerrillas is based on brotherhood. He is their protector and the architect of all great victories the group is renowned for. His great self control would not permit the use of violence on subordinates.

## **5.5 EFFECTS OF THE LIBERATION WAR ON FAMILY AND SOCIETAL RELATIONSHIPS**

The family as an institution needs foregrounding in discourses on the liberation war. This is vital since the family was and still remains the soul of the liberation war during and after its execution. During the liberation war, the family provided the nationalist movements with the recruits who trained to become guerrillas. When these recruits returned into the country as trained guerrillas, the family provided food, clothing, and

security. In addition, it still proceeded to surrender to the guerrillas more of its members in the form of young girls and boys who assisted guerrillas and, in some instances, provided sexual relief. After independence, the same family is host to the burden imposed by the returning guerrillas and the militarised youth. For that reason, the few historical narratives that give expression to the dialectics between the liberation war and the average Zimbabwean family need to be given special attention because they engage a profoundly fundamental, yet marginalised subject in historical studies on the Zimbabwean liberation war. A *prima facie* glance of historical fiction in which the sociology of the family finds representation gives readers the impression that the liberation war makes the family a highly contested and wobbly sociological terrain. The contesting political ideals filter into its fabric, thereby radically altering, configuring, disfiguring, arranging and re-arranging the balance of power, general familial infrastructure and above all, the integrity and stability of the family.

Notably, the family as depicted in the narratives could not escape guerrilla strategies of 'rural mobilisation' which were more "pragmatic than ideologically determined. This pragmatism emerged as the guerrillas grappled with the complex socio-political dynamics of the society they sought to mobilise" (Maxwell, 1993: 363). While historical fiction generates images on this crucial aspect, it appears that the choice of images, vision and sensibility vary from one writer to the other regardless of time of publication and choice of language. On the one hand is historical fiction that celebrates nationalism and the presence of guerrillas as having brought about family stability and liberation from oppressive customary codes. The other category is critical of nationalism and uses historiography to advance the contention that the family suffered imponderable damage. Taking into consideration the observable trends in liberation war historical fiction as evinced in the preceding discussion, this becomes one instance where the historical thrust and vision in liberation war fiction is not determined by time of publication and language of expression. One of the reasons already given for such an outlook is that the new political regime was mainly interested in the image of the guerrillas and their guns.

### 5.5.1 Liberating and humanising the family space: celebratory discourse of war

Historical fiction in this section as represented by Mahamba's novel, *Woman in Struggle* (1984) and Chipamaunga's *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983) celebrates the liberation war and the nationalist ideology, movement or idea as having contributed to the liberation, democratisation and humanisation of the family space and its structures. It recreates images of the past that are consistent with "patriotic history." In this scheme, the presence of guerrillas is viewed as an indispensable part of family and social survival architectonics. Focus is on celebrating guerrilla fighters' advanced ideological and intellectual capacities which consequently inspire and rejuvenate family balance and social harmony in general. Guerrillas become a fundamentally constituted point of reference for the strengthening of family relations through instituting a constellation of arbitration processes and investing in the principles of restorative justice. They are also credited with ushering a new philosophy and agenda for life which liberates, ameliorates and transforms the family space into an arena for the equitable 'interplay of forces.' In the early 1980s when Zimbabwe attained political independence as well as in Zimbabwe's recent politics of hegemony, this version of history also functioned to extend legitimacy to nationalism. It presented nationalism as an indispensable ideology that liberated and democratised society and by extension, could still lead and democratise the same society in the post-war period.

Using a typical bildungsroman-like style seen through the central character, Nyevenutsai, Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle* (1984) emphatically argues about the liberation war's positive impact on the average family in Zimbabwe and women's emancipation in general. The narrative revolves around the life of Nyevenutsai, a young girl who is victim to what the author considers oppressive Shona 'traditional' practices. In Shona nomenclature, the protagonist's name, Nyevenutsai, which is consciously and creatively employed by the author, is a verb that collectively entreats people to ameliorate and ease their hold on women's emancipation. In the narrative, this is directed at those patriarchs who use tradition to circumscribe the base of women's agency. As a young girl, Nyevenutsai is forced to marry a violent and uncouth old man called Nyandurai (One given to violent outbursts). When Nyandurai's first wife dies from lack of family care (because he is always drinking

beer), he proceeds to demand another wife from his in-laws so that he can have more children, which is his sole concern in marriage. One of the motivating factors behind Nyandurai's demand for another wife is that he had paid *lobola* (bride wealth) whose value is not consistent with the two children his deceased wife has left him. It is at this point that Nyevenutsai becomes a victim of the family and its customs, especially *chimutsamapfihwa* (wife replacement). Faced with patriarchs and 'oppressive' customs, Nyevenutsai struggles to regain her independence and freedom. She eventually decides to run away to her uncle in another area where she meets ZANLA guerrillas who then become arbitrators in the contest between so-called 'tradition' and 'modernity' or women's emancipation. Thus, the novel argues that the liberation war and the presence of guerrillas usher a sociological paradigm that liberates the prohibitive family space, facilitates and guarantees women's emancipation from Shona customary practices, especially *lobola* and *chimutsamapfihwa*.

In the context of such a 'traditional' family that upholds Shona customs and is also run by rapacious patriarchs, Nyevenutsai is helpless and defenseless as noted in her confession:

My aunt had only lived with her husband for four years. She had only had two children. She therefore had not done enough to cover what had been paid as 'lobola' by her husband. I, being the only daughter of her only brother, was the one and only candidate of replacement. So I was to be led to the sacrificial altar. I had to go and bring back life to the cooking stones. I knew by custom I could not refuse but I felt I could not accept it. I did not love the man (8).

*Woman in Struggle* (1984) conceptualises and instrumentalises nationalism as a movement, idea or ideology that crusaded against a galaxy of restricting cultural practices. Nationalism is celebrated as progressive and humanising. Shona customary values such as *lobola* and *chimutsamapfihwa* are portrayed as oppressive practices which collude with patriarchy in subverting the development of the girl child. Rather than protect its members and open up space for their full development, the 'traditional' Shona family is presented mortgaging their future to patriarchs who are depicted as unscrupulous. This view echoes the position of the then Zimbabwe's Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe (1983: 70), which he pronounced in an opening address on the 'First Zimbabwe Women's Seminar':

The role our women should play today in the bitter struggle against imperialism and colonialism is determined by the degree of their freedom, readiness and commitment to play that role. Custom and tradition have tended to favour men than women, to promote men and their status and demote women in status, to erect men as masters of the home, village, clan, and nation, but pin down women as mistresses of the same home, village, clan and nation.

The nationalist leaders' claim that the liberation war worked to free women from years of feudal practices was one of the messages they used in order to win support from the international community and justify the existence of the liberation movements.

Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle* (1984) therefore blindly and uncritically condemns both the 'traditional' family and Shona customary practices as retrogressive. The largely patriarchal family is symbolised by two men in the family, Nyandurai and Nyevenutsai's father. They emblemise what the author views as typical Shona tradition; which in our view is rather simplistic. Nyandurai, who is a son-in-law, is violent, uncouth, abusive and lacking in urbanity. Most of the time, Nyandurai abandons his terminally ill wife in search of beer parties. He is an irresponsible father. The name Nyandurai is a Shona verb which refers to someone who is unruly, ill-tempered and averse to value and virtue. This stereotypical character becomes the living manifestation of what the author considers as some of the negative elements of Shona culture. He epitomises this culture just like other characters in Zimbabwean non-war fiction works who include, Zimunya (Stale sadza) in *Rudo Ibofu* (1961) and Matigimu (physically huge but mentally challenged) in *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1957).

Mahamba paints a progressive and 'modern' picture of another family arising principally from its contact with guerrillas and nationalism. This idealised version of a family is represented by Nyevenutsai's uncle and *Ambuya*. Gender is not an issue in this family as all characters (father, mother, sons and daughters) have equal responsibilities. For instance, both husband and wife complement each other in performing household chores. This is evidenced the moment a ramshackled Nyevenutsai arrives from the village where she had run away from Nyandurai and her father. *Ambuya* helps her bath while her uncle prepares food in the kitchen. Equally, male and female children are not discriminated in terms of gender. They make



independent decisions and choices in a context where the family space is liberated and liberating. They all go to similar schools and their contribution in the liberation war as youths, an independent decision they make without influence from parents, is also based on parity rather than gender. In this regard, this becomes an ideal model towards which family patterns should be evolving. As such, nationalism and the general presence of guerrillas are merited for this ennobling state of affairs.

The two families are brought together in one crucial instance by Nyevenutsai's journey inspired by the search for freedom and growth. The meeting, which also includes guerrillas, underscores the narrative's admiration of guerrillas and nationalism in eradicating all forms of oppression. The 'traditional' patriarchs, Nyandurai and his father-in-law who had followed the fugitive, Nyevenutsai, come face to face with guerrillas who intervene to bring liberty to the family institution. The hastily arranged court presided over by the guerrillas led by comrade Dzvootsvoo becomes a moral seminar. The young guerrillas moralise to the elders who in normal circumstances would have been the teachers of morality. This image seems to be consistent with ZANU's declared intentions in the early 1970s as it geared towards the radicalisation and intensification of its military attacks. In explaining this position, Kriger (1992: 89) writes that:

It [ZANU] proclaimed the armed struggle to be primarily political, and asserted that the entire guerrilla zone of operations was a school to discuss, analyse, and find solutions to the felt needs of peasants and workers. The war of liberation was perceived as an educational project and part of a long-term goal of mental decolonization.

After the 'moral seminar' and the passing of the verdict, Nyevenutsai's father is liberated from his domineering son-in-law who always acts with impunity. At one point Nyevenutsai characterises her father as a "generally weak character [who] normally agreed to what was suggested by stronger characters which Nyandurai was" (14). The girl child and women in general are liberated from oppressive culture and family structures while diversifying opportunities for choice.

This victory and even the cultural renaissance are reflected in the following excerpt from the novel:

The present war of Liberation in Zimbabwe has proved that women are as tough as the men. However it should be understood that women have always been equal to men. Men have taken unfair advantage over them and mistreated them. The women before our War of Liberation did not have a chance to prove themselves but today in the War of Liberation they have proved beyond doubt that women are our equals. Due to this therefore, certain customs practiced by our elders have to go. It is no longer possible to force a woman to marry a man she does not want, either through *chimutsamapfihwa* or *kuzvarirwa* (wife pledging) (25).

While Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle* (1984) identifies instances of gender violation, the vision and attitude towards Shona culture and customs is rather exotic. The customs are not examined in context and one cannot help but feel that the narrative is obsessed with celebrating nationalism and the guerrillas at the expense of critically articulating Shona cultural realities. Again, it is a vision that partly resonates with Non Governmental Organisations' discourse and other western intellectual perspectives on Africa wherein phrases like 'harmful cultural practices' are in vogue. The decontextualisation of *chimutsamapfihwa* and *lobola* makes the customs read like manifestations of culturally and socially sanctified forms of rape. The narrative adds to the growing body of fiction in Zimbabwe that contributes retrogressively to the discourse on African customs and other practices. Such discourses, as is the case with *Woman in Struggle* (1984), charge a people's culture and their customs as responsible for the proliferation of suffering, but fail to condemn specific individuals in a culture who short-circuit customs.

In *Woman in Struggle* (1984), Nyandurai is depicted as a mere obscene caricature and stereotyped character who does not typify ideal Shona fatherhood. He abuses Shona culture for his selfish needs. In Shona culture properly understood, a son-in-law cannot coerce his in-laws to give him another wife. It is up to them to decide, and this decision depends on the character and the general behaviour of the concerned son-in-law. As a result, the blame cannot rest with the custom but with Nyevenutsai's father who is a weakling, as already stated. A people's cultural values cannot be terminated by such rational disputation. This is corroborated by Chiwome (2002: 117) in his reasoning that "customs are survival strategies. They are not formulated and terminated by debate. They are dropped when they become redundant." However, what we witness is forced abandonment of the custom which might be difficult to

uphold in the absence of guerrillas. This is so because change is not linked to changing times and crucial human needs.

As shown in the foregoing discussion, guerrillas invade the conservative family space through a combination of moral persuasion and force. They become the new symbols of a pristine moral, ethical and cultural order that the liberation war is said to represent. As the dividing line between the new and old world order, they are on an unassailable crusade to demolish mainly feudal patriarchal notions in which women have largely been viewed as the other. In this regard, *Woman in Struggle* (1984) puts forth the proposition that the war becomes good for women's development and liberation as it challenges skewed gender practices which disadvantage women within the family institution. This appears to be in line with the nationalist agenda of convincing society that indeed the liberation war was worthwhile as it liberated women by putting them "on an equal footing" with men (Gambahaya and Magosvongwe, 2005: 3).

In the narrative, during a *pungwe* (all-night gathering) called to deal with immoral, promiscuous and oppressive and violent characters, particularly men, the guerrillas provide long moral lectures to the civilians. The topic is on what constitutes *pfambi* (sexually loose person). This is crucial because *chipfambi* is a threat to family integrity. *Pfambi* is a gender-neutral Shona word which unfortunately has mainly been used to blackmail women. During that talk show intended to provide a model of living together in the family, both men and women profess their biased understanding of *pfambi* which probably is a result of years of wrong socialisation, at home and at school. The guerrillas finally provide the correct version which convinces every one, especially women who have been victims of the misuse of the concept. In this regard, guerrillas become the people's intellectuals responsible for formulating a social theory and agenda for life that defies bigotry.

In the narrative, husbands who batter their wives and engage in extra-marital affairs are paraded in front of people. In typical military style justice, they are accused without being given an opportunity to defend themselves. These men include *Baba vaJames*, (Father of James) *Baba vaTicha* (Father of Ticha), and *Baba vaStanford* (Father of Stanford). Their wives are graciously invited to administer justice using a

whip and, they administer fifty strokes each. Maureen, a local girl who had slept with the three men is also thrashed. After the four are beaten, the headman is then called

to administer punishment on the four of them on behalf of the community. Each of them received fifteen cuts from the Headman. When he was through with them, the men could hardly sit or walk properly (43).

The battered and publicly embarrassed husbands are sternly warned by the presiding guerrillas against any ill-treatment of their wives in retaliation. The guerrillas' interventions in domestic family affairs finds support from Nyangoni and Nyandoro quoted in Kriger (1992: 100): "In the spirit of promoting unity among peasants, the guerrillas tried to eliminate the sources of marital disharmony: men's violence towards their wives, their excessive drinking, and extra-marital affairs." In addition, part of Kriger's (1992: 194 and 195) research findings in the district of Mutoko, north east of Zimbabwe further reveal that:

Guerrilla appeals to families to be united and to men to stop beating their wives and drinking excessively originated with married women who saw in the guerrillas potential allies. Their initial success in winning the support of guerrillas gave them a strong motive to continue to provide support for the guerrillas...According to villagers, guerrillas stumbled on women's grievances against their husbands. 'Comrades could come through a village at night, hear a woman crying and find her husband beating her'...the guerrillas then punished the husbands by beating them. Men felt threatened and 'husbands would be afraid to do or say anything to wives'...

This evidence provides some hints on why different genders and social categories participated in the liberation war. The case of Nyevenutsai and other women who 'happily' thrash their husbands because of the nationalist reality could have been part of the war because of the desire to hit back at their recalcitrant guardians and husbands, respectively. It is notable that the *pungwe* (all-night gathering) usurped the place of the Shona traditional *dare* (court) where issues of marital roguery were dealt with. The guerrillas took the place of the court elders who usually presided over such issues. The dethronement of patriarchs and elders is captured by Kesby (1996: 573):

Yet while female emancipation was not continually promoted, the privileged status of older men was repeatedly challenged; whether patriarchs were beaten for abusing wives or for not following

instructions, whether they obeyed the young guerrillas and *mujibhas* willingly or under duress, their adult, autonomous, masculine identity [suffered].

Men lost control over their families as guerrillas became the new heads of families, running and directing private family life. Such a scenario could not guarantee peace between men and the young guerrillas who seem to have usurped their powers. The author also fails to note that such imposition of justice is likely to subvert the family order since it has no cultural foundations. Kesby (1996: 570) argues that “although patriarchs may have been pre-disposed to the guerrillas’ anti-state objectives, ZANLA’s paramilitary interventions into the periphery were not dissimilar to those of the colonial state in that they threatened to usurp control of patri-localities, even the jealously defended domestic space.”

Mahamba’s *Woman in Struggle* (1984) camouflages the fact that during the war era patriarchal systems were not comfortable as noted by historians such as Kesby (1996) and Kriger (1992). Though the narrative’s representation of guerrilla interventions is supported by history, the overall vision is blighted by the author’s unbending conviction to articulate the positive transforming power of the guerrillas and nationalism. It therefore ends up idealising and distorting the impact of the liberation war on the family and on male-female interactions within both the private and public domains. Mahamba (1984) generates historical images that foreground the dominant perceptions of guerrillas and their nationalist leaders, especially at independence. Another aspect which also evades the attention of the author is that more often than not the guerrillas themselves could not have been the best arbitrators because of their sexual encounters with girls and married women which often incensed local communities. An unnamed teacher who is one of the many informants quoted in Kriger (1992: 194) reports that:

Comrades...became sexual. They took other people’s wives and slept with them...They were tempted by money, young girls and women with husbands in Mozambique. They called these ‘their’ women...They [*youth*] would have to go and get women for the comrades, yet they were told not to touch women.

Kriger (1992: 194) further explains that:

Guerrilla attitudes and behaviour to women could not have made them the suitable promoters, as they were, of family unity and new standards of morality that prohibited divorce and adultery and made it mandatory for men to marry women who bore their children. Guerrillas themselves fathered many children during the war.

Similarly, Gambahaya and Magosvongwe (2005: 6) refer to the issue of sexual abuse of civilian girls by guerrillas as “tragic behaviour patterns” which did not “take cognisance of traditional African values which were part of the cultural environment of the masses who hosted the war.” The result was that the war caused a moral dilemma among rural people. In some kind of a personal testimony titled ‘Ropa Rinopfuka: Taking up the Challenge’, Mahamba (1987: 48) brings out the kind of thinking that could have influenced her vision and version of history in *Woman in Struggle* (1984):

I realized that the oppression of women was not natural, but something that came about as society passed through different stages of development. I then related it to the liberation struggle and saw that the oppression of women was part of the society we had inherited. After independence we would do away with all forms of oppression. So the only way we could win women’s liberation was through the national liberation struggle. After independence no form of oppression would be allowed. Racism, elitism, classism and sexism – all these kinds of oppression would have to go.

Unfortunately, as observed by Gambahaya and Magosvongwe (2005: 17), such a vision could probably have resulted from a “literal, almost naïve embrace of war-time promises pertaining to the gains of the liberation struggle, and failure to realise that such promises could just have been used as a mobilising strategy.” *Woman in Struggle* (1984) therefore represents historical images that are part of official nationalist historiography. It becomes a discourse that is narrowly obsessed with passing guerrillas as faultless and therefore pristine symbols and paradigms for the new Zimbabwe in 1980.

*A Fighter for Freedom* (1983) equally canonises the liberation war as a historical and political process committed to the nourishment, reinvigoration and salvation of African families. This mammoth responsibility is laid squarely on the shoulders of the guerrillas who are the living manifestation of a progressive and humanising nationalist idea, ideology or movement. In fact, the liberation of African families from

the stranglehold of colonial machinations can be said to be Tinashe's major objective for participating in the liberation war. The author summarises Tinashe's mission statement as:

His main concern was to free families, particularly his own, from the grip of any outside influence which tended to reduce them to mere puppets (98). As he struggles to reconstitute first his fractured family and restore its dignity,

Tinashe simultaneously becomes a multi-purpose fighter. The colonial environment tended to seriously compromise the integrity of the African family in general, and the Shona and Ndebele family in particular. In the novel, Tinashe's family never enjoys peace. His mother and father are always in conflict. As a result, his father becomes a hopeless drunkard. Tinashe eventually realises that his father is a victim of Truss, a white man who keeps him holed in a situation in which self-realisation is impossible. His marriage to Tinashe's mother was not out of mutual consent. They were forced to marry after having been found in a somewhat romantic position long back at school. As a result of this forced union, there is no love between them which is why they are always quarrelling. Truss treats Tinashe's father like a small boy such that he even has the effrontery to humiliate him in public, despite the fact that the latter is a headmaster. He also masterminds the downfall of Tinashe's family.

From the above, Truss becomes a manifestation and an embodiment of the colonial ideology and its attitude towards Africans. His actions dehumanise African people by treating them as sub-humans. The destruction of the African family and its fabric means that there can be no meaningful development among Africans, since the family is the centre for any meaningful form of social development.

Another colonial assault on the African family comes through Nuanetsi farm, an environment that is not fit for human habitation. However, it is to such an environment that African families are condemned by the colonial system. Tinashe's father, together with Tom's mother, Marwei, find themselves on this farm as a result of Truss's invidious and insidious maneuvers. Their concubinage union is not only immoral but degrading. When news of their parents' fate at Nuanetsi reaches Tinashe and Tom, who are now guerrillas, they immediately go there. Their main goal is to retrieve their parents from that spiritual wreckage. They are taken to a farm used

by guerrillas as their base where they go through intensive rehabilitation. Henceforth, Tinashe fights hard to reunite his mother (now staying in Harare) and his father. He arranges a formal courtship process between the two because they had never done it which is why their marriage was always punctuated with conflict. The reunion between his mother and father marks the salvation of the African family from the tentacles of the colonial yoke. Other couples whose romance is cemented at the end include Mlambo and Tsitsi and conjecturally Teerera and Tinashe himself. These are sound families whose foundations lie in the war of liberation. From this vantage point, the novel ends as a romance of war. The happy ending, which is also part of the celebration of independence, becomes a loud statement that the war was fought to save families.

Nuanetsi, which is certainly a microcosm of Southern Rhodesia is characterised by excessive alcoholism, prostitution and in-fights which undermine African family dignity and self-esteem. The creation of such spaces, which is not different from the creation of reserves or what the colonial authority called Tribal Trust Lands, was a subtle colonial strategy to marginalise African potential, confound African thinking and paralyse African action. Considering the difficulties that Tinashe and Tom go through in trying to salvage their families, the author underscores the fact that the liberation was not just a military venture. Guerrillas were symbols of total change rather than just being men and women of combat. Waging war against the Smith regime becomes an act that destroys the root cause of family disintegration and humiliation.

### **5.5.2 The liberation war and the disruption of the family space**

While images in Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle* (1984) and Chipamaunga's *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983) depict the liberation war as a historical process that restores family confidence and harmony as the rallying point for national development and reconstruction, other narratives published during the same time view it differently. For instance, Moyo's novels, *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) and *Yaiva Hondo* (1985), Tizora's *Crossroads* (1985) and to some extent Sigogo's *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986) underscore the disruptive and divisive character of the liberation war. By emphasising the deconstructive rather than the reconstructive impact,



particularly on the ordinary family and other social relations, these narratives focus on how nationalism severely undermined family balance, harmony and peace. The pre-war family order, which was relatively serene, crumbles as the war takes its toll. Writers who present the war as a disruptive force within the family space provide alternatives to notions of “single view, single-identity, authoritative” (Goduka, 2000: 135) methods of historical representation in Zimbabwe.

Moyo's novel, *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) associates family disintegration with the liberation war. Family disintegration is a theme that is popular in Zimbabwean fiction in African Languages and also in English. In other narratives, including Moyo's non-war fictional narratives such as *Uchandifungawo* (1975), family disintegration is linked to the tragic misalliance between Africa and Europe which engendered culture conflict. It is also linked to the rural–urban divide which leads to the separation of couples. Therefore, by locating family disintegration squarely in the liberation war, *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) and other narratives in this category introduce a relatively new conceptual thrust on this hackneyed theme. While the narrative celebrates the military aspect of the liberation war, it openly questions the sociological successes of nationalism.

Kudzai and Andrew in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) are a happily married couple blessed with a son. The advent of the liberation war destroys the happiness since the two subscribe to different and irreconcilable political ideologies and parties. Kudzai, who is a nurse in a rural area, supports the guerrillas and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). As a nurse working in the operational zones she is daily in touch with guerrillas and also supplies them with medicines. She also attends *pungwes* and cooks for the guerrillas. Furthermore, she listens to Radio Mozambique which is beamed from Maputo in neighbouring Mozambique by the nationalist movement, ZANU. When referring to the guerrillas, she calls them ‘*varwiri verusununguko*’ (freedom fighters). In this regard, she becomes an active participant in the nationalist politics of the country. This political dispensation gives women like Kudzai a new form of consciousness and independent thinking. On the other hand, Andrew, who is based in Harare, backs a party that fiercely denounces guerrillas. He has a strong liking for newspapers which tell the story of the war from the vantage point of the Rhodesian establishment. This orientation makes him refer to guerrillas as

*magandanga* (violent and undisciplined rascals). These differences trigger perennial conflicts whenever Kudzai visits her husband in town. The unending conflicts subsequently lead to the separation of the two, after which Kudzai joins the war to train as a guerrilla. However, the forced ending of the novel, which is rather superficial as the author attempts to articulate the ZANU (PF) policy of reconciliation, marks the reunion of the two after a long separation. This aspect could have been triggered by the fact that *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) was published in association with the Literature Bureau, an organisation that sponsored the competition which led to the production of this novel.

In *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), therefore, the liberation war is presented as fostering disunity in the family. It alienates husband from wife and turns the erstwhile stable family space into a battlefield of ideological contestations. Each character, that is, husband or wife, appears to serve as the political commissar of their respective organisations. At the same time, the couple's language, which in the narrative is divested of any pretensions towards romance, becomes discordant, making it difficult to reconcile differences or achieve peace. The language that a couple communicates with is a measure of their compatibility. Such language is also a critical determinant for progress, growth, stability and family survival. Most worrying is also the realisation that the idea of *mushalikhaya* (home) which is powered by *ukama/ubuhlobo* (kinship) is dissipated. *Mushalikhaya* provides a platform from which a people can articulate their vision and version of reality and chart their own path of self-growth. People feel protected and more human in the context of *musha*. When this institution crumbles, the people in question become itinerants and vagrants without identity and purposeful agency.

Domestic violence, too, becomes part of the identity of this young family. While domestic violence is one theme that has been extensively handled by Shona and Ndebele novelists in the colonial period, *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) ushers a new dimension in that it explains this aspect in the context of wider national processes. Fiction in the colonial period tended to articulate domestic violence based on women's infidelity, use of love potions, and the writers' general perception of women's character as trivial. As a result, we contend that *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) is innovative in its attempt to challenge the stereotypical depiction of colonial women

characters. In one scuffle which attracts the attention of the neighbourhood, Kudzai is seriously injured such that her colleague, Joyce, cannot even recognise her because of the advanced state of facial deformation. She has to be hospitalised. In order to cover up and avoid embarrassment, both Andrew and Kudzai concoct a story that they had been mugged on their way from the market. In the end, Kudzai sacrifices the family because she cannot live with a man who forces her to support a party that she does not want. She unceremoniously leaves home without any word. She eventually writes a letter to her husband long after she has joined the guerrillas. The couple's young child, Tichakunda, is deprived of motherly care as a result of the liberation war and related political developments. He is brought up by a step mother, Betty. At the same time, the family fails to withstand the abrading effect of the liberation war. It crumbles.

As is the case with *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986) is a loud celebration of nationalism and the military aspect of the liberation war. In the sociological dimension, it shows how the war disrupted family harmony and the life of the ordinary people, and also interfered with personal plans. Therefore, while the narrative celebrates the military aspect of the war, the writer inadvertently questions the sociological successes of nationalism. In the narrative, Lisho, a teacher at a rural secondary school in Matebeleland has his dreams of marrying his lover shattered when freedom fighters order the closure of the school, forcing him to seek alternative employment in Bulawayo. This transfer to the urban set-up forces him to stay with his elder brother in Bulawayo's high density suburbs. As was the reality in many families during the war period, Lisho is generally detached from the war. He, however, sees it as a disruptive force, while his brother actively supports it. While his brother labels freedom fighters liberators, Lisho brands them terrorists, leading to serious tension between them, as is evident from the fact that although they live under the same roof, at times they are not on talking terms for days on end. Lisho is forced to withstand the discomfort of his brother looking down on and poking fun at him, and even calling him a sell-out, an insult at the time in question as it carried connotations of cowardice, being a puppet of the colonialists and generally aligning oneself with the colonial master at the expense of the interests of the generality of African people. Thus we see the family under stress as a result of the war.

Further, Lisho's lover, Phikezelwe, is fully committed to recruiting young people for training in Zambia, leading to high levels of tension between the lovers. He gets estranged from her when he is called for military training, as this implies fighting against his lover's side. In the end the relationship collapses. As she puts it herself, the liberation of the African people takes priority over her relationship with Lisho (76-77). Like Lisho's brother, she also suspects that he is a sell-out. This puts paid to his dream of the two of them being a family. Rather than sympathise with Lisho as he ponders over the implications of fighting on the Rhodesian side and reality of that danger to his personal life, his elder brother not only completely dissociates himself from Lisho's dilemma and this potentially dangerous situation, but goes as far as indicating that even if Lisho dies during his 'Call -up' duties, he would not be perturbed by it. Besides appearing to be inhuman, this is quite unAfrican especially since, as the elder brother, he is customarily expected to protect his younger siblings. This tension extends to the relationship between Lisho and his father who resides in the rural areas. Like Lisho's brother, his father urges Lisho to cross the border and join the other side. Although in the end Lisho is perturbed by the senselessness of fighting his own people, the pro-nationalist author is bent on punishing him and thus denies him the opportunity to cross the border and take up arms against the Rhodesian regime. He gets severely beaten up by Rhodesian forces on his way to join the liberation war, falls into a deep coma and only regains consciousness after independence. As the story ends, he is a lonely and tormented figure, despised by his family and ex-lover for serving the interests of the colonialists, and having to endure the pain and humiliation of seeing his ex-lover with a baby that he has not fathered.

*Yaiva Hondo* (1985) uses the image of the tragic occurrences in the Richard Fungai family in order to indict nationalism as a tragedy. The narrative skillfully evades the theme of celebration by pursuing what on the surface may appear to be Loveness' infidelity, while on the other hand maintaining Richard's seemingly heroic status in the bush. The artistic juxtaposition of the dual narratives, but with a bias towards Loveness' life, arms the author with effective arsenal to lambast, interrogate and blackmail nationalism, especially at a time when other novels in Shona are obsessed with celebrating guerrillas. Richard leaves behind his young wife, Loveness, to train as a guerrilla in Mozambique. His departure is not voluntary as the Rhodesian special

branch is after him. Loveness is unemployed and uneducated, making her entirely dependent on her husband's income. In addition, she is also left with children to take care of. Considering that she is living in an urban area where one has to use money almost on a daily basis, the task at hand becomes a mammoth one. The separation of the two symbolically marks the disintegration of the young family. Hakata's (another lodger) comment, made immediately after Richard's departure is informative at this point:

*Chokwadi...nyaya dzenyika idzi dzaparadza dzimba dzakawanda  
kwazvo (47)*

Honestly...politics of the national liberation has led to the destruction of many families.

As soon as Richard leaves, Loveness is given an eviction order and three days to look for alternative accommodation. Her lack of education makes her chances of landing a formal job in the city very difficult. At the same time, there are very few job opportunities for African women in the colonial period. As she struggles to look after the children, the little savings get used up, forcing her to sell some of the household goods. She even tries to be a vegetable vendor but all her efforts are in vain. It is at this point that she approaches Alice, her husband's sister seeking assistance but is sadly rebuffed. She runs out of food and money for rentals. Left with no option, she succumbs to Sharks Hoto's sexual shenanigans. Sharks Hoto is Andrew's former friend. She has an affair with him so that she can look after herself and the children. A few years after independence, she receives a letter from her husband informing her about his homecoming as well as how he would love to reconcile with his family after years of separation. Because she is now pregnant from her relationship with Sharks, she commits suicide. Loveness' death symbolises the tragic demise of the Shona family as a result of the liberation war. It also shows the vulnerability of Shona institutions due to nationalism as well as the exposure of individuals. Richard's long awaited homecoming and reunion with his family is overshadowed by the funeral and the general sense of loss. This brings to attention the fact that celebration was not the only reality in the early 1980s, as the other early 1980s narratives depict.

The narrative emphasises Loveness' desperation. The author lets her speak out her ordeal in an attempt to make readers see clearly her existential conundrum. The difficulty and emotional trauma that Loveness goes through after her husband's departure finds support from a real life testimony from Maudy Muzenda, wife of Zimbabwe's late vice-president, Simon Muzenda quoted in Staunton (1990: 61):

It was difficult to look after the family when my husband was travelling. He (Cde Muzenda) stayed outside the country for two years. It was very hard for me. You know. You know it is difficult for a mother, with so many children to look after and there was really no one to help me.

What is interesting in the novel is that the author does not blame Loveness for her decision to engage in an extramarital relationship. She does so solely for survival and the need for companionship. In this regard, Moyo becomes one of the few writers in African languages literature in Zimbabwe who avoid the tendency to blindly blame victims of socio-economic processes. He underscores how the liberation war, which was supposed to liberate and protect, engenders massive victimhood and helplessness. It similarly undermines morality and *ubuntu/unhu*. As such, the liberation war becomes a historical process that tragically compromises the social security of ordinary family members and the family institution in general. Married women who are left behind become the most pronounced victims. To a very large extent, the family institution and the moral worth of women become victims of history. The family in particular loses its glamour and protective powers. Kaarsholm (2005: 4) is quite sincere in the observation "that the national liberation war which went on for fifteen years...turned social structures and everyday relationships upside down." Yet this side of nationalism has been conveniently forgotten in Zimbabwe and is never talked about in public and even in history text books.

Moyo's (1985) representation of the sociological dimension of nationalism proffers a refreshing alternative and opens up a conceptual trajectory of history that transcends the grand and hagiographical narratives on guerrillas and military history. Experiences in the narrative are such that the Shona/African people's institutions, particularly the family, could not have remained unperturbed in the context of the liberation war. In as much as nationalism was intended to be restorative and reconstructive, it paradoxically turned out to be disruptive and deconstructive. The writer's recreation of the sociological dimension of the war problematises nationalism

at a time most of the writers were celebrating it as a humanising mission. Such problematisation of history leads to the diversification of the memory base. In other words, it makes it possible for the history of the liberation war to be narrated from a multiplicity of perspectives so that no one can claim monopoly over memory. In Zimbabwe after independence, the elite and other armed participants have claimed monopoly over suffering at the hands of the liberation war; and they have even proceeded to use these claims to reward themselves with hefty sums of money and large properties as compensation for suffering and for being victims. What is always forgotten is that the ordinary man and woman in the street suffered beyond reparation and went through frighteningly incapacitating experiences. Loveness' tragedy symbolises this tragedy of the ordinary person who has been forgotten whenever compensation related to losses from the war is mentioned. In this regard, we dare to ask the questions: Who will compensate the likes of Loveness or the children left behind? Are they not victims of the liberation war? Why such categories should be excluded from what is called the War Victims Compensation Fund is a puzzle whose solution exposes the limited and official view of nationalism exploited by a few to enrich themselves. Images in *Yaiva Hondo* (1985) are a serious indictment on the whole process of fighting for liberation. They emphasise the tragic dimension of the war, a rarely covered aspect of the war, mostly as a result of the fact that art tends to be appropriated by those in positions of power.

Tizora's novel, *Crossroads* (1985) also emphasises the sense of family tragedy triggered by the so-called liberation war. The writer's vision is consistent with conclusions made by Chiwome and Mguni (2000: 177) that "war...weakens the basic social unit." When David is taken one night by guerrillas (already discussed in chapter three), he leaves behind his young newly wed wife, Priscilla. The liberation war makes it difficult for the young couple to settle down and organise their life together. As a young woman, Priscilla feels very exposed when left alone. She has to leave the place where she lived with her husband before he was forcibly taken. At the new place, she is forced by circumstances to seek sexual satisfaction and companionship from students at a college clinic where she works. This is not surprising considering her age and status. It is incontrovertible that one of the most important reasons why people enter into marriage unions is the need to create a convenient private space that makes it easy to access sex at any given time. If a

relationship fails to fulfill this sacred role, then it would have failed and the incumbents are likely to seek sexual satisfaction from outside. It is in this context that Priscilla becomes pregnant from one such relationship, where the responsible student, Peter, also fails to own up because he also joins the liberation war.

Faced with such a dilemma where her husband had left her for the liberation war and Peter does not accept the responsibility of making her pregnant, she suffers from serious mental breakdown. She has to be detained at Ingutsheni Mental Hospital. After independence, the illness develops into a full fledged mental breakdown to the extent that she begins to feed from garbage bins and living in the wild. This mental illness which extends into independence reflects the exposure of the individuals and the extent to which the protective powers of the family institution had been compromised by nationalism. Mental instability becomes a symbol of the unstable nature of the family and society as a result of the war as well as the destabilising effect of nationalism. Significantly, it is an indictment of nationalism, particularly its failure to achieve the total humanisation of the formerly oppressed. At the same time, it can be argued that the author, therefore, proposes the setting up of a comprehensive programme to rehabilitate and heal not only those in the military, but the rest of society as well. The whole society needed healing and rehabilitation and still needs it up to this day. The war was a universal experience that tragically compromised the integrity of social institutions and in the process destroyed vital social safety nets and security systems that ensure individual autonomy and integrity. The paucity of historical scholarship on the nexus between the experiences of the ordinary Zimbabwean family and the liberation war is a challenge to historians and scholars in Zimbabwe, as this articulates a form of violence that has been neglected.

It is evident that the family is portrayed as a site and means of struggle during the liberation war. In recreating the war, writers have taken on the burden of presenting conflicting views about the liberation war. While writers like Mahamba and Chipamaunga present the war as a stabilising force within the African family, other writers like Moyo, Tizora and Sigogo present its destabilising tendencies. Of note is that political independence had significant implications on the growth of literature in African languages in Zimbabwe. The brief period of euphoria was succeeded by a



period of silence that also impacted on the creative act. This state of affairs arises from the tendency by nationalists to,

curtail debates and suppress opposing views. This strong intolerance which was a strong feature of the nationalist liberation struggle, has reared its head in post-colonial Zimbabwe, where the state has often demonstrated an overzealous proclivity to impose narrow definitions of the national unity on the people of Zimbabwe (Raftopoulos, 1999:144).

This could partly account for the stance of those writers who blindly support the war by idealising and glorifying the activities of the guerrilla fighters, including the role they played in stabilising and reinforcing African values at family level. It is ironic, however, that the armed young men that we see settling family disputes in the narratives do so without the authority of tradition. Again, considering the guerrillas' involvement in sexual abuses at the war front, it is debatable that they could have made meaningful and lasting interventions on behalf of the African family and community in general, as seen in the texts in question. As Raftopoulos and Yoshikuni (1999:14) posit, the establishment adopts a strategy to monopolise the interpretation or editorialisation of history in order to use art to maintain the status quo. Such editorialisation is, "a reminder of the contingent force of nationalism. At its worst, it is a menacing example of the silencing tropes of nationalist politics".

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

Historical fiction published in different languages and epochs largely represents the experiences of civilians in contrasting but very complex terms. As the so-called 'man in the middle', civilians are portrayed as agents, victims, beneficiaries as well as manipulators of the liberation war. Fiction shows that civilians and guerrillas work together even though this relationship is presented differently. Celebratory fiction in the early 1980s presents the relationship as perfect while fiction in the late 1980s onwards remembers the relationship as often violent, corrupt and unstable. For the first time in this research, this chapter shows that generally early 1980s historical fiction which focuses on the sociological dimension of the liberation war is able to abandon celebration as it takes stock of the devastating effect of the liberation war on society in general. In this regard, it articulates a paradigm of history that neutralises the overabundant narratives of celebration which create the impression of an infallible

nationalism. This fiction in the early 1980s is consistent with trends in fiction in English published in the late 1908s onwards.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **OBSERVATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The study of the interface of history and fiction is both a risky and quite an absorbing intellectual enterprise. The risky dimension is essentially an upshot of the nature of the subject under investigation because there is no impeccable universal instrument to qualify or quantify the material that should constitute a work of fiction for it to be perfectly qualified as historical fiction. This is further exacerbated by the fact that there is not only one historical truth, but multiple historical truths in different contexts and at different times. However, investigative parameters adopted in this research comprehensively lessen the risk but without completely eradicating it. As previously noted, this also becomes one of the possible weaknesses of researches of this nature. Having said this, it should be pointed out that while such fears exist, this study has shown that there certainly is a convergence of fiction and history, even though the degree of historicity in fiction is forever debatable. Because of this convergence, the study of historical fiction affords open, flexible, fluid and interdisciplinary dialogue that is not hindered by artificial or 'traditional' boundaries in scholarship. It is against this background that this research has led to a number of significant observations and findings related to but not limited to Zimbabwean literature and history. This chapter outlines some of these research observations.

#### **6.2 FACTORS AFFECTING THE WRITING OF HISTORICAL FICTION**

Literature cannot be fully appreciated without looking at the factors, both particular and general, which affect its production. Particular factors are those factors that directly relate to the unique experiences of the writer, while the general factors, broadly speaking, are those that seem to have a bearing on a wider cross section of literary cooks. In the words of Gerson and Horowitz, (2003: 201), particular factors are part of the "micro-social processes as they unfold in the lives of individuals," and these include among others, one's personal background and other idiosyncrasies. General factors include, among others, the editorial policies which affect the majority

of the writers as well as the universally experienced social, economic and political realities which are inseparable from the development of fiction in general. These are the universal or “macro-social processes” (Gerson & Horowitz, 2003: 201).

Considering that the Zimbabwe liberation war has attracted writers from diverse intellectual, political, regional and historical orientations, an intellectual endeavour as this one becomes critical. It is against this background that this section discusses the various factors affecting the writing of historical fiction on the liberation war. The discussion and conclusions are based on observations from the research as well as material gathered during interviews with literary historians and some of the book editors. Findings drawn from interviews with writers illustrate that various factors have contributed to the writing of the liberation war novel, particularly the choice of historical material, vision and sensibility. These findings help illuminate the preceding discussion in the sense that readers will be able to draw comparisons.

### **6.2.1 Social and economic conditions**

The version of history in historical fiction is generally inseparable from the prevailing social and economic conditions. In other words, historical representation becomes a function of economics and sociology. In the early 1980s when Zimbabwe attained political independence, many people including writers welcomed independence as a panacea to the problems they had faced in the colonial period. In this regard, independence was an occasion for celebration. Ngugi's (1986: 2) summation of the general mood during this period as “a decade of hope, the people looking to a bright morrow in a new Africa finally freed from colonialism” is indeed instructive. Then, people's expectations were very high. This coupled with the new political reality ushered by the new government ensured economic growth and stability:

In the first two years after independence Zimbabwe showed the world that reconciliation between enemies is possible and of infinite value. Partly because of the reconciliation policy, and partly because of the determination of Government and the cooperation of the Churches and NGOs, Zimbabweans began 1982 with high hopes for a peaceful and prosperous future. Good rains in 1981, resulting in good harvests, were also seen as auspicious omens for the future (Auret, 1992: 141).

The government was supposedly guided by socialist policies and at the same time it also sought to build the nation on the basis of the foundations of the just ended war and the nationalist ideology. Equally, the war weary peasants and fighters welcomed the ceasefire as the birth of a new life. It offered them an opportunity to return to normal life, reorganise their lives and plan for the future of their children. The war had been exorbitant to them in terms of life, time and opportunities. For that reason, independence was a reprieve and a relief. In the early 1980s, the national economy inherited from the Rhodesians was still intact. Historical fiction thus reflected part of this satisfaction by generating celebratory historical discourse.

During this time, celebration was synonymous with patriotism. Failure to embrace celebration was tantamount to 'selling out', a 'popular' saying in the war. It was an abandonment of the collective project of the nation and a betrayal of people's popular struggle and popular expectations. In a written response to questions put to him by the researcher, Nyamfukudza says that his novel, *The Non-Believer's Journey* (1980), made him appear like an unpatriotic figure because it was devoid of celebration:

I remember the disfavour with which *The Non-Believer's Journey* was viewed when first published, with critics like Ranga Zinyemba suggesting there was undue pessimism too soon after independence. I was also not popular with ex-combatants and I was viewed as a traitor in some circles...

The war became an important national symbol and a fundamentally constituted political and ideological rendezvous for patriots. The new nation needed patriots who fully appreciated the sacrifice, pain, loss and above all the victory. Such patriots would become the vanguard of the winning party, ZANU (PF), and defend it when confronted with any form of adversity. Songs were composed and poems written to fully capture and disseminate this mood. Some of the songs were sung in schools as part of the schools' music competitions. When this researcher was growing up in the 1980s, he was part of the primary school choirs where every year the theme of the songs was based on the commemoration of the gallantry of the former guerrillas and the nationalist idea, ideology or movement. Thus most writers recreated history which was in tandem with political and social realities of the time. They celebrated history, particularly eulogising the guerrillas who were seen as liberators in official circles.

The late 1980s were characterised by a growing dislike of the ruling ZANU (PF) government. War promises had remained unfulfilled. Corruption in government as partly evidenced through the Willowgate scandal of 1988 was becoming rampant. The most notable expressions of disenchantment with the government came through the University of Zimbabwe students who staged wildcat demonstrations against the government. Unemployment also became a major problem. In addition, some reasonable time had passed for people to reflect and visualise the paucity of the progress made since the attainment of political independence in 1980.

The period immediately after the first decade, that is, 1990, marks the end of the legalised ten year embargo on land redistribution as outlined in the Lancaster Agreement. The year 1992 marks the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). Moyo (1993: 8) summarises this dispensation as “the politically volatile days of the World Bank-sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP).” The government adopted neo-liberal policies binding it to the Western donor agencies and lending bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The conditions set by these organisations effectively ended government interventionist and welfare-centered policies. Subsidies on basic goods were scratched and prices soared beyond the reach of the majority. The life that is symptomatic of this period is artistically captured in two Ndebele and Shona post-independence non-liberation war novels, namely, Ncube’s *Lokhu Akungekhe Kwenzekhe* (1998) and Mabasa’s *Mapenzi* (1999), respectively. It is also this period that Mutasa (2000: 1) metaphorically describes as:

*Nyika yandakasiya iri mateve, nzizi dzichishinyira nemvura nhasi ndonzwa kuti dzaoma ‘Checheni rwaiva nengwena nhasi ndonzwa kuti rave jecha chete’. Nyika yave gwenga.*

For a country that I left lush, with rivers overflowing now I hear the same rivers have dried up. Checheni, which used to harbour crocodiles now I hear it is filled with sand. The country is now a desert.

Many low-income workers mostly in urban areas were retrenched. Social security slumped to very deplorable levels resulting in the violent food riots of 1997. Corruption also became rampant in government. The euphoria of the 1980s had given rise to total disillusionment and frustration by the peasants and workers who

had sacrificed during the war. As a result, writers begin to use historical fiction not only as a platform to articulate historical truth, but also to contest the nationalist movement and express people's disenchantment with 'the party that brought independence.' They do this by selecting those aspects of history that counter official versions of nationalist history. They advance alternative sites of nationalist history which expose nationalism as corrupt, dehumanising and oppressive. It can be argued that writers begin to use history as opposition and as a discourse of protest.

### **6.2.2 Independence euphoria**

As part of social conditions, independence euphoria affects the writers' dialogue with history. As has been consistently stated in this study, the early 1980s was a period of independence celebrations. Writers who also wrote and published during this time generate fictional images that commemorate independence and nationalism and deify the guerrillas. Writers were influenced by the emotions of the time. In an interview with the researcher, Nyawaranda who wrote under the conditions of independence euphoria presented his intention and factors informing his vision of history thusly:

The idea of optimism was popular during the era of independence. We were entering the golden age. We had lost our jobs. We wanted to promote the euphoric mood. People had yearned for change. Writers were also caught up in the mood...celebrating history and not recording history.

The preoccupation with celebration increased possibilities of remembering those aspects of the war that hallowed nationalism and the guerrillas. 'Celebrating history' instead of 'recording' it meant that reality had to be distorted in order to enhance its sense of "appeal", one of the criteria the Literature Bureau used to assess whether a work was worth publishing. In most instances, this makes these novels read more like romances of the war rather than echoes of and critical renditions of history. The nationalist ideology and the attendant euphoria and celebration made the works useful to one historical period. Failure to balance celebration with reflection made writers pursue a narrow and narrowing historical trajectory. History became an event and a finished product rather than a process. Almost three decades after the

publication of *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), Nyawaranda, the author, had this to say in an interview with the researcher:

If I were to write again, it would be something different. There is need for one to wait until you sober up...the closer you are to an event, the more emotional you are...but for that time it was my truth. [Our] novels were only fit for that period. This is why we need war novels for each era.

Makari was also influenced by the celebratory mood. In an interview with this researcher he said that:

The mood was celebratory...I felt people should know what transpired during the war...the early 1980s was the right time because if delayed it would have been irrelevant.

Responding to a questionnaire, Hleza explained that:

Writing in the 1980s and 1990s does affect the way in which one sees the war; for instance the betrayals, subversions of the ideals of the liberation war that come to light in these years. Some true facts about the war of liberation have not been told. It is a challenge to those who fought in the war to correct this by putting the record straight.

Liberation war fiction becomes an expression of the dominant ideologies of the time. As in the colonial period, literature continued to be subservient to the state. Fischer (1972: 12) clarifies the relationship between literature and ideology when he says, "all art is conditioned by time, and represents humanity in so far as it corresponds to the ideas and aspirations, the needs and hopes of a particular historical situation." While the mood was euphoric, it should also be pointed out that the manner in which Shona and Ndebele writers represent history makes them part of the elite. Through their fiction, they diffuse elitist positions to the majority. With regard to interviewed English fiction writers, time of publication is not an issue they raised. Many wrote simply because they were interested stakeholders in recording what had happened.

### **6.2.3 Editorial policy**

The second chapter of this research provided a general discussion of the history of editorial policy and its impact on fiction writing without necessarily focusing on the



experiences of individual writers. It discussed the Rhodesian Literature Bureau and the generally restrictive space in Rhodesia then which forced other writers to publish abroad. Now it is important to focus on the views of writers with regard to editorial policy, particularly the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau. A cross-section of Ndebele and Shona writers interviewed by the researcher revealed that the Literature Bureau interfered with creative independence with regard to the representation of the history of the liberation war. In most instances, these writers in African languages in Zimbabwe had few options in terms of publishing because the Literature Bureau was the only 'official' channel. The writers' dialogue with history was therefore partly influenced by the Literature Bureau's assessment criteria. While a bit hesitant in his response to a questionnaire, Hleza revealed that:

There were limitations in publishing through the Literature Bureau [in a context] where some of the principal players in the war are still alive and holding powerful positions in society. Perhaps both unconsciously as well as consciously the Literature Bureau could have influenced me because of certain set standards that had to be adhered to. A lot still needs to be written about the liberation war. Some very important facts of it have not been made public...

Hleza's views demonstrate that the Literature Bureau directly and indirectly censored writers. The insistence by the Literature Bureau on adherence to 'set standards' also affected the writer's vision and version of history. Hleza's novel, *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) is celebratory of the guerrillas and its plot is simple – proceeding from victories at the battlefield to independence. There is also evidence of 'self-restriction' by the writer in a context where liberation war history is a sensitive topic. In this regard, inherited and institutionalised forms of censorship therefore inhibited Shona and Ndebele writers in general. One such form of censorship was internalised censorship which Chiwome (2002: 48) describes as "...a psychological state which cannot be quantified. It represents the more subtle side of subjective censorship. It arises from the existence of many censorship laws. It inhibits free creativity. The mind may or may not be aware of it."

Another writer who also expressed the fact that the Literature Bureau interfered in creative processes is Ndebele who wrote *Kwakunzima* (1997). Ndebele said that he was not free to express his preferred version of history without any due influence and

imposition of forms. He said he wrote his novel in 1982 but it was only published in 1997. Ndebele expressed this in a written response:

I actually wrote the novel in 1982. Bureaucratic jabbering by publishers (Literature Bureau) forced me to abandon the novel script in 1984. The reason why I had to abandon the script in 1984 is because they kept on telling me to change this and that to suit their requirements. In the end I thought they wanted me to write their novel...The original script was totally different...Am sure many others abandoned their works due to differences with the Literature Bureau, which was the sole approver of vernacular novels by then.

Commenting on the presence of Ndebele and Shona legends in the novel *Kwakunzima* (1997), Ndebele said: "The publishers advised me likewise, but then in Zambia we were mixed and hence all heroes were worshipped, regardless of ethnic affiliation." This evidence shows the extent to which the Literature Bureau contributed in shaping and directing historical representation.

It is difficult to separate the 'jabbering' and subsequent delay in the publication of the novel from the politics of history where only ZANU (PF) and not PF-ZAPU was presented as the legitimate revolutionary movement. The war in Matebeleland had started and PF ZAPU was seen as a dissident party and a historical blank page. The other factor could have been the version and vision of history in the novel. Despite massive changes as alluded to by the author, the published version emphasises the difficulty of war and most profoundly, its dehumanising effect. Celebration is very subdued, an aspect that could also have made the publishers uncomfortable. Above all, Ndebele's experience shows the extent to which editorial interventions can shape the writer's product and representations of history. However, most of the Shona and Ndebele writers who could not stage any counter-maneuvers to safeguard their voices stuck to the Literature Bureau's limited and limiting assessment criteria. One of the Literature Bureau's assessment criteria was appeal.

Nyawaranda spoke positively and yet ambiguously about the Literature Bureau. In a short response he said "the Literature Bureau encouraged Shona publications and it was good at first...Literature Bureau censorship is overplayed. People censored themselves because they were operating in a framework of a culture of silence." These views were also echoed by the first black editor of the Literature Bureau, B. C

Chitsike. In this regard, while the Literature Bureau could have had minimal impact on the writer's vision, its existence cannot be separated from "a framework of a culture of silence" that engendered 'self-restriction'. The existence of the Literature Bureau from the 1950s to 1999 and the quality of the literature published under its stewardship emphatically makes it part of the tradition of a culture of silence. Nyawaranda's response also shows that the general political environment and the sensitive nature of the liberation war promoted self-censorship.

Aaron Moyo acknowledged that his novels in general were influenced by the Literature Bureau without elaborating. But like Nyawaranda, he spoke positively about it. He said that: "*Dai isiri iyo dai pasina basa rese iri...Mukukanya kwayo kwayaiita yakabatsira*" (Were it not for the Literature Bureau, there would not have been all these novels...Despite its weaknesses, it helped). Considering that Nyawaranda and Moyo are Shona writers who have published more than one liberation war novel in the 1980s, they seem to speak with positive ambiguity about the Literature Bureau, unlike their counterparts in Ndebele. Nonetheless, all the interviewed writers demonstrate that editorial interventions constitute a big factor in the representation of memory. Zimbabwean writers in English interviewed by the researcher did not have this problem since they did not publish with the Literature Bureau. Only Chinodya complained that College Press delayed the publication of his novel, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), until he decided to send it to Irene Staunton of Baobab Books and, it took only nine months for it to be published there.

A critical overview of the views from the above cross-section of Ndebele and Shona writers makes one conclude that the quality of the novel was also a result of editorial policy. The change of government in 1980 did not bring about fundamental changes in the character and policy of the Literature Bureau. It maintained a rigid literary tradition that did not allow for any innovation to thrive. As a result, one finds that the Ndebele and Shona war novel written in the 1980s and even in the 1990s resembles its predecessor written and published in the colonial period, both in terms of style, sensibility and ideological orientation. This is also vindicated by Wild (1992b: 246) who comes to the conclusion that the "the majority of Shona and Ndebele writers were constrained and repetitive in theme and style, imitating their predecessors, centering their fictions mostly around the ever-recurring [plot types]." Such acts of

channeling fiction along a narrow and rigid creative tradition seriously affected the development of liberation war fiction written in indigenous languages.

In assessing manuscripts submitted for possible publication, the Bureau paid undue attention to form. According to Chiwome (2002: 52), the formalist achievements of a work of fiction were assessed as follows:

<b>Heading</b>	<b>Marks</b>
Plot	15
Conflict	15
Suspense	5
Characterisation	15
Language	5
Continuity	10
Theme and Title	15
Style	5
Appeal	10
Ending	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The above evidence shows that writers were apprenticed to formalistic traditions. As a result of the above assessment criteria, Chiwome (2002: 52) comes to the conclusion that “the format was simplistic. It sub-divided the manuscript into many formal categories. Form over-shadowed content and vision. Plot subsumes conflict, continuity, suspense and ending. Style subsumes language, appeal, suspense and characterisation...Suspense, style, conflict, continuity, plot and appeal together claimed 60% of the total award.... No marks were awarded for innovation which is a central aspect of novelistic practice.”

For all writers who had been publishing with the Literature Bureau in the colonial period, there is an invidious continuity in terms of style and the tendency towards oversimplification and stereotyping. *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) and *Yaiva Hondo* (1985) including a short story titled *Ndaponda Gandanga* (1984) all fiction on the war resemble other of Moyo’s novels published with the assistance of the Rhodesian

Literature Bureau which include, *Uchandifungawo* (1975) and *Ziva Kwawakabva* (1977). In an interview, Moyo echoes the assessment standards of the Literature Bureau, particularly form and characterisation. This leads to the realisation that his heroine, Kudzai, in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) is more of a creation than a historical figure as expressed in chapter three of this study. Moyo said that his style of presentation is similar in both the colonial and neo-colonial epochs:

The style in *Yaiva Hondo* is mainly flashback. I was also careful with characterisation that is why I gave Kudzai a voice...when you look at my novels there is continuity in terms of style. My major strength and preoccupation is with the plot.

As noted in the general discussion on the development of fiction in Zimbabwe, style and plot are part of the Literature Bureau's highly considered aspects. Even the marks awarded to these were more than those given to content.

Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), also a liberation war novel, carries over with the same story-telling traditions in terms of style, particularly plot. The style is like that to be found in *Sarura Wako* (1971). Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) both fiction on the liberation war follow the same style as other novels published during the colonial period. In the same vein, Sigogo's novels published during the colonial period are similar to his *Ngenziwa Ngumumo Welizwe* (1986) which also portrays the war. Some of the author's titles include *Usethi Ebukhweni Bakhe* (1962), *Gudlindlu Mntanami* (1967) and *Indlalifa Ngubani?* (1976). The continuities and rigidities in the style of fiction writing testify that both writers and the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau were not conscious of the fact that different themes and epochs require different stylistic and artistic canons for the purposes of attaining expressive effectiveness.

Nyawaranda also raised an aspect that clearly shows the influence of the Literature Bureau's assessment standards – suspense and appeal. These aspects come out emphatically in his two novels *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and *Paida Mwoyo* (1987). In an interview with the researcher, Nyawaranda emphasised appeal and suspense, aspects that have the potential to increase the gap between history and fiction:

Reality is too complex; it cannot be represented without introducing some distortions...reality is being distorted in the novel to make it more interesting to the readers.

The combination of suspense and appeal possibly led writers to compete to see who among them would produce the most breathtaking and scintillating 'distortion' of the war.

The insistence on and the imposition of style and its impact on creative writing are issues explained by Chitsike (1989: 14), the former editor of the Literature Bureau:

The other difficulty which resulted from lack of trained staff was that the Editorial Officers stuck to the format that was set by the Chief Publications Officer. When assessing manuscripts, Editorial Officers looked for plot, Conflict, (Problem), Characterisation, suspense and many others.... If an author tried to be innovative he/she lost marks on that.

This made many authors to identify the Literature Bureau a censorship board. Titles were also in line with the creative traditions of the Literature Bureau. This is again explained by Chitsike (1989: 11) when pointing out that this "tended to make the books stereotypes. For example, the greater majority of titles in Shona are either proverbs or idiomatic expressions which sell the plot before the readers start reading them." Such 'proverbialisation' was not the best for recreating the liberation war with all its complexities. In the light of the above, the attainment of independence did not improve the quality of fiction in Shona and Ndebele which continued to be published with the Literature Bureau. The editorial space remained inhibitive. Furusa's (1998a: 203-4) observation made in reference to trends in African languages literature in Zimbabwe is quite revealing. He mentions that

...the elements of the new do not always signal an ascent, and that every new writer does not obviously hold higher aesthetical values than his predecessors...the challenge that faces the Shona novel is to be innovative. There is need for it to introduce a more essential element that goes beyond the bounds of creative structure and poetic originality to achieve unity of word and purpose. The words and narrative techniques would then embody not only the individual lives of the novelists, but that of the whole nation and its sense of historical continuity and progress.

#### **6.2.4 Self-restriction**

Another aspect that comes out in the discussion on the influence of the Literature Bureau on historical representation is self-restriction. Nyawaranda and Hleza's views discussed above show that writers were fully conscious of the political environment in which they were operating as well as the sensitive nature of the war of liberation. Nyawaranda, for instance, calls this 'a framework of a culture of silence'. In this regard, writers tended to censor or restrict themselves as a way of self-protection. In an interview with the researcher, Chinodya also expressed the inherent fear which leads to self-restriction among writers dealing with nationalist history: "In bringing out the ugly side of the war, I felt I would be in trouble with the regime. I was scared and I thought I would be rounded up. But the trick is one has to write intelligently and honestly and use devices as literary camouflage."

#### **6.2.5 The Zimbabwe Literature Bureau-sponsored competition**

In chapter two, it is noted that the Rhodesia Literature Bureau sponsored competitions for the best novel in Shona and Ndebele languages in order to encourage writing. The same trend continued in the neo-colonial period. Immediately after independence, the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau sponsored a competition on the war novel. Like in the colonial period, these competitions were based on a competition topic or theme which served as the index. It was also the privilege of the Literature Bureau officials, themselves civil servants on government payroll, to come up with a specific topic. The Literature Bureau also set the terms of reference for the competition. Arguably, history got superannuated to the prize money that was being offered by the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau. It appears literature was domesticated and, in the process, creative independence subordinated to the competition. Any conscious writer who was part of those vying for the top three prizes already knew on which ideological side the Literature Bureau was.

The trend that had been set in the colonial period where "good" fiction would be made a set book in secondary schools created what this researcher calls a pathological and debilitating set book mentality. Historical fiction on the war whose vision was ideologically acceptable and 'politically correct' stood very good chances

of being prescribed as a set book in schools, the biggest consumers of fiction in indigenous languages. The possibilities of getting 'good' money once the novel was identified as a set book were so high. In the same vein, the novel could be reprinted several times keeping the writer in business for a long time. In an interview with the researcher, Chitsike, in apparent reference to the Literature Bureau-sponsored competition on the liberation war novel, said that:

Competitions spilled into our government. They were yearly competitions. To show that we were genuine people who wanted literature to grow, plus or minus 1985, we gave them a clear topic where we asked people to write about *hondo yeChimurenga* [liberation war]. We got manuscripts, a lot of them. It took a lot of time going through them...If there was a competition, the people would be asked to submit manuscripts that were in line with the terms of reference of the competition.

Chitsike's sentiments were also echoed by Lordwell Manyika, (a former employee of the Literature Bureau) part of whose written response reads:

I still remember the 1984/85 competition on the war novel and it was one of the first jobs I did. The theme was simply the War of Liberation. People could write from any point of view. Nonetheless, writing is never really free and writers wrote under the influence of what the people felt at the time. Most, if not all the writing praised the victors of the war. In 1984/85 the Bureau could not ignore the war of liberation. Nothing had been written about it.

The competition explains why most of the Shona liberation war narratives examined in this research are published in 1985 and, in association with Literature Bureau. Nyawaranda and Moyo are some of the writers who were inspired by the competition on the war novel. Commenting on what motivated him to write *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), Nyawaranda did not hide the money factor:

The novel was a response to the Literature Bureau competition...there was also the possibility of getting published and winning the prize which was around \$600,00 then. It was a lot of money...Because of the money and need to be published pleasing the status quo was unavoidable...*Mutunhu Une Mago* was initially rejected because of corruption.... It had been rated the best but the money went to a non-existent Sungano J. who wrote *Kuda Muhondo*.



The prize money, which was quite substantial in the early years of independence, made the writer recreate the war from an official point of view. Under such circumstances, self-censorship was inevitable in order to gratify the expectations of the competition organisers. Moyo (1985) also echoed similar sentiments, stating that he was motivated by the competition to write about the war. He also spoke on behalf of many authors of the time when making the point that:

There was a competition on the war. *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) is a direct response to that competition...most of the fictional works written during that time were inspired by the competition. It is true that there is some bit of celebration but it is subdued and cautious. I had to end it that way because of the sponsors and the mood of celebration.

Makari also submitted his novel in response to the competition. Literary competitions mortgaged writers' creative latitude to see and interpret reality from the vantage point of authentic selfhood. They would recreate history superficially. Ndebele did not write in response to the competition but submitted his already finished manuscript after seeing the competition advert calling for manuscripts. He says it was awarded the first prize but could not be published because the Literature Bureau wanted him to make extensive adjustments:

I had already written it (the novel) when I saw a Literature Bureau advert known as "HONDO/IMPI NOVEL WRITING COMPETITION"...Another war novel *Umzilakawulandelwa* by B. D. Ndlovu came second to mine in the competition, but it was published much much earlier. When I asked him how, he said he was patient and tolerant to the monopoly of the publisher.

Responding to a questionnaire, Hleza explained that "the Literature Bureau competition of 1984 (not 1985) gave me the opportunity to present the story of the liberation war in a way never done before, at least in the Ndebele language." This is in reference to his short story in *Izigaba Zempi Yenkululeko* (1984).

Such competitions placed participants in an invidious ambivalent situation where they would try to please the competition organisers and readers at the same time. It should also be borne in mind that whoever sponsors a competition has a veiled interest in the direction it should assume. Competition themes were not an arbitrary construction but were both political and ideological. They served to entrench and

popularise dominant modes of thinking by making them acceptable to readers. During that time, the celebration of war heroes and nationalism were the most fashionable themes because the state had a direct interest in the history issue.

Alternatively, the competitions diverted creativity from grappling with the 'burning issues of the day'. This strengthened establishments because winning fiction was guaranteed to be part of the school syllabus for a long time. For instance, one finds sufficient vindication from publication trends in the pre-1980 dispensation. Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1957) which absolved colonialism by blaming African characters for their poverty had received eight reprints up to 1972. Makhalisa's play *Umhlaba Lo!* (1977) whose moral revolves around a young countrywoman who is forced by circumstances to stay with corrupt friends in Bulawayo had received eight reprints by 2000. For that reason, literary competitions advanced a lopsided political and ideological disposition whose effect equals brainwashing and indoctrination. Both writers and readers became victims of the politics involved in the production of literature. Such control was vital to the political establishment because as Woodson (1977: xiii) submits:

When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his "proper place" and will stay in it. You do not have to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit.

### **6.2.6 Oral traditions**

Ndebele and Shona people's oral traditions are avatars of a profound history of struggle and victory. They express Ndebele/Shona people's identity based on heroism, courage and the indefatigable pursuit of the trophies that life has to offer. Some of these oral traditions include myths, legends, songs, praise poetry and others. Images advanced in these oral traditions celebrate life and decry defeatism and acquiescence to any form of oppression and enthrallment. These, as Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike (1985: 2) argue, constitute "the incontestable reservoir of the values, sensibilities, esthetics, and achievements of traditional African thought and imagination....[while serving] as the ultimate foundation, guidepost and point of departure for a modern liberated African literature." In the colonial period such

emotions from the Shona and Ndebele heroic past could not be expressed in written literature since it was published using the institutional machinery of the colonial regime. The attainment of independence therefore creates a platform to commemorate this tradition of heroism. Writers therefore remember the liberation war through the imagery of this gallant past.

In an interview with the researcher, Makari emphasised that his recreation of the character Mberikwazvo in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) and Josia Tungamirai in *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia Tungamirai* (2003) is inspired by his heroic and conquering grandfather who is a family legend – Mberikwazvo. According to the author, the legend of Mberikwazvo was an all-conquering one that never retreated when faced with challenges. The legend of Mberikwazvo is extensively discussed in *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia Tungamirai* (2003) making Josia Tungamirai its reincarnation. As has been shown in the discussion, Mberikwazvo in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) is subjected to severe torture which no human being can withstand; but he overcomes the severity of the torture and becomes a legend of the war.

Hleza makes the influence of Ndebele oral traditions in his remembrances of the liberation war profusely clear:

When I grew up I learnt about the great battles of our ancestors against the white settlers orally from the elders in my family as well as through teachers at school. I got to know that through the defeat of our ancestors in the battle by the white settlers we as blacks had been reduced to servants of the whites, a people without a proud and a great history. To me the liberation war that took place before me and in a way, I was part of became a movement for the transformation of the lives of black people from servitude to freedom and human dignity long denied the blacks by white settlers. This to me was and still remains the source of my inspiration. To me, there is no greater period in our history than that of the liberation war, a period of the restoration of our pride and dignity.

Notably, memories from the distant past inform historical vision and sensibility. The recreation of guerrillas as heroes also becomes a conscious attempt to redeem the Ndebele and Shona people's past for identity construction purposes. However, the remembrance of liberation war history gets overwhelmed by the need to recreate glory more than truth. Viewed from this perspective, it can be argued that some of the

heroic figures in historical fiction are not products of or from liberation war history but are essentially creations of the authors.

Related to the above representations is the general suppression of heroism in fiction written and published in the colonial period. The advent of independence offers possibilities for the release of emotions and, under such circumstances, cultural nationalism supersedes historical reality. Independence provides writers with an opportunity to create indigenous heroes and heroines without any fear of being restricted. In the colonial period, the literature in question tended to confer heroism to characters who were actively engaged in fighting to dislodge their own cultural foundations and frustrate the liberation of their people. It even went to the extent of presenting white characters as heroes. Examples include Chakaipa's novels like *Dzasukwa Mwana-asina-hembe* (1967), *Garandichauya* (1963), and Mlilo's *Lifile* (1975) in which those characters committed to the liberation of their spaces while maintaining an unyielding rootedness in their cultures are cast as anti-heroes.

It is against this background then, that the advent of political independence and the liberation war as a theme in literature introduces a new creative and pedagogical vision that instead of diminishing and caricaturing Shona and Ndebele characters, it blesses and lavishes them with action and agency – aspects critical for liberation and self-realisation. It achieves this by reversing and redefining the ownership of heroism and anti-heroism. For the first time since the publication of *Feso* (1956) and *Umvukela WamaNdebele* (1956), both discussed in chapter three, indigenous people fighting for the defence of their country and culture become heroes while the coloniser and other African collaborators become villains. Through this conceptual scheme,

the narrator does not only refute the narratives invented by colonialism about his native land, he also strives to rewrite his own version of History: colonialist history is not simply the opposite of a transcendental truth, it is a selection of events, of heroes which add up to a coherent vision: 'History' is used to justify the coloniser's politics. In [celebratory] fiction, the reader learns to reappraise the relevance and relativity of historical figures as the narrator carefully creates new heroes or dismisses old ones (Cesaire, 1995: 62).

While we are critical of upholding celebration as the only sensibility in the war, we are, however, not oblivious of its inevitability and necessity. Unfortunately, this potential for action and agency is not sustained in Shona and Ndebele works dealing with themes other than the liberation war.

### 6.2.7 Writing back and liberation war fiction

Writing back is part of image reconstruction. First, as a corrective to the negative images of Africans created by white people. Second, as a corrective to the romantic images of the liberation war depicted in the early 1980s historical fiction. Whites had generally presented black people in unenviable terms. For instance, guerrillas were referred to as terrorists, gooks, rapists, murderers and cowards. In fact, they were given all the negative labels that the white world attached to 'uncivilised' Africa and the 'native'. Fanon (1967: 32) summarises the coloniser's perception of the colonised:

As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil....The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces.

The *Rhodesian Herald*, for instance, was also awash with such images that sought to liquidate the guerrilla. Cate (1983: 50) summarises journalist Richard Cecil's description of Rhodesian Forces' contact with guerrillas in the bush in the following words:

By the next morning the action was completed, with a haul of six dead 'ters' for three wounded Rhodesians...The hill below was now criss-crossed with tracer bullets. A mere seven seconds after jumping – 150 metres being a dangerously low altitude from which to parachute – Cecil missed a nasty looking stump and 'rolled comfortably on some soft dirt on the edge of an African kraal.' The battle continued for six hours. Cecil celebrated the resourceful audacity of these 'Rhodesian boy veterans' whose fitness and quick wits' time and again turned almost certain death into miraculous escape. When the action finished twelve guerrillas were dead. But there was no respite from the tired

paras. Thirty more guerrillas had been sighted. Within an hour they were airborne again.

In the light of the above, some fictional narratives become some kind of reverse propaganda. They celebrate politics in a context where civilian political engagements had been criminalised. Resultantly, political expediency supersedes historical duty. Therefore, the first priority for such literary historians seems to be a determination to correct the skewed image of the guerrilla and align it to the image of the new nation. Writing back becomes an act of healing and rehabilitation of the battered image of the guerrilla in particular and, the black person in general. Celebration of guerrilla fighters becomes part of the dynamics of national identity creation.

English fiction writers from the late 1980s and some of the Shona writers who publish in the 1990s write back as a way of critiquing early historical narratives. Their vision is directed towards the reconstruction and deconstruction of historical images particularly those that characterise fiction published in the early 1980s. In this category are writers like Manyimbiri (1991) and Kanengoni (1997). In an interview with the researcher, Manyimbiri stated that one of the motivating factors to write on the war was the need to counter earlier voices on the war:

I had read other war novels. To me they read like *ngano* (folktales). That novel (*Mudzimu Wakupe Chironda*) therefore is a critique of other Shona novels written by earlier writers. It is a challenge both in terms of style and theme/ content.

Kanengoni echoed similar sentiments part of which have already been recorded above. He said that “we were correcting earlier distortions.”

### **6.2.8 Liberation war fiction written or published outside the country**

The production of literature is a highly political act. Space and place are as important as the process of writing itself. Various spaces and places have their own unique ideologies and philosophies from which the writer cannot escape. Literature written in indigenous languages in the colonial period becomes insidiously domesticated. The domestication of such literature in terms of theme and content was meant to promote acquiescence and passive acceptance of enslavement by Europeans. Written and

published at home, Rhodesia, the government had full control over all editorial processes. The confinement of fiction to narrow, restrictive and oppressive colonial spaces meant fiction writers had no other role model apart from the coloniser's image of them. Even those who tried to use age-old Shona and Ndebele oral art forms tended to articulate a jaundiced consciousness which perpetuated the system of enslavement. The only exceptions are *Feso* (1956) and *Umvukela WamaNdebele* (1956), pioneer fiction in Shona and Ndebele, respectively.

The colonial government had realised the power of indigenous languages. They invested in these languages by seeing to it that this literature was published at home. The only avenue through which Shona and Ndebele writers could get published was the Literature Bureau. The Bureau officials were not competent in handling manuscripts in English. This promoted a situation where indigenous languages were used to undermine the indigenosity of Shona and Ndebele people. Circulation of literature in English was largely restricted and prohibited. The only role models available were those writers who had been thoroughly indoctrinated by the system, especially Chakaipa in Shona and Sigogo in Ndebele. This created and institutionalised a vicious cycle of mediocrity.

Writers who wrote in English had the opportunity to publish abroad. They could directly publish with independent publishers. After the attainment of independence in 1980, the same publishing and writing patterns remained unchanged for a very long time. Writing and publishing at home through the Literature Bureau partly disadvantaged Ndebele and Shona writers. They were restricted in terms of choice of theme and style. Submissions from some of the few writers contacted by the researcher indicate that writing away from home seems to provide the writer with some degree of creative latitude. As a result, one realises that writing at home and writing away from home leads to different conclusions. Commenting on the implications of home at different times and locations, George (1996: 17) submits that:

What the hyphen in "home-country" makes explicit are the ideological linkages deemed necessary for subjects who are at home in a social and political space and even more acutely for those who are, because of geographic distance or political disenfranchisement, *outside* their "legitimate" space. Home-country and home resonate differently from

different locations for different subjects and often even for the same subject at different locations.

Nyamfukudza is an example of authors whose novels give an insight into the politics of publishing as well as the imaging of home away from home. Responding to a questionnaire on whether it was possible to write about the war when it was raging on, Nyamfukudza wrote:

That is what I did, but probably only because I was in the UK...The story itself was originally written in 1977 when I had been in UK for 3 years and revised in 1978 although publication was only 2 years later in 1980...Furthermore, the publication was delayed because Heinemann publishers felt that the biggest market would be Zimbabwe and there was no business argument for publishing while the RF (Rhodesian Front) was in power because the book would not be allowed into Rhodesia.

The politics of publishing have an impact on the development of creative writing. Such information can only be obtained from writers who are the most involved at this stage. *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) was also written while the author, Chinodya, was out of the country. The novel was written in

1984 and submitted as part of an MA in Creative Writing at the University of Iowa in the USA...More than nine tenths of the novel was written in the USA where I would go to the library at night...my novels are written whilst outside the country – in faraway places – where there is calm...no disturbances.

Asked on why he delayed publishing the book if it was written in 1984, Chinodya explained:

I sat on this book for three years because of domestic commitment...also I did not know how to finish it. I thought I would have a really big battle. I finally finished it in 1987 and then publishers delayed me for one year. I then decided to send it to Irene Staunton at Baobab books and it did not take more than nine months.



### 6.3 WRITERS' SOURCE OF INSPIRATION, REGION AND PLACE

Historical fiction on the liberation war is both biographical and autobiographical. A number of writers underscored a desire to capture history based on their personal experiences. They underscored the liberation war as an unavoidable thematic experience. For many, such history was a product of their experiences during and after the war. Baldwin (1995: 15) has identified writing out of one's experience as crucial in shaping vision and developing fiction:

One writes out of one thing only – one's own experience. Everything depends on how relentlessly one forces from this experience the last drop, sweet or bitter, it can possibly give.

Writers who use personal experiences from the war mostly belong to what Veit-Wild (1992b: 15) calls the second and third generations:

The second generation writers were born in the years 1940 to 1959. "Generation 2 writers were moulded by their upbringing and education after World War 11, in the years of rapid industrialization and social change in Southern Rhodesia. ...Their experiences at school were marked by the growing political conflicts in the country from the early 1960s on...The youngest generation (1960 and later) were children and adolescents during the war of liberation. This early experience of war has been a major preoccupation in their writing – which most started after independence in 1980.

Historical fiction written by Ndebele writers remembers ZIPRA history. It represents the experiences of peasants, guerrillas, youths, Selous Scouts and Rhodesian forces as they occurred in Matebeleland. It also articulates the operational experiences of ZIPRA as a unique guerrilla force. The focus on ZIPRA is critical since in the contest for historical legitimacy in neo-colonial Zimbabwe, ZIPRA history has been cast as a non-event, a nullity and a historical blank slate. Orthodox historical texts on ZIPRA history are also very limited. As the study has shown, the only historical texts that attempt to remember and restore ZIPRA history from the perspective of the participants include Bhebe's *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (1999), Alexander, McGregor and Ranger's *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matebeleland* (2000), Sibanda's *The Zimbabwe African People's Union 1961-1987: A*

*Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia* (2005), Dabengwa's article 'ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation (1995) and Brickhill's article titled 'Daring to Storm the Heavens: The Military Strategy of ZAPU 1976 to 1979' (1995). There are also a few oral accounts from former ZIPRA combatants in *Women of Resilience: Voices of Women Ex-Combatants* (2000) and mothers in Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* (1990). The noticeable trend is that all these historical accounts which give voice to ZIPRA history are published mainly from the 1990s onwards. Against the background of the general paucity of historical resources on the war in Matebeleland, historical fiction plays a significant role in keeping the public informed about the liberation war as it occurred in that region. Eventhough Ndlovu, a lecturer in the Department of African Languages and Literature at the University of Zimbabwe echoed similar sentiments when he said:

Some authors among them Hleza and Ndebele at least make reference to ZAPU and its contributions but most of them are rather silent and treat the war as if it was fought by one united front. Even those who allude to ZAPU do so in a way that leaves ZAPU on the fringes of the struggle as if it did not also participate in the war...To some extent, the novel is a substitute but there is always a need to also supplement such facts with historical facts. Where ZAPU is mentioned in some cases there are distortions in favour of it so it is always necessary to treat these works with great caution

Despite some of the shortcomings in historical representation, Ndebele historical fiction on the liberation war generates perspectives on ZIPRA recruitment strategies, the role of peasants and youths, ZIPRA victories and operational strategies as well the Rhodesian counter-insurgency strategies that are supported by history. Hleza, who was a member of ZAPU'S Youth Front Wing chronicles the experiences of ZIPRA. He celebrates the invincibility of ZIPRA guerrillas while at the same time giving vast descriptive space to their guns. In response to a questionnaire, Hleza said that "my source of history is both through personal experience as well as through the experience of others who took part in the war of liberation." He further elaborates his personal experiences as follows:

Six of my family members went to the war. I remained behind and as a member of ZAPU's Youth Front wing holding the post of District Secretary I was responsible for teaching liberation war literature such as the *Zimbabwe's People's Voice*, the *Zimbabwe Review* as well as the ZIPRA combat diary during meetings. The literature was brought to

us by the ZIPRA forces. As the eyes and the ears of the party we were also the eyes and ears of its military wing, ZIPRA. As the war progressed the bond between the community and the freedom fighters became stronger and stronger. We became familiar with a variety of weapons which they carried as well as their sounds during battles. The close experiences I had of the war of liberation through close interaction with freedom fighters as well as the personal experiences of close members of my family, including my twin brother who trained and fought under ZIPRA have contributed a lot to my perception of the liberation war.

As shown in chapter four of this study, Hleza's novel, *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi* (1992) gives a vivid and elaborate description of guerrilla guns as well as their sounds. At the same time, writing from Matebeleland, the region where ZIPRA drew its massive support affects historical images. As Hleza explained to the researcher:

Writing in Matebeleland or Mashonaland does affect the way one views the war because although this was a national effort, it later on assumed regional tendencies when the spirit of son or daughter of the soil became a victim of regional and ethnic domination in the ranks of the liberation war movement.

Similarly, Ndebele emphasised personal experience and stories from ZIPRA guerrillas returning from the battlefield as his source of history:

I was a refugee in Zambia during the war. Stories from returning and injured fighters coming through our camp inspired me to write...I simply narrated what the ZIPRA forces narrated about their ordeal. That's why it mostly focuses on Matebeleland. The few Mashonaland experiences in the book were imposed by the publisher.

Shona historical fiction published in all epochs represents the experiences of ZANU and ZANLA. ZANLA largely concentrated on the north-eastern half of the country where most of these Shona writers come from. The fiction thus focuses on the liberation war as it happened in Mashonaland, Manicaland and the ZANLA operational areas of the Midlands. The characters in the narratives are Shona and their names are derived from ZANLA, which to a very large extent also recruited from Mashonaland. In an interview with the researcher, Nyawaranda expressed that:

The only side that I experienced was that of ZANLA freedom fighters who stayed in the villages. The Rusape area was never infiltrated by ZIPRA and as such was only exposed to ZANLA history and its

mottos. I am only writing in context. I had no experiences with ZIPRA. During the war I was a teacher at Kriste Mambo 28 miles along Nyanga road. I experienced the war from *pungwes*. When schools were closed I came to the University of Rhodesia running away from the war.

Makari, also writing from Masvingo (a Shona speaking province) was involved in the struggle as a linkman. He described a linkman as someone whose duty was to assist the guerrillas as much as possible by looking after their welfare. He represents the role played by civilians in the total execution of the war and ultimately its success. Often, this was a dangerous exercise, as civilians were not armed. In an interview with the researcher, he noted that:

I was a headmaster in the Gaza province [during the war] covering Manica, Bikita, Zaka, parts of Gutu and Nyajena. These transcended the normal boundaries we know today. Each province had a general commander – in this case it was Henry Muchena...I wrote this novel from my own experiences, [that is, what] I saw and witnessed and information that I got from my involvement with comrades. The comrades would tell us about the events in Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana...I remember at one time comrades had come in tatters and were hungry. We sat down and I collected money to buy food and clothes for them. During mid month people had no money and I would use my personal money. My movements were not restricted because of my position... also had very supportive staff...The war was not only fought by people holding the guns – born or not born – everyone was affected in one way or another. Business people were affected and the economy of the family was affected, too. No one owns the war; were it not for the old women the guerrillas would have found it very difficult...they were strangers in our areas.

The author's popular novel, *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), attempts to show civilian involvement in the liberation war more than most of the narratives published during this time. In the same interview, Makari confirmed that in writing *Magamba eChimurenga: Josia Tungamirai* (2003), he travelled to Mozambique where he visited former ZANLA bases and interviewed people who were present during the war. He personally visited the site of the accident which claimed Josiah Tongogara's life. Such commitment from writers of fiction is not just symbolic but underscores the writer's task as a responsible historian. Research is unavoidable when writing about a people's history. This reduces doubt on the close relationship between fiction and history. Fiction increases and enhances readers' understanding of liberation war history. This understanding is founded on the conceptual premise that "all literature

has the capacity to participate in and comment on social change, and that novels are particularly well placed to do so because of their formal malleability and the narrativity they share with historical accounts of events” (Primorac, 2006: 2). How the writer presents the gathered material becomes another issue which criticism/scholarship deals with.

Aaron Moyo, also a prominent Shona novelist, was active in urban politics as a member of the People’s Movement started by Canaan Banana to provide internal support “for ZANU and Robert Mugabe” (interview with Moyo). In this regard, he said his novels *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) and *Yaiva Hondo* (1985) articulate the war from the point of view of the temporary urban dwellers, the lodgers. For that reason, he ushers an urban philosophy of the war. Action in his novels is mainly urban-centered with very few images on the rural dimension of the war. A number of Shona writers confined themselves to the rural domain. As a result, Moyo’s historical fiction on the liberation war contributes immensely towards the understanding of one of the most neglected liberation war zones – the urban area. He explained to this researcher that, “*Ndairoja muHarare. Maroja ndiwo aitsigira hondo...malandlords mazhinji aisapota Rhodesian Front naMuzorewa*” (I was a lodger in Harare. Lodgers / tenants were the active supporters of the war...most landlords backed the Rhodesian Front and later Muzorewa). He further added that:

*Ndainyanya kunyora nezvekurarama kwevanhu muhondo mudhorobha...Zvemuhondo, kunyanya zvepfuti zvaingonyorwa nevazhinji. Izvi zvaindibata chaizvo nokuti vazhinji tinowanztarisa akabata pfuti chete...Zvehondo chaiyo zvine chitsotsi chakawanda saka ndaisada kuzvinyora...Handidi kunyora nezvebato rimwe chete...Taimboenda kunzvimbo dzine hondo. Mukoma wangu akanga ari mupurisa saka taienda kumastation. Baba vangu vaid a zvavarungu; vaisada zvehondo...Vatambi vazhinji vari muna **Nguo Dzouswa** masahwira angu andaishanda nawo mudistrict. Ndaive treasurer muKambuzuma Section 2 asi pakapera hondo hapana chandakawana...*

I wrote mostly about people’s urban experiences in the war... Realities from the war, especially military contacts and guerrillas in general, many people had written about them. This worried me a lot because the majority among us tended to focus on the person who had a gun...there is a lot of trickery in real war experiences so I did not want to write about that...I also don’t want to write about one party...We used to visit war zones. My elder brother was a policeman and we would go to various police stations. My father supported whites; he did

not like the guerrillas...Most of the characters in *Nguo Dzouswa* are my friends with whom I worked for the party at district level. I was the treasurer for Kambuzuma section 2 but when the war ended I did not benefit.

Commenting on *Yaiva Hondo* (1985), Moyo said: "*Inyaya yechokwadi – musimboti wayo uri pachokwadi. Kupandukirana kuoma kwezvinhu*" (It is a true story – its strength is based on what happened. Betrayals and differences were a result of the complex and difficult situation in the war).

English fiction writers also represent the liberation war based on personal experiences. In his response to a questionnaire, Nyamfukudza wrote:

The liberation war started in earnest in the Mount Darwin area, which is my rural homeland. I lived in the area when the war had already started. At some point I was involved in shunting across the Zimbabwe/Botswana border with a number of people who went to join the liberation struggle. Some survived the war and others did not. I have friends who fought in the war and with whom I maintained relationships after the war. My rural home area was destroyed during the war and the family dispersed to various parts of the northeast as a result of the war. I did not however have access to most of the oral history of the war that was part of my family fabric until after the *Non-Believer's Journey* had been published...The story was written after the disunity and internecine strife which took place in Zambia particularly and which included the murder of Herbert Chitepo...I was aware of the ugly side of the nationalist struggle and was not able to romanticize both the war itself and my feelings of foreboding about what might happen after the struggle had been won.

Mujajati, a playwright explained that, *Rain of My Blood* (1989) was part of the experiences in St Albert's Centenary area where he was a teacher. Historically, Centenary is important because "in 1972 ZANLA launched its military offensive in the north-east with an attack on Altena, 20km from St Albert's Mission" (Auret, 1992: 69):

I wrote this play in the mood of celebration in 1984. I intended to celebrate independence...However, in about 1987 most of the freedom fighters were coming back frighteningly wounded – there were a lot of scars – the healing was not there. By observing and relating with those who fought, I decided to write about freedom fighters who were suffering in the early years...I remember one freedom fighter who had one leg. After drinking beer, he would suddenly stand up and start crying demanding 'I want my leg now'. He would hit every one using his crutches and within seconds the bar would be vacated.

Mujajati is one of the few writers who were able to adjust fiction on the war in line with changing social, economic and political realities. He combines experience, observation and research to create a somber account of the war. The first part of his play is centered on land and sacrifice while the rest of the play is a revelation of the frighteningly painful experiences of disabled former combatants and how they have been neglected in neo-colonial Zimbabwe.

On the other hand, former freedom fighters like Kanengoni and Bvuma among others write from their own personal experiences as 'Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War'. Kanengoni wrote on the war in order to give an

inside view or perspective of liberation war experiences... [because] the story has not been clearly told...It has been told by different people – not participants and some even are foreigners. War is destruction and suffering – its execution is deadly...*Echoing Silences* is a story about people not heroes. It is a consolidation of *Effortless Tears* – all short stories put together into one story.

The title of his novel, *Echoing Silences* (1997) aptly captures the need to articulate alternative truths and confront the culture of silence in the nation. At the same time, he is one of the few writers who transcend the regional and ethnic dimension of the war by depicting ZANLA/ ZANU and ZIPRA/ ZAPU realities. In an interview, he said:

It cannot be denied that ethnicity was there – we must also recognise the fact that ZAPU also participated. Some sections in my novel are an attempt to try and embrace the concept of nation. If we exclude other critical aspects, we do that at our own peril.

Such a transcendental and all-embracing consciousness is engendered by the writer's experiences in the rear as well as the front. He rescues historical memory from monolithic representations that make liberation war history synonymous with a single political brand. He said that as a former guerrilla fighter his "strength is that he is a participant – as such distance between the story and reality is non-existent...but the disadvantage is that if there is an agenda one can twist facts and change history." While poetry is not the concern of the research, the views from Bvuma, a poet and former guerrilla, are important in understanding the dynamics of memory representation. According to Bvuma, being a former 'soldier' in the liberation war

makes it possible for him to transcend self-censorship triggered by an entrenched culture of fear and silence:

I wrote, first, because I felt the need to get out of the intense emotions I felt about the war. I felt that the war was a unique experience that needed to be captured artistically. Poetry was the only avenue I knew. Some poems in *Every Stone that Turns* were written after demobilization. I suppose I was trying to reconcile the war experiences with the post-war personal, social and political realities – the contradictions and disappointments...[As a freedom fighter], the major strength is that what I write is not contrived, it comes out naturally, oozing or gushing out of my gut and soul. I have to do less research on the war, compared to a writer who was not there. I can write boldly, I can handle sensitive or “taboo” issues, I can write critically, even though I know my colleagues might complain.

Bvuma’s poetry is clear in its defiance of making reference to any political party or military wing. It raises new perspectives on issues that people tend to take for granted. Yet they had an imponderable impact on the psychological balance of the freedom fighters.

In an interview with the researcher, Chinodya said that “the war is an inescapable feature on the literary terrain of Zimbabwe. I was naturally drawn to it. I did not even research on the war because there was an overflow of information...I do not like dates, places...in the novel its neither ZANU nor ZAPU....” Chinodya explained to the researcher that *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) is a novel that should be read in conjunction with his other novels as it marks a transition into adult experiences or what he terms ‘natural progression’. ‘Natural progression,’ is a term that the writer uses to describe trends in his literary experience. It is a mark of development – both stylistically and thematically. It is a form of innovation that is idiosyncratically linked to the linear development of the writer’s fictional works. It leads to a hierarchical perception of his literature which records and celebrates stages in life – from childhood to adulthood. Along this evolutionary spectrum, the choice of war as subject marks the turning point. In this regard, Chinodya wrote on the war as part of personal growth as a writer and also a transition in themes. For instance, he felt he “had done with childhood”. Consequently, by thematising the war, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) was a conscious construction in the writer’s self-transcendental act. As part of ‘natural progression’, “harvest’ is a harvest of style – epistolary, stream of consciousness, gossip, flashback and etcetera.”



He explained that the characters in his fiction develop from boyhood, teenage and adult stages. The war therefore provided him with a platform to celebrate the transitional experiences of his characters. The war is a more serious theme that calls for mature and sober intervention. It marks an important stage in the development of his literary career:

My writings celebrate literature. When you look at my works, there is a chronology developing. *Dew in the Morning* (1982) is about 12 year olds. *Farai's Girls* (1984) deals with teenage experiences. This is also the case with *Child of War* (1984). In writing *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), I felt I had dealt enough with childhood. *Harvest of Thorns*, therefore, marks my natural progression thematically and stylistically. I had mastered total control of my voice. When you look at *Child of War* you see clearly that Hondo progresses into Benjamin (interview with Chinodya).

Also related to what Chinodya calls 'natural progression' was the 'acerbic' criticism the writer said he and his contemporaries received from some of the University of Zimbabwe's professors. Chinodya said that the criticism branded the writers as merely involved in peddling 'politically incorrect' ideas. Chinodya gave Emmanuel Ngora as one of those professors. Ngora is a Marxist who has written numerous critical works among them *Art and Ideology in the African Novel: A Study of the Influence of Marxism on African Writing* (1985) and *Ideology and Form in African Poetry: Implications for Communication* (1990). Chinodya stated during an interview that he personally suffered from the debilities attendant upon such scholars' criticism. Therefore, when he wrote *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), it was a direct challenge to Ngora, whom he sardonically referred to as 'the politically correct literary regime of the University of Zimbabwe professors.' For that reason, writers like Chinodya were assumed to be 'politically incorrect'. *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) was written with such accusations in mind. Thus, criticism has an important bearing on the direction that a people's literature assumes. As part of fully appreciating the development of war fiction, such idiosyncratic dispositions are significant as they help fashion and clarify readers' understanding of the writer's sensibility and outlook.

Another author who links both the development and transition of his fiction to the war is Tizora. In an interview with Wild (1992a: 124), he said that "the war and

independence made me shift from purely social concerns to political and economic ones.” An appreciation of the writers’ background clarifies the vision and sensibility that defines their historical representation. It is in light of this observation that Diallo (2007: 157) explains that “history can always be intentionally used for precise goals and that, as an intellectual production, it will always reflect the background of the producer.”

To a very large extent, English historical fiction contributes towards an ideologically and pedagogically empowering concept of nation and nationalism. National participation and belonging between the Ndebele and the Shona have been contested on the degree of participation in the liberation war. Against this background, we conclude that liberation war historical in English, particularly that published in the late 1980s and beyond becomes ideologically and ethnically acceptable in Matebeleland and Mashonaland and Manicaland. No ethnic category feels left out of the political and historical arena. For that reason, it is a discourse on war that conceptualises history “at the level of high analysis...rising above racial, ethnic and tribal considerations” (Kamba and Dabengwa quoted in Bhebe and Ranger, 1995: 1&2)

#### **6.4 TRENDS IN LIBERATION WAR HISTORICAL FICTION**

The study of liberation war fiction in Zimbabwe clearly reveals how fiction responding to similar historical processes appears moderately conjunctive and principally disjunctive. Ever since its conception, Zimbabwean literature in indigenous languages (Shona and Ndebele) and English has to a very large extent followed contradictory ideological and intellectual trajectories. Its evolutionary history reflects separate development in terms of sensibility, commitment and orientation. Such separate development is partly a reflection of the colonial policy on the native (other) and the self (European/English). It is also a result of the editorial processes that are part of the production of the literature, especially before the Literature Bureau disbanded. Even after independence, this pattern remains conspicuous. Only in few instances where writers seem to write in both languages; English and Ndebele or Shona do their sensibilities converge.

Indigenous languages were part of the other, a phenomenon that resulted in the 'vernacularisation' of the resultant literature. This resulted in the separate development of literature in English and literature in Ndebele and Shona. Such separate development of the literatures in question can still be noted today in the manner in which the Departments of African Languages and Literature and English at the University of Zimbabwe teach the same literature. Works written by the same authors in different languages, that is, Ndebele/ Shona and English are taught separately in African Languages and Literature and English Departments, respectively. Because of the different editorial backgrounds of English fiction and Shona/Ndebele fiction, language of publication has a profound bearing on the development of literature as well as its place in the literary history of Zimbabwe. War fiction, too, follows similar traditions where Shona and Ndebele fiction can be said to be largely underdeveloped in terms of its sensibility. It seems to struggle to break out of the ossifying creative traditions and 'colonial hangovers' of yesteryear. On the other hand, fiction in English has been quick to adjust and adapt to new political, economic and social realities. In terms of innovation, war fiction in English offers an aesthetically and pedagogically empowering curriculum of history.

Veit-Wild (1992b) offers a general explanation of trends in Zimbabwean literature based on generational experiences. She divides these trends and generations into the first, second and third generations. While her categorisation may appear rigid, it nonetheless vindicates the existence of trends in Zimbabwean literature. Chiwome (1996) has also focused on trends in Shona poetry. This has also been the central concern in Gambahaya (1999) as she analyses creative trends in Shona and Ndebele poetry published after 1980. Ndlovu (2001: viii) discusses trends in the Ndebele novel written and published in the colonial period. He explains that:

*Umsebenzi wethu siwubeke ezigabeni ezimbili. Isigaba sakugala sikhangele amanoveli adindwa kusukela ngo 1956 kusiyafika ku1959. Kwathi isigaba sesibili sakhangele amanoveli adindwa kusukela ngo 1960 kusiyafika ku 1971. Lokhu sikwenze ngoba sinanzelela ukuthi kulokuhambelana okuthile phakathi kwamanoveli akusigaba sinye ngasinye.*

We have placed our work into two categories. The first category examines works written and published from 1956 up to 1959. The second category examines those works written and published from

1960 up to 1971. We have done this out of the realisation that there are common salient characteristics in novels written in the same period.

In the same vein, the current research shows that historical fiction on the liberation war also falls into distinct categories and trends. These trends are determined by historical time, ideology and in some cases, theme. Against this background, the observable trends can be presented as historical fiction in Shona, Ndebele and English published in the early 1980s which is celebratory of the nationalist ideology. This fiction mainly focuses on guerrillas. The second trend which also characterises historical fiction published in the early 1980s is less celebratory of the war and the nationalist ideology. This fiction represents the sociological side of history, particularly the family and the impact of the liberation war on ordinary people's relationships. The other trend identified in this research is that of fiction published from the late 1980s and beyond. This category is mainly made up of fiction written in English and some few narratives in Shona and Ndebele. This fiction is very critical of nationalism and the liberation war.

These different trends are linked to economic realities in the nation as well as the relationship between and attitude of the state to citizens and history. As noted above, the overly subscribed trend in the early 1980s is represented through fiction which depicts the combat element of the struggle. The majority of writers who subscribe to this trend are mainly Shona-speaking writers from Mashonaland who depict history in Shona and English languages. The thrust is that of commemorating the epic heroism of the guerrillas. While the civilian element is shown, it remains an ancillary theme that functions to validate guerrilla heroism. At this time, the absence of Ndebele historical fiction on the liberation war could be a result of the civil war that was taking place in the region. It can be argued that the liberation war and the politics of legitimacy associated with it were at the center of this bloody contest that ZANU PF named *gukurahundi*. The few Ndebele writers interviewed by this researcher evaded this subject since it is still a sensitive issue in Zimbabwe's politics. However, the views from Gambahaya (1999: 2 and 3) help explicate why there were no Ndebele war narratives in the very early years of independence yet there was an oversubscription from Shona writers:

The few Ndebele celebratory poems soon after independence may be due to the fact that while the civil war was raging in Matebeleland, the then Shona-dominated ZANU (PF) government was consolidating its power through literature and history books (1999: 2 & 3).

Generally, the early years of independence were characterised by euphoria and great expectations. The state also introduced a number of policies that benefited citizens such as free primary health care, free primary education and increased employment opportunities. History, particularly the liberation war was a crucial symbol of regime legitimacy for the fledgling nationalist government. In this regard, guerrillas became symbolic figures in national identity construction. Most fiction writers representing the experiences of guerrillas in the just ended war chose to remember their heroism in line with independence celebrations and also because guerrillas were an asset to the state's claims of legitimacy. The state's interest in history explains the large number of narratives that makes guerrillas and guerrilla heroism their thesis.

At the same time, other writers in the early 1980s chose to remember the disruption of the social structures as a result of the war. The discourse in these writers' narratives operates outside the parameters of euphoria and nationalist glorification of the war. It provides a balance sheet of history for the civilian element or the so-called 'man in the middle.' It appears that the civilians were a marginal category that politicians viewed only as election material. For that reason, writers depicting the sociological aspect of the war were not inhibited by the state's interests. Thus, writers who represented this dimension were able to offer a veiled counter-discourse to narratives of guerrilla celebration without any 'self-restriction.' This version of history was quite understandable when one takes into account the fact that while independence euphoria was taken for granted, especially during these early years, the liberation war itself was a violent experience that seriously affected the lives of ordinary people. Again, there were many people who were already disillusioned with the new nationalist government and the party, ZANU (PF). For example, Kriger (1992: 225-6) carried out research in Mutoko in the north eastern parts of Zimbabwe and came to the conclusion that:

By 1982, peasants had lost interest in party activities and the vibrancy of the immediate post-war period had given way to dispirited passivity.

Party committees seldom held meetings, and when they did, it was difficult to get a quorum...Most peasants and *youth* had not expected rewards for their war efforts but when guerrillas were absorbed into the army and paid salaries, they wondered why they had been unrewarded. From their perspectives, guerrillas were amply rewarded.

As already explained, there also was the *gukurahundi* violence in Matebeleland and some parts of the Midlands though this is not part of this research. The existence of celebratory and non-celebratory fiction in the early years makes it improper to merely categorise literature in the early 1980s as outstandingly expressive of the euphoria that is said to have been symptomatic of the time. It is a simplistic way of academic engagement.

While researchers like Kaarsholm (2005) would want to separate historical fiction published in the late 1980s from that published in the 1990s and beyond, this research has discovered that political and economic realities that become glaring in the 1990s in fact have their foundations in the late 1980s. Historical fiction that marshalls historiography from the late 1980s does so not only to bring out alternative narratives, but to protest against the failure of the nationalist government. The 'Willowgate scandal' of 1988 which involved many high-ranking government officials was probably one of the high profile cases of corruption since the attainment of independence in 1980. It revealed the extent to which the privileged few were able to use their positions in order to enrich themselves. As previously explained, there were also massive demonstrations by the University of Zimbabwe students against the state's corruption and failure to transform ordinary people's lives for the better. These problems worsened in the 1990s with the introduction of ESAP in 1992. Chung (2006: 261) captures part of this reality when she writes that:

The situation was exacerbated by the change in ZANU PF's ideology from nominal socialism in 1992 to Structural Adjustment's version of liberal capitalism...Structural Adjustment was interpreted by the ruling political class as licence to enrich themselves. There were massive job cuts in the government. For example, about "10,000 lower level civil servants, mainly cleaners and cooks" were sacked in the 1990s.

As shown in the chapters of this study, there were numerous problems in the 1990s which pointed to the failure of the nationalist state.

Consequently, historical fiction published during this period, particularly English fiction underscores the dehumanising impact of nationalism. The link between trends in historical fiction and the state of the economy, politics and social attitudes makes the remembrance of history and representation of memory an emotional experience. Historical fiction on the liberation war is connected to the emotions of different times as well as changes taking place in the nation's politics. The fact that the representation of memory is far from being an unemotional experience is addressed by Yosef ben-Jochannan (1971: 124) in his dismissal of neutral or unemotional writing:

This in itself is hypocritical and subjective, for no one can write on anything without exhibiting emotion. The mere fact that the writer thinks about writing itself begins the emotional processes which are necessary to produce anything. Also to say that a work is "AN UNBIASED PRESENTATION" of anything is in itself BIASED. No one can be totally removed from the prejudices of the world in which he or she lives and write completely free of the effects of the strain the environment places upon him or her.

Trends in historical fiction on the liberation war are therefore reflective of national emotions – political, social, psychological and economic.

## **6.5 INTERFACE OF HISTORY AND FICTION: MYTH OR REALITY?**

The main thrust of the study was to investigate the relationship between historical fiction and history. In this regard, the research has discovered that historical fiction on the Zimbabwean liberation war is veritably a stakeholder in the history issue. To a large extent, the narratives published in different languages as well as different historical epochs recreate history in a manner that is corroborated by historical sources. In other words, the link between fiction and history is not myth; it is reality. The interstice between the two is very thin and at times non-existent. Gunner (1991: 77) concedes this view when advancing the argument that:

If fiction is one of the means of marking the consciousness of a generation then the novels of war are perhaps a particularly potent means of assessing the varying interpretations of the time of

turbulence, a crucible where what has gone before may be smelted down and turned into something new, different and beautiful.

Similar views are expressed by Muchemwa (2005: 196) in the following words:

Zimbabwean fiction consistently makes use of biographical and autobiographical modes. Not only do writers use fiction to interrogate facts found in historical narrative; they also seek to collapse boundaries of discipline and genre that separate history and fiction.

Perhaps the view from Doctorow quoted in Muchemwa (2005: 196) perfectly sums the relationship between fiction and history in Zimbabwe, particularly as exemplified in the discussion. Doctorow explains fiction as “a kind of speculative history, perhaps a superhistory.” The most important realisation from this description is that fiction is another kind of history. In an interview with the researcher, Gerald Mazarire, a historian in the Department of History at the University of Zimbabwe explains that the relationship between history and fiction is as “old and established [because] history writing is also a *creative work*.” Fictional narratives thus become a source of history to the historian. Mazarire adds: “Literature provides a worldview about human experiences in a particular context [and since] historians deal with sources...they do not have the luxury to choose sources when in fact they are hungry for them...literature constitutes part of the primary sources for a historian.” Ranger and Ncube, both academic historians, also added to Mazarire’s submission by affirming that historians indeed make use of works of literature.

While this is the case, there are some conceptual factors that have to be taken into consideration in order to guard against the uncritical acceptance of all material presented in historical fiction. These have to do with the sensibility and vision of the narratives as they represent history. The sensibility and vision of the narrative has a bearing on historical truths and tend to influence and, in turn are influenced by the choice of images that are remembered or forgotten. This is critical because the act of memory representation does not occur in a vacuum.

Generally, historical fiction in Shona, Ndebele and English published in the early 1980s, the time Zimbabwe attained political independence, represents history from a



celebratory and largely state-centered perspective. This, again, is generally true of most historical narratives in Ndebele and Shona published from the 1980s, 1990s and beyond; and reasons for this state of affairs have already been discussed. Muchemwa (2005: 197) calls this fiction “patriotic packages of the past.” It is fiction published in association with the Literature Bureau whose officials denied involvement in any form of censorship. However, Kaarsholm (2005: 4) counters such denials by expressing the view that: “If direct censorship was rarely used, there was enough in the post-war atmosphere to encourage active self-restriction.” War fiction in this era remembers, while at the same time exaggerating the heroic exploits of guerrillas. The fiction forgets wholesale all those elements of history that present nationalism as weak, problematic, fractured and violent. This vision and sensibility has been explained against the background of independence euphoria and this will be elaborated further in this chapter.

The reception of this fiction by historians has also been very cautious and suspicious. For instance, in responding to a questionnaire sent to him by this researcher, Ranger, a prominent historian on Zimbabwean history acknowledges the historicity of this fiction but instantly cautions that: “Once again one has to distinguish between romantic/illusory/patriotic novels, which are useful to the historian only as politically correct discourse.” While these novels published in the early 1980s record history, they are largely romantic. In most instances, history is oversimplified in order to commemorate past glories and celebrate independence. To a large extent, this view affects historical fiction which depicts guerrillas, who in Zimbabwe’s politics, have been embraced as political symbols of legitimacy and national identity construction. The value of this research has been to show that in those moments of celebration and simplification, one finds striking semblances with information in historical texts and oral sources.

Some scholars interviewed by the researcher also expressed dissatisfaction with historical fiction in Zimbabwe, particularly celebratory historical fiction. Eventhough Ndlovu, a lecturer and researcher in literature at the University of Zimbabwe said:

I strongly feel that this historical event has not been treated with the justice it deserves, a lot of distortions mark the presentation of the event, celebration tends to cloud reality, the culture of silence still

prevails. Some issues are brushed under the carpet, for example, the ZIPRA-ZANLA clashes are never mentioned and it's as if these were united fronts which had no differences. History is distorted in favour of the freedom fighters who are always prevailing; brutal acts of the war are always associated with the Rhodesian Front. The war is presented as a "game" in some works. By and large, ZANLA seems to be the one that is presented as having fought the struggle. Inter-party struggles are not mentioned. To some extent, the authors are not faithful to history.

In an interview with the researcher, Tavengwa Gwekwerere, an academic, called the 1980s novels "dubious narratives about the past." Wellington Wasosa, also an academic at Great Zimbabwe University said, "while the literature depicts the past, it tends to tell a lot of lies as it clearly participates in the politics of entrenching the contemporary regime."

Historical fiction in English published in the late 1980s and beyond rises above romanticism and articulates the liberation war in a far more convincing manner than fiction published in the early narratives. This fiction remembers the liberation war as very difficult and complex. It chooses to remember those aspects of history that are dwarfed in earlier narratives such as the abuse of women by guerrilla/nationalist leaders, violence, corruption and military defeats. The reception of this fiction by historians, academics and the reading public has been warm. For instance, some of the historians who discuss these narratives in their studies include Lyons (2004), McCartney (2000), Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000) and Ranger in a number of his researches. The warm reception of liberation war historical fiction in English published in the late 1980s onwards, and a readiness to use it by some canonical historians and many foreign literary scholars qualifies this fiction as significant in historical understanding and the development of Zimbabwean literature in general. Again, in response to a questionnaire sent to him by this researcher, Ranger characterises this fiction as

novels of profound imaginative engagement...these novels have been of enormous importance to historians. It was they which first encompassed the brutality and confusion of the war, as Kanengoni does so well. Novelists got to many points before historians and memorialists did. Chinodya, Hove, Kanengoni, Vera in *The Stone Virgins* offer profound meditations on war and the distortions of violence on human personality.

In the words of Ranger, this fiction becomes “a quarry for a historian” (Ranger in response to a questionnaire). Eventhough Ndlovu speaks positively about novels like *Echoing Silences* (1997):

In my view my reading of works like *Echoing Silences* gives the impression that ZAPU’s role is fairly covered when compared with works in Ndebele although they also exhibit their own limitations in their presentation of the war.

Tavengwa Gwekwerere said “war literature in English, for example *Echoing Silences* offers numerous possibilities not only for scholarship but for the nation as well. It tells the truth about the past and, one must hasten to point out that, to say a true word is to empower a people.” In terms of favourable audience reception, English historical fiction published in the late 1980s onwards has received far more than its counterpart published in the early 1980s as well as Shona and Ndebele fiction published in all historical epochs.

## **6.6 NARRATIVE SYNTAX AS SYMBOLISM OF HISTORY**

In both fiction and history, style of presentation matters. The historian is fully conscious of “the style of presentation and representation...style matters just like ideology” (Interview with Gerald Mazarire). Historical fiction representing the liberation war in different historical dispensations is characterised by contrasting narrative styles. Historical time becomes inseparable from the writers’ style and technique in remembering history. Fiction published in the early years of independence makes consistent and unwavering use of the linear style. History is sequenced and unambiguously presented as military contact and victory. In the case of Ndebele and Shona historical fiction, this is attributable to the Literature Bureau which imposed assessment standards on writers. As discussed in this chapter, style was one aspect that was emphasised by the Literature Bureau editors. It could also have been the influence of the Ndebele and Shona oral tradition wherein the various art forms follow a logical but profound narrative syntax. In terms of history and politics of the time, the use of a single and linear style accompanied by the author’s voice as authoritative narrator symbolise the idea of a supposedly united nation and a unifying nationalism. Style becomes a metaphor for a nation that is said to be speaking with one voice.

Historical fiction published in the late 1980s onwards in English and Shona recreates memory on the battlefield and other liberation war experiences using an array of narrative syntaxes. The narratives exhibit an unfettered volition to retell the war flexibly by using a style which discourages seeing the liberation war as a linear progression, whose evolutionary sequence is predictable and perfectly traceable in a straightforward manner. The complex history of the liberation war is privileged to determine narrative syntax rather than let narrative syntax be exogenously determined. The exogenous determination of narrative syntax as seen in narratives published under the tutelage of the Literature Bureau compromises and trivialises the complexity and density of the war. Various narrative styles such as *in medias res*, flashback, numerous rhetoric questions, fragmented plots through the use titles and character names, newspaper articles, short sentences including one word sentences and the stream of consciousness, concatenate to give voice to the fact that the war was a complex experience that cannot be effectively harnessed using one expressive method. The pluriformity of techniques that are deployed in liberation war fiction published in the late 1980s and beyond perfectly suits the various dimensions that the struggle assumed at different historical points. The liberation war was never uniform at all times. Even its impact on those who were involved in it was never uniform in different contexts and, it can be added that while men and women participated in the liberation war, they were affected differently. With the exception of a few fictional narratives in English, most of these narratives are published at a time when there is growing criticism of and frustration with nationalism.

A nuanced reading of the use of multiple narrative syntaxes points to the attempt to use historiography to contest official claims of the singularity of political purpose, space and historical version. Correspondingly, the multiple narrative syntaxes signify the fractured character of nation and nationalism in the late 1980s and beyond as the social, political and economic fortunes of Zimbabwe took a downturn. With regard to the actual war and how it was fought, the many styles give the guerrilla multiple identities – liberator, victim and tormentor among others.

## 6.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that historical fiction on the liberation war is very close to history. The dividing line between history and fiction is therefore very thin and at times non-existent. The histories that are observable in trends in Zimbabwean historical fiction are celebratory and critical. The early 1980s are host to both celebratory and critical histories of nationalism. Celebratory history represents guerrilla experiences while critical history represents the sociological dimension of the struggle. The late 1980s and beyond are largely characterised with critical historical fictions though elements of celebration still exist in Ndebele and Shona fiction. In representing history, writers make use of their personal experiences as well as stories told by former fighters. The processed views of the writers who were interviewed clearly show the experiences that shape their sensibility of history. However, these experiences are also shaped by editorial policy, time of publication, oral traditions and other personal conceptions by the writer. In the case of Shona and Ndebele fiction published in association with the Literature Bureau, the interference of the editors also shapes the final product. The early 1980s also conditioned writing and writers engaged in 'self-restriction'. The celebratory mood made writers commemorate history and this also affected their ability to see other perspectives. Writers also use a sequenced representation of history in line with the spirit of a single and unitary national identity. In the late 1980s and beyond, writers become critical of nationalism and, as the discussion has shown, move onto plural syntaxes as a way of showing the fractured nature of nation and nationalism.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

As part of the nation's recent history, the liberation war is a very important experience in understanding the past, the present and the future dynamics of Zimbabwe as an independent nation. The protracted liberation war led to independence in 1980 and, by the same token, Zimbabwe entered a new era of nation-state politics. The changed conditions also meant that literature had to be part of this change in its diverse and complex nature. Against this background, the discussion of this important topic in the every day lives of Zimbabweans leads to far-reaching conclusions on politics, ideology, economics and sociology among others. In other words, an examination of historical fiction on the liberation war is at the same time an examination of the nation's political, economic and sociological life. This is unavoidable because fiction is 'the written part of the dialogue' that a people conduct among themselves about their politics, economics, religion, sociology and etcetera.

Historical fiction is a product of history whose contents and images derive significance from and operate within the embankments of a particular historical moment, event or process. As such, the relationship between history and fiction is something that cannot be papered over. This realisation makes historical fiction another type of history that cannot be wished away in any attempts aimed at unraveling a people's historical trajectory. The interface of history and fiction, which, in a broad intellectual sense, actuates the term historical fiction makes the literary act a vital and indispensable scheme in narratives of the nation or what Kahari (1990) calls the 'matter of Zimbabwe'. While this is the case, the vision, tone and sensibility in historical fiction are not necessarily hinged on the historical moment per se. In most cases, these reflect a fluid structure that is a result of the flexibility of fiction and the complex process of historical and memory representation. Often this leads to contesting interpretations and representations of the same historical event or process. This is exemplified by the various liberation war narratives in Ndebele, Shona and English which; while inspired by the liberation war fought in the 1970s, manifest a plethora of contesting sensibilities, visions and tones as determined by a

multiplicity of factors such as time of publication, editorial process, language of expression, background of the author, intention and others.

While explaining the nexus between history and fiction and the political life of the people of Zimbabwe, the study comes to the conclusion that the representation of the liberation war in historical fiction is both a homogenous and heterogeneous exercise. In other words, historical fiction in Shona, Ndebele and English converges and diverges in a number of respects in its remembrance of the liberation war. From this comes the realisation that the development of historical fiction in the three languages at most follows different aesthetic, pedagogical and ideological trajectories. Accomplished from different backgrounds and orientations, the nuanced representation of the story of the liberation war in historical fiction in Ndebele, Shona and English can be likened to the story of the blind men and the elephant:

There is a famous story about six blind men encountering an elephant for the first time. Each man, seizing on the single feature of the animal which he happened to have touched first, and being incapable of seeing it whole, loudly maintained his limited opinion on the nature of the beast. The elephant was variously like a wall, a spear, a snake, a tree, a fan or a rope, depending on whether the blind men had first grasped the creature's side, tusk, trunk, knee, ear, or tail (Lindfors, 1999: 1).

This story emphasises the determination to advance knowledge, name the world and transcend the unknowable; which exactly is the quest in which the various literary historians examined in this research are immersed in, that is, naming a complex historical past. The six blind men represent the different writers from different backgrounds, languages, regions, epochs and above all, writers standing on unrelated historical platforms or bases. The elephant becomes the liberation war while each part of the elephant identified by each of the six blind men symbolises the various aspects and interpretations of liberation war history that individual writers come up with. When all these membered definitions of the elephant are brought together, they reconstitute the original elephant as it is supposed to be. Similarly, when brought together, the contesting and comparable images of the liberation war in Shona, Ndebele and English historical fiction published in different historical epochs, the result is quite enlightening.

Whether romantic or celebratory and critical or non-celebratory, historical fiction on the liberation war contributes to a better understanding of experiences related to the liberation war – in the past, present and future. Of importance is the fact that it contributes to an understanding of the nation's ideological history and, its future course. It increases historical consciousness by illuminating what is 'beautiful' and what is 'ugly'. It is largely out of an awareness of 'beautiful' and 'ugliness' that humanity derives the dynamism and mechanics for growth and self-initiated change. The suppression and exclusion of either of the two life fundamentals make transformation a far-fetched possibility. In the same vein, historical fiction on the liberation war is part of the national historical record that archives history through images, symbols and characters. The historical record on the liberation war cannot be considered complete if liberation war historical fiction is sidelined as trite and anachronistic to scholarship and academic history in particular and the entire national memory making process in general. The acknowledgement of the importance of war fiction by historians and researchers makes it an indispensable stakeholder in the 'search for Zimbabwean identity'.

Like history, historical fiction not only records but also interprets history, an aspect that makes fiction an innovative interpretation of human experiences. While the degree of historicity significantly varies, the above realisation is exemplified in historical fiction published in all languages and historical dispensations as shown in the chapters of the study. Gikandi (1991: 3) makes similar conclusions when he says that "the novel has limitless possibilities of inventing a new national community...fiction allows the writer to express a different vision and perspective."

Pursuant to the above, the historical novels analysed in the study perform the dual role of representing and interpreting history for various purposes. As already explained, the different representations and interpretations are linked to the author's background, intention and motivation for writing as well as the various ideological, social, political and economic transitions taking place in Zimbabwe. Consequently, memory representation becomes a complex process that cannot be seen reductively and simplistically. As He (2007: 65 & 66) explains:

Remembering the past is not a simple act of recording historical events, but a process of constant reconstruction of these events in



light of present social and political changes...Memory contestation is the rule rather than the exception, precisely because the motivations behind historical interpretation differ across social groups and over time.

Historical fiction published in Shona, Ndebele and English lives up to this realisation though in varying levels of compliance.

The contrasting representations of liberation war history in war fiction underscore the fact that English fiction and fiction in indigenous languages follow different developmental trajectories. Shona and Ndebele fiction, which represent indigenous literatures, share numerous commonalities. Historical fiction in these two languages maintains a consistent creative culture in which old trends continue to be recycled. The vision of history remains caught up in the enclaves of celebration long after the national mood has shifted. It offers an official view of history that is on the one hand uncritical and, on the other hand, quite ambivalent. Since its inception in the colonial period, this fiction has largely employed indigenous languages not as a potent technology of transforming consciousness, but as a resource to provincialise the consciousness of the indigenes. This becomes one instance in which indigenous resources were used by the coloniser to undermine African people and continue to be used in the neo-colony for almost similar purposes. Only in very few circumstances do literatures in Shona and Ndebele drift from a tendency to articulate state-centered perspectives which function to the detriment of the so-called ordinary people who, in most instances, are victims of ill-formed policies. There is a strong continuity between Shona and Ndebele fiction published in the colonial period and Shona/Ndebele historical fiction published after the attainment of political independence. The long history of interaction between Shona/Ndebele literature and the Literature Bureau has seriously conditioned this fiction. Its development lags behind its counterpart written in English.

In the early 1980s, historical fiction generally assumes a celebratory perspective towards the nationalist ideology, movement or idea. It is caught up in the moments of celebration and independence euphoria. It thus represents liberation war history in a manner that celebrates the collapse of British imperialism in Zimbabwe and the dawn of a new political and economic era. Without being critical, it also celebrates the history of violence committed by the guerrillas as revolutionary. This is all part of

'patriotic history.' By embracing this vision, it directly participates in the politics of increasing and securing regime legitimacy through discourse, particularly in a context where nationalism is a critical determinant for hegemony. Celebratory fiction in all languages varnishes nationalism by emphasising its humanising aspects while camouflaging the corrosive side. It speaks bombastically about the nationalist ideology, movement or idea, thereby potentially turning nationalism into a national institution immune to opposition and contest. In this context, symbolic images of guerrilla heroes become the most definitive elements in the remembrances of the liberation war as they function as the conduit for propagating a new national identity and consciousness based on triumphalism and the virtues of military force. Their epic interpretation is premised on a reincarnation of heroic pasts and symbolic representations of a triumphant present. The military contacts in the narratives are simplified to accentuate the heroic sentiment. Most of the literary productions in this category are written in Shona with a few written in Ndebele; but all are published in association with the Literature Bureau. Very few celebratory novels are published in English.

However, the simplistic and romantic account of the liberation war given by the authors has the potential to undermine the very notion of heroism that they seek to promulgate and transform into some form of national identity in the new political dispensation. The pain, suffering, loss of life and blood that accompanied the liberation is masked by such images that seek to narrowly glorify the war. It is in this context that celebration of the war and the guerrilla fighters become a major handicap in assessing the damage people suffered as well as providing an upright assessment of what exactly needed and still needs to be done. It also affects the value of this fiction to the public who have a very low esteem for it. Chiwome (1998: 17) also expresses discomfort with celebratory Ndebele and Shona literature which fails to adjust or strike a balance between celebration and criticism:

Literature that seriously participates in nation building should not just celebrate the joys of the moment. It should critically review the past and clearly bring out the pains that constitute the sacrifices made by people to acquire independence. The destructive side of the war cannot be left out where writers are taking account of the gains and losses made in that particular historical account.

As previously indicated, the danger with narrow celebration is that the war becomes an interesting reading experience rather than a profound historical project that poses serious questions for post-independence life. Such questions must be seen as the foundation for a dynamic engagement of the past and the present in the united efforts to build Zimbabwe for the present and the future generations. The major challenge for the war novelist in the early 1980s is to engage history in critical dialogue, taking into cognisance policy and decision making. The war is an important aspect in the discussion of nation, nation-building and national development.

While fiction writers who prioritise celebrating the war may have intended to advance 'patriotic history', they certainly fail to realise that patriotism is not just limited to the singing of praises and churning out of panegyrics. Patriotism is also to be found in criticism and reflective writing. Singing praises can turn out to be an unpatriotic gesture, especially if the praises lead to the domestication of energy and vision which consequently foster the impression of having fulfilled history as people are lulled by the galloping praises. It is precisely for this reason that praise and criticism need to be balanced. The cultural nationalism in the novels is superficial. It is not informed by Afrocentric epistemological assumptions in which a balance between celebration and critical reflection and or criticism is emphasised.

On the other hand, historical fiction in English generally offers a version of history that is sustainable when compared to historical fiction in Shona and Ndebele. Of particular importance is historical fiction in English published in the late 1980s and beyond and, which clearly develops from celebration to critical reflection. It abandons those comfortable myths and stereotypes, stampedes people out of the comfort zones of history primarily because "for the sake of one's children, in order to minimize the bill that they must pay, one must be careful not to take refuge in any delusion..." (Baldwin, 1963: 88). This is vital because no single reality is permanent. Gunner (1991: 81) identifies the bearing of time of publication as a factor that could also have shaped the vision in English historical narratives. Gunner explains that "novels written a while after an important event are sufficiently distant from it to be reflective rather than celebratory." The alternative narratives articulated in English historical fiction published in the late 1980s onwards transcend a mere concern with historical truths. Most significantly, this fiction becomes a discourse of protest that marshalls history

as opposition. It interrogates nationalism by emphasising its dehumanising effects on both the individual and society. It participates in the politics of contesting hegemony in the state by redrawing the margins of the historical terrain which has been used as a fountain for political and regime legitimacy. This fiction is not subservient to elite mythmaking constructions. It renegotiates nationalist history by promulgating counter-historiography and history hitherto muzzled. It pluralises perspectives on historiographical representation, an aspect that technically can be construed as a challenge to the monolithic nationalist narrative that has been used as the definition for nation and an avenue for monopolising legitimacy.

Fictional narratives in English on the Zimbabwean liberation war offer prospects for historical deconstruction and reconstruction. They advance a previously muzzled realisation that the war created victims rather than heroes. The deconstructive aspect obtains in the manner the narratives debunk earlier perceptions on the war which lacked both historical and conceptual authenticity. This is achieved by emphasising the dehumanising impact of the war on the individual soldier who is an ordinary person. The reconstructive aspect, which is quite vital for policy, is noted in the restoration of the complex dimension of the struggle which not only triggered physical injuries and death, but caused serious mental disorders. Such mental disorders are said to be a result of the excessive violence in the war, power abuse and corruption and the pitiless atmosphere. Writers in English in the late 1980s and beyond show the impoverished and vulnerable condition of the fighters. They do not camouflage the blood and pain that accompanied the war. This dimension corroborates claims that independence did not come easily.

It should be pointed out that a study of historical fiction on the Zimbabwean war of liberation reveals the uses to which history is put by the state and those who struggle against the state's truncation of the historical terrain. Finally, the study of historical fiction brings out various perspectives on nation, nationalism, conflict resolution, history of violence, and many other intriguing topics that affect the everyday lives of Zimbabweans as well as the manner in which Zimbabwe relates with her neighbours and the international community.

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## **DISSERTATIONS AND THESES**

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

Ndebele, K.

***Kwakunzima* is one of the very few novels in Ndebele and Shona literature which talks about experiences of the war outside Zimbabwe. Could your personal experiences during and after the war have affected the manner in which you portrayed history?**

I actually wrote the novel in 1982. Bureaucratic jabbering by publishers forced me to abandon the novel script in 1984. The Literature Bureau traced me in 1996 and published it. I had given up. The experience I got was from stories being told to me by those who were actually involved in fighting at the front. I was a refugee in Zambia during fighting.

**What inspired you to write about the war?**

I was a refugee in Zambia during the war. The stories that were being narrated by returning combatants and others coming through our camp inspired me to write.

**Does the time of publication of *Kwakunzima* in 1997 affect the manner in which you talk about the war? In other words, if you were to write in the early 1980s, would you have created the same image of the liberation war?**

I actually wrote the book in 1982. But Literature Bureau's bureaucratic principles forced me to shelve the book for almost 17 years until they followed me up in 1996. The original script was totally different. The publisher forced me to make some changes here and there to suit their requirements.

**One worrying aspect is the absence of any Ndebele liberation war novel in the early 1980s. Could it be that disturbances during that time also affected the production of literature on the war? Why does it take you so long to write about the war, an important theme in the history of the Ndebele and Shona people?**

I have already explained when I wrote it and why it took 14 years to publish. Am sure many others abandoned their works due to differences with the Literature Bureau, which was the sole approver of vernacular novels by then.

**Again, you are one of the very few writers who talk about or make reference to both Ndebele and Shona heroes, e.g. Lobhengula and Chaminuka. What could have influenced such a state of affairs where you refer to both Ndebele and Shona heroes from the past?**

Unity. The publishers advised me likewise but then in Zambia we were mixed, and we praised and sang about heroes from both sides regardless of ethnic affiliation.

**Did publishing with the Literature Bureau give you freedom freely and was your novel written in response to any Bureau-sponsored competition?**

I had already written it when I saw a Literature Bureau advert known as "HONDO/IMPI NOVEL WRITING COMPETITION" and I had to submit it. One was never free PUBLISHING WITH Bureau. The reason why I had to abandon the script in 1984 is because they kept on telling me to change this and that. In the end I thought they wanted me to write their novel.

**Writing from Matebeleland, does that has any influence on how you represent the war?**

I simply narrated what the ZIPRA forces narrated about their ordeal. That's why it mostly focuses on Matebeleland. The few Mashonaland experiences in the book were imposed by the publisher.

## APPENDIX 2

Hleza, E. S. K.

I have written one liberation war short story in the anthology of war stories – *Izigaba Zempi Yenkululeko* – Mambo press 1984. I have also written one liberation war novel *Emfuleni Wezinyembezi*. Six members of my family went to the war. I remained behind and as a member of ZAPU's Youth Front Wing, holding the post of District Secretary I was responsible for teaching liberation war literature such as the *Zimbabwe People's Voice*, the *Zimbabwe Review* as well as the ZIPRA combat diary during meetings. This literature was brought to us by the ZIPRA forces. As the eyes and ears of the party we were also the ears of its military wing, ZIPRA. As the war progressed the bond between the community and the freedom fighters became stronger and stronger. We became familiar with a variety of weapons which they carried as well as the sounds they produced during battles. The close experience I had of the war of liberation through close interaction with the freedom fighters as well as the personal experiences of close members of my family including my twin brother who trained and fought under ZIPRA have contributed a lot to my perception of the liberation war. My source of history is both through personal experience as well as through the experience of others who took part in the war of liberation. Again, when I grew up I learnt about the great battles of our ancestors against the white settlers orally from the elders in my family as well as through teachers at school. I got to know that through the defeat of our ancestors in battle by the white settlers we as blacks had been reduced to servants of the whites, a people without a proud and a great history. To me the liberation war that took place before me and in a way, I was part of what became a moment for the transformation of the lives of black people from servitude to freedom and human dignity long denied the blacks by the white settlers. This to me was and still remains the source of my inspiration. To me, there is no greater period in our history than that of the liberation war, a period of the restoration of our pride and dignity.

With regard to the Literature Bureau, there were limitations in publishing through it particularly in a context in which some of the major participants are still alive and holding powerful positions in society. A lot still needs to be written about the liberation war. Some very important facts of it have not been made public. The Literature Bureau competition of 1984 gave me an opportunity to present the story of the liberation war in a way never done before, at least in the Ndebele language.

## APPENDIX 3

Nyawaranda, V.

In writing *Mutunhu Une Mago* I was mostly motivated by the Literature Bureau competition. There was a lot of money to be won. There was a possibility of publishing and getting publicity and to get all this one had to please the status quo. The Bureau encouraged Shona publications and it was good at first. The romantic sensibility is because that was the mood of the time. It served a purpose. We were writing in context. The idea of optimism was popular during the era of independence. We were entering the golden age. We had lost our jobs. We wanted to promote the euphoric mood. People had yearned for change and writers were caught up in the mood – celebrating not recording history. The novel celebrates history rather than record history. It is based on self-censorship. Literature Bureau censorship is overplayed. People censored themselves because they were operating in a framework of a culture of silence. I only write what I experienced in the liberation struggle. I was a teacher at Kriste Mambo 28 miles along Nyanga road. We attended pungwes and when schools closed I came to UZ running away from the war. [In terms of presentation], reality is too complex. It cannot be represented without introducing some distortions. Reality was/ is being distorted in the novel to make it more interesting to the readers. However, if I were to write, it would be something different. It is important to wait until you sober up – for that time it was my truth. The novels were only fit for that period. This is why we need war novels for each era. The closer you are to an event, the more emotional you are.

## APPENDIX 4

Nyamfukudza, S.

**How have your personal experiences during and after the war affected the manner in which you write about the war and also what is your source of history?**

The liberation war started in earnest in the Mount Darwin area, which is my rural homeland. I lived in the area when the war started. At some point I was involved in shunting across the Zimbabwe/Botswana border with a number of people who went to join the liberation struggle. Some survived the war and others did not. I have friends who fought the war and with whom I maintained relationships after the war. My rural home was destroyed during the war. I did not however have access to most of the oral history of the war that was part of my family until after the *Non-believer's Journey* had been published. The story itself was originally written in 1977 when I had been in the UK for 3 years and revised in 1978 although publication was only 2 years later in 1980.

**The *Non-Believer's Journey* is the first novel to offer a sobering account of the war despite the fact that it was published on the eve of independence. What factors could possibly have shaped the manner in which you relate war experiences?**

The story was written after the disunity and internecine strife which took place in Zambia particularly and which included the murder of Herbert Chitepo and after which the northeastern front infiltrating Rhodesia from Mozambique began. I was aware of the ugly side of the nationalist struggle and was not able to romanticise both the war itself and my feelings of foreboding about what may happen after the struggle had been won.

**Generally, do you think liberation war literature is contributing to a proper understanding of history or not?**

I think after a period of denial about some of the fascist and anti-democratic tendencies that had been manifested during the war, it was a sign of the maturity of Zimbabwean writers that even ex-combatants like Alexander Kanengoni began to write of the more complex moral dilemmas that an honest look at the war demanded. I remember the disfavour with which *The Non-Believer's Journey* was viewed when first published, with critics like Ranga Zinyemba suggesting there was undue pessimism too soon after independence. I was also not popular with ex-combatants and viewed as a traitor in some circles. I think part of the problem was because the bulk of writers were not ex-combatants and had a guilt complex about being critical. Most of the war literature, especially in indigenous languages, was simplistic, self-congratulatory hero worshipping discourse. But the scenario has altered somewhat since.

**Was it possible to write about the war when it was raging on?**

That is what I did, but probably only because I was in the UK. Furthermore, the publication was delayed because Heinemann publishers felt that the biggest market would be Zimbabwe and there was no business argument for publishing while the RF was in power because the book would not be allowed into Rhodesia.

## APPENDIX 5

Bvuma, T. S.

### **How has your experience as a former freedom fighter fashioned the way you depict the liberation war?**

I think what I have written about the liberation war comes out passionately. My experience as a freedom fighter influences the ideology that comes out in my poems. I believe I come out on the side of the struggle of workers and peasants and I look at the struggle from an individual, national and Pan-African point of view.

### **What could be the possible strengths and shortfalls in portraying the war from that vantage point (former combatant)?**

The major strength is that what I write is not contrived; it comes out naturally, oozing or gushing out of my gut and soul. I have to do less research on the war, compared to a writer who was not there. I can write boldly, I can handle sensitive or “taboo” issues, I can write critically, even though I know my colleagues might complain.

The major shortfalls are as follows: I could get carried away; I could become too partisan; I could write a political track or series of slogans rather than a work of art; I could ruffle the feathers of fellow freedom fighters; I could antagonize those who chose not to support or join the liberation war.

### **After demobilisation, what made you think of writing about the liberation war?**

The core of my published poems was written in Mozambique between 1978 and 1980, although the volume *Every Stone that Turns* was only published in 1999. Before joining the war I was already writing poems, but with hardly anything published. The poem “The Three Sisters” was first published in the *Rhodesian Two Tone Magazine* in 1974 when I was doing Upper Sixth at St Augustine’s Mission.

I wrote, first, because I felt the need to get out the intense emotions I felt about the war. I felt that the war was a unique experience that needed to be captured artistically. Poetry was the only way I knew. Some poems in *Every Stone that turns* were written after demobilisation. I suppose I was trying to reconcile the war experiences with the post-war personal, social and political realities – the contradictions and disappointments.

### **Is your writing linked in any way to self-healing?**

My writing has a cathartic effect on me. It helps me deal with the post-war social, ideological and political contradictions I may face.



## APPENDIX 6

People interviewed or responded to questionnaires between October 2007 and April 2009

Bvuma, T. S.  
Chitsike, B, C.  
Gwekwerere, T.  
Hleza, E. S. K.  
Kanengoni, A.  
Makari, C. S.  
Manyimbiri, F.  
Manyika, L.  
Mari, E.  
Mazarire, G.  
Moyo, A. C.  
Mujajati, G.  
Ndebele, K.  
Ndlovu, E.  
Nyamfukudza, S.  
Ranger, T.  
Wasosa, W.

**NB.** Parents and former combatants who wished to remain anonymous.