

Shadows, Faces and Echoes of an African War: The Rhodesian Bush War through the Eyes of Chas Lotter – Soldier Poet

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Supervisor: Dr Roger Field

Shadows, Faces and Echoes of an African War. The Rhodesian Bush War through the Eyes of Chas Lotter – Soldier Poet

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Keywords

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Rhodesia

Rhodesian Army

Trauma theory



Declaration

I declare that: "Shadows, Faces and Echoes of an African War. The Rhodesian Bush War through the Eyes of Chas Lotter – Soldier Poet" is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Date: 10 November, 2016.

Abstract

Poetry that is rooted in that most extreme of human experiences, war, continues to grip the public imagination. When the poetry under scrutiny comes from the “losing side” in a colonial war of liberation, important moral and ethical questions arise. In this thesis, I examine the published and unpublished works of Chas Lotter, a soldier who fought in the Rhodesian Army during the Zimbabwean liberation war (1965-1980).

In investigating Lotter’s artistic record of this war, I propose that a powerful, socially embedded Rhodesian national mythology was a catalyst for acceptance of, and participation in, the Rhodesian regime’s ideological and military aims. A variety of postcolonial theoretical approaches will be used to explore the range of thematic concerns that emerge and to unpack the dilemmas experienced by a soldier-poet who took part in that conflict. Trauma theory, too, will be drawn upon to critically respond to the personal impact that participation in organised violence has upon combatants and non-combatants alike. The production and marketing of this cultural record will also be examined and in the conclusion, I speculate on the changes modern technology and evolving social mores may have on future developments in war literature. Finally, I conclude my case for installing the challenging work of this often conflicted and contradictory soldier-poet as a necessary adjunct to the established canon of Zimbabwean Chimurenga writing.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been many years in the making and would not have been possible without the support and input of friends, family and academic colleagues.

I wish to thank my wife, Gail Hagemann. She encouraged me to exorcise the ghost of the Rhodesian war and has fully supported my decision to undertake this study (Prov. 31: 1-12).

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My subject, Chas Lotter, has cooperated fully with this study and not shied away from answering difficult and sometimes traumatic questions. I retain the greatest respect for someone so willing to put himself and his work under such intense scrutiny, all the while resisting the temptation to ask to see it until it was done.

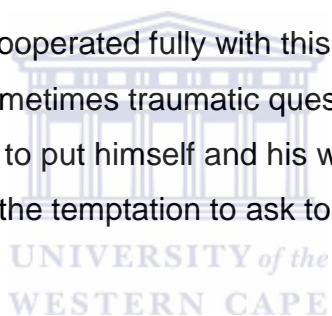


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Appendix 1: Acronyms used

BSAC – British South Africa Company – the private company granted a Royal Charter in the 19th century to annexe and develop the territory that became known as Rhodesia.

BSACP – British South Africa Company's Police – an armed unit that was responsible for the security of the pioneers and original settlers.

BSAP – British South Africa Police – the police force of Rhodesia, originally the British South Africa Company's Police.

CIO – Central Intelligence Organisation – Rhodesian intelligence, nominally under control of BSAP.

CMF – Commonwealth Monitoring Force(s) – Commonwealth troops deployed on Operation Agila, the peacekeeping duties instituted in Rhodesia after the Lancaster House agreement.

COIN – Counter insurgency.

COMOPS – Combined Operations – the inter-service command group that oversaw the Rhodesian war effort.

FN –FAL – Belgian assault rifle used by Rhodesian forces. Version known as R1 produced in South Africa was also used.

G3 – German assault rifle manufactured by Heckler & Koch, used by some Rhodesian troops.

FRELIMO - Frente de Libertação de Moçambique – guerrilla movement in Mozambique, founded in 1962, fought against Portuguese colonial rule and eventually became governing party in Mozambique.

INTAF – Internal Affairs – arm of Rhodesian government administration that dealt exclusively with black lives; an armed paramilitary force during the war.

JOC – Joint Operations Command – each operational area had its own command coordination structure, subordinate to COMOPS.

MAG – A Belgian designed, belt fed machine gun used by Rhodesian troops.

PUEU – Police Urban Emergency Unit – the BSAP's riot squad.

PF – Patriotic Front – loose alliance militarily and politically between Nkomo's ZAPU party and Mugabe's ZANU.

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – an acute and debilitating psychological condition commonly brought on through exposure to violent and / or traumatic events.

RAR – Rhodesian African Rifles – a black infantry unit in the war; mostly white officered.

RENAMO - Resistência Nacional Moçambicana – Mozambican resistance movement founded by Rhodesian CIO in 1976 to wage guerrilla campaign against FRELIMO; Renamo is today in opposition in Mozambique's parliament.

RF – Rhodesian Front – right wing party headed by Ian Smith, enjoyed popular support amongst white electorate from 1964 – 1980.

RhAF – Rhodesian Air Force.

RLI – Rhodesian Light Infantry – all white Rhodesian paratroop unit.

RSF – Rhodesian security Forces – moniker embracing all units of Rhodesian armed forces.

SADF – South African Defence Force – elements of SADF were deployed in Rhodesia during the war.

SAP – South African Police – elements of the SAP were deployed in Rhodesia.

SAS – Special Air Service – all white Rhodesian paratrooper and Special Forces unit.

SFA – Security Force Auxiliaries. – also known as Pfumo re Vanhu – private armies aligned to Ndabaningi Sithole (ZANU-Sithole) and Bishop Muzorewa (UANC).

SS – Selous Scouts – notorious racially mixed unit that operated as pseudo guerrillas.

UANC – United African National Council – “internal”, “nationalist” party headed by Bishop Muzorewa; briefly was the ruling party in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.

ZANLA - Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army – armed guerrillas of ZANU, operated mostly out of Mozambique.

ZANU – Zimbabwe African National Union – a nationalist party supported mostly by the People's Republic of China; originally formed in 1963, with Ndabaningi Sithole as leader, he was later replaced by Robert Mugabe; based in Mozambique during the war.

ZANU-PF - Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front – loose alliance between Mugabe's ZANU and Nkomo's ZAPU; formed after 1976 as a joint front to fight white rule.

ZAPU - Zimbabwe African People's Union – founded in 1960 and headed by Joshua Nkomo, a nationalist party that turned to guerrilla war to oust white rule; later merged with Mugabe's ZANU to become ZANU-PF.

ZIPRA – Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army – guerrilla wing of ZAPU, based in Zambia during the war, supported by the former Soviet Union.

ZNA – Zimbabwe National Army – the military force of Zimbabwe post-independence, comprised of integrated Rhodesian, ZIPRA and ZANLA forces.

ZRP – Zimbabwe Republic Police – police force of Zimbabwe.



Introduction

“Isn't that exactly the definition of biography? An artificial logic imposed on an 'incoherent succession of images'?” — Milan Kundera, *Encounter*.

Edward Said, the Palestinian-American literary critic famously suggested: “the beginning then, is the first step in the intentional production of meaning” (5). This thesis on the Rhodesian war poetry of Chas Lotter is, in many ways, a personal beginning too. It is my deliberate attempt to synthesise my own experience of growing up in Rhodesia and then living in South Africa for most of my adult life. So, in a sense, this has also been the longest of beginnings. I am now 55 years old, I was 19 when the war ended and I effectively left Zimbabwe in 1981. My interest in the Rhodesian war / Zimbabwe liberation war and the literatures occasioned by this conflict are thus deeply personal and indelibly rooted in my own life as a young, white Rhodesian, my brief participation in that war and my personal and professional interests in literary studies since then.

I was born in Gwelo (Gweru), Southern Rhodesia in January 1961 and enjoyed a typically white middle class upbringing. My father was employed by the Rhodesian Ministry of Roads and my family migrated from one major rural road construction project to the next for the first ten years of my life. As a family, we did not put down roots, and lived in a series of prefabricated houses on site. This semi-nomadic existence meant that my earliest memories are of living in isolated rural settings and I was effectively an only child until the birth of my brother when I was five.

I started school in 1966 (the year I turned five) and by the end of my standard one year (Grade 3), my family had moved so often that I had attended 5 schools in 3 different towns. At that age, I was oblivious to the march of decolonisation in Africa, but I can distinctly remember the day of UDI, 11 November, 1965. My mother broke the news to me that my supply of sweets (I particularly enjoyed Rowntree's Fruit Gums) was going to be interrupted by the imposition of something called “sanctions”. At that young age, I felt massive injustice that “sanctions” could deprive me of sweets and I do not know at exactly what point in my short history it happened, but soon after the disappearance of these treats from my life, my father started vanishing

for short periods as he was “in the army, fighting terrorists”. I had no idea who these “terrorists” were, but the association with the disrupted sweetie supply certainly reinforced in my young mind an emerging belief that these amorphous devils were thoroughly evil and had to be resisted. As I grew older and began to take an unusual interest (for a school boy) in news and world events, it became clear to me that these “terrorists” were somehow drawn from amongst the very black people that surrounded my life. I did not register or appreciate the brutal ironies implicit in these observations, and quite honestly, it never occurred to me until I was considerably older, that I had inherited a racist typology and was fully complicit in its constructions and deployment in social discourse. Here I might add that as good settler colonists, we enjoyed the services of domestic helpers and at any point, my family employed a “garden boy” and a “house boy”. White Rhodesians universally employed servants with many having the services of a “cook boy” too. In my emerging lexicon, the diminutive label “boy” carried no pejorative status at all and was quite acceptable. For me, it was simply a signifying term for any black person in the service of a white family like mine. My parents regard themselves as Christian and we attended Presbyterian churches as a matter of routine. I grew up staunchly right-wing in political orientation probably because my parents were enthusiastic Rhodesian Front voters and I assumed their viewpoints as, quite naturally, correct and beyond question. That is how things were; the sum of it all. We took occasional holidays on the South African Natal coast and my first experience of apartheid was seeing the various “whites only” signs then in common placement. Again, as a family, the sight of dual entrances to post offices and other public buildings was regarded with some degree of mirth and puzzlement, the irony that a similar though less “visible” form of apartheid existed at home was lost on us. Such, I suppose, is the degree of smugness that percolates a racist mind-set.

The late 1960s were exciting times for me. I was not greatly interested in music or popular culture, so the British musical invasion was something that barely stirred my internal seismograph. I did, however, develop a keen interest in aviation and this, naturally, led to a fascination with the space race and an awareness of the conflicts that were raging around the world. The various Apollo missions were widely reported on Rhodesian TV and in watching these scenes, I became aware, too, of the happenings in Biafra and the war in Vietnam. I can vividly recall seeing newsreel

footage of the January 1968 Tet offensive. At school I swapped “Battle” comics with my friends and eagerly eavesdropped on adult conversations where family and visitors who had participated in World War II would recount their stories. Two of my uncles had served in North Africa and another was a serving member of the Rhodesian Air Force, so titbits of war stories filtered into my psyche and fuelled a growing interest in matters historical.

At an early stage of my development (though I cannot precisely explain how or why), I became aware that Rhodesia was in a state of political rebellion against Britain and that politics and terrorism were somehow linked. I lacked, of course, the knowledge or critical tools to dissect the superficial and highly selective narratives that punctuated conversations at home, but it was apparent to me that things in Rhodesia were fraught and that people living elsewhere, especially in the UK and Europe, enjoyed lives that were very different to my own.

In 1969, our nomadic existence came to a halt when my father was transferred to Umtali (Mutare) a picturesque small town on the eastern border of Rhodesia and Mozambique. By way of happy coincidence, the cosy relationship between Rhodesia and Metropolitan Portugal meant that residents of Umtali could cross the border with ease and so escape the strictures of fuel rationing and sanctions. Petrol and scarce consumer goods (but no Rowntree’s Fruit Gums) were available in the Mozambican hamlets a short drive away and commerce was facilitated by the ability to pay for goods in Rhodesian currency. The tropical Mozambican coast was a mere 300 kilometres distant, so we, like many other Rhodesian families, sometimes visited Beira for sea-side holidays.

The end of my primary school career coincided with the Altena farm attack in December 1972. I distinctly remember asking my father at the time when the trouble would end. His words were ironically prophetic: in his estimation, the real trouble was yet to begin. In 1973, my father was transferred to Bulawayo, a town in the southern Matabeleland province of Zimbabwe. I enrolled at Milton High school, a school with a high proportion of Jewish scholars and, curiously, the alma mater of H.F. Verwoerd, architect of apartheid in South Africa. I was young for my class as a consequence of my January birthdate, so my introduction to Milton High School was an alienating

experience. The school was large and seemed peopled with hairy giants – I was only 12 years old at the time. I settled in to my stream eventually and can remember the intense debates that took place amongst my peers on the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war in Israel. The Rhodesian Jewish community was Zionist in orientation and many of my class mates had friends or relatives involved in that war.

Our own war was starting to tick over and this too figured in our daily conversations. By the end of the year, the school's Roll of Honour board in the foyer had been enlarged to accommodate not just the old boys who had fallen in the two world wars, but also now the former scholars who were dying in the Rhodesian war too. At home, my father who was then in his mid-30s, was starting to be "called up" more frequently for military service. It transpired that his call ups coincided with every Christmas period from 1973 until 1980. He served in the reserve holding unit of the Rhodesia Regiment as an infantryman until he turned 38 and later served as an NCO in the Rhodesian Intelligence Corps. His periods of service increased in frequency and duration but he never disclosed much of his service to me at the time. I later established that he had seen considerable action and realise that he was attempting to shield me from worry by maintaining the stance that his service was mundane and lacklustre in nature.

My father's job required much travel in rural areas, so he kept an FN-FAL battle rifle at home and, when I was a little older, perhaps aged 16 or so, I sometimes accompanied my father on his work trips to those rural road construction projects that were still being pursued. My father had taught me to use the rifle and it was my job on those occasions to carry the weapon whilst he drove the vehicle. The war intensified and I became acutely aware of the danger that lurked, interpreting the bush itself as somehow menacing and unsafe. Perhaps more than my peers, I read the newspapers and journals in the school library. I also had a short wave radio at home and so could tune in to radio stations that broadcast from all over the world. I began to realise, with some dread that this war was unlikely to end soon or well. At the same time, like the vast majority of my peers, I absorbed the mythology of the moment and embraced the Rhodesian cause without question. Rhodesian broadcast media did not challenge the regime's stance in any way, the daily newspapers we received at home were heavily censored (though I did not know it then), but I

followed the political developments keenly, and could not understand how anyone in their right minds could not see that the Rhodesian cause was just. To me, it was a simple case of binary opposites without any need for further investigation or internal reflection. From the moment I turned 16, I began to receive call up papers of my own. In every instance I was instructed to report to the Rhodesian Light Infantry, a parachute-trained infantry regiment that was used extensively throughout the war. My parents, quite rightly, were reticent about me leaving school so young and so I continued with my education and obtained a deferral from service in 1977 and completed “M” levels at Milton High School. This would have equipped me, eventually, to proceed to university in South Africa. My headmaster advised my father to enrol me for “A” levels at school. In their combined opinion, the extra year of education (13 years) would stand me in good stead and keep me out the war for at least another year.

At some point in 1978, I began exploring my options with regard to military service. I would have dearly loved to join the Rhodesian Air Force as a pilot, but it required a 10 year commitment and, as my uncle (an RhAF officer) noted, the annual pilot training course was tiny and had a high “chop” rate. I was looking forward to joining up and taking part in the war, for me there was no question of conscientious objection. In my mind, the one or two boys I knew who left Rhodesia to evade call-up were worthless cowards. At the time, my military commitment was essentially a two year period of full-time service in the Rhodesian army. I cannot recall exactly how it happened, but I developed an interest in service with the British South Africa Police. This was not a “soft” option; BSAP members had military training and combined military duties with police-work. The drawback was that joining the BSAP meant signing a three year service contract. The advantage was that as a regular force member, I would receive pay considerably higher than any national serviceman in the army. The extra year’s commitment was acceptable and so I applied for selection to the BSAP. The selection process was hardly automatic, it involved an interview in Salisbury and the force did not consider recruits with an education that amounted to less than 5 “O” levels. I was successful and received instructions to report for recruit training at the BSAP’s main base, Morris Depot, in Salisbury (Harare) on 3 January 1979. At the time that I did so, I was still 17 years old and had to re-attest into the BSAP 2 weeks later when I turned 18.

My initial recruit training was para-military in nature and consisted of basic infantry training, drill and weapons training. In addition, we also attended classes on police procedures, law and battlefield first aid. An indication of how desperate the war had become, is that within a few weeks of induction (and still way short of our pass-out date) we were deployed on armed operations and involved in armed road blocks. Some 6 weeks into our training, we were deployed to a rural area for 4 weeks of intensive counter-insurgency training and we were issued with live ammunition at all times. On this deployment, I was peripherally involved in an own forces contact that resulted in the death of an instructor and the serious injury of a recruit.

At the end of May, 1979, I was considered a fully trained police officer, and I was posted to Bulawayo central police station where I spent most of my time doing night duties at the security cells, where political prisoners were kept in squalid conditions. Soon after this initial posting, I was reassigned to BSAP Donnington, a small station on the outskirts of Bulawayo. It was a precinct on the peri-urban fringe that encompassed a blue collar "white" area, a "coloured" suburb, a township, a light industrial area and a rural area. A twelve-hour curfew operated in the industrial area and the police station was heavily fortified. Railway sleepers and walls made of sand-filled maize bags surrounded the main building. We mounted machine guns at two firing points behind these fortifications. Our single men's mess was sandbagged, we kept our rifles in the house and had mortar pits outside. In addition to investigating petty crime, attending to road accidents, sudden deaths, suicides and domestic disputes, I was seconded to the Police Urban Emergency Unit (PUEU or riot squad as we called it) for a regular two week 24/7 duty in every normal 5 week duty cycle. This unit was essentially a permanent riot / reaction squad that operated in the townships and which was used solely to deal with outbreaks of public violence and urban guerrilla incidents.

The nature of police work in war time was such that I quickly became inured to the sight of appalling injury and death. I began to drink heavily, partly as a coping mechanism but also because alcohol (ab)use was part of the military culture I was immersed in. It was during my riot squad service that I first witnessed and took part

in police brutality. Ironically, the South African Police of the time ¹were regarded by the BSAP regulars as contemptible thugs incapable of operating with finesse or professionalism. The BSAP, by way of contrast, boasted an official policy of “minimum force”; no-one practised it though, especially in the riot squad where any form of resistance was met with violence. It is an aspect of my life I find deeply shameful.

Towards the end of 1979, political developments made it apparent that the end of the war was in sight. I was enjoying my time in the BSAP and I thought hard about extending my contract and perhaps becoming a career policeman. When I articulated these thoughts to my parents, they were hostile to the idea. They wanted me to go to university. I felt a little suffocated by my parents and grew distant in my interactions with them. I went as far as applying for a fast-track career possibility that offered attendance at the University of Rhodesia followed by a commission. The idea had merit, but I was declined after an initial interview. The reasons given to me were that I was too young. Had I been 20 years old, then it would have been feasible.

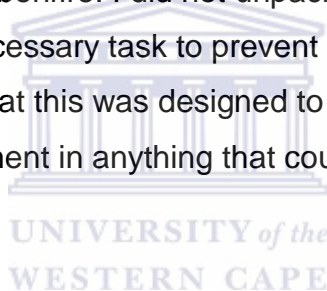
The lead up to the April 1980 elections baffled me. The daily “sitreps” (war situation reports) and what I was witnessing suggested that the transition to peace would not be an easy one. At BSAP Donnington, we found that we were constantly dealing with lone guerrillas who had neglected to go to the assembly points and, instead, brought weapons into town and embarked on assaults and banditry. Officially we were supposed to take a softer line, but the reality was that we proceeded on a war footing and responded as before.

Within the BSAP, rumblings started that perhaps things were going to slide into anarchy. A group of very senior BSAP officers toured the country addressing rank and file and promising that Robert Mugabe could not possibly win the elections and that even if he did, plans were in place. In later years, I found out that they were referring to “Operation Quartz” – a planned Rhodesian coup. Thankfully that madness never took place. The BSAP commissioner had pledged the loyalty of the

¹ The SAP had been deployed in Rhodesia since 1967.

force to the elected government and so a situation might have arisen where BSAP members would have had to resist renegade elite Rhodesian Army units. It goes without saying that we (the BSAP) would not have prevailed in that scenario.

On the day that the election results were announced, my world collapsed. Everything I believed in, everything I had been taught was right and true was overthrown in an instant. Bulawayo descended into pandemonium with celebratory crowds running through the streets. Back at the police station, we began drinking heavily and we moved weapons and as much ammunition as we could, into the mess. We felt betrayed and there was visible tension between the white policemen and black policemen in the station. I suppose sanity prevailed and once the hangovers subsided, we replaced the weapons in the armoury. Orders came through a day or two later to destroy all war-related documents. I spent most of the day hauling files, dockets and photographs to a bonfire. I did not unpack the implications of what I was doing. In my mind, it was a necessary task to prevent kangaroo courts from acquiring information. Later, I realised that this was designed to remove any evidence of our (and I include myself) involvement in anything that could be construed as a war crime or atrocity.



My reaction at the time was to increase the tempo of my drinking. It was not the physical horror that “got” to me. Instead, I was in a state of total mental / intellectual confusion. The relationship with my parents was difficult and many of my contemporaries (unwilling to accept the collapse of Rhodesia) were talking of leaving the country. The new regime was alien to me, the physical symbols of Rhodesia were gone. The flag, the uniforms, the songs, anthem and elements of popular culture I had identified with had disappeared. Political rhetoric was heating up. The word “comrade” was used as a prefix in any media mention of the new government’s officials. Although sanctions had been lifted, the shops were still bereft of consumer goods and inflation was high. Smith-era exchange control remained, so it meant that emigrants left with Z\$ 1000 per family, a single second hand car and household furnishings. I had saved half of my BSAP salary each month and my parents were prepared to pay for my university education. I decided that Rhodes University was a good idea after all and had applied in mid-1980, for admission to a general BA course. I resigned from my contract with the Zimbabwe Republic Police (the BSAP

renamed and rebadged in mid-1980) and left the ZRP on 31 December, 1980. Six weeks later, I got off the train in Grahamstown.

At 20 years of age I started university in a foreign country. My family remained in Zimbabwe for a short while yet, only leaving for South Africa at the end of 1981. At Rhodes in Grahamstown, my world was turned upside down again. For the first time, I met white kids who did not share my world view, who despised the war I had been in, who were anti-Apartheid and had no intention of serving in the SADF. I completed my BA in 1983, got married and went to live in Pretoria. During this time, I secured a temporary post as an unqualified teacher at Pretoria Boy's High School and completed a BA (Honours) degree at the University of South Africa. I had aspirations of post-graduate study and so my wife and I relocated to Grahamstown where she enrolled for her BSc (Honours) and I registered for an MA tentatively titled: "Chimurenga and other voices: the poetry of the Rhodesian War". I was not in good psychological health at the time, drinking to excess and the thesis, rather predictably, went nowhere. In retrospect, I was not in an intellectual position to grapple with the complexities of my topic especially as my political orientation in the mid-1980s was so racist and shallow that I could not engage honestly and meaningfully with my topic. I abandoned this study after two years and, instead, registered for a University Education Diploma so that I could consider a teaching career. It would prove a momentous decision in my life.

My political "re-alignment" began slowly and in an odd fashion. In 1988, I got the opportunity to tutor black teachers who were upgrading their qualifications through UNISA. These teachers had access to classes at SACHED² in Grahamstown. The SACHED stipend was enough to pay my bar bills and that was my primary motive in the beginning. Shortly after starting at SACHED, the security police in Grahamstown attempted to burn down the SACHED building. For the first time, I felt conflicted politically. Part of me applauded the deed, but another part saw that it was a dirty trick that served no purpose other than to intimidate and terrorise. This was no

² The South African Committee for Higher Education was founded in 1959. A politically inspired NGO, SACHED attempted to counter, in a practical way, the Apartheid regime's determination to enforce apartheid education design on black people.

Damascene conversion, but rather the ignition of a slow fuse. The End Conscription Campaign (ECC) was very active on campus and I had discovered that none of my BSAP service would “count”, I would have to do a full two year stint in the SADF. I made the choice that I would not do this and avoided conscription by simply not registering with the defence force, not applying for a passport and delaying my application for a South African ID book for a number of years. This had financial and tenure repercussions as it meant I could not hope to get permanent employment as a teacher.

I had around this time acquired a heavy vehicle licence and got vacation work driving lorry loads of vegetables and sometimes live stock to the markets in East London. My trips to East London took me through the “Ciskei” each time and I noted the pitiful state of this “country” with its minimal, crumbling infrastructure and the patent inability of the land to sustain anything more than subsistence agriculture. The absurdity of the situation nagged at me and I began questioning the practicality of the Bantustan concepts. A Christmas Eve shakedown by drunken Ciskei soldiers convinced me that only lunatics believed that Bantustans were viable solutions. In my UED year, I had to do practical teaching. I was sent to Nombulelo High School in Grahamstown. We were escorted into the townships by troops and out again after school. Initially I was horrified and wondered if I would be “safe”. I quickly discovered that not only was I safe, the school was functional, learning was taking place and that the students actually liked me and seemed to appreciate what I was doing. I can remember sitting in classes thinking to myself “are these people really ‘the enemy’?” The wheels began turning.

In 1989 I got a job at Edgemoor High School in Cape Town but could not cope with my personal demons and the demands of teaching in a rigidly authoritarian environment. In 1990. I resigned my post, swore off teaching for good, and was unemployed for a year. During this time, my wife supported me financially and I received psychological help. We became “born again” Christians and started attending a local charismatic church. By now, my right wing attitudes had given way to a more reflective (albeit charismatic) Christian approach. I made the decision that I would not vote whilst this country remained undemocratic. I felt that it was immoral that I, a white immigrant from Zimbabwe, a citizen by default (Grandfather

Hagemann was a Cape Colony citizen) had more rights and privileges than any black person born in this country. I recognised it as appalling but I made an exception for the referendum and exercised my vote in favour of democracy. I started working again as an educational adviser at a private home for street children in Salt River where I got to see the impact of poverty and witness the uncoordinated, lacklustre efforts and resources available to the poor. The home could not source reliable funding and I was retrenched in 1993. In 1994, I managed to get a temporary position for a year at Table View High School and, as we know, it was a good year for South Africa. The end of conscription meant that I could now safely seek a permanent teaching post, so in 1995, I secured a post teaching English and Geography at Luhlaza Senior Secondary in Khayelitsha. This was an eye-opening and profoundly moving period of my life. Teaching there had its challenges but I greatly enjoyed my interactions with the pupils and came face to face with the repercussions of apartheid. What I saw horrified me. The poverty, the destruction of peoples' dignity and the singular elimination of hope from so many people cut deeply. I became very conscious of my past and began reading and thinking deeply on Rhodesia and the war I had been part of. In September 1996, I suffered an unexpected heart attack, was hospitalised for some weeks and required an angioplasty. At the time the church we were part of was talking of starting a Christian school and even moving into educational ministry in Africa. I saw this as an opportunity "to make a difference". I received an insurance pay out that rendered us debt free and so I resigned from government employment and entered the ministry of Christian education, where I assisted my pastor to start an Accelerated Christian Education school. I'd like to claim that things picked up here, but they didn't.

My wife also left her job as a microbiologist, did her post-graduate teaching diploma (HDE) and joined me in the church school a year later. We earned a nominal income as "ministers" and bought a 1/7 share in an embryonic nursery school at the church. By 1999, it became apparent that we were members of a cult, that our dreams of "serving the Lord" were in fact not true. Retrospectively, it was fortunate that we were expelled from the church and school and forced to find alternative employment. I was particularly bitter about the events that had transpired and the apparent injustice done to us plagued me for years. In 2004 I saw a psychologist and he diagnosed me as suffering from PTSD. We stopped attending churches soon after that, but we

retain our Christian faith, preferring now a simple, practical gospel to organised religion.

My wife and I were able to find teaching posts in Ruyterwacht in 2000 where we experienced, first hand, white poverty and could see how the crumbling of apartheid was playing out. Ruyterwacht was an apartheid era poor white suburb where “opheffing” [the Afrikaner nationalist government’s policy of affirmative action and social support for poor white Afrikaners] was once the dominant ethos. I found it a fascinating and challenging place to be and it has figured significantly in my own creative writing. Apartheid created Ruyterwacht and sustained it for a time. The discourses rumbled still, but I was in an intellectual position to recognise and deconstruct these. In 2004, I registered for my MA at UWC and found an intellectual home at this historically black institution. My wife left teaching and returned to her former employers, Nampak, where she remains. We grew up in a country (my wife is also from Zimbabwe) whose passport was useless, so travel is our shared passion. It is perhaps no coincidence that many of the places that we have been to (Cuba, the UK, the USA, Argentina, Vietnam, Malaysia, France, India, Egypt, Mozambique, Tanzania and Singapore) have their own histories of conflict and much of our travel time is spent at sites of memory and in museums.

I moved onto Christian Brothers College St John’s in 2006 after graduating with my MA. After nine years of service in this Catholic school (five as Head of Pastoral Care), I grew tired of petty school politics and had become deeply uncomfortable with teaching in an excessively authoritarian environment that served white privilege under the guise of organised religion. Something was missing from my life and I knew that it was time to confront the Rhodesian war and critically unpack the myths and metahistories that had such an impact on me. This initial potted autobiography is thus offered to explain my personal motivations for conducting this study at a comparatively late stage of my life.

In choosing Chas Lotter’s Rhodesian war poetry, I am acutely aware that I am dealing with a topic that is sensitive and may provoke criticism. It is not my intention to rehabilitate white Rhodesia or offer excuses or any justifications for the war but as

this is a quasi-literary biography, I concur with Nick Salvatore's contention (190) that in such work

it is not enough, I would insist, to hang the burden of a traditional social or institutional history upon the inert form of the chosen one, occasionally evoking that body to highlight an interpretive point. No. One must rather grant the individual his particularity in all its dimensions – or as many as one can possibly discover; and the biographer must be willing to explore these byways wherever they may lead.

Thus I have chosen not to frame this work with any one dominant theoretical scaffold or particular form of writing. This study is cross-disciplinary at times, so I use theories where appropriate as tools of synthesis and although I follow MLA referencing techniques, the micro-historical nature to some parts of this study has meant that I have hybridised this style to incorporate footnotes where these are needed to supplement the text. Rhodesia was an archetypal settler colonial society, so I draw on postcolonial theory and writings about settler colonialism in conjunction with the traditional literary critical techniques of close analysis. I have mentioned a personal reason for embarking on this study. There is another somewhat larger purpose to this study too.

Zimbabwe today is a state in crisis. Robert Mugabe, formerly hailed as a liberating hero is now widely regarded (especially in the "West") as a brutal dictator clinging to power and willing to go to any lengths to crush opposition. Economic and political mismanagement, corruption and the systematic ZANU-fication of government structures have all but destroyed the hopes the Zimbabwean majority entertained at independence in 1980. The country is in deep crisis and requires immediate political salvation if it is not to become a failed state. Many have written about Zimbabwe's plight, but I have been enormously influenced by the autobiography of a white Zimbabwean activist, David Coltart. Like me, he served in the BSAP, but unlike me, he came from a family that was anti the Rhodesian Front and he became aware of the incongruities and injustices inherent in white hegemony during his service in the BSAP in the 1970s. Coltart is one of Zimbabwe's leading human rights lawyers and has played a role in articulating opposition to Mugabe's rule. What has particularly

intrigued me is his strong conviction that Zimbabwe's present state is indelibly linked to its past, particularly the recent liberation war. Coltart believes emphatically that until Zimbabweans re-engage with the war, it is unlikely that social and political transformation will succeed. As much as he focuses on Mugabe, he also turns his gaze towards the white Rhodesians and makes a most pertinent point (287) that needs examination:

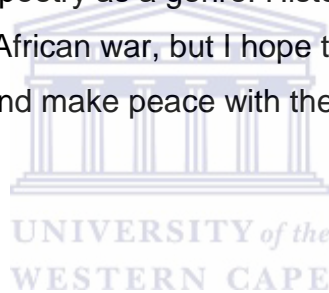
a prickly subject, namely our collective responsibility as whites for the chaos that had befallen Zimbabwe. We had enacted unjust laws, which caused a war and much bitterness – which was now being regurgitated by ZANU PF.

It is in this spirit of my own confrontation with white privilege and hegemony, that I offer this study. Perhaps in detailed examination of one white poet's experience of the war, we may reach a deeper understanding of the total effect this war has had.

The pro-Rhodesian point of view is not a constant in Lotter's work and he is a complex and contradictory character. His poems do not make for easy or pleasant reading mostly, but they are of their time. Self-reflection is difficult, and I have demanded much of this from Lotter in an effort to shape an understanding of the white Rhodesian experience of that war, an understanding that I hope may find resonance as Zimbabweans try to navigate a post-Mugabe transition to democracy, and move beyond the entrapments of victimhood which seem to surround discussions of race, identity and ideology. The work of Irikidzayi Manase that culminates in his appeal for innovative thinking on the "recognition of heterogeneous perceptions of land and narratives about history" (136) suggests, to me at least, that the time is indeed ripe to revisit the Rhodesian experience of war.

This work is also a semi-literary biography of a Rhodesian war poet, so in essence it has two major movements: a large socio-historical contextual framework that supports an intimate analysis of Lotter's poetry. This is by no means an unorthodox literary approach. John Garth in his 2003 work *Tolkien and the Great War*, uses a similar strategy, relying upon a detailed examination of Tolkien's experience of the Somme to explain how Tolkien's war service might invest his creation of Middle-earth with its peculiar mythological power and the enduring traditions of Faërie.

I begin this study with a framing history of the war, linking it to settler colonialism and charting the progressions and escalations. My readings of the political history of Rhodesia coupled with my own experience strongly suggests that issues of identity and national myth played a significant role in motivating white Rhodesians, and so in my second chapter I outline the development of national myths in this settler society and demonstrate how such myths fed the white Rhodesians' initial appetite for war. The chapter that follows, chapter 3, establishes the position of Lotter's war poems in the literary context of war literature in general. Out of this review, I formulate framing questions and approaches that I use in a systematic and largely chronological examination of Lotter's work. He was a Rhodesian version of a "bittereinder",³ so in his poetry we can trace the evolution of his political consciousness and subsequently an emergent pacifist mind-set. In the conclusion, I synthesise my findings and speculate on the future of war poetry as a genre. History's finger has not yet written the final chapter of this lonely African war, but I hope this study will reverberate and challenge people to confront and make peace with the past.



³ The term was originally applied to Boer fighters who, having lost the "conventional" war against British troops, became guerrillas and remained in the field until the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging in 1902.

Chapter One: History of the war

“But war’s a game, which, were their subjects wise, Kings would not play at.” (William Cowper)

It is useful that in beginning this study of Chas Lotter’s Rhodesian war poetry, we have the example of Said’s *Beginnings: Intention and Method* to construct a philosophical and theoretical framework. As we shall see a little later in this chapter, finding a beginning point for the war is problematic. Accordingly, the issues of where to begin this study of a body of war poetry are less than straightforward. Said proposes that “the beginning then is the first step in the intentional production of meaning” (5) and

Beginnings inaugurate a deliberately other production of meaning – a gentile (as opposed to a sacred one). It is “other” because, in writing, this gentile production claims a status alongside other works: it is another work, rather than one in a line of descent from X or Y (13).

This is an important point. Lotter’s poetry is located within a sub-genre of war literature, but it is not a simple continuation of an existing body and as Said would suggest, it creates its own authority too and is part of the “ceaselessly changing triangle of encipherment, decipherment and dissemination” (21). To a large extent, Lotter’s conscious decisions to write war poetry mark the beginning of his own attempts to interpret his participation in the war. If *Beginnings: Intention and Method* was, as Bayoumi and Rubin suggest (xxii), also “an attempt to work through the conditions of his [Said’s] political wakening in literary terms”, so too does this study examine the convoluted evolution of a complex and sometimes compromised political and moral stance in the poet, Chas Lotter. Just as Said’s book was prompted by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, this study is tied to the Rhodesian war and part of my own “beginning” is necessarily the construction of a history of that war to serve partly as a contextual framework and then, sometimes subliminally, as an interpretive prism for the poetry Lotter wrote.

My drafting of a brief history of the Rhodesian Bush War / Zimbabwe Liberation War poses anxieties. Hayden White well articulates an immediate difficulty that the

ideological dimensions of a historical account reflect the ethical element on the historian's assumption of a particular position on the question of the nature of historical knowledge and the implications that can be drawn from the study of past events for the understanding of present ones (22).

Given that this conflict was one patterned by issues of imperialism, settler colonialism and race (and thus open to ideological bias) a theoretical anchor to resist ideological bias in scholarship is important. Critics like Michael Benton debate the validity of literary biography in literary studies, and similar debates occur between advocates of narrative and structuralist historical discourse. Peter Burke (287) neatly explains the differences between narrative and structural discourse thus:

Traditional narrative historians tend - and this is not exactly contingent - to couch their explanations in terms of individual character and intention... Structural historians, on the other hand, prefer explanations which take the form "the window broke because the glass was brittle", or (to quote Braudel's famous example) "orders arrived late from Madrid because sixteenth century ships took several weeks to cross the Mediterranean". As Stone points out, the so-called revival of narrative has a great deal to do with an increasing distrust of the second mode of historical explanation, often criticised in the last generation as reductionist and determinist.

White (with his work *Metahistory*) has become the foremost advocate of narrative history and his suggestion that "it is the success of narrative in revealing the meaning, coherence, or significance of events that attests to the legitimacy of its practice as historiography" that I find compelling. The idea that history can be read as a grand narrative is an appealing practical approach to deconstructing the settler colonial history of Rhodesia and elements of White's structural schema, (Mode of Emplotment [Tragedy]), Mode of Argument [Mechanistic] and Mode of Ideology [Radical]), offer not only a plausible theoretical framework, but also a useful, imaginative way of navigating the complex history of the war and help us to gauge

the human interactions that pattern the historical processes, and make sense of some of the savage ironies implicit in Rhodesian political stances, particularly in the post-UDI period. The great advantage of White's approach though, is that it encourages scholars to look beyond mechanistic assessments of history.

Any attempt to sketch an outline of the Rhodesian Bush War / Zimbabwe Liberation War is likely to generate a degree of frustration, particularly when readers attempt to track the chronological course and origins of the war. What started, in the 1960s as episodes of civil disobedience, rebellion and unrest, escalated by 1980, into a regional conflagration that attracted the attention of the Cold War super powers and their proxy forces. By war's end, seven different armies (Rhodesian, FRELIMO regular troops, special forces elements of the SADF, ZANLA, ZIPRA, and SFAs) were operating within Rhodesia. The Rhodesians attracted little sympathy at the time as they were perceived to be recidivist racists, clinging to outmoded colonial myths and imperialist models, and punching way above their weight in world affairs until they were defeated. Years do pass, however, and looking back as a participant in the last year of the war, it becomes apparent that the story of this war (which forms the subject of the poetry produced by Chas Lotter, a former Rhodesian soldier), remains contested.

Scholars of the Rhodesian Bush War / Zimbabwe Liberation War soon discover that the records of this conflict present a sometimes impenetrable thicket of competing discourses. Historians, activists and military veterans introduce their own ideological slants to their accounts and a simple Google search will return thousands of results, some with promise, a few infused with merit and others considerably less so. Similarly, any good bookshop or public library will likely stock a selection of texts ranging from unit military histories to memoirs that may satisfy the initially curious. For the serious scholar, the person willing to access research libraries and who seeks to engage with this conflict in any depth, a more coherent narrative of the war requires an engagement with a variety of sources¹. In this task, two initial challenges emerge. The first is something of a tangled, temporal riddle as commentators and participants alike offer different framing dates. The second task involves navigating

¹ A meticulously detailed, if sometimes partisan account of ZANU's (and ZANLA's) role in the war is recorded in David Martin and Phyllis Johnson's: *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War*.

the socio-linguistic nomenclatures attached to the conflict: taxonomies that defer to positions taken along the range of ideological positions present in any accounting for the conflict. Some commentators such as Moorcraft and McLaughlin style the conflict as the “Rhodesian bush war”, others like Judith Garfield Todd speak of the “Rhodesian civil war” and still others (Muwate, Mutasa and Bopape) speak of the “Zimbabwe liberation war”. Similarly entangled become any attempts to outline a precise chronology of the war.

Ken Flower, former Rhodesian Central Intelligence Office (CIO) chief, states in his memoirs that the ZANU hierarchy decided in 1964 “to renounce all further negotiations with the whites and to pursue the armed struggle with all means at their disposal” (39). Stephen Chan writing about the Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence, suggests that “once UDI was declared [on 11 November] in 1965, the terms of the war were set. There was no going back” (143). Robert Mugabe, wartime leader of ZANLA and now President of Zimbabwe, states categorically that the war began with the Battle of Sinoia (Chinhoyi) on 28 April 1968 (1). Vladimir Shubin, writing from the perspective of his position as former secretary of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, implies that Mugabe’s date is inaccurate as the decision to opt for armed struggle had been made earlier in 1963 (155). Lieutenant-Colonel Ron Reid-Daly, former commander of the infamous Rhodesian Selous Scouts unit, scripts the ZANLA attack on Altena Farm in the Centenary district on 21 December 1972, as marking the start of the war (2). An outside claim is that made by Greg Mills and Grahame Wilson (22), who suggest that the war started earlier than all previous sources would hazard. In their assessment,

the first phase can be delineated from the time of the start of civil disobedience campaigns in 1957 through the creation of the two dominant African political movements in the early 1960s Joshua Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) and its armed wing, the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA); and Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) – and its Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA).

These dates (1957, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1968 and 1972) span an eleven-year period, and this pattern is repeated in one form or another in further accounts of this war. There is a reasonable explanation for this enigma if we consider the conflict to be an example of “asymmetric warfare” – a conflict typology theory first proposed by Andrew Mack. Inspired by the successes of the Viet Minh and Viet Cong campaigns in Vietnam, Mack (177) deconstructs the assumption that more economically developed nations with full access to the resources of their military-industrial complexes would triumph in any conflict with insurgents or lesser economically developed entities because:

in every case, success for the insurgents arose not from a military victory on the ground – though military successes may have been a contributory cause – but rather from the progressive attrition of their opponents' *political* capability to wage war.

In Mack's asymmetric warfare theory, socio-political aetiology assumes as much importance in contributing to the cause, course and definition of a particular conflict's history as do any chronicled set-piece battlefield encounters. A similar, earlier view is that proposed by Robert Taber in his book, *The War of the Flea* (26):

Fundamentally, the guerrilla's tactics and those of the counterinsurgent differ because their roles differ. They are dissimilar forces, fighting dissimilar wars, for disparate objectives. The counter-insurgent seeks a military solution: to wipe out the guerrillas. He is hampered by a political and economic impediment: he cannot wipe out the populace, or any significant sector of it. The guerrilla, for his part, wishes to wear down his military opponent and will employ suitable tactics to that end, but his primary objective is political. It is to feed and fan the fires of revolution by his struggle, to raise the entire population against the regime, to discredit it, isolate it, wreck its credit, undermine its economy, over-extend its resources, and cause its disintegration. Essentially, then, the guerrilla fighter's war is political and social, his means are at least as political as they are military, his purpose is almost entirely so.

A clear synchronicity exists between Taber and Mack's views, and if we accept that in asymmetric warfare situations, political rhetoric, propaganda, the caucusing of influential opinion makers and the politicisation of certain sectors of society are as much weapons and instruments of war as the deployment of troops and military assets on the ground, then it follows that asymmetric conflicts are unlikely to follow a neatly discernible linear movement from tension to crisis to the declaration or outbreak of warfare. For the purposes of practical discussion, it is my contention that though Mills and Wilson's argument is interesting, we can exclude 1957 as a date for the start of the Rhodesian war because Rhodesia, at the time, was part of a larger geo-political structure, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. One can directly link the agitation to which they refer to the nationalist demands for the disassembly of the Federation and the granting of independence to two of the constituent states in the Federation. These demands were met in the case of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, with Malawi (formerly Nyasaland) becoming independent on 6 July 1964 and Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) on 24 October 1964. Most whites in the Federation lived in Southern Rhodesia and here the independence process for Southern Rhodesia stalled. The white minority government in the territory insisted on a disproportionate hold on power and other constitutional safeguards that Britain, the colonial power, was reluctant to concede.

With Zambia and Malawi becoming independent, majority-ruled republics, the former issues that had plagued the entire Federation (racial discrimination and white political and economic hegemony) coalesced in Southern Rhodesia. It is a truism that the (Southern) Rhodesians utterly misunderstood and gravely underestimated the scope and character of emerging Black Nationalism at the time. Rhodesian security and government officials interpreted simmering tensions as little more than opportunistic thuggery and failed to understand that a more complex set of political demands and a rapidly evolving African nationalism was, in fact, coming to the fore. Robert Mugabe (41), offers this neat summary of black political aspirations in 1960s Rhodesia.

The period 1957 – 1961 ushered in a stage during which the reformist politics transformed into a struggle for equal rights – political, social and economic.

The parties championing the campaign were the African National Congress as

reformed in 1957 and the first real mass political organisation – the National Democratic Party 1960 – 1961. It was the NDP which carrying over from where the ANC had left off when it was proscribed in February 1959, thoroughly drilled the masses into confidently upholding the principle of independence based on one-man, one-vote.

The Rhodesian government's response at the time was to use the security apparatus to crack down and suppress dissent. Whilst the Rhodesians can be rightly judged as being grossly insensitive to the legitimate demands of the majority, it must also be noted that disunity prevented the nationalists from articulating their political aspirations in a coherent manner that invited engagement. Ibbo Mandaza (8) suggests that in the 1960s, African nationalists in Rhodesia did not espouse the pan Africanist revolutionary spirit that the Rhodesians suspected, and were in fact influenced by:

two interrelated neoliberal themes. First an implicit faith in Western values.. and [S]econd the vision of a democratic society in which the violations and denials of the colonisers would be a thing of the past and a new meritocracy established. (8)



Robert Mugabe, too (47), reinforced this with his claim that the aim of armed struggle in the early days was not wholesale insurrection, but rather the precipitation of a state of emergency that would force the colonial power to intervene and set in motion political and constitutional reforms, and so set in motion a political and constitutional process that would satisfy the aspirations of the black majority.

The leadership in those days never intended to overthrow the enemy but rather draw in the hand of the colonial power so constitutional changes could be effected to bring about a government based on the principle of majority rule.

The tragedy, of course, is that at a time when negotiations could have mapped out a just democratic society, the colonial authority in Rhodesia had no appetite to engage in transformative political processes, thus setting in motion a cycle of events during

which attitudes would harden and demands become increasingly extreme². Thus we can surmise that it was the accretion of these multiple socio-political issues (race discrimination and white hegemony) in this particular territory, coupled with its specific settler-colonial conquest history and a degree of intransigence on the part of the Rhodesian government that precipitated a spiral into conflict. Indeed, a strong case can be argued that the entire Rhodesian colonial project was one of violence and resistance – a position that Fanon (37) describes eloquently:

[t]heir first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler – was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. The settler and the native are old acquaintances... The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression.

Indeed, as some are inclined to do, the dates of the war could be pushed right back to the arrival of the Pioneer Column in the 1890s.³ This is interesting, but becomes something of a moot point and does little to inform the larger purpose of this study. So, although the macro processes that precipitated conflict predate the violence of the 1960s and 1970s, for my purposes, the dates that mark the constitutional crisis occasioned by Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence (11 November 1965) and 18 April, 1980, the date on which Zimbabwe attained formal, legal independence closely straddle the opening shots of the war and the final ceasefire and demobilisation of combatants, and therefore offer a credible and convenient timespan for this conflict that does not, in any way, diminish the contributory factors of settler colonialism. With a chronology of 1965-1980 established, an opportunity arises to dissect the signification inherent in the opposing terms “Rhodesian bush war” and “Zimbabwe war of liberation”.

² Ibbo Mandaza (13) notes that by the last phase of the war (1976-1980) the political arm of ZANU had been thoroughly eclipsed by the military wing and that it was the latter that held sway in guiding ZANU strategy.

³ See, for example Pfukwa, Charles, and Lawrie Barnes. "Negotiating Identities in Guerrilla War Names in the Zimbabwean War of Liberation." *African Identities* 8.3 (2010): 209-19. Web.

Those who speak of the “Rhodesian bush war” tend to do so from a position that is located in an intimate awareness of Rhodesian accounts of the war. Their sources are often former members of the Rhodesian security forces and/or people with access to documents and sources derived from within the Rhodesian security apparatus. Some Rhodesian sources, like Chas Lotter and even the outspoken internal critic of the Rhodesian regime, Judith Garfield Todd, choose to call the conflict a “civil war” (1). The term civil war is, however, deeply problematic and represents an oversimplification of the Rhodesian conflict. Mark Gersovitz and Norma Kriger (177) suggest that:

We define a civil war as a politically organized, large-scale, sustained, physically violent conflict that occurs within a country principally among large/numerically important groups of its inhabitants or citizens over the monopoly of physical force within the country. Civil wars usually have incumbent governments that control the state and have a monopoly of force before the civil war and challengers — people who have not effectively challenged the monopoly of others before the outbreak of the civil war but whose challenge initiates the outbreak of the civil war.

The American Civil War, for example centred on the monopoly of physical force and the desire of the slave states to secede from the Union. Where wars have an ethnic component or are rooted in resistance to colonialism, this definition becomes unstable. The problem with the term civil war is that implies a violent fracturing of a previously organic whole or nation state. My discomfort with the term civil war is located in deep concerns I have regarding the authenticity and imagined reality of “Rhodesia” as a unified nation. Much has been written on the concepts of nationhood and nationalism, but Benedict Anderson’s suggestion that a nation is an imagined social construct limited by size, sovereignty and, importantly, by a shared sense of community that embraces “a deep level of horizontal comradeship” is useful for our purposes of directing questions to the semantic definitions of the conflict (Anderson 7). Preben Kaarsholm pointedly notes (156) that

Rhodesia was a conquest society which the white “pioneers” had grabbed by force from the African population in the invasion in 1890, the war against the Ndebele state in 1893 and the suppression of the Ndebele and Shona risings in 1896-97.

The cultural memory of the late 19th century uprisings by the Ndebele and Shona peoples against the white settlers figures large in both settler colonial and contemporary Zimbabwean historiography. Whilst a more detailed examination of the origins of Rhodesia will form the basis of discussion in chapter two, it is sufficient to assert here that Rhodesia was a short-lived, settler colonial construct that began as territory occupied under Royal Charter, gained “self-government” in 1923 and was briefly welded into a maladroit federal realm of the British Crown with Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) from 1953 until 1963. Whatever its guise, territorial extent or constitutional composition, during the time that “Rhodesia” existed, its identity (heavily dependent on foundational mythologies) and agency accrued exclusively to the minority white settler inhabitants. The black majority were largely denied access to land, economic resources and political power. Similarly, they were effectively rendered “other” in the very sorts of social interactions that one expects to encounter as characteristics of community. Minter and Schmidt further underscore the lack of authenticity and credibility invested in the Rhodesian state by pointing out that “the day after UDI [12 November 1965], the United Nations Security Council called upon all member nations to withhold recognition of Rhodesia and to provide it no assistance” (211). Thus the Rhodesian government held *de facto* status only as it was deemed an illegal regime in rebellion against the Crown. The United Kingdom (as colonial power) referred the matter to the United Nations and Rhodesia was placed under comprehensive mandatory United Nations sanctions. Thus this sense of contrived society, national artificiality and the absence of legitimate sovereignty effectively calls into serious question any reading of the conflict as a civil war. Furthermore, the forces that precipitated the conflict sought to overthrow the (illegal) colonial regime and replace a colonial identity with a democratic, non-racial Zimbabwe that was inclusive and representative of all its citizens. This suggests that another semantic definition of the conflict is required.

George Ginsburgs, in his essay on “Wars of National Liberation” draws attention to the Soviet doctrine that

[w]ars of liberation, [are] waged to defend the people from foreign attack and from attempts to enslave them; or to liberate the people from capitalist slavery; or, lastly, to liberate colonies and dependent countries from the yoke of imperialism (910).

Taking this strategic concept and splicing it to the argument thus far, I contend that for socio-political reasons, it is perhaps more accurate to refer to this conflict as the “Zimbabwe liberation war” sharing much in common with other colonial wars of liberation such as the conflicts in Algeria, Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. The current ZANU regime in Zimbabwe uses the term “Chimurenga” when referring to this war. Chimurenga is a Shona word traditionally used to describe conflict, but in modern parlance it has undergone a significant semantic realignment to mean a revolutionary people’s struggle, but one increasingly appropriated exclusively by ZANU-PF, as Terence Ranger (214) records:

[t]here has arisen a new variety of historiography. This goes under the name of ‘patriotic history’. It is different from and narrower than the old nationalist historiography, which celebrated aspiration and modernisation as well as resistance. It resents the ‘disloyal’ questions raised by historians of nationalism. It regards as irrelevant any history that is not political. And it is explicitly antagonistic to academic historiography. ‘The mistake the ruling party made’, says Sikhumbizo Ndiweni, ZANU-PF Information and Publicity Secretary for Bulawayo, ‘was to allow colleges and universities to be turned into anti-Government mentality factories’. Out in the ZANU-PF countryside, university history has become deeply suspect.

In this “patriotic history”, Chimurenga has expanded into a 3-part series of connected resistances. These are the “First Chimurenga” (the struggles against the British South Africa Company forces in the 1890s), then the “Second Chimurenga” which refers to the war between 1965 and 1980, and more recently the “Third Chimurenga”

has come to refer to the ZANU strategy of indigenisation that was first brought to attention by the invasions of white owned farms in the early 2000s. Given the number of competing terms applied to this conflict and mindful of the need to avoid obfuscation, I will use the terminology, “Zimbabwe liberation war” or “Zimbabwe war of liberation”, for the purposes of general academic discussion. The terms “Rhodesian war” and “bush war” will be used on those occasions when it is contextually relevant to discussion of Lotter’s poetry and secondary Rhodesian materials for the simple reason that this was the term in common usage by members of the Rhodesian forces at the time and will reference the period 1965-1980.

The military history of the Rhodesian settlers is chequered. The British South Africa Company’s Royal Charter (the means by which white settlement in Lobengula’s kingdom was effected) provided for an armed force to accompany the settlers. Thus the British South Africa Company’s Police, styled after traditional British cavalry regiments (in terms of organisation, equipment and tactics) but lacking the social and class “pedigree” one associates with those British units, formed the first military force in the newly proclaimed territory of Rhodesia. The BSACP was heavily involved in suppressing the Matabele and Shona rebellions (1896 and 1897) and, what is little known, is that the BSACP proved insufficient to cope with the task of cementing the settlers’ positions in Rhodesia in the early years of occupation. Shaw’s article, “Early Rhodesian Military Units” (1967), proposes that approximately thirty ad-hoc militias and volunteer rifle brigades were established in the first decades of Rhodesia’s occupation to protect settler interests. Very little information on these forces exists, but it is probably safe to say that these were akin to the Boer commandos and did not undertake regular duties, but mustered in response to times of crisis. For our purposes, what is important to note here is that a military tradition was synonymous with the colony’s establishment and, as we shall see in a later chapter, this tradition did much to contribute to Rhodesian foundational mythology, particularly, as Moorcraft and McLaughlin note, “the defence system of the first decade of the twentieth century was geared solely towards securing the settlers against the vastly more numerous black population” (21).

The outbreak of World War I had little impact on the daily routines in the colony for the simple reason that the major conflict areas were remote. White and black

volunteer troops joined imperial units fighting in German East Africa and Europe, but such actions were geographically distant and did not affect the security of the colony. At war's end, the Rhodesia Native Regiment (an askari-style unit with white leadership that served in German East Africa) was considered superfluous to requirements and disbanded. Defence needs, apparently, were rudimentary as Gann⁴ notes:

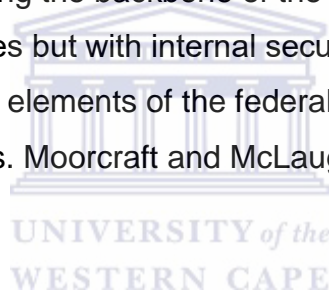
military planners once again thought mainly in terms of the real or supposed needs of internal defence, but African political activity remained negligible; defence questions excited little interest, and a few devoted people interested in military matters carried a heavy burden in keeping a territorial organization going.

The decade of the 1920s proved historic in the life of the Rhodesian colony. The colony gained "self-government" status in 1923, and in 1926 "compulsory service for young white males was introduced" (Moorcraft and McLaughlin 22). Although the internal security needs of the colony were still supplied by the paramilitary BSAP, conscription into an embryonic Rhodesian Army contributed to the militarization of white society. Preparation included the establishment of infantry regiments and the beginnings of an air force. Significantly, these growing military assets were designed to be deployed externally on imperial service and were not intended to bolster Rhodesia's internal security. With the outbreak of WWII in 1939, Rhodesians saw action overseas in all the major theatres, with members seconded to existing British Army units on a skills and needs basis. Rhodesia, due to its secure location far from the war, was selected to host trainee pilots under the Empire Air Training Scheme – a strategy devised to supply the allied air effort with suitably trained fighter and other types of pilots. As Moorcraft and McLaughlin (23) note, the twin significance of the 1930s militarization in Rhodesia was that over 20 per cent of whites served in the armed forces and a vast pool of potential immigrants were exposed to opportunities (post-war) in the colony thanks to their postings there under the Empire Air Training Scheme. The Rhodesian security forces that emerged in the immediate post-war period were significant and the air force component was well established. Events in

⁴ See <http://www.rhodesia.nl/gann1.htm>.

the 1950s led to further developments and reinforcement of these security structures.

In 1953, a new geo-political structure, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was created (see Figure 1 overleaf) in central Africa. This ambitious experiment welded Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland into an economic and political unit that played well in the courts of imperial thought and, as suggested by Wills (316), served as to maintain “the British connection and British tradition and principles” as well as act as a foil to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and Apartheid in South Africa.” In principle, the Federation was designed to build “economic and political partnerships between European and African” (Wills: 317), though the principle did not imagine or equate to an equitable partnership in any way at all. The Federal parliament was located in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, with (Southern) Rhodesian armed forces forming the backbone of the federal defence apparatus, spread throughout the territories but with internal security provided by each territory’s own police force. For a period, elements of the federal defence forces contributed to imperial security arrangements. Moorcraft and McLaughlin write (24):



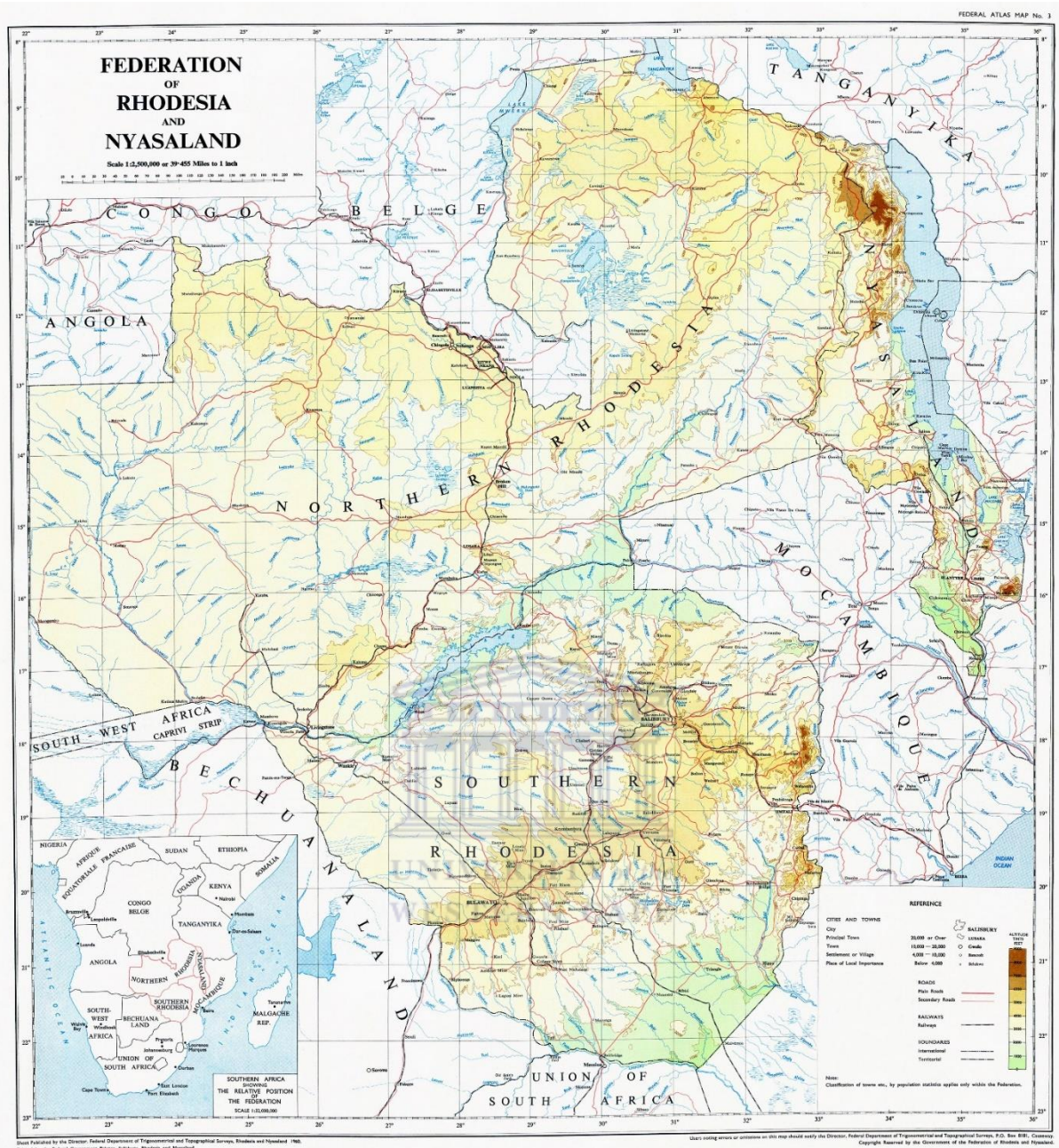


Fig. 1. "Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland". (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Federation_of_Rhodesia_and_Nyasaland_map_1960.jpg)

[d]etachments of the [BSAP] police force, which had never lost its paramilitary functions, were sent to help to quell disturbances in Bechuanaland (now Botswana) in 1950-2 and to Kenya and Nyasaland in 1953. A Rhodesian Far East Volunteer Unit served in Malaya in the early 1950s The Royal Rhodesian Air Force, which was based mostly in Southern Rhodesia, was expanded in

the Federation years and ... served in Kuwait and at Aden in support of British operations in the Middle East.

Significantly, these operations were the first exposure by Rhodesian units to counter-insurgency warfare situations and, as Flower (10) records, the experience would be drawn upon heavily in the years to come. Pointedly, this exposure to guerrilla war cemented the idea of the enemy as an internally situated, amorphous “other”, a postcolonial alterity that would percolate Rhodesian thinking in the years to come. It is possible, too, that the British “success” in countering the communist insurgency in Malaya blinded Rhodesian military thinkers to the different realities and likely outcomes of their own insurgency problem.

Grandiose in design, the Federal project lasted barely a decade. Much has been written about the Federation and its demise, but it is sufficient for our purposes to state that the collapse of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was hastened by a potently toxic mix that included the hegemonic political position of Southern Rhodesia’s white population, the inability of whites to comprehend, let alone concede, the democratic and social aspirations of black people in the territories and vastly disparate levels of economic development across the Federation. Similarly, Macmillan’s “Winds of Change” speech in 1960 to the SA parliament signalled a shift away from colonialism and predicted the rise in African nationalism and pan-Africanism. All of these factors set black political aspirations in Southern Rhodesia on a path away from what was offered to them: a heavily prescribed qualified franchise to be rolled out over a long period of time and always structured to guarantee a white veto. Various attempts were made to save or reconstruct the Federation, but nationalist opposition in the territories least populated by whites (Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland) proved insurmountable, and so the experiment failed in 1963 with Nyasaland becoming the Republic of Malawi on 6 July 1964 and Northern Rhodesia being granted independence as the new state of Zambia on 24 October 1964. Southern Rhodesia, with its concentration of whites, was excluded from the decolonisation and independence-granting process primarily because, as Mtisi, Nyakudya and Barnes suggest “Britain was unwilling to grant independence without a sign of commitment to black majority rule” (118). The diverging political trajectories of the former federal territories account then, for the singling out of

(southern) Rhodesia's history and fortunes in our examination of the war that followed.

The Southern Rhodesian nationalists at this time were united in their rejection of Federation, but divided in their approaches to decolonisation and the route to be followed in any accession to power. In 1963, the nationalists split into two factions – ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) led by Ndabaningi Sithole and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union) led by Joshua Nkomo. Sibanda attributes the split to “ethnic differences within the nationalist membership” (140). Concurrent with the nationalist split, a significant realignment of political sympathies and a clouding of vision occurred within the minority white electorate. As Flower (102) states:

[t]he decisions made by Rhodesia's white leaders in April 1964 and her black leaders just a few weeks later, were perhaps the most crucial to the story that began with the RF (Rhodesian Front) victory in 1962 and ended with the ZANU (PF) victory eighteen years later. The whites ousted Winston Field and took a sharp turn to the right, from which course they never deviated until the country had almost bled to death; the blacks, frustrated by repeated detentions of their leaders and the banning of nationalist parties, realised their aspirations would not be achieved through peaceful negotiation and turned down the road which led to guerrilla war.

Into this power contest stepped Ian Smith. Supported by a far right element in the RF,⁵ he deposed Winston Field as Prime Minister of Rhodesia and leader of the Rhodesian Front in April 1964. In the quest for Rhodesian independence, Smith was prepared to go where Field was not: a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (modelled on the American example of 1776) from Britain was viewed as infinitely preferable to any acquiescence to majority rule. Again, much has been written about Smith's UDI putsch on 11 November 1965, but a sober contextual assessment is this one offered by Mlambo:

⁵ Smith was one of the founder-members of the RF in 1962.

The decision to break away from Britain must be understood also in the context of decolonisation that was sweeping across the continent. The military revolt in the Congo just a few days after that country's independence led to a mass exodus of whites into Rhodesia and South Africa, confirming local fears about what African majority rule might hold for them unless they could pre-empt it by taking their independence from Britain. Thus while the attainment of independence elsewhere in Africa was an inspiration to the African nationalists, its significance for the whites was just the opposite (110-111).

The opening shots: 1966 – 68

UDI created a political and constitutional crisis of mammoth proportions both in Rhodesia and Britain. The Smith regime's hubris and the confused responses of the British government, particularly its unwillingness to end the rebellion through military force, were viewed with dismay by the nationalists. As Cilliers (6) notes:

by 1966, however, ZAPU, still the major black nationalist movement, had realised that the British government could not be induced to intervene actively in Rhodesia... The major task of the insurgent forces existing at this early stage was therefore to convince the Organisation of African Unity and the world at large that the forces to overthrow the regime of Ian Smith really did exist.

The decision made to opt for armed struggle, formulated some years previously, found expression in early 1966. On 28 April, 1966, a group of ZANLA guerrillas who had infiltrated from Zambia, clashed with elements of the Rhodesian security forces at Sinoia (Chinhoyi), about 100 kilometres north-east of the capital, Salisbury. The date has entered the Zimbabwean lexicon as "Chimurenga Day", the start of the war of liberation. Militarily, the clash was disastrous for ZANLA, with seven guerrillas killed and with the Rhodesians suffering no losses. A similar incursion in May 1966 led to the first white civilian casualties when the Viljoen family were attacked on their farm near Hartley (Chegututu). Again, follow up operations by the Rhodesians led to the death or capture of most of the guerrillas. A further contact occurred with a third insurgent group, again near Sinoia (Chinhoyi) and the result was similar – the death

or capture of most of the guerrillas. On the political front, the Smith regime took part in settlement talks with the British government on board the British warship HMS Tiger over the period 2 to 4 December 1966. These talks proved fruitless and led to a hardening of attitudes all round, with the UK government seeking more stringent United Nations sanctions resolutions against Rhodesia. South Africa and Portugal chose not to impose sanctions, so essential supplies of oil and export gateways were maintained such that the effects of sanctions were dampened. The political stalemate, whilst serious, did not threaten the mid-term survival of Rhodesia and the military situation, as Flower records was such that security officials, "were inclined to dismiss the campaign as being of little consequence" (105). Events a year later portended an ominous development.

In August 1967, Rhodesian security forces made contact with a large insurgent group near the town of Wankie (Hwange). This group, a combined force of ZIPRA and South African ANC combatants, had infiltrated from Zambia near the Victoria Falls, and the South African contingent had intended to continue southwards to conduct military operations against the apartheid regime in South Africa. In a series of running battles, the group was contained, losing almost half its number killed or captured. Significantly, Rhodesian forces suffered their first casualties of the war, losing 7 members killed in action. Flower notes that:

the guerrillas' morale and standard of training was much higher than anything yet encountered in Rhodesia; the guerrillas fought a military action face to face, with no civilians involved, and were defeated only by the [Rhodesian] Security Forces' air power, mobility and much greater effectiveness in communications and medical services (108).

The presence of South African guerrillas in the group prompted the involvement of South African forces in Rhodesia. Elements from the South African Police were despatched to support the Rhodesian forces, and this set the pattern for varying levels of South African involvement in the war for the years to come. A further two combined incursions occurred in 1968, again with Rhodesian forces prevailing in the clashes, albeit with losses which included the first South African policemen killed in Rhodesia. The apparent successes of the Rhodesian security forces

lulled Rhodesia into a false sense of security... It also tended to strengthen the impression amongst Rhodesians that military action, to the exclusion of political and other non-military action, would be sufficient to destroy the insurgency threat (Cilliers: 9).

Further political talks with the British government, this time aboard HMS Fearless held between 8 and 13 October 1968, were again fruitless. With sanctions not seeming to have too deleterious an effect, there was no sense of urgency in Salisbury. Furthermore, the insurgency had appeared to stall. The incursions that had taken place all emanated from Zambia, and the Rhodesians focused their patrolling efforts on the inhospitable and sparsely populated Zambesi River valley area. As far as they were concerned, the other borders, with Botswana in the west, South Africa to the south and Mozambique to the east, were secure. In particular, Rhodesia maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese rulers of Mozambique and cooperated with the Portuguese in their efforts to contain Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) forces then infiltrating Mozambique from Tanzania. Things were set to change, however.

In 1971, the British government undertook a further initiative to settle the Rhodesian problem. An agreement was signed with the Smith regime on 21 November, 1971 but its implementation was made subject to a test of acceptability by the majority of Rhodesians. This test took the form of a series of consultative meetings between a British government commission headed by Lord Pearce (former Lord of Appeal in Ordinary and head of the British Press Council) and representatives of the African nationalists within Rhodesia, united under the banner of the [Rhodesian] African National Council led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa. The Pearce Commission findings, released in March 1972, however, were that the settlement proposals were not acceptable to the majority of Rhodesians. Ian Smith's reaction was bitterly blunt. In his autobiography (157), he writes:

The absolute fraud of the Pearce Commission Report became all the more obvious when I received a report during the early months of 1973 (April-May) that Bishop Muzorewa, who had led the campaign for the 'No' vote during the

test of acceptability, was now conceding his mistake, and thinking about reopening the matter with me.

Mtisi, Nyakudya and Barnes more pointedly note that the Pearce Commission findings underlined the growing polarisation of the majority population, and their waning confidence in conventional political structures to deliver fundamental change, and the prospect of a genuine transfer of power to a black majority (141). Events externally were to set the course of the territory on an altogether different tack.

The opening of the front with Mozambique, détente and Kissinger: 1972 – 1976

Externally, rifts between the nationalists led to a split between the ZAPU and ZANU forces. Dumiso Dabengwa suggests that the cracks began with internal party assessments of the armed actions undertaken in the 1960s, but the discourses escalated into unresolvable disputes about strategy between ZANU and ZAPU forces (30). A brief attempt to unite the two groups collapsed, and ZANU began to move out of Zambia and relocate its troops in the Tete province of Mozambique where Frelimo had effectively pinned down Portuguese colonial forces and was operating freely. ZANU's thinking here was that Tete offered a safe base from which it could begin the infiltration of Rhodesia along a new front. Central to the strategy behind this new approach to guerrilla warfare was, as Stoneman and Cliffe note,

a decisive strategy based far more on prior politicization of people in a rural area thus making it safe for small groups of guerrillas to dig roots and slowly begin operations of hit and run ambushes and mining roads designed to exclude the government from the TTLs [Tribal Trust Lands] (22)

The war entered a new phase on 21 December 1972. ZANLA guerrillas, having already infiltrated and entrenched themselves in the Centenary area, attacked Altena farm in the north east of Rhodesia and laid landmines on roads that follow up troops would use. The Rhodesians were taken by surprise by this attack as it was launched from Mozambique. It soon became clear that this was no isolated incident, but rather a coordinated, strategic move to escalate the war along a new front. According to Cilliers' assessment:

not only had ZANLA succeeded in establishing a relatively secure base area inside Rhodesia, but had also succeeded in obtaining the full cooperation and support of the black population within the area. This proved a crucial factor in their later successes and in the way the Rhodesian government attempted to eradicate the threat (14).

The Rhodesian response to the 1972 actions was a massive increase in army patrols and operations in the north east of the country. As Moorcraft and McLaughlin note, an extension of initial conscription from nine months to a one year period (37) was necessary to provide the manpower to effect this increase in military operations. In 1973, the size of the regular army was increased and more active recruitment of black volunteer troops was undertaken to meet the threat posed by the new front that had opened up. Ambitious plans were conceived to deny the guerrillas access to the country or succour once across the border. A massive minefield or *cordon sanitaire* was planted along the border with Mozambique at huge expense, yet, as Reid-Daly records in *Pamwe Chete* (158), it proved of no practical military use as the guerrillas were able to breach the minefield at will. Another method, the relocation of local inhabitants into protected villages (a tactic learned from the Malayan experience) was adopted with vigour, but as Mtisi, Nyakudya and Barnes point out “in the northern and eastern districts... protected villages placed curfews on villagers who were often killed if they broke them, and shelter in the fenced camps was often poor” (139-141).

The Rhodesian military’s assessment was that it had the insurgency in hand for much of 1973. Although there had been numerous land mine detonations and a number of ambushes, military intelligence believed the situation to be well contained. Cilliers’ summation is revealing:

by the close of 1973 the number of insurgents in Hurricane [the operational area on the northern border] was estimated at a mere 145 men. Insurgent casualties for the year stood at 179 while 44 members of the Security Forces and 12 white civilians had lost their lives (18).

1974 was to prove a year that appeared to go well on the surface for the Rhodesians. The economy was doing well, stimulated, as Stoneman and Cliffe report, by “rapid import-substitution led growth (about 7 per cent per annum)” (42), and the military authorities were confident. Events far away in Europe were about to change the rosy Rhodesian picture. On 25 April, 1974, metropolitan Portugal was rocked by a *coup d'état*, the so-called “Carnation Revolution”, which unusually, for a military take-over, sought the democratisation of the state rather than signalling a forceful imposition of military or totalitarian rule. Within a few weeks, the new authorities in Lisbon announced that Portugal would divest itself of all its overseas possessions and June 1975 was figured as the date upon which Frelimo would ascend to power in Mozambique. This move plunged the Rhodesian state and security apparatus into something of a crisis. Portugal had not respected UN sanctions against Rhodesia, and Rhodesian exports and vital oil supplies had passed through the Mozambican ports of Beira and Lourenco Marques (later Maputo). In addition, a direct air link operated by the Portuguese national carrier TAP from Salisbury to Lisbon, allowed Rhodesian businessmen, sanctions-busters and government officials easy access to the various European capitals and centres of business. The Portuguese army, involved in its own struggle against Frelimo, had also provided the Rhodesian military with logistical support and intelligence on ZANLA movements in Tete. All of these factors hung in the balance and the Rhodesians rightly feared that a Frelimo government would prove hostile and effectively open the entire eastern border of Rhodesia to insurgency.

The Rhodesian military response was to gear up the state of their forces and adopt new tactics. Defence spending in 1974 increased substantially (Cilliers 21) and direct foreign recruitment into the Rhodesian army was undertaken (Moorcraft and McLaughlin 39). A new tactic known as “Fire Force” was developed in response to increased guerrilla activity. Fire Force can best be described as a vertical envelopment of guerrilla forces by helicopter gunships and troop-carrying aircraft. The speed and ease of deployment of a fire force obviated the necessity for large scale foot patrols. Troops could be inserted into combat and withdrawn immediately thereafter. Fire force was an effective military tactic, but its adoption was also an oblique admission that the Rhodesian army did not have the manpower to maintain adequate ground coverage through conventional foot patrols, and also lacked the

logistical means to support large numbers of troops in the field. Events late in 1974 were to have significant impacts on both the nationalist armies and the Rhodesians.

Internal feuding in Zambia amongst remaining ZANU cadres led to the Nhari rebellion – “a confrontation between remaining members of the ZANU high command in Zambia and a group of younger freedom fighters” (Mtisi, Nyakudya and Barnes: 152). The rebellion was put down ruthlessly, but not before Zambian authorities had imprisoned many of the ZANU high command. The net effect of the Nhari rebellion was to upset the insurgency efforts of ZANU for nearly a year. Simultaneously, the South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, had embarked on a détente policy with a number of African states. As part of this engagement, Vorster imagined a period of accommodation and acceptance of Apartheid South Africa by significant African countries. Under Vorster’s aegis, détente moves included an attempt to reopen settlement talks between the Rhodesian regime and the nationalists. As a precursor ZANU and ZAPU were loosely grouped under the leadership of Bishop Abel Muzorewa (internal ANC leader in Rhodesia), and were thus persuaded to attend talks with the Rhodesian government. The Rhodesians, in turn, agreed to a ceasefire and the release of the detained nationalists Joshua Nkomo, and Robert Mugabe. Unbeknownst to the Rhodesians, the nationalists were far from united under the leadership of Muzorewa. Attitudes had hardened and Sithole had been deposed as leader of ZANU by Robert Mugabe. The reality was that the guerrilla armies looked to Nkomo and Mugabe for their orders, not Muzorewa. Stoneman and Cliffe assess the transformation in nationalist power positions thus:

Muzorewa was the neutral initially apolitical figurehead but, when the African political bodies were again allowed in Rhodesia after 1974, he and the Council became contenders for power. His party and a rump of ZANU that stayed loyal to its first and deposed president, Ndabaningi Sithole, plus some groups around some traditional chiefs, became the ‘internal’ parties after 1975, dissociating themselves from ZAPU and ZANU that remained in exile and from the armed struggle (24).

Whilst the political landscape was changing visibly, the ceasefire that had been tentatively in place collapsed spectacularly when a number of South African policemen were attacked and killed on 16 December 1974. Talks between the Smith government and the nationalists at Victoria Falls continued, but no accord was forthcoming and the negotiation process broke down in August 1975. South Africa attempted to place pressure on the Rhodesians by announcing the withdrawal of all supporting South African police members, but the opportunity had been missed. The war was set to continue.

The Rhodesian security chiefs assessed that they retained the upper hand in the war and set to its prosecution with vigour. Cilliers (30) notes several indicators of the deterioration in the security situation in Rhodesia. The first was an increase in defence spending and as an indicator that manpower shortages were affecting troop deployments, the initial conscription period was extended from one year to eighteen months. Another sign that things were not quite going the Rhodesians' way, was the declaration of two new general operational areas "Thrasher" and "Repulse" in early 1976. A third, "Tangent" was defined later that year (see Figure 2 overleaf). The declaration of these operational areas was an acknowledgement that the insurgency was no longer confined to the northern border of Rhodesia, but had spread along the entire eastern border with Mozambique. The border with Zambia had been quiet following sporadic talks between Smith and Nkomo, but by mid-1976, the Zambian front opened up again and insurgent activity across the northern and north-western borders resumed in earnest. From a Rhodesian perspective, a number of events early in 1976 signalled an ominous redirection of the war.

On 3 March, 1976, the Mozambican government declared war on Rhodesia (Smith 184). Overnight, the lengthy eastern border was closed and a significant percentage of Rhodesia's rolling stock that was used on the Umtali-Beira rail corridor link to the coast, was appropriated by the Frelimo government. The Mozambicans announced that they would permit ZANLA to operate freely along the entire length of this border and provide them with shelter and base camps.



Fig. 2. "Rhodesian internal operational areas". (Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhodesian_Security_Forces_operational_areas.png)

The psychological impact of this new front to the east was brought home to the average white Rhodesian over the Easter weekend in 1976 when some white South African tourists on motor cycles were ambushed on the main road near Fort Victoria (Masvingo) and three were killed. This attack, on a major arterial road, by guerrillas who had infiltrated from Mozambique, signalled the immediate end of unrestricted day time traffic on Rhodesian roads; for some time, no traffic had travelled at night due to the risk of ambush. Civilian traffic could hereafter only move on Rhodesia's arterial roads in ponderous convoys guarded by armed troops. Rail links too, were sabotaged, trains attacked, and passenger rail traffic was cut to a minimum and restricted to daylight hours. The psychological impact of the war on civilians can only be estimated. White Rhodesians took to arming themselves whenever, however and

wherever they travelled, and it was not uncommon for the boarding schools in rural areas that remained open to deploy senior pupils as armed guards at night. The landmine threat on unpaved roads grew apace and as Cooke and Locke detail, a rudimentary arms industry grew in Rhodesia to provide armoured vehicles, small arms, home defence devices and anti-ambush munitions systems for civilian vehicles.

A significant departure from established Rhodesian tactics also occurred in 1976. There had been several instances of “hot pursuit” operations where Rhodesian troops had temporarily crossed international borders during contacts with guerrillas, but uncharacteristically cautious of world opinion, the Rhodesian army had deliberately restricted its operations to internal actions. That was set to change dramatically when, on 9 August 1976, a group of Selous Scouts infiltrated Mozambique and attacked a staging post at Nyadzonia. The raid, achieved with complete surprise, killed over 1000 people. Flower’s assessment of the Nyadzonia attack is telling. He writes: “we [Operations Co-ordinating Committee⁶] were not prepared to take responsibility for lying about the nature of the raid and we could not devise a formula which would account for the death of such large numbers of unarmed, untrained people” (151). The border town of Umtali (Mutare) came under sustained mortar attack from positions in Mozambique on Wednesday 11 August 1976, with shells landing in white suburban areas inflicting damage to private property but no significant white casualties. The timing of the Umtali mortar attacks, just after the Nyadzonia swoop, suggested a new phase of the war was opening where the guerrillas made no attempt to restrict their attacks to military or strategic targets and white civilians were equally at risk. World reaction to the events at Nyadzonia was one of horror and the South African government turned the raid into a stick with which to goad the Rhodesians into accepting the Kissinger proposals barely six weeks later.

Dr Henry Kissinger, then US Secretary of State, arrived in South Africa with a determination to exert pressure on South Africa such that Rhodesia would make the

⁶ According to Flower (57) OCC was set up in 1964 and was administered by the heads of the BSAP, the Rhodesian Army and Rhodesian Air Force. Its purpose was to plan and coordinate all combined forces operations.

concessions required to restart settlement talks. South Africa's *détente* policy had collapsed; it faced a student uprising in Soweto and had begun a secret military invasion of Angola in the wake of the power vacuum left by the Portuguese withdrawal a year previously. The nature of South Africa's political and economic hold over Rhodesia is now well documented, but Cilliers interestingly records that fifty per cent of Rhodesia's defence budget was paid by South Africa (33) so clearly the prosecution of the war was beyond the capacity of Rhodesia's fiscus. To reinforce the point, Rhodesia's border traffic, including the flow of fuel, weapons and ammunition needed to prosecute the war was severely disrupted until Smith accepted Kissinger's proposals and made his public statement accepting the principle of majority rule on 24 September 1976. A conference scheduled to take place in Geneva, Switzerland, was convened by the British to begin on 28 October, 1976. It was hoped that this conference, underpinned by Smith's acceptance of majority rule, would prove sufficient to budge the constitutional log jam, lead to a settlement and end the war. Whilst the politicians travelled to Europe, the war continued unabated.

In Geneva, the talks became mired in difficulties. Mtusi, Nyakudya and Barnes suggest that "political machinations amongst the nationalists also caused discord in the negotiation process" (148), and the conference broke down irretrievably in January 1978. It seems that the nationalists had used the conference as an opportunity to flex their military muscles. Flower, in particular, notes that ZIPRA and ZANLA launched campaigns based on the assumption that Rhodesia's guard was down. Attacks increased from Zambia and ZIPRA guerrillas also began infiltrating from Botswana. By 1977, the whole of Rhodesia was now an operational area (see Figure 2), with no area of the country deemed outside of guerrilla influence or safe from attack. Moorcraft and McLaughlin note that all white school boys were required to register for military service in the year they turned sixteen and methods were put in place to stop young white men from leaving the country. School leavers were required to proceed immediately to the army for an initial two year period of service, before they could enrol for tertiary education. Tellingly, all able bodied white men up to the 38 year age cohort were subject to 190 days of military service every year. In effect these men were rotating through the Territorial Army on a six weeks in, six weeks out cycle. Older men, until the age of 60, had less onerous call-up

commitments, but certainly by this time, white Rhodesians were universally armed and the country was under siege. The strain on the economy, on marriages and family life was severe. Moorcraft and McLaughlin note that at this time, Rhodesia had one of the highest divorce and alcoholism rates in the world (131). The hawks in the Rhodesian security apparatus began to sniff the possibility of defeat in the air and plans were set in motion to escalate the war. The concept of a total war strategy, first mooted in 1976, took root in Rhodesian military thinking.

Towards the end 1977-1980

In 1977, the Rhodesians seemed determined to take the fight to the insurgents. In that year, martial law was declared throughout much of rural Rhodesia. At the same time, dusk to dawn shoot-to-kill curfews cloaked most rural areas, and even parts of the industrial infrastructure in the main towns and cities. Those white farmers who continued to farm did so heavily armed and under guard, and retreated into fortified farmhouses at night. Individual farmsteads were patched into a radio network connected to armed reaction units in case of attack. Rural tribesmen living along known infiltration routes were forcibly relocated from their traditional lands and permanent frozen zones were created that were essentially free fire areas for Rhodesian troops. The work of rural development officials involved in clinics, agricultural extension and stock-dipping programmes was abandoned and most of the schools servicing rural areas were closed down. These measures, combined with guerrilla attacks, ensured the destruction of most rural development infrastructure. Flower (137) records too, the growing interest in Rhodesian “dirty tricks” such as the covert supply of poisoned clothing to guerrillas and their sympathisers, targeted assassinations and bombings. Whereas previously the Rhodesian security forces had been reluctant to mount cross border operations, external operations of increasing frequency, scale and geographic penetration were mounted against ZIPRA and ZANLA bases in Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique. Mozambique attracted particularly negative attention from the Rhodesians and in a chilling move, Rhodesia began preparing a proxy guerrilla group RENAMO, to operate against FRELIMO government forces. To punish Mozambique further, acts of sabotage were conducted with attention being paid by Rhodesian forces to disrupting civilian road and rail traffic through the destruction of economic infrastructure such as bridges,

roads and rail lines. Moorcraft and McLaughlin (120) report that the extremes to which embargoed Rhodesia was prepared to go in the prosecution of the war included the support of a *coup d'état* in the Comoros Islands in 1978 – a move that facilitated the importation of weapons and aircraft needed to prosecute the war.

There were further signs of an intensified struggle in 1977. On 6 August, a large bomb planted in a Woolworths store in central Salisbury exploded and killed eleven civilians. Though there had been isolated grenade attacks on urban targets previously, urban whites regarded the war as confined to the rural or border areas. The reality that no part of the country was safe hit home hard and quickly. Overnight, white civilians had to accept the possibility of violence on the streets. Shoppers were confronted with routine bag and parcel searches, and store-front glazing throughout the country was reinforced with anti-blast laminates the likes of which must have rung warning bells for survivors of the London blitz three decades previously. Cilliers notes that “the war was about to be intensified to an unprecedented level bringing the war closer to the urban white communities than at any time before” (39). The Rhodesians were faced with an onslaught but, in Cilliers’ assessment, they “entirely lacked any grasp of the dynamics of the revolutionary threat” (40).

The Rhodesian response was to escalate external operations in Mozambique and Zambia against ZANLA and ZIPRA forces. The nightly security force communiques on Rhodesian radio and television trumpeted body count tallies in a vain attempt to bolster morale, but there was no escaping the fact that every day brought news of more deaths, more casualties and more suffering. Rhodesian attempts to continue some kind of civil administration and restrict guerrilla action in the rural areas had rested on the protected village strategy. In 1977, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission estimated that over half a million rural people were “living behind the wire” (Moorcraft and McLaughlin 149) in protected villages. One of the problems with the protected villages was that they were interpreted as concentration camps designed to confine populations rather than protect them or improve their lot in any way. Politically, the protected villages were counterproductive and made little difference to the military situation. Guerrillas had, by now, thoroughly infiltrated Rhodesia and could move at will in many rural areas. Flower (193) notes that “[m]uch as members of the Rhodesian government would have preferred things to

stand still, the deterioration of the security situation was pushing them towards settlement.” Ian Smith, the man who had said in a radio interview on March 20, 1976 “Let me say it again. I don't believe in black majority rule ever in Rhodesia, not in a *thousand years*” (emphasis in original), was forced by the deteriorating military settlement to concede, and his government began pursuing an “internal settlement” agreement in 1977 that was based on the Kissinger proposals but excluded Nkomo and Mugabe and their ZIPRA and ZANLA armies. This pact was termed “internal” to emphasize that it had been reached with moderate African leaders inside Rhodesia, as opposed to the militant Patriotic Front (a military- political alliance formed in 1976 at the time of the Geneva all-party talks) of Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, who were waging a guerrilla war against the Rhodesian regime from the neighbouring states of Mozambique and Zambia respectively (Ngara 1978).

The “internal settlement” was signed on 3 March 1978 between Smith, Bishop Abel Muzorewa of the UANC, Ndabaningi Sithole (ZANU-Sithole) and Chief Jeremiah Chirau of the Zimbabwe United Peoples Organisation (ZUPO). Elections were scheduled for March 1979. Any hopes that this arrangement would attract international recognition were quashed when UN Security Council Resolution 423 of 14 March, 1978 condemned the settlement as illegal. The internal parties had hoped for UK recognition, but this was not forthcoming. The war continued with ZANLA and ZIPRA both declaring their determination to continue until their objectives had been met. Sithole and Muzorewa made numerous claims that they controlled all the guerrillas and that the war would wind down as news of their political success reached the fighters in the bush. The opposite proved true.

Precisely where the next Rhodesian strategy, the Security Force Auxiliaries, came from is still not clear. Flower (204) reckons that two of the major leaders involved in the internal settlement, Bishop Muzorewa (UANC) and Ndabaningi Sithole (ZANU – Sithole), needed armed supporters in the field “if they were to have anything like the same chance as Nkomo and Mugabe in ‘politicising’ the people”, but the sudden appearance in [white] public view of these irregular armed militias in 1978 at around the time that the settlement agreement was reached, added a new and dangerous edge to the war.

Nominally under the control of the Rhodesian Special Branch, the SFA units that aligned themselves to Muzorewa and Sithole were little more than “private armies” (Preston 63). Reid-Daly (356) was particularly scathing about them: “the more we had to do with the whole pathetic set-up, the more we came to realize that the government, and through them, the people of Rhodesia, were being taken for a long and bumpy ride.” The SFAs were a propaganda exercise, designed to give the “internal” black leaders some credibility and suggest that they had the support of guerrillas. It was hoped that these “on-side” guerrillas could win the support of black rural inhabitants away from the insurgent armies of ZANLA and ZIPRA. The SFA experiment gave photo opportunities for Sithole and Muzorewa, but the SFAs caused havoc. They were poorly trained, ill-disciplined and their deployment was often characterised by general lawlessness. Far from liberating areas under guerrilla control, the SFA presence complicated matters. The SFA were not, on the whole, guerrillas who had switched sides. Mostly they were unemployed young men given rudimentary training, basic weapons and sent out into rural areas. Rhodesian clashes with (genuine) ZANLA and ZIPRA forces continued and the number of contacts, ambushes and land mine incidents rose. In a very few cases, SFA forces brought some stability to some rural communities, but as a whole they proved inept and were outfought on almost every occasion that they came into contact with “real” guerrillas. In too many cases, SFA forces resorted to violence and lawlessness themselves, preying on the very people they were supposed to have been protecting. So bad was the conduct of SFA that on several occasions, RSF units were deployed to wipe out those SFA who were deemed to be mere bandits. Moorcraft (162) records that 183 Sithole-aligned SFAs were killed in a series of attacks by RSF in 1979. Rhodesians were not informed of these problems with SFAs, and the killings of problematic SFA men were covered up by reports that the deaths occurred in contacts between Rhodesian troops and ZANLA or ZIPRA forces.

Despite the “internal settlement”, the war took a darker turn on 3 September 1978. ZIPRA guerrillas equipped with a STRELA surface-to-air infrared homing missile shot down an Air Rhodesia Viscount airliner shortly after its take off from the resort town of Kariba. In the crash that followed, 38 of the 52 passengers and crew were killed. A further 10 survivors were killed by ZIPRA forces at the crash site. Whilst man-portable missiles had been fired at Rhodesian Air Force aircraft on external

operations, the use of these weapons inside the country and against a civilian target added a new element of danger. Road travel had not been considered safe for years, but the guerrillas' ability to attack air traffic at will anywhere inside the country, was an ominous development for Rhodesians. The immediate Rhodesian reaction was an enormous strike on ZIPRA camps in Zambia, partially to boost white morale, but also designed to send a message to the Zambian government and ZIPRA that Rhodesia could, and would, strike at will and inflict substantial damage. At one point, Rhodesian aircraft dominated Zambian air space and the raid that followed led to the deaths of hundreds of people (Flower: 214). Martial law was extended over the remaining areas of Rhodesia too. Practical measures introduced to civilian flights included operations without visible navigation lights, the application of radiation-absorbing paints and exhaust shrouds. Extreme "Khe San" style high approach angle landings and precipitously steep take offs became the norm for what little civilian air traffic continued under the circumstances.

It is a debatable point whether the majority of white Rhodesians fully supported the war especially towards the end. Ed Bird, a former Rhodesian special branch operator, notes cases where white farmers actively cultivated relationships with guerrillas "by not reporting their presence or feeding them or both" (133). Certainly the war's negative effect on white morale was glaringly apparent, indeed it had been so for a number of years. Writing in 1976, Donald Baker assessed the conditions facing whites, and these circumstances deteriorated in the following years:

whites are virtually "captives" in Rhodesia, especially since recent restrictions have made it difficult for them to leave the country. For example, those who wish to emigrate can take out only Rhodesian \$1 000 (roughly, US \$1 500), and those eligible for any form of military service (aged 16-38) must have prior approval to leave the country. With the money restrictions it is difficult for people to survive elsewhere while they seek employment. Hence, many are fearful of emigrating. Moreover, white Rhodesians have been propagandised with the belief that they are pariahs and no other country will accept them. That viewpoint is often confirmed by reports of would-be emigrants rebuffed when seeking visas to Canada, the US, Australia and elsewhere. Although white Rhodesians could possibly emigrate to South Africa, most are opposed

to settlement there for numerous reasons. Some, for instance, dislike its racial policies; others believe racial conflict will escalate there in coming years; and still others have a cultural dislike for Afrikaners. That leaves many of that group as virtually captives in Rhodesia. Believing there are no alternatives, white Rhodesians reluctantly remain captives of the system (5).

Even so, (white) people did leave Rhodesia. In droves. Josiah Brownwell notes that the nett loss of whites due to immigration grew so serious in 1978 that “the Smith government debated banning again, the publication of immigration figures, as during the UDI period” (42).

ZANLA scored a massive propaganda coup on 12 December 1978. A party of saboteurs struck at the main oil depot storage facility in the capital, and in a single rocket attack managed to set fire to and destroy a number of oil storage tanks, causing the loss of millions of litres of fuel, as well as the almost total destruction of the depot infrastructure. The blaze that ensued destroyed much of Rhodesia’s vital fuel reserves and the conflagration was so intense that it was visible from a distance of 120 kilometres, and could only be extinguished after some days (Mtisi, Nyakudya and Barnes 154) with the assistance of experienced South African fire fighters. The pall of smoke and the influx of hundreds of troops into the capital was a visible reminder to urban dwellers that the siege was tightening, and that absolutely no part of the country was immune from sudden and devastating attack. The Rhodesian response was predictable, with ongoing external options in Mozambique and Zambia. A few weeks later, in January 1979, guerrillas launched an attack against the international airport at Salisbury proving their capacity to operate freely in the capital.

On 12 February 1979, a second Air Rhodesia Viscount was downed by a missile. This time there were no survivors among the 59 passengers and crew. A week later, the Rhodesian Air Force mounted an air attack on a ZIPRA base at Luso in Angola. This raid struck at a target 1000 kilometres from the Rhodesian border and required the presence of South African fighter aircraft to act as top cover to guard against any retaliation by Cuban forces in Angola (Abbott:12). The planned “internal settlement” continued, with elections held in March 1979 and the result was a win for

Muzorewa's UANC. A "unity" government of the clumsily coined state of "Zimbabwe-Rhodesia" came into being on 1 June, 1979. Although the country technically had a black majority government in place, international recognition was withheld as events had outpaced the politicians and the war raged on. Both ZANLA and ZIPRA scoffed at the result and declared it an empty propaganda exercise. Attempts by the new leadership to gain international support were stillborn, but in August 1979 the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Lusaka put pressure on the British government to intervene and bring an end to the war that was causing havoc and so much suffering in central Africa. The swift result of this was the Lancaster House conference that convened in Britain in September, 1979. The forces of ZANLA and ZIPRA facing the Rhodesians at this time do much to underscore the military crisis the Rhodesians were facing. According to Chimhanda (179) ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas could field substantial numbers of troops in the closing stages of the war. I have included a similar table below detailing Rhodesian troop musterings⁷ to assist the comparison, though it should be noted that the bulk of RSF strength were reservists, so total force numbers are not reliable indicators of actual numbers deployed in the field.

PF Forces	ZIPRA	ZANLA
Cadres deployed internally	04055	10 275
Trained cadres in external bases	16000	3500
Cadres in training (external bases)	02950	14000
Totals	23005	27775
Units of RSF	Total force numbers	
Rhodesian Army	66 250 (5000 regular troops)	
Rhodesian Air Force	1300 (150 pilots)	
British South Africa Police	43 000 (8000 regular members)	
Internal Affairs	Unknown	
Guard Force	1000	
SFA (Muzorewa)	Unknown	
SFA (Sithole)	Unknown	
Total	111 550 (regular and reserve)	

⁷ Accurate RSF force numbers are difficult to quantify reliably. This information sourced from "Guardians of White Power: the Rhodesian Security Forces". Zimbabwe Briefing #6, Anti-Apartheid Movement Publication, London.

The purpose of the Lancaster House talks, however, was simple: all-party negotiations to settle the Rhodesian question and end the war (Mtisi, Nyakudya and Barnes 165).

The Rhodesian security establishment was well aware that they were losing the war and staring defeat in the face. Flower pointedly records that:

because Rhodesia was losing the war at home, the military planners in COMOPS [Combined Operations] turned outwards in frustration, to strike beyond our borders where the inhibitions that restrict an army fighting on its own ground need not apply (213).

Flower's comment implies that towards the end of the war, the RSF did not observe the Geneva Convention on external raids at least. To strengthen their negotiating hand leading up to the conference, the Rhodesian raids into Zambia and Mozambique increased in intensity. For some time, the Rhodesians had been aware of ZIPRA plans to launch a conventional assault on Rhodesia and in a bid to forestall this, Rhodesian forces set about destroying every road bridge on all the Zambian trunk and main roads that could possibly be used by ZIPRA forces in any push over the Rhodesian border (Reid-Daly 452). A similar strategy was used against Mozambique. Rhodesian CIO created the RENAMO rebel group and whilst this proxy force diverted some FRELIMO attention, Rhodesian forces set about similarly disrupting vehicular traffic in Mozambique. Between 1 and 7 September 1979, the Rhodesians launched a major operation that included as a target the only rail/road bridge over the Limpopo at Aldeia da Barragem. Again it is a moot point whether any of these actions played any significant role in ending the war. Flower suggests that Samora Machel exerted enormous pressure on Mugabe's ZANU to settle at Lancaster House (247), but one thing was clear, the appetite for war was sated all round and the conference achieved its aims – the negotiated end to the Rhodesian crisis and, ultimately, the war.

Joshua Nkomo (204) neatly summed up the Lancaster House agreement as “a result of muddle and compromise, reached in haste in order to stop the bloodshed”. Lord Soames, the British-appointed interim governor, arrived in the country in early

December, 1979 and a ceasefire was declared to be in effect from 26 December, 1979. In terms of the ceasefire, Rhodesian forces were confined to barracks and guerrillas were ordered to move towards designated assembly points. A Commonwealth Monitoring Force provided military supervision of the ceasefire which, despite some incidents, held. Elections held in March 1980, handed power to Robert Mugabe's ZANU (PF) and he became the first black Prime Minister of Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980. Officially, the war was over. In the period 1980-1981 a new Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) was formed comprising elements of the three former warring parties. A British military training team supervised the integration of these forces which did not go smoothly. In the immediate post war period, as Stoneman and Cliffe (45) note:

After the confirmation of their position in power after the 1980 elections, the ZANU leadership sought to accomplish three political objectives. First they wanted to bed the country down into some degree of stability after the years of war – in part this was sought through the policy of reconciliation. Second, they wanted to consolidate their own power, which meant specifically the establishment of their authority as a government and in the process a redefinition of the structure and role of the party. These two aims were seen as being effected by and equated with a third objective... a one party state.

Fallout with ZAPU happened in quick order and the ZNA was faced with its first test, dealing with an armed uprising that happened in Bulawayo in November, 1980. Hundreds of combatants were killed in this fighting between former ZANLA and ZIPRA troops. The rebellion was put down with force, but was followed by a ZAPU *coup de main* in February 1981. The new ZNA was hard-pressed to face this revolt that involved guerrillas backed with armoured vehicles. Thousands were killed before the ZNA managed to crush the insurrection. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the events that followed, but ZANU's determination to eliminate ZAPU as a political and/or military force led to the Matabeleland disturbances of the 1980s, strife that took on a sinister ring with the Gukurahundi campaign by Mugabe's 5th Brigade forces. Gukurahundi effectively eliminated any opposition to ZANU rule and paved the course of Zimbabwe's post-war history. By the advent of the 21st century, white

settler numbers had dwindled to the point where they ceased to be a relevant factor in Zimbabwean politics and society. That part of Zimbabwe's Chimurenga was done.

The war massively disrupted life in Rhodesia. Wiseman and Taylor calculated black refugees as: "approximately 238, 000 of which 160 000 were in Mozambique, 43 000 in Zambia, and 23 000 in Botswana" (59). Casualties were less easy to calculate and no authoritative, final and inclusive casualty lists are available for the Zimbabwe Liberation War. Haggett, Van Tonder and Woods' book, *Rhodesian Combined Forces: Roll of Honour 1966-1981*, lists over 1300 Rhodesian security force deaths in action or as a result of active service between 1965 and 1981. Guerrilla casualties have never been accurately assessed but probably number in the tens of thousands. The ultimate collateral damage, civilian deaths, remains nothing more than guesswork. Few, if any, records were kept of rural black people killed during the war within Rhodesia, and no attempt was made to assess the casualties inflicted as a consequence of Rhodesia's many external operations in Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana and Angola. A figure of 30 000 total casualties has been offered,⁸ but, in private, one former senior former Rhodesian commander ventured to this writer that probably closer to 300 000 people were killed in the war.⁹ The final comment on the war is Martin Rupiah's sombre note (77) that over 1 million landmines planted during the war remain in place and continue to take their toll.

Why the Rhodesians fought this war remains a question that intrigues historians. In the chapter that follows, I suggest that this settler colonial society was founded on conflict and that a unique set of Rhodesian national myths coalesced to create the conditions where the unravelling of empire became a site of resistance amongst the colonists. Hindsight may suggest that the war was avoidable, but in the chapter that follows, I will argue that this was not the case.

⁸ See Chris Cocks, *Fireforce: One Man's War in the RLI*.

⁹ The comment was made to me by Reid Daly at a lunch I attended at his home in 1999.

Chapter Two: The Rhodesian national myth explored

Memory and history...far from being synonymous are ... in many respects opposed. Memory is life, always embodied in living societies and as such in permanent evolution. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.

(taken from Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire." *Representations*: 7-24. Print.) (315)

Her Daddy went to fight for the Green and White
 'Cos their country means everything
 Tall and lean in his jungle green
 She heard her mother sing:
 Green and White you're flying in the blue Rhodesian sky
 Green and White you know that we all love you 'till we die.

(John Edmond: *Her Daddy went to fight for the Green and White*)

But we're all Rhodesians
 And we'll fight through thick and thin.
 We'll keep our land a free land,
 Stop the enemy coming in.
 We'll keep them north of the Zambezi
 'Til that river's running dry.
 This mighty land will prosper
 For Rhodesians never die.



(Clem Tholet: *We're all Rhodesians*)

I would say colonialism is a wonderful thing. It spread civilization to Africa. Before it they had no written language, no wheel as we know it, no schools, no hospitals, not even normal clothing.

(Ian Smith)

Vic MacKenzie 2012

WHAT IS A RHODESIAN?

They are three of the greatest generations the world has ever known.



**1890.s
PIONEERS**

**1920-1950
THE BUILDERS**

**1950-1980
THE DEFENDERS**



They stopped the slaughter among the tribes.



Built dams and eradicated disease.

Achieved the highest literacy rates in the whole of Africa.



Rhodesians built towns, roads, railways, churches, schools, hospitals, mines, museums and art galleries.

Rhod. farms produced some of the highest yields in the world.



Rhodesians fiercely protected their wild life.

They had some of the finest schools in Africa. They produced world class performers and athletes.



....and they did all this in just....

90 Years

Rhodesians had high standards and believed in evolution not revolution.

Fig. 1. "What is a Rhodesian?" Cartoon by Vic Mackenzie. (Source: <http://rhodesianheritage.blogspot.co.za/2012/12/vic-mackenzie-artwork-what-is-rhodesian.html>)

I begin this chapter with extracts from Rhodesian folk songs by John Edmond and Clem Tholet that were popular in the 1970s and enjoyed much air time on the state broadcaster, a quotation from the memoirs of Ian Smith, former Rhodesian prime minister and a cartoon by Vic Mackenzie, a former Rhodesian *Sunday Mail* newspaper cartoonist. Together, they are curious relics that depict the Rhodesian identity I was familiar with: the rough and ready, happy-go-lucky, brave, resourceful, and uncompromising white African who carved a modern state out of wilderness. The deployment of these artefacts is not intended to focus conscious ironic comment and neither are they offered for the purpose of cheap political comedy. My purpose is larger than that. I took part (enthusiastically) in the liberation war and was a member of the British South Africa Police until shortly after Zimbabwean independence in 1980. Like many other “Rhodesians”, my world view collapsed in the post Mugabe period. These framing extracts are offered to demonstrate something of the nature and flavour of the Rhodesian identity that had accumulated in the space of 90 years, and which I had once enthusiastically owned. Like many other white Rhodesians, I believed my people reflected these principles. But if that was who we were, and if it was so good, why then was it so severely challenged and why did it all collapse? It took a long time, but I had to confront the possibility that these core values and beliefs that had once motivated me and which were shared, I assumed, by my elders and compatriots, may have not been as well-grounded or stable as I had initially believed them to be and that perhaps something less noble, infinitely more complex and certainly darker in intent was at work.

I moved to South Africa in 1981, but even though the political climate was similar to what I had grown up with, I could not relate to the country. South Africa’s history was different to my own, the symbols of state were foreign and held no significance and the culture of Afrikaners or English-speaking South Africans did not gel with my own. So, for many years, I wandered in a state of disillusioned semi-exile, stripped of my Rhodesian identity, unwilling to ally myself to Zimbabwe and increasingly embittered. Following the defeat of Rhodesia, I had many questions that seemed destined to remain unanswered. Something of an epiphany occurred in December 2005. My wife and I were in London, visiting the “mother country”. Both the landscape and the English people seemed so foreign and remote from my own experience. We had spent some time visiting the galleries, museums, public spaces and tourist sites. We

stopped in Downing Street, and as I surveyed the buildings wherein momentous world decisions had been made the realization dawned on me that spread before me was not just the London metropolis. These old buildings and historic sites were the symbols of a powerful nation with a long accretion of history against which Rhodesians, “my people”, had rebelled in 1965 when I was four years old. It seemed that in that instant, the futility of Rhodesia’s UDI burst home. I can remember saying to my wife something like “who were we to even think we could defy these assembled courts of opinion, power and reach, let alone sustain a rebellion and hope for a successful outcome?” I recognized the outburst was ill-formed and reductionist, but larger questions began forming in my mind and I began to suspect that far from being a concrete relic of something that had once held intrinsic value, Rhodesia as a place, a mental landscape and as an identity was likely nothing more than a toxic mix of vanished myths, a fantastic, distorted shadow of a departed empire and that the foundations and the elements of my (white) “Rhodesian” identity were nowhere near as concrete as I had once assumed them to be. This opinion had been forming for some time, but it grew larger after my visit to England and was reinforced by my discovery that most who called themselves “Rhodesians” in reality held dual citizenship (I did not), and that the majority of “Rhodesians” had been born outside the country. What I could not do, initially, was concretise in my mind what it was that had made my Rhodesian-ness. To a large extent, this chapter will address that essential question and unpack the *raison d’être* of why white Rhodesians embarked on their self-destructive course and in particular, why an emotionally complex, articulate and thoughtful poet like Chas Lotter, would ally himself to the Rhodesian cause. This begs the question, though: what is / was (white) Rhodesia? Did Rhodesia exist as a nation, or was it (as I suspected) little more than a flimsy imaginary construct, some loose amalgam of fantasy, myth and wishful thinking?

The question of what constitutes a nation seems the most logical starting point. Casual observers and laymen seem, instinctively, to identify nations as the entities represented by cartographers. Thus they might suggest that nations are finite territories with known boundaries, imbued with political and judicial independence but enjoying negotiated economic relationships with surrounding, similarly identifiable “countries”. It is easy then to believe that nationhood is instantly and completely synonymous with citizenship of these discrete territories, and that

nationalism is the political expression of a national project. Scholarship in the social sciences deprives us of such convenient posthole descriptors however, and fascinating territory opens as one attempts to unpack and then grapple with the quintessential essence of “nation”, “nationality”, “nationalism” and “national identity”.

The early work of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), and Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762) are amongst the first major pieces of scholarship that helped stabilise the notion of nation as a sovereign territorial unit that was a distinct development out of the older European models of monarchy, principality or theocracy. The conflation of nationhood with nationalism is a slightly later concept, likely originating with the Prussian theorist Johann Herder, and it gained significant momentum in the French Revolution when republican ideals replaced monarchy. Nationalism has figured with varying degrees of interest and notoriety throughout the previous century, but readings of nationalism do very little to explain the origin of a specifically Rhodesian identity as something separate to the founders' Englishness. I suspect the answer lies somewhere in decoding or identifying a link between the formal proclamation of Rhodesian territory, and the accretion of various myths that underpinned Rhodesia's short history.

E.J. Hobsbawm (24) rightly argues that there are considerable intellectual difficulties invested in the concept of “nation”. He suggests that nationhood is a modern socio-linguistic construct and rejects Adam Smith's earlier conception of the nation as synonymous with the territorial state, but it is the collaborative work of Hobsbawm and Ranger that alerts us to the significance of “invented tradition”. In their work, I submit, can be found the argument and evidence to support the existence and crucial historical linkages and value-giving significance of what I will refer to in future as Rhodesian national myths. They argue (1) that:

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. A striking

example is the deliberate choice of a Gothic style for the nineteenth-century rebuilding of the British parliament.

This idea, that at some point traditions and myths are invented, that they do not slowly build over lengthy periods of time, is profound in its implications and is supported, too, by the ideas of Anthony D Smith (14-15) who offers this analysis that also assists us to disassemble the imagined structures of nation/hood:

National identity and the nation are complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components – ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political. They signify bonds of solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths and traditions that may or may not find expression in states of their own but are entirely different from the purely legal and bureaucratic ties of the state. Conceptually, the nation has come to blend two sets of dimensions, the one civic and territorial, the other ethnic and genealogical, in varying proportions in particular cases.

Tying together the ideas of Hobsbawm, Ranger and Smith, we may arrive at an understanding that Rhodesia had a finite origin¹ and that the British settlers who arrived in this “new” territory on the frontier of empire were confronted with an alien landscape and an unknown local population. British imperialism brought the settlers to this periphery of empire, and they soon discovered that they required additional means to navigate their relationships with the landscape and indigenous people in central Africa. As Peter Burke points out (6), “our minds do not reflect reality directly; we perceive the world only through a grid of conventions, schemata and stereotypes”. This new world (it was new to the settlers) thus prompted the formation of an identity shaping process as a means for the settlers to adapt to and pattern the course of their new lives. This is a cogent point. So too is Christine Prentice’s argument (23) that posits the possibility of: “an ontological and discursive link between 'Nation' and 'self', such that they are more than analogous or parallel, but actually interdependent constructs”.

¹ The British South Africa Company, for example, began using the term to formally describe the territory as early as 1895.

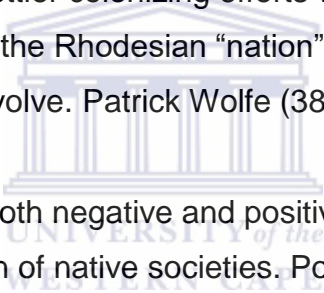
With a new territory “Rhodesia” proclaimed, it followed that a Rhodesian identity would likely evolve to set aside and define these settlers as distinct from inhabitants of England or any of the older colonies (Natal and the Cape) south of the Limpopo. The emergence of a specifically Rhodesian identity followed and was influenced by Rhodesian national myths that soon collected. Gerard Bouchard’s work in the field of national myths is deeply illuminating and I find myself in broad agreement with his suggestion that “myths are also a distinctive type of collective representation on at least four grounds: Their first attribute is hybridity. Myths are always a mixture, unevenly calibrated, of reality and fiction, reason and emotion, truth and falsehood” (13) and I recognise the substantive, sustaining power he identifies (14) as being invested in national myths:

third, thanks to their deep emotional roots, there is a kind of sacredness about myths that confers upon their contents a self-constraining power. Because of this attribute, it is deemed preposterous to attack or to reject a prevailing myth (for example, Cartesian logic and rationality in the Western world as a source of progress, maleness in frontier societies, individual freedom in England, private property in the United States, racial equality in South Africa, or gender equality just about everywhere else in the Western world).

I owe much of my own thinking to Bouchard and agree that in summary, national myths form the social fabric of *patria* and become elaborately entwined with the historical record. His observation that these myths are hybrids of reality and fiction and his assertion that national myths are necessarily glamorous and act as beacons of hope apply well to Rhodesia, especially when we consider that “Rhodesia” as a nation or *patria* is a modern phenomenon, an engineered Victorian settler colonial construct, and not the product of social evolution located over a significant time period. Rhodesia lasted a mere 90 years, a period conceivably congruent with a single human lifespan. Significantly, we need to add that Rhodesia was always figured with whiteness, in all its manifestations. White hegemony was at its core; and black people occupied a position convergent with Spivak’s thesis of subalternity. Prior to white settlement, there was no “Rhodesia”; it did not exist in any physical form and neither did it occupy any pre-existing imaginative position. If this study was focussed on Chimurenga literature particularly as texts of resistance, then

postcolonial theory would provide an ideal “fit” as a set of critical tools to be used in the discussion and dissection of the representative texts. But as this study will focus on war poetry from a Rhodesian perspective (and these are essentially works that collected around a minority’s privileged position), arguments and critical stances that are restricted to the power disruptions of hegemony fall somewhat flat. Gillian Whitlock’s suggestion that “[r]esponses to Empire in settler societies, like Australia and Canada, comprise a site of contesting and conflicting claims, an array of identifications and subjectivities which refuse to cohere neatly into oppositional or complicit post-colonialisms” (349), neatly describe the entanglements that will be encountered. Consequently, theoretical ideas surrounding settler colonialism present engaging opportunities to pursue the complex interplay of power and social relationships in the evolution of a Rhodesian national identity.

The particular thrust of initial settler colonizing efforts was to have a significant impression on the character of the Rhodesian “nation” that was established and pattern the myths that would evolve. Patrick Wolfe (388) notes that:



settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively [from the settler colonial perspective], it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base—as I put it, settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event. In its positive aspect, elimination is an organizing principle of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence. The positive outcomes of the logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism.

The Pioneer Column thus figures as the foundational agency that drives the narrative in the Rhodesian myths. As an expedition, an adventure, and for its demonstrations of imperial hegemony, it was a popular thing at the time, too. Robert Cary (69) notes:

The response to advertisements for Europeans [whites] who could “ride and shoot” was enormous and rapid. In addition to his many other tasks Johnson² found himself dealing with nearly 2000 applications. The Pioneer Corps offered many attractions: excitement and adventure for the restless; gold (and possibly farms) for the young man in search of capital; 7/6d per day and “all found” for those thrown out of work by the slump on the Rand. To join the expedition to Mashonaland became fashionable, and many well-placed Cape families, who turned their noses up at the idea of their offspring joining the police, were soon at work “pulling strings” in order to gain acceptance in the Pioneer Corps.

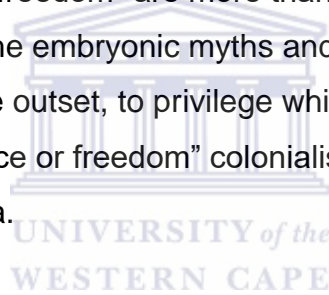
The BSAC’s expedition was a unilateral movement designed to conquer, subdue and expropriate territory for the crown. Wolfe’s analysis is a neat summation of the territorial conquest and colonising purpose of the Pioneer Column, and sets the scene for the evolution of a complexly layered set of Rhodesian national myths which instantly converged around the Pioneers.

With the foundational myth of the Pioneers established, the emergence of white Rhodesian identity follows a genealogical track, cementing the settler colonists’ claims to the territorial *patria*. Anthony Smith (117), almost anticipating the modernity of Rhodesia, makes the salient point that a nation is considered as “the place of one’s birth and childhood, the extension of hearth and home. It is also the birthplace of one’s ancestors and of the heroes and cultures of one’s antiquity.” In the absence of any sense of “antiquity”, the Pioneers as foundational figures assumed a significance that readily translated into heroic myth. Curiously, however noble or heroic the level to which the Pioneers were raised in the Rhodesian imagination, the foundational myths required an additional degree of depth or moral legitimacy and so ancillary “heroes” had to accrete, figures who might compliment the heroic trope represented by the Pioneers. This happened early in Rhodesia’s history with the civilizing linkage of the Christian missionary, David Livingstone, to the capitalist imperialist intentions of Cecil Rhodes. Patrick O’Meara (2) is the first to establish this link, pointing out that:

² Frank Johnson was the person appointed to oversee the Pioneer Column’s advance in 1890.

two archetypal colonial figures dominate white Rhodesian history: David Livingstone, missionary, humanitarian and liberator; and Cecil Rhodes, empire builder. Livingstone felt that "Christianity and commerce" would free Africans from ignorance, disease, the slave trade, and famine. Rhodes, however, saw central Africa as a strategic area for both personal and British imperial involvement.

Thus this cast of characters, one driven by altruistic, perhaps even noble aims, the other a politician, businessman and adventurer, create the perfect complement to the efforts of the Pioneer Column, the men in the employ of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) who trekked into the territory north of the South African Republic in 1890 to establish a British presence. The BSAC's arms (see figure 2 overleaf) with the motto "justice, commerce, freedom" are more than heraldic, legitimising devices, for they do much to illustrate the embryonic myths and illustrate how the colonial project was designed, from the outset, to privilege white settlers. It is a moot point, of course, what "justice, commerce or freedom" colonialism would deliver to the indigenous people in Rhodesia.



The exploits of the Pioneer Column are well charted. Significantly, the Pioneers soon found themselves occupied militarily as they battled, in turn, rebellions by the Matabele and Shona – the original inhabitants of the territory they occupied. The importance of these actions in adding to the Rhodesian myths can be gauged from a consideration that as much as these events converged to establish Rhodesian pioneer mythology, they have also, as James Muzondidya, and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (36), have noted, neatly segued into foundational mythology status in postcolonial Zimbabwean historiography where the "rebellions" are now styled as the first "Chimurenga" struggles against white settler conquest. The actions of the Pioneer Column in subduing the rebellious tribes sat well with the Victorian psyche, and the perceived gallantry of their military exploits translated into Rhodesian national myths. Roger Marston (157) notes that "a separate white Rhodesian culture began to emerge in the early 1930s with its own heroes,



Fig. 2. British South Africa Company arms. (Source: <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/zw-bsac.html>)

such as Alan Wilson and the Shangani Patrol, its own shrine at Rhodes' grave in the Matopos and its own elite in the Pioneers and their descendants." This is an important point. Individuals who choose to locate themselves in frontier areas discover the need to pin their identities to something that is at least concrete in their imaginations. Uncharted, undeveloped, the place required the investment of symbols, myths, shrines, flags and stories to establish and conceptually legitimize this embryonic white, "Christian" civilization located in central Africa. The BSAC, with its ranks and structures and the heroic actions like the Custeresque "last stand" of Alan Wilson's Shangani Patrol and the retroactive, posthumous award of a Victoria Cross to Frank Baxter, provided rich material for the weaving of an elaborate tapestry of frontier expansionism, "civilizing" presence and military glory. The *London Gazette's* 1907 notice of Baxter's award may sound saccharine today, but it bolstered the image of the Pioneer Column's fighters as valorous, resourceful and determined men, and the award of Britain's highest gallantry decoration lent official legitimacy to the BSAC's forces:

Trooper Frank William Baxter, of the Bulawayo Field Force, on account of his gallant conduct in having, on the 22nd of April, 1896, dismounted and given up his horse to a wounded comrade, Corporal Wiseman, who was being closely pursued by an overwhelming force of the enemy, would have been recommended to Her Majesty for the Victoria Cross had he survived.

It was fortunate that the Pioneers attracted admiration in the early years of the settlement. These figures rapidly assumed legendary status in the fledgling colony (in much the same way that frontiersmen entered American mythology), and a demonstrable Pioneer connection assured social cachet in Rhodesian society similar to the degree to which many Australians today celebrate their convict ancestors. W.T. Miller's school textbook: *A History of Rhodesia* codified the centrality of the pioneer mythology and exposed generations of (white) Rhodesian school pupils to the agendas of settler colonialism:

What is a pioneer? He is a man – or woman – who goes out and does some kind of work which no-one has done before, or makes a new trail for others to follow after. The men who were sent up to Mashonaland by the British South Africa Company in the year 1890 were true pioneers. They came into a new country which no-one knew very much about; they made a new road in order to reach it; and they came to try out the new idea of settlement. They meant to make it a country in which they could live as they were used to living (121).

The centrality of the Pioneers to Rhodesian national myths is also reflected in the spread of public holidays that were proclaimed and observed. Apart from the usual Christian holidays at Easter and Christmas, Rhodesia also celebrated “Rhodes Day”,³ “Founders Day”,⁴ “Pioneers Day”,⁵ “Republic Day”,⁶ “Independence Day”⁷ and

³ Celebrates the birthday of CJ Rhodes usually the first Monday in July.

⁴ In memory of Rhodesia's founders (i.e. the original board of the BSAC) on the day after Rhodes's Day.

⁵ Celebrates the efforts of the Pioneer Column, 12 September.

⁶ Proclaimed to celebrate self-declared republican status, in effect from 1970, 2nd to last Monday in October.

⁷ UDI date – 11 November each year.

“Shangani Day”,⁸ thus 4 of the 6 holidays were directly keyed to the pioneers. Katja Uusihakala’s interest in the white Rhodesian diaspora post-1980, led her to identify the continuing prominence of “pioneer connections” as sustainers of the myth after Zimbabwean independence:

A sense of belonging and a sense of commitment do not necessarily require an age-old connection with the land. But it does help. In the ex-Rhodesian life histories, as well as in the life histories of former colonials in contemporary Kenya, whom I have previously studied (Uusihakala 1995, 1998), knowledge, credibility and authority within the community are forcefully established through the length of genealogical connection with the land. The Rhodesians – formerly only men – who were direct descendants of pioneers could be admitted to the Rhodesia Pioneers and Early Settlers Society, and framed certificates of membership in this society decorated many a wall in the homes I visited. These people often referred to themselves as born and bred Rhodesians, sometimes as "Africans".

Ian Smith, the Rhodesian prime minister (and later also, ironically, a mythic hero), is vocal in his assessment of the role of the pioneers in claiming and developing the colony. He proudly points (2-3) to the character and achievements of the pioneers and articulates the foundational narrative of the pioneers in Rhodesian society:

Certainly, pioneers by nature were the kind of people who sought a challenge in preference to the humdrum sheltered life, with its security based in the knowledge that one lived in a society that provided protection and insulation from external forces. So our foundations were built by people with strong, individual character, with that important quality of having the courage of their convictions – British people who were playing their part in building the British empire, the greatest force for good the world had ever known.

The role of the Pioneers in sketching out the framework for Rhodesian foundational mythology was not confined to their military activities. Uusihakala concludes that part

⁸ Commemorates Alan Wilson and the men who were killed on the Shangani Patrol.

of the foundational mythology is a celebration of the Pioneers appropriating what was perceived to be wilderness and taming it in a form of inverse pastoralism (85):

In settler colonial discourse, “wide open spaces,” “vast horizons,” “great spaces washed with sun” and other similar metaphoric phrases about landscape are in abundance. In the ancestor narrative, early Rhodesian landscape is represented as “a wide open space” or as “nothingness.” The pioneers had “seen nothing” because they had seen nothing that could be interpreted as human involvement with the environment. The “nothingness” signified potential. In their mind’s eye, in their hopes and dreams, the settlers imagined fields and houses, development and fortunes.

This is an important point, one that is supported by the environmental philosophers Arturo Gómez-Pompa and Andrea Kraus who also establish a link between a western civilizing of the wilderness myth and Christian zeal: “our faith in our ability to manage the environment is a legacy from the Industrial Revolution rooted in the concept of progress and a biblical notion of human dominion over nature” (272). The Pioneers and the BSAC, therefore, did not see the landscape as something to be won through conquest, but rather something waiting, benignly, to be tamed. The indigenous people, who followed low impact subsistence and pastoral lifestyles, were simply invisible, falling outside the visible spectrum of imperialist settler colonists. The BSAC advert from the 1920s reproduced as Figure 3 overleaf confirms this peculiar view of depopulated, wide open spaces freely available and crying out for development. Perhaps it was not the designer’s conscious intention, but the omission of any graphical connection with the rest of Africa ironically creates a mythical geography that depicts “Southern Rhodesia” as some kind of wild, uninhabited Eden, waiting a civilizing touch.

The creation of Rhodesia at a comparatively late point in the sweep of British imperialism was to have lingering effects on the administration of the colony. It prompted the development of a settler society that was increasingly out of step with changing social attitudes in the rest of the world, whilst it simultaneously developed its own political voice. Thus when we consider Elkins and Pedersen’s (2) view that “settler colonies often sought to weaken (or even to rid themselves of) that

metropolitan control and those indigenous populations as quickly as possible”, and O’Meara’s point that “Rhodesia came into being at a time when the British were no longer expanding their colonial empire but were beginning to feel many of the burdens of administering their possessions”, and that this “resulted in a greater permissiveness toward Rhodesia than might otherwise have been the case” (55), we can more easily understand how and why the heroic rebel trope, the “brave” Rhodesian who thumbs his nose at empire, might later emerge as such a distinguishing feature in the complex matrices of the Rhodesian national myths.

This myth, I will soon demonstrate, crystallised in the persona of Ian Smith and attached itself, limpet-like, to the act of UDI. What is important in shaping our understanding of Rhodesian national myths is also a realisation that the politics of Rhodesia were always so aligned that this tiny colony seemed to punch above its weight in the Commonwealth. 1923 was a pivotal year in Rhodesian history, because the white inhabitants rejected potential union with South Africa. O’Meara notes:

The majority, however, fearing too close an alliance with the Afrikaners of South Africa, voted in favour of self-government. Rhodesia had emerged as a national entity, and this factor, coupled with a fear of social and economic integration, contributed to the rejection of incorporation with South Africa. Thus company rule was dissolved, and Rhodesia formally annexed to the British Crown since it had never been a formal colonial possession of Great Britain (6-7).

Rhodesia thus gained the unique status of self-governing colony early in its history. The BSAC transferred its responsibilities to an elected civilian administration with Britain retaining responsibility for foreign policy, but Rhodesians assumed responsibility for all other arms of state government including defence. The socio-historical and legitimising importance of Rhodesian self-government can be measured from the knowledge that it predates the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act that gave women full franchise rights in England in 1928. The pioneers had initially mostly been men, so the early settlement was demographically skewed and privileged masculine stereotypes. The creation and maintenance of a

viable, white society, however, required a sizeable and demographically stratified population to create and support a diversified economy. Sponsored immigration to the colony (from the United Kingdom) was seen as the answer.

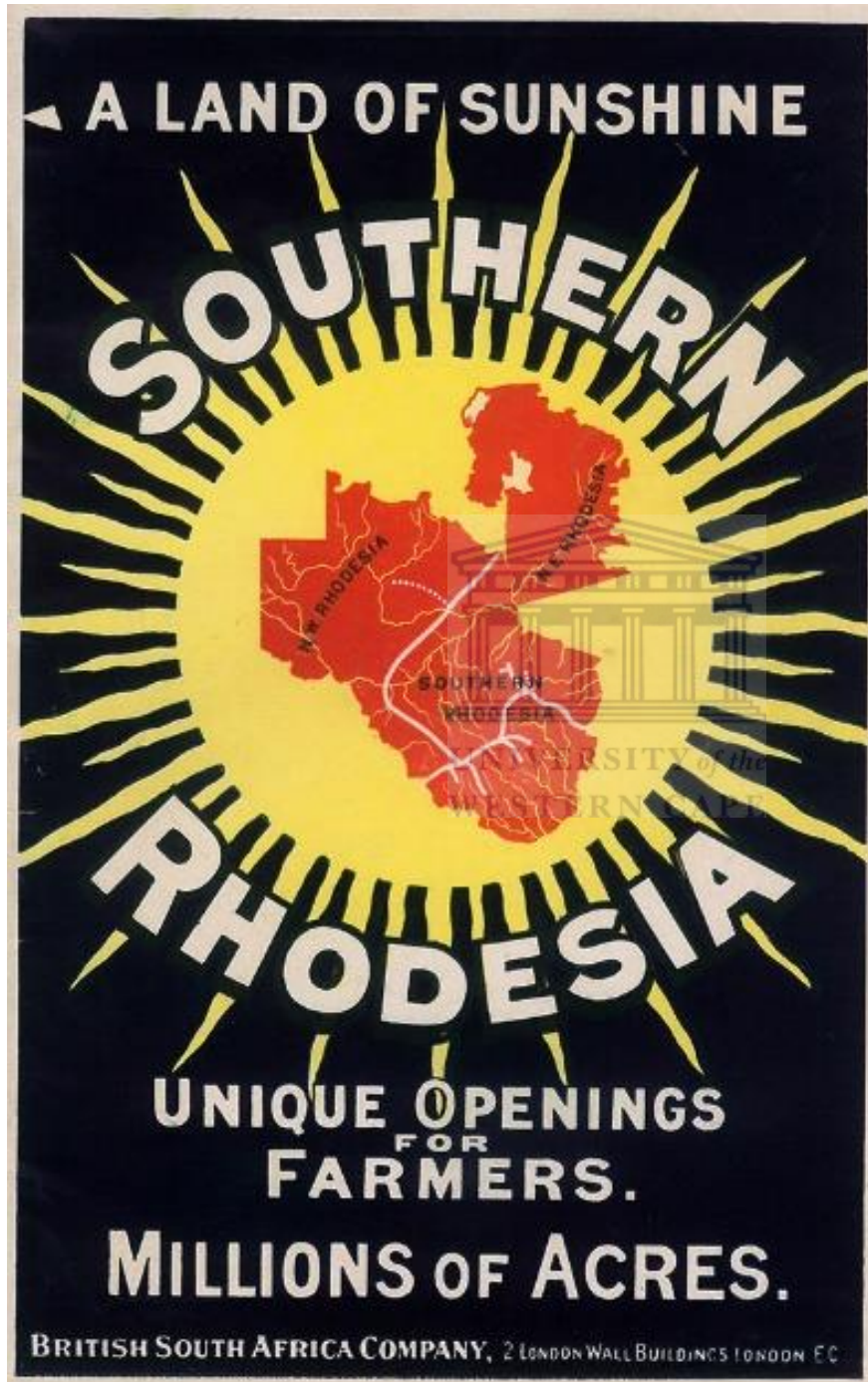


Fig. 3. BSAC advert. (Source: <https://za.pinterest.com/pin/348958671105288480/>)

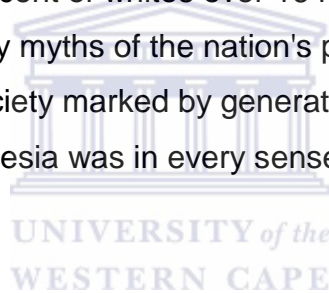
Roy Licklider (1993) draws attention to the fact that Rhodesia's white population swelled thanks to immigration efforts and not as a consequence of natural increase, and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni is one of a number of commentators who draws attention to the transient, rotational nature of white Rhodesian citizenship. A significant percentage of people who identified themselves as white Rhodesians were, in fact, not born in the territory and actually held dual citizenship with another country, most often the United Kingdom with a minority hailing from South Africa. Quite then why these people disavowed their existing national identities to band together under the Rhodesian banner and assume the distinct identity appellation of being "Rhodesian" is, at first glance, puzzling. There are two likely answers to this enigma.

Sociologists remind us that humans are social animals, predisposed to seek group affiliation. Such group affiliations happen at the most basic level in the family, but extend in a series of overlapping hierarchies to the defined relationships implicit in national citizenship where language, ethnicity and culture form the commonalities. Immigrants to Rhodesia were almost universally white, English speaking and middle class. The majority of these settlers were also not South African by birth, and so did not trace their lineage back to the 1820 settlers, Huguenots or the Dutch. They would have sought commonality only with other white people as miscegenation taboos and racist prejudices meant blacks occupied a significantly othered position. Secondly, migrants to Rhodesia were not expatriates. Expats will live and work away from "home" (the UK) for defined contractual periods, their financial compensation packages often linked to the degree of discomfort and identity disruption created by the circumstances that prevail in their temporary domicile. Typically expats accept their alien status, make few attempts to integrate into the local community, and plan to relocate elsewhere or return "home" at the termination of their contracts. Immigrants to Rhodesia regarded themselves as settlers, not aliens, and were determined to create a new life for themselves. They effectively cut ties with the motherland. As settlers, they thus had a vested interest in the heroic foundational mythology of the pioneers (who had done exactly the same thing, only years before), and saw themselves as the successors, the generation that would build on the foundational work of the pioneers and help develop a successful, prosperous white

enclave in black Africa. The life they anticipated in Rhodesia was one of privilege and material comfort, often in stark contrast to the prospects they faced “back home”, usually in post WW II England, where opportunities were limited.

Paul Williams, in his memoir *Soldier Blue*, vividly describes the material condition of his parents, a scene that would be familiar to many immigrants to Rhodesia: “they arrived in Rhodesia, the story goes, with a pram full of saucepans, a few shillings jangling in their pockets, and an optimistic trust in a benevolent universe, that things would somehow work out” (6). Thus it is understandable that a unique set of fast track assimilations into white Rhodesian society took place as these settlers sought to adapt to what, after all, was a new life. This migration / settlement pattern strongly patterned white Rhodesian demography. Schwartz notes that

as late as 1970, 75 per cent of whites over 16 had been born elsewhere. Whatever the customary myths of the nation's public representatives, Rhodesia was not a society marked by generational continuity. Historically and sociologically Rhodesia was in every sense a new country, not an old one (408).



These historic myths celebrated white supremacy, but how they entered into Rhodesian mythology and became so sanitised that the evil nature of racism could lurk unseen or be so strenuously denied is interesting too. Olga Sicilia (19) builds on points raised previously with her suggestion that the:

white Rhodesian self-image which evolved in the twenties, was based on the idea that they were civilizers of the wilderness, taming its violence. They saw themselves as peace-bringers and profoundly moral beings in contrast to the less than human blacks that embodied brute nature.

This certainly makes sense and would explain why white culture was celebrated and privileged, starting with the goals and exploits of the pioneers and continuing throughout Rhodesia's short history. This advantaged social coding soaked the fabric of Rhodesian society, and even extended to the settler colonists' conceptualisation of the territory's archaeology and its precolonial history.

The discovery of a vast complex of ancient stone ruins in the territory in the 19th century entered the official lexicon as evidence of a white presence in central Africa that predated the arrival of the pioneers, so establishing a precolonial “white” link and cementing white legitimacy. Susanne Duesterberg details the reactions and claims of Karl Mauch the white hunter who first saw the ruins: “after inspecting Great Zimbabwe in 1871, Mauch was convinced that he had discovered the remains of a white settlement and eventually identified them as the ruins of Ophir” (477). Later commentators suggested the ruins may have been a Phoenician outpost or even as the pseudo-archaeologist Eric Von Däniken bizarrely claimed in a 1980 work, the work of extra-terrestrials. Any explanation it seemed, other than the acknowledgement that these buildings were built by indigenous black peoples at some point! The white myths of the origin of the Zimbabwe Ruins entered the official lexicon as a curious but deliberate negation of historical truth, because it was massive physical evidence that threatened to derail the white settlers’ thesis that prior to their arrival, no systematised urban settlement had existed: the “natives” were considered too primitive to have independently created a sophisticated sprawling urban structure supporting intra-continental trade and cultural linkages. Julie Frederikse, in her resource book *None But Ourselves: Masses Vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe*, quotes Paul Sinclair, Curator of Archaeology at Great Zimbabwe on this very issue:

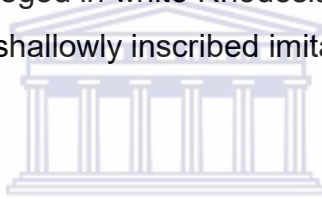
Once a member of the Museum Board of Trustees threatened me with losing my job if I said publicly that blacks had built Zimbabwe. He said it was okay to say the yellow people had built it, but I wasn’t allowed to mention radio carbon dates. You see, the radio carbon dates show clearly and categorically that the Zimbabwe state flourished after 1000 A.D. For the Queen of Sheba myth to have any basis, it would require far older dates, preferably B.C. So the guidebooks were physically censored by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was the first time since Germany in the thirties that archaeology had been so directly censored (10-11).

The white society that developed in Rhodesia was also distinctly different to the position occupied by whites in South Africa (who could claim a much older physical connection with Africa). As Licklider (127) observes:

The influence of new whites coming to Rhodesia cannot be underestimated. Most of the Europeans in Rhodesia were newcomers and, unlike their Afrikaner compatriots south of the border, could not claim the legitimation of "being African too".

Michael Prior offers fascinating examination of the accretion of Afrikaner mythologies over three centuries, showing that "the whole [white] nation was engaged in creating its mythological nationalist past" (79). The same energy and time was not extended on the Rhodesian settler colonial project, however. The English language and British values and customs were privileged in white Rhodesian society, but the result was a social distortion, a flawed and shallowly inscribed imitation of the "mother country".

Dan Wylie (ix) notes that:



[w]hen the Metropole is European and the new nation African or Asian, diverse geographical and racial groundings make different pasts and different destinies obvious. Southern Rhodesia's whites lacked this grace of perceptible difference. The majority had been in the country only since the early 1950s and they inherited the space created by the pioneers rather than being their literal descendants. Whether as pioneers or post-war immigrants, Rhodesians had played their role in helping to add further dimensions to Britain's imperial and national character. However much they disliked the idea, Rhodesians were almost but not quite British.

The picture sold to potential immigrants was beguiling. Paul Williams (6-7), describes the imagined Rhodesia to which his parents immigrated in the 1950s:

They were living in an extension of England, sans snot. For Rhodesia, promised the film [a propaganda piece designed to lure immigrants], was a paradise of blue grainy skies and green vegetation, clear flickering air,

mountains, gurgling streams, crime free cities. But this film failed to show the five million brooding Africans in the townships and Tribal Trust lands. It failed to sweep its 16-mm Beaulieu camera lens up North, where the British Empire was cracking and crumbling in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Instead the film focussed on a smiling black “delivery boy” on a bicycle, ringing his bell at the gate of a large house. This house could be yours; that “madam” could be you, Lina; and that man caressing his Lion Lager on his *stoep* could be you, Bernard.

Williams’ memoir is a frank and sometimes caustic navigation of the tensions, dualities and contradictions that permeated Rhodesian society. His work points to the inescapable degree of artificiality that permeated the Rhodesian settler polity.

The demographics of the Rhodesian period require sober consideration too. Whites, who dominated politics and the economy, never numbered above 350 000, whereas the black population was probably 10 times that number. Writing in 1975, O’Meara (57) offers this insight into the structures that formed the precarious scaffolding that surrounded white Rhodesian society:

the character of white society in Rhodesia today has been shaped by several factors; the settlers' struggle against a hostile environment; their conflict with the indigenous people; their fight for political self-determination; and the fact that African interests were not to be primary in the development of the area. The early conflict situation was replaced by a form of paternalism in which the African was the servant rather than the master, the employee rather than the employer, and so on. Rhodesia could be referred to as a composite society only in economic terms; Africans and whites were jointly engaged (with whites in leadership roles) in mining, farming, the railways, and construction work, but no further. In the early period the primary aim of preserving white supremacy was established, and the only thing that differed over time was the means with which this was to be accomplished.

Bill Schwartz, building on observations already noted, pinpoints the essence of white Rhodesian society, its artificiality and precarious status:

The idea that 'Rhodesia' was the past was a strange one, especially after the Second World War. The 1950s saw breakneck modernisation. As with other settler societies in the empire, white migration was considered by the Rhodesian government to be essential for social development of the nation. Between 1946 and 1951, 135 600 white migrants arrived in Rhodesia, making an astonishing 65.1 per cent in the European population. In 1951 only about one-third of the white population had been born in Rhodesia, with little under a third (30.5 per cent) having migrated from the Union of South Africa and most of the remainder coming from the British Isles. As late as 1970, 75 per cent of whites over 16 had been born elsewhere. Whatever the customary myths of the nation's public representatives, Rhodesia was not a society marked by generational continuity. Historically and sociologically Rhodesia was in every sense a new country, not an old one. Attachments to the past had to be learnt anew. What is striking, however, is the speed with which new immigrants came to be integrated into the culture of white Rhodesian society. Primarily this was the consequence of the requirements of white solidarity. The labour market was protected for all whites, while the institutions of state education did much to "Rhodesianize" the children of new migrants. The authority of racial whiteness determined the means by which, in lived culture, whiteness was encoded and made local was largely through the propagation of the historic myths of the nation (408).

Rhodesia promoted itself as a young, modern nation, yet paradoxically, it sought to define itself through a constant looking back into the past as its myths attest. A number of authors point to the fluid nature of white Rhodesian society and the racism that became an unashamed part of the very fabric of Rhodesian society. Williams, in his memoir, relates the common (adult) thinking where racist typologies pooled on top of vast layers of sweeping generalisation to percolate much white civil discourse:

We were the good guys who brought Light and Civilisation and the Protestant Work Ethic. The kaffirs were the chaff of society, the Black Sambos who were funny by very nature of their blackness: the garden boys, the cooks, the workers on the back of trucks, the nannies – "them". They were stupid; they

were hewers of wood and drawers of water, as it said in the Bible. They worked well only under supervision. You could take the African out of the bush but you couldn't take the bush out of the African. They were children (13).

A pseudonymous two-part essay appeared in the Rhodesian literary journal *Chirimo* in 1969. It is unusual for the depth of collective self-analysis it offers and was probably written as something of an insider joke, to be appreciated by the small Rhodesian literary set that set themselves apart from the earthier white Rhodesians around them. In the first installment, the author "Scarab" ventured this pen sketch of white Rhodesians:

the greatest praise for Rhodesians has probably come from Rhodesians themselves, who see in the crowds on First Street every Saturday morning the stuff of pioneers. They see in the man at the rugby match, the farmer at the *braaivleis*, the teacher and the bank clerk, a skilled and courageous elite who is [sic] the cement for prosperity and order in the country (39).

The piece is tentative and probing whilst maintaining a mock sardonic tone. Scarab, emboldened by anonymity, abandoned the satirical voice and in the next issue probed deeply into the Rhodesian psyche:

Europeans in Rhodesia are devoid of a special national character, except to say that they are South African or English prosperous, middle class conformists. There is one thing we can say and that is they have a booming divorce rate. This has been attributed to booze and boredom – which of course are symptoms not reasons. One reasonable theory is that there is little need to struggle against harsh environment. This need can unify even apparently incompatible couples. Another reason could be that as they are largely an immigrant population there is a restlessness of personality. The weekly reports in the papers read like a roll call after the Somme. Stoically or tearfully, stories of hair-raising frightfulness are reported – rape, sadism, infidelity, assault, drunkenness or perversion. A recurrent theme is that of

desertion overseas or to South Africa. This might seem to support the rootlessness theory (39).

“Scarab’s” observations point to a fundamental flaw in white Rhodesian society, one that contributed to the ready maintenance of myth and fictions: Rhodesians (probably due to insecurity) seemed reluctant to admit to self-scrutiny, engage in debate or reflect critically on the social and moral dialectics in their society. The arts (as indicators of cultural depth and stability) were neglected and on this point, C.J. Wortham’s observation (47) says much about the paucity of cultural expression in white Rhodesia:

Rhodesia has no full-time professional company of actors. There is one semi-professional group, Ken Marshall Productions, and the Salisbury Repertory Players have the services of a professional Director of Productions, Mr. Adrian Stanley. For the rest, stage drama is kept alive by amateur societies

It is also perhaps worth pointing out that Rhodesian society, where the myth of the self-made man (an off-shoot of the pioneer character) prevailed, did not especially value tertiary education either – the country only ever supported one university and a single teacher training college.⁹ In modern Zimbabwe, there are now some 20 tertiary education institutions. In a society where race and privilege were so engrained, pathways to status and success were artificially smoothed, obviating the necessity for self-betterment.

The peculiarly anti-intellectual society that Rhodesia became was satirised by Doris Lessing. She had grown up there and seemed set to follow a conventional if stereotypical path – marriage and the raising of a family -- but this attraction quickly paled. Her novel *The Grass is Singing*, her *Collected African Stories* and four of the five novels in the sequence *Children of Violence* are set in Rhodesian society. What she encountered and was expected to participate in, both displeased and disgusted her. Eve Bertelsen’s 1984 essay, “Doris Lessing’s Rhodesia: History into Fiction”, explores Lessing’s surgically precise dissections of the contradictions, anathemas,

⁹ The University College of Rhodesia, initially affiliated to the University of London, opened in 1952. The Hillside Teachers’ Training College started in the 1960s.

injustices and oddities of the myths and values that percolated in Rhodesian society. Bertelsen (24) notes:

Against a basic background of parochialism and self-interest which she casts as moral hypocrisy, she sets its sub-cultures: The Sports Club set, domesticity in the Avenues, and the limited 'liberation' offered Martha by the Group of young intellectual left-wingers. The overall picture is one of a conservative, conformist society, anti-intellectual, combining the exploitation of black labour with deep racial suspicions, and at best a few moderate reformist gestures. In all this the blacks and their lot provide a permanent shadow -- they are heavily discussed, but appear on stage only incidentally as servants, waiters, manacled prisoners or token members of political groups.

Lessing, of course, collided head-on with the Rhodesian myths and her reward for this stark portrayal of a closed-minded, racist society was rejection by that small colony and its elite and her ultimate self-exile from Rhodesia. Yet Lessing's portrayal of white Rhodesia also obliquely highlighted a fundamental problem. That society could only exist by virtue of the social exclusion of white dissenters and the political and economic exclusion of the black majority. It is a point made by Mtsi (140), a contributor to the collection *Becoming Zimbabwe*:

Given Rhodesia's historical background and its racial and ethnic heterogeneity, a sense of nationhood had to be manufactured: to whom should Rhodesia belong and who belonged to Rhodesia? More often than not, race was a key ingredient in these efforts to construct national identity. However, its significance was limited largely to mobilising certain constituencies and marking the lines of exclusion, i.e. defining whose nation it was not.

The national myths Rhodesians celebrated were out of step with the structural realities of their society. The celebration of the Pioneers is noted, yet ironically, the promise of precious mineral concessions that lured many in the early years, failed to materialize. There was no Rhodesian extension of the fabulously rich Witwatersrand deposits. The potential of vast agricultural holdings was similarly disrupted. Not

many of the pioneers were capable of success in agricultural efforts. Their unfamiliarity with the demands of farming in tropical regions, struggles with disease, pests and the precarious rewards derived from servicing small, unstable markets meant that few could make a living from the land. Many then set their lot on securing merchant positions or administrative jobs in the emerging urban areas. The pattern continued into the future resulting, as Brownwell (593) observes, in a white population that was "one of the most unstable and demographically fragile ruling ethnic castes in any polity anywhere in the world." This structural fragility would help explain, too, why authoritarian rule and attitudes formed so integral a part of the Rhodesian experience.

As Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni (3) writes, "[c]olonial governments were at best quasi-military authoritarian political systems, where violence was the main mode of governing the colonised peoples". Whites thus dominated Rhodesian politics, and the systems of governance that developed in Rhodesia were geared towards maintaining their hegemonic position. The Federal experiment, whilst offering economies of scale and increased opportunities for white businessmen and farmers, took little account of the black majority in the three territories and offered black people no more than token political participation. We have, in a previous chapter, noted the rise and collapse of the Federation, but the experiment's unwinding and Rhodesian perceptions of deliberate British government duplicity in the negotiating process did much to consolidate white racism, and etch into the myths a deep and abiding distrust of British politicians. As evidence, Ian Smith (37) would claim that in the latter part of the Federation,

a few ominous changes in the British government's attitude began to reveal themselves, subtly and covertly at first, but with more black politicians to our north beginning to flex their muscles, the British displayed no desire to oppose their extravagant demands, and hence the dreadful philosophy of appeasement gained momentum.

The emergence of the Rhodesian Front (RF) is synonymous with the collapse of Federation. Ian Smith became the public face of the RF when he ousted Winston Field as its leader in 1964, with Smith articulating the position that (white) Rhodesia

would settle for nothing less than full political independence on favourable terms, from Britain. The RF assumed near cult status amongst whites, and the party is indelibly written into the evolving national mythology that white Rhodesians assumed. O'Meara (69) notes that "with an unbroken string of political successes behind it, the RF was in a dominant position in Rhodesia. It was well aware that it had the backing of the white electorate and that for most of its political purposes Rhodesia was a one party state." Much of the success of the RF is invested as Douglas Schorr (2014) claims, in the "myth of Ian Smith".

It is difficult to understand today quite how Ian Smith caught the public imagination, but one needs remember that in the 1960s, a sophisticated, well-groomed media presence was not quite the social cachet or requirement it is today. When Ian Smith appeared in public or on Rhodesian television or radio, the image he portrayed was of a no-nonsense, straight talker and this struck a chord with the average white Rhodesian. He had near perfect "Rhodesian" credentials too. He was a "born Rhodesian", he could almost claim pioneer stock (his father had settled in Rhodesia in 1898), he had attended a "good" Rhodesian boarding school, was a B.Com graduate of Rhodes University in South Africa, he had played rugby and rowed at university, he was a successful cattle and tobacco farmer, he had served as a pilot in the Royal Air Force during World War II, had been injured, shot down and spent time fighting with Italian partisans. He was a married man, with children of his own and seemed as invested in the country and its potential as any other. He wore a safari suit outside of parliament, enjoyed a cold beer at the end of the day and cultivated an air of likable normalcy that appealed to the average white Rhodesian. Good old Smithy, the man of the [white] people, the PM who spurned bodyguards, drove himself about in a sensible Austin, declining the opportunity of a chauffeured Jag, flashy Bentley or stylish Rolls Royce. This peculiar mix of egalitarianism and shrewdness meant that Smith could exploit a ready-made if roughly manufactured propaganda machine. The British government, his party argued, suffering from a post-WWII liberal miasma, had turned its back on kith and kin, and with mounting cowardice, was deliberately negating the many sacrifices Rhodesians had made during "Britain's hour of need" in the war. It was an image that struck a chord with conservatives around the world, and created the impression of a depth of moral

legitimacy that pooled beyond Rhodesia's borders. Ken Flower (60), the former Rhodesian CIO chief, noted this phenomenon in his own memoirs of the time:

During my daily visits to Ian Smith's office in the weeks following UDI, I saw that he was virtually inundated by tens of thousands of congratulatory letters from all over the world, mostly from Britain. From being the son of a Scottish butcher in the village of Selukwe (Shurugwi) in central Rhodesia, Smith had become a world figure overnight and a hero to millions. Propaganda saw to it that the image of a "strong, honest, simple man" was created.

The perceived chaos in some newly independent African countries fed into RF cant, and this supported the party's position that Britain had gone soft and seemed bent on pulling the rug out from under the feet of the very people it had once so enthusiastically supported as its minions of empire. Why, though, did these people put their faith in such a man and the party he headed? Why did white Rhodesians back the RF's headlong rush towards UDI -- an action that today seems, almost unanimously, foolish and suicidal?

It is easy to indulge in complacent retrospection. We occupy a period where democratic values and issues of social justice are inescapable and foregrounded aspects of public discourse. It has not always been so. The pace of decolonisation was comparatively swift. Rhodesia gained self-government in 1923, but barely thirty-five years later, the same metropolitan social machinery that had worked to elevate Rhodesia to colonial status began militating not just for imperial reform, but the unraveling of all vestiges of empire, and by implication, the destruction of Rhodesia. Readings in settler colonialism do much to clarify this difficult position and answer the question why the Rhodesians pursued UDI. As Elkins and Pedersen (13) note:

Settlers, their power well entrenched within their political and economic institutions of the colonial state, were unprepared to relinquish their privileges. Revealingly, they met African demands not just for increased representation but for self-rule (and concomitant pressure from metropolises for concessions) with the rhetoric of republicanism. Algerian colons and Rhodesian farmers felt themselves only distantly tied to remote metropolises, and Jewish settlers in

Palestine were not tied to any metropole at all; like American settlers before them, then, they invoked their right to defend their hard-won property and (when pushed) to self-determination as well.

We have the luxury of hindsight and can pass judgment on the ills of colonialism, but for those who had invested themselves, their energies and fortunes in the colony, matters were not as easily discernible and certainly not as morally transparent as they appear today. Henry Townsend (writing in 1967) offers a penetrating observation that negotiates this polarized territory with a rare degree of understanding and empathy:

It was inevitable, most unfortunately, that Rhodesia should become the centre of a controversy that is assuming international proportions. Its problem is very much a problem of our time: a problem of acceptance of and adjustment to new social patterns and unities which conflict with habits of mind and living acquired in the past and the expectations they have engendered. To those who have enjoyed a dignified and stable existence with a comfortable standard of living, far-reaching social change, however inescapable in the long run, appears as a threat to their own and their children's security and if this security has been won by their own enthusiasm and effort, as an unjust undoing of their advantage (297).

L.H. Gann (484) offers a complimentary insight. He suggests that the style and character of organised politics that evolved in Rhodesia facilitated a jump to the right that effectively rendered left or liberal white politics impotent. He argues shrewdly that:

White Rhodesian political behaviour has always contained a strong personal, even an eccentric element. An oligarchic franchise and a restricted electorate have produced an archaic political style, reminiscent of early nineteenth century England rather than modern Europe.

The election history of Rhodesia shows that the [white] electorate never numbered more than 90 000 voters (the total population of a small town like Hermanus, in the

Western Cape), and that in the 4 elections and 2 referenda that were held between 1965 and 1977, the RF won every available parliamentary seat and achieved massive majority accession votes to the referendum questions.¹⁰ Putting aside privilege and engrained racism for a moment, it is understandable that white Rhodesians feared for their futures in the early 1960s. As Gann (483), points out, independence had not settled easily on many African countries. The Mau-Mau campaign in Kenya, the collapse of the Belgian Congo, rebellion in Tanganyika and the stirrings of guerrilla warfare in the Portuguese territories fed white fears that majority rule in Rhodesia would lead to their swift and total destruction, a position that Rhodesian propagandists used to great and continuous effect. The Cold War was in full swing, and it was exceptionally difficult to disentangle anti-colonial sentiment from Communist expansionist policies.

The Rhodesian problem was compounded by the fact that there were in essence three competing and strident voices during negotiations on the independence issue: the black nationalists with their set of demands; the British government with their own agenda; the white Rhodesians who felt increasingly backed into a corner. It was the classical dilemma of settler colonialism described by Lorenzo Veracini (5) as “a fundamentally triangular system of relationships, a system comprising metropolitan, settler, and indigenous agencies.” What is not apparent in the literature on settler colonialism is the absolute futility of settler colonial efforts to permanently assert and maintain their agency. The dogged pursuit of settler dominance must inevitably flame opposition, and this is a fire that cannot be extinguished. In the absence of any significant, organised white liberal opposition to RF rule and possible negotiation of realistic terms of power transfer, the march towards UDI was inexorable and the outcome written in the stars. Robert C Good, former US ambassador to Zambia at the time, suggested that the final schism was “entirely consistent with the all or nothing mood prevailing in Rhodesia” (51), a stubborn doggedness in the face of difficulties and opposition that had marked the efforts of the pioneers and settled into Rhodesian myths. Chung and Kaarsholm (62) offer a similar assessment:

¹⁰ In elections held in 1965, 1970, 1974 and 1977, the RF won all 50 “white” seats available with a minimum of 77% of the white vote. Even in 1980, in the internationally supervised elections, white support for the RF was high, with 83% of whites voting RF and so ensuring that the RF held all 20 seats reserved for whites under the Lancaster House agreement.

the increasing polarisation by race meant that whites, whose class differences had affected their political affiliation in former times, were now locked into a solid alliance behind Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front. Previously, whites covered a whole spectrum of political opinions ranging from the middle of the road liberalism of Garfield Todd to the extreme white racism of Ian Smith, but UDI united all classes behind Ian Smith. The Rhodesians saw themselves as beleaguered, attacked by the international community led by the British government, by all African countries led by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and by virtually all blacks within the country.

When UDI occurred, it was a moment of supreme yet naïve political theatre that fed directly into the myths and generated ancillary ones. Ian Smith relates (103) that the document was styled on the historic articles that framed the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. Elkins and Pedersen (18) offer an assessment of the *modus operandi* behind UDI:

When Rhodesia's secessionist white farmers adopted the American Declaration of Independence as the model for their own claim for a racially exclusive vision of freedom, it was more than a cynical ploy. Republican freedom and band-of-brothers exclusivity are the entangled twin foundational ideologies of the settler colonial state, and our own ambiguous inheritance.

I find myself in agreement with their suggestions that associations with the United States' colonial history were deliberately cultivated to exploit the sense of historic pride, the search for justice and the right to self-determination that drove America's independence quest. The timing of Rhodesia's UDI, 11 November 1965, was also calculated to appeal to a public heavily invested in the memorial culture of Armistice Day. Smith's UDI was thus entirely in keeping with Pioneer character. It continued a magnificent tradition in that as much as the brave Pioneers opened up a new land, so too would UDI open up a new and glorious chapter in Rhodesian history. It was the right thing to do, an act that made Rhodesians proud. UDI showed the British and the rest of the world the stuff Rhodesians were made of, they were standing up to bully Britain, ironically exhibiting the same degree of bluff and grit that Britain had

called upon in its moments alone against Nazi Germany. They were also daring the nationalists to make good on threats believing that they had the muscle to suppress, as had the Pioneers before them, any black rebellion. It was entirely in keeping with the national myth making. Smith gambled that Rhodesians would back his stance and he was proved right. What little opposition existed in white ranks was drowned out by a sort of collective playground clamour, and the signatories of the UDI document also entered the collective myth as heroes.

Rhodesians were swept up in the moment of UDI, the taste of which proved more palatable than many initially might have believed. Good (82) suggests that

[e]ven opponents of Smith admitted that upwards of 90 per cent of the white population had concluded that the only way to salvage something of “their Rhodesia” was to close ranks against external pressures. The traditional parochialism of Rhodesians now mixed with their deep anxieties to make perfectly believable any scurrilous charge against Wilson, and entirely plausible the extraordinary claim that white supremacy in Rhodesia was consonant with Christianity, civilized standards and indispensable to the West’s fight against world communism.

One of the myths that Smith’s RF successfully punted to white Rhodesians was that unlike their cousins to the South, they were not rabid racists or apartheid apostles. The RF stood, instead, “for civilized standards” and this slippage entered Rhodesian mythology to the point that many whites believed that their attitudes to black people were simply a reflection of some supposed (and benign) cultural difference and not, in fact, racism. Smith’s bluster on the matter could be breathtaking at times. In *Bitter Harvest*, he strikes a bizarre position in commenting on South Africa’s policies, and uses the same occasion to suggest that Rhodesia would pursue a different, more moral path. It is a clumsy piece of political footwork:

A division within a unitary country based purely on race, declaring that white people were first class citizens and blacks were second class citizens, was unprincipled and totally indefensible. Not only would it be impossible to gain support for such a philosophy anywhere else in the world, but most important

of all, it would create bitterness and hatred among the great mass of the people – a blatant affront to them based purely on race. I believed that there were answers to the problem without abandoning our Western civilization. (187).

Smith's words are absurd, but importantly, these crude fictions, suggesting a special status, were believed by white Rhodesians. Despite their fundamental illogicalities, they were accepted as *de rigueur* political and social fact. The myth that Rhodesians were not racist and that apartheid did not exist in Rhodesia occurs often enough in white Rhodesian writing to suggest the lie found ready traction. It continues to this day, with its resurrection in the 2014 memoir *Tales and Poems of The Rhodesian Bush War* by Winston Pullin. This former RLI and SAS soldier blithely remarks: "Apartheid never existed in Rhodesia because the word was never used. However affluent white people lived a life of luxury and only noticed blacks when they worked in their kitchens or gardens"(299). The post-UDI period not only saw the concretising of racist ideologies into the Rhodesian myths but also the adoption of a sort of machismo, a celebration of the spirit of defiance when it became clear that the UK would not succeed in its efforts to humble the rebellious colony.

The first waves of financial sanctions imposed by Britain in the weeks after UDI did not succeed in bankrupting the Rhodesian exchequer or significantly stem the flow of trade. Temporary hardships such as fuel rationing and shortages of luxury consumer goods proved valuable propaganda tools for the RF government. Import substitution was touted as the answer to initial economic problems but if Scotch was in short supply, local booze was not and it was cheaper! People could still go about their daily lives and enjoy much the same the lifestyle to which they had become accustomed. Paul Williams (35) sums up the situation:

Gone were Kellog's Rice Krispies and Cadbury's chocolates, but here came Willard's chips, Honey Krunchees and Charon's chocolates. The only faithful multinational which sustained a visible profile was the black, fizzy, caffeinated,

carbonated drink called the Real Thing. After all, in the sixties, things in the townships went better with Coke.

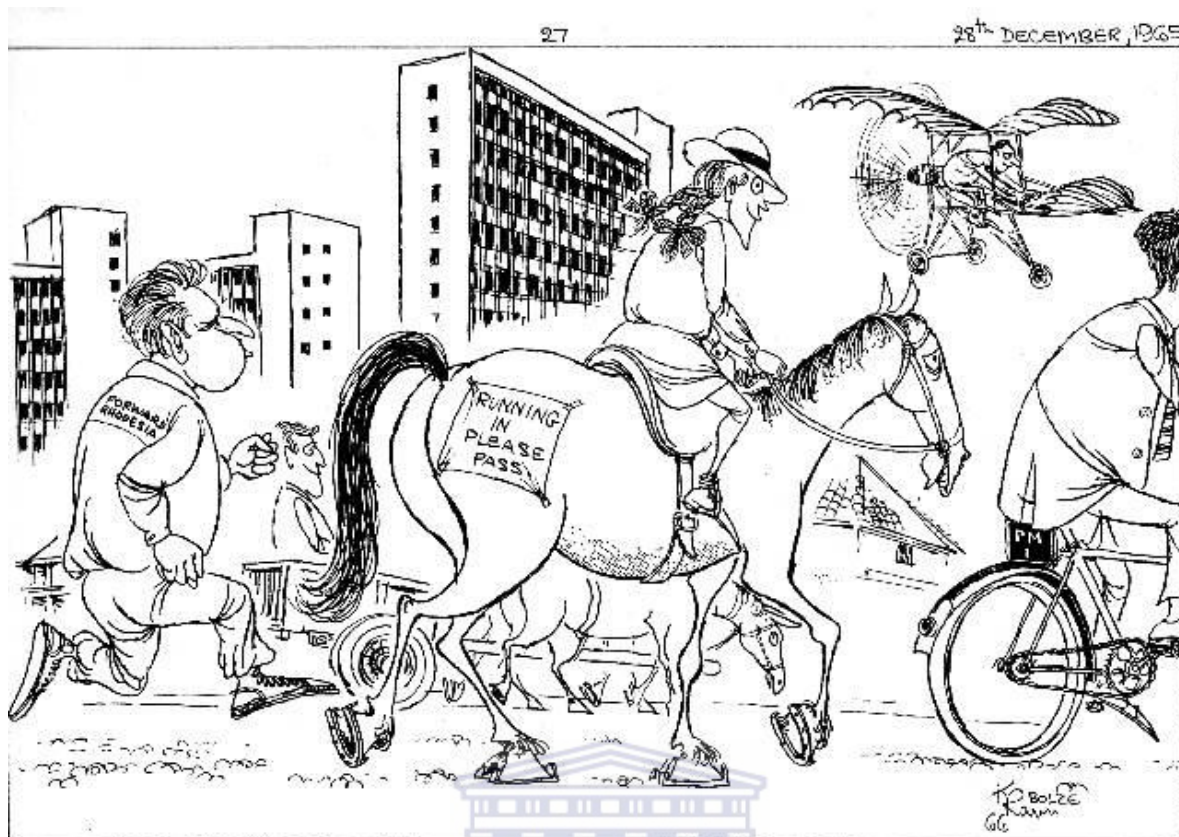
The vast majority of whites interpreted the period as some kind of vindication of the position taken by Smith and the RF. An examination of the Letters to the Editor contained in the *Rhodesia Herald* in the months after UDI reveal that by far the majority express unqualified support for Smith and UDI, and embraced the heady spirit of the times. The 1 December 1965 edition of the paper, for example, contains 16 Letters to the Editor, all on the subject of UDI, but only four of these express any reservations about the act. The rest are solidly supportive of Smith and UDI as this example, by PJ Emmer of Umvukwes records:

Sir, during the past months many people have been praying sincerely that the right decision would be made regarding the independence of this country. Whilst dioceses and parishes the government and student bodies as well as families and individuals have prayed "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done."

What right therefore has anyone to say that the wrong decision was made, that in fact God's will has not been done?

The PM in England may have the constitutional right to advise the Queen what is to be done, but I doubt if even Mr Wilson would claim the same privilege with the almighty.

Those Rhodesians who were vehemently opposed to UDI were by far in the minority and if they felt strongly enough, they cut their losses and emigrated. It was not an easy task to leave, however. Rhodesian passports were next to useless overseas and only dual nationality Rhodesians could realistically consider leaving. The rest were hardly prisoners though, and were welcome visitors in South Africa and Mozambique where commercial ties continued. The political theatre suffused the white Rhodesian public imagination in strange ways with bumper stickers and newspaper cartoons (like the example by Louis Bolze below) celebrating Rhodesia's defiance and ingenuity.



PETROL-RATIONING COMES TO RHODESIA

Fig 4. "Petrol rationing comes to Rhodesia." Cartoon by Louis Bolze. (Source: *Life with UDI: A Cartoon "History" of Independent Rhodesia*)

Bolze's cartoon is worth brief comment for the insights into the UDI spirit it reveals. His humour is childishly cheeky, but there is something unconsciously ironic about [white] people (all depicted moving to the right) reduced to running, cycling, riding a horse or driving in a mule cart against the background of a modern cityscape. In a strange and unintended way, Bolze's cartoon suggests that UDI was a retrogressive step for Rhodesia.

Just as the myth of Robin Hood as an heroic, populist figure had infiltrated popular English culture, so too did stories of sanctions busting and the crafty ones who ensured the procurement of essential goods enter Rhodesian national mythology. That these desirable goods were sometimes of inferior quality or acquired at extortionate prices via shady middlemen, or from politically unpalatable sources like

totalitarian South American countries, was expediently ignored.¹¹ The myth of the wily sanctions buster running rings around UK Home Office officials completely overwrote any sense of criminality in the white Rhodesian public's imagination. Also discounted was the fact that sanctions busters with secret access to foreign exchange resources generally enriched themselves¹² and that corruption (fueled by secrecy) established a foothold in government and the economy.¹³ Whites took simplistic pride in acquiring scarce consumer goods like washing machines or bottles of French perfume and boasted when, after waiting two or more years, a new car (no choice other than take it or leave it) could be bought from a motorcar trader. These inversions of social norms were perverse but the myths were powerful, and Rhodesians seemed to accept the economic deprivation of sanctions as readily as masochists embrace pain. Writing in 1988, Minter and Schmidt (211) assess the impact of sanctions in this survey:

The application of United Nations sanctions against Rhodesia between 1965 and 1979 constitutes the most far-reaching and ambitious attempt to date to implement economic sanctions under international auspices. In evaluating their effects, it is important to note that they were imposed gradually, moving from partial to comprehensive, from voluntary to mandatory. In addition, Rhodesia was warned as early as October 1964, one full year before UDI, that a unilateral declaration of independence would result in the imposition of sanctions by Great Britain. Consequently, all sectors of the Rhodesian economy were able to plan for the event. The Rhodesian government was able to announce UDI at the most advantageous moment, in November, just after the sale of the tobacco crop. Over the long term, apart from covert evasion, several of Rhodesia's economic partners openly declined to apply sanctions during much of the period they were in effect.

¹¹ The Rhodesian Air Force bought some helicopter gunships on the backdoor arms market in 1978. When they were delivered, they were found to be in poor condition.

¹² John Bredenkamp, a controversial figure in Zimbabwe, amassed a personal fortune of almost £700 million beginning as a Rhodesian sanctions buster. See <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2016/apr/06/mugabe-zimbabwe-john-bredenkamp-billy-rautenbach-offshore-sanctions-panama-papers>

¹³ In 1978 details emerged of Rhodesian government officials involved in corrupt arms deals. See Moorcraft, *The Rhodesian War* page 92.

Rhodesians continued to take a perverse pride in sanctions busting throughout the sanctions and UDI period. The myth needed only occasional maintenance. The acquisition of three Boeing 720 jet airliners by Air Rhodesia in 1973, for example, was celebrated as a sanctions busting coup. That the planes were already outdated and could not fly passengers anywhere other than to South Africa was an irony lost on a white public determined to immerse itself in its own mythologies. Stories of this nature were good morale boosters for the white public and featured prominently in Rhodesian media, an essential instrument in the propagation of Rhodesian mythology. The local newspapers, *The Rhodesia Herald* and *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, were controlled by the South African-owned Argus group and were largely sympathetic to the RF government. As these were pre-internet days and direct dialing connections to outside countries did not exist, it was possible to control the flow of news¹⁴ and so the public broadcaster (the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation) could spread a white populist version of insolent, good news without much fear of contradiction.¹⁵

On 11 November, 1968, the “old” Southern Rhodesian flag (the last visible public connection with Britain) was hauled down and replaced with a new Rhodesian flag. The new pennant, a three paneled ensign with green and white bands and the national coat of arms central, became the most visual symbol of “UDI” Rhodesia. Whereas the old Southern Rhodesian flag still deferred to the metropole with its inclusion of a small Union Jack, the new flag proclaimed the path of assumed independence, and became the rallying point in expressions of Rhodesian public culture and mythology. After a double referendum of the white electorate in June 1969, Rhodesia assumed a new, republican constitution, unilaterally severing any remaining ties with the metropole and making the role of governor redundant.¹⁶ A “new” national anthem, “Rise Oh Voices of Rhodesia” (set to the tune of the final movement of Beethoven’s ninth symphony, the “Ode to Joy”), replaced the former British national anthem and further changes were reflected in the dropping of the

¹⁴ In the early days of UDI, the newspapers left blank columns to indicate the censorship of material. The practise was banned by the government on 9 February, 1966 and reported stoically in the *Rhodesia Herald* on that day.

¹⁵ There were no private broadcasters in Rhodesia. RBC radio broadcast in English, Shona and Ndebele. The African language stations followed the same “party” line as the English service.

¹⁶ The two issues were interconnected. A new constitution and a change to republican status were the matters placed before white voters.

“Royal” prefix attached to elements of the Rhodesian security forces. New names, new badges, new opportunities, or so it seemed. There was nothing on the immediate horizon to suggest that things would be different. That was set to change soon, with the increase of guerrilla infiltrations into Rhodesia.

The broad history of the war has been dealt with in the previous chapter. Here I explore its impact on white Rhodesians. The first incursions were amateurish, ill-fated efforts that resulted in the death or capture of most of the guerrillas. These initial incursions, ironically, added to the gathering mythologies that white Rhodesians bought into. The ZANU guerrillas of the 1960s were poorly trained and lightly armed with a motley selection of weapons. Some of the first weapons captures made by the Rhodesians included WWII vintage sub machine guns. Thereafter Soviet and Chinese weapons were found, providing evidence of the communist plot against Rhodesia. Ranged against the guerrillas was a military machine that Moorcraft (2005) details had special forces, regular infantry battalions, a small but efficient air force, a professional, paramilitary police force, much modern equipment and could draw on recent institutional experience of fighting counter insurgency campaigns as part of the British efforts in the Malayan and Aden “police actions”. When the “Battle of Sinoia (Chinhoyi)” resulted in the deaths of all seven guerrillas and no loss on the Rhodesian side, the myth quickly emerged of Rhodesian military supremacy. Rank and file were lead to believe that they were up against an inept enemy and sure to prevail on the battlefield just as the Pioneers had done in the previous century.

Isolated engagements in the 1960s tended to support this view point. Although the Rhodesian security forces were taking casualties, the losses incurred by the guerrilla bands outnumbered RSF by about 10:1. The insurgency appeared confined to the remote Zambesi Valley area and seemed well within the capacity of the security forces to contain for an indefinite period. Guerrilla tactics too, played into the accelerating Rhodesian mythology. The murder of a farming couple near Hartley (Chegutu) in May 1966 marked the first (white) civilian casualties of the war. As Godwin (12) points out, the brutal nature of their deaths coupled with Rhodesian racism formed perfect propaganda for the Rhodesians. The guerrillas were ascribed the label “terrorist” in all official communiqués and this word spread quickly into white

lexicons. We who live in the era of the “global war on terror” are aware of the subtle dehumanizing power invested in the terminology and the connotations were fully exploited. Fictional accounts of the “bush war” emerged soon after, and these affected novels did little more than reinforce the racist stereotypes and myths that were infiltrating Rhodesian public imagination. One, Daniel Carney’s *The Whispering Death* (1969) merits some discussion because it assumed best-seller status in Rhodesia and paraded all the myths of Rhodesian military superiority.

Carney was a former member of the British South Africa Police and had some initial experience of Rhodesia’s counter insurgency war. His novel grabbed popular attention thanks to a racy plot that served up liberal (for the censorious times) portions of graphic sex and violence. It was certain to appeal to an indiscriminating readership and was later made into a feature film. Anthony Chennels, contributing to Ngwabi Bebhe’s *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, makes this observation about the emergence of the trope in which the Rhodesian soldier is heroic, and the guerrilla a primitive, unrepentant barbarian who must be resisted and quashed:

Carney's Blacks are produced not only from the Rhodesian discourse but from two centuries of imperial writing: they are the savages able to be beguiled by trick and ceremonies and the White, in imperial romances at least, is a past-master of both. The albino kills Terick's wife and all thoughts of tricks and ceremonies are forgotten as the novel sets primitive emotions of love and revenge against the imposed structures of law and order. Much later in the war the novelist shows senior officers in the police and army responding to savagery with savagery. In 1969, although the District Commissioner and Member in Charge indulge in childish games, for this is still a Rhodesia where all the world is young, they are both men upholding the highest standards of justice and equity among a savage people (121).

What is most engaging in Chennels’ argument is his oblique notation that the myths of hegemony that penetrate *Whispering Death* were part of mainstream public discourse, reflecting the social patina that accumulates around decades of assumed settler colonial values and ethos. The devices Carney deployed were celebrated and adopted enthusiastically by other writers (Wilbur Smith, Peter Stiff and John Gordon-

Davis) suggesting, powerfully, the degree to which racism and militarism had infiltrated white Rhodesian thinking. A steady dribble of Rhodesian war novels followed these initial examples. They may have differed in plot detail, but they echoed the stereotypes and deployed the well-worn tropes. The pattern was seriously disrupted in 1989 when Bruce Moore King published his novel *White Man, Black War*. This slim work tells the story of a soldier (the author) who fought in the Grey's Scouts, a mounted infantry unit. It is the product of Moore-King's own political and moral epiphany in the post-war period. He returned to Zimbabwe in the mid-1980s and was appalled at the entrenched racist views of many of his white comrades. His experiences, as reflected in the novel, become a penetrating examination of the racist myths he (and many other whites) had once espoused. Another significant novel that broke with the heroic Rhodesian war tropes is Alan Thrush's work: *Of Land and Spirits*, published in 1997. Thrush was a decorated Rhodesian army officer and his work presented something that stood in opposition to the established myths. He depicted a losing Rhodesian army, with troops unsure of themselves, their fight or the likely outcomes. M.J. Hurry, writing on 24 March 1997 in *The Star*, comments on the novel thus:

White Rhodesians have tended to believe it was simply the brutal and bestial intimidation by the insurgents that cowed the local peoples into co-operation. Thrush points out the plight of the innocent tribal communities caught between this intimidation and the violence of security forces seeking information on guerrilla movements. A most interesting point, too, was that the insurgents had the support of the spirit mediums.¹⁷ The heavy rains during the period were interpreted as a sign of approval from the ancestral spirits for the struggle to regain land taken by force by the pioneers and later colonists... The dilemma of black members of the Rhodesian forces, regarded by many as traitors, especially the captured insurgents recruited into the formidable Selous Scouts, forms another aspect of the story. But the real strength of the book is its re-creation of conditions of actual war.

¹⁷ The issue of spirit mediums in the war is an interesting one. The Rhodesians failed to realise the double significance of spirit mediums in their channelling ancestral voices and legitimising the guerrillas' cause. See, for example Lan, David. *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*. London: James Currey, 1985. Print.

But Thrush's novel only appeared after the war was over. The myths had metamorphosed into the bedrock of Rhodesian society and were, for a long time, resistant to erosion. The increase in the war's tempo initially had minimal effect on Rhodesian morale. Jakkie Cillers (13) describes white public reaction to the escalation of fighting in the early 1970s thus:

Most Rhodesians, however, accepted the news philosophically. Official concern over the deteriorating situation in the area had been expressed some weeks earlier by Prime Minister Ian Smith when he stated on the radio that the security situation was far more serious than it appears on the surface.

What the various commentators do not underscore, however, is that Rhodesians had become a compliant, "make do" population, unable to look critically at their circumstances and peculiarly reluctant to demand change from the white politicians. They had lived with economic sanctions for some years, their military commitments were seen as a necessary sacrifice, but they were not overly disruptive. Those who wanted to leave Rhodesia were free to go, although they faced the problems of trying to emigrate with a Rhodesian passport (which because of the 1968 UN Security Council Resolution 235 meant that virtually no UN member country admitted people travelling on this document). Holders of dual citizenship had wider options, but all were bound by the severe restrictions of Rhodesian foreign exchange control, which effectively prevented would be emigrants from taking their capital with them.

As the war progressed it became, as wars are wont to do, more and more bitterly contested. Atrocity begged response and that begat retaliation and so a mad cycle of spiralling violence raced like a whirlwind across the land and spilled into the Frontline states. No one was immune, and Lotter would note this in his war diary entry of 29 September 1978: "There are no innocents in a war like this, it has gone on long enough for everyone to choose sides."¹⁸ The Rhodesian media issued daily communiqués that summarized the situation. Rhodesians began hearing every day, the refrain "Security Forces Head Quarters regrets to announce the deaths in action of..." A war that had seemed confined to a border area had spread everywhere

¹⁸ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Bindura 3" 29 Sept. 1978. MS. 7/22.

imaginable. Dusk to dawn curfews were in effect, civilian vehicular traffic on Rhodesia's roads was confined to daylight hours and that movement was possible only when facilitated by armed convoys. Civilians went about armed at all times and at those rural boarding schools that still operated, senior pupils undertook armed patrols of the school grounds. Rhodesia was under siege and this, too, fed into the myths. Folk songs by John Edmond, Clem Tholet and Mike Westcott that celebrated or poked fun at aspects of military life enjoyed airtime on the radio and sold as many copies as international chart-topping pop bands like Abba or the Bee Gees. Customised assault vests, combat wear and tee shirts with sardonic cartoons and slogans appeared in clothing stores (see Figure 5 below). A thriving small arms industry released a number of simple weapons onto the civilian market, and light engineering firms began offering land mine protection and anti-ambush kits for civilian vehicles.



Fig. 5. Non-issue camouflage t shirt sold in Rhodesian shops.(Source: author)

In 1976, the first acknowledged “external” operation, a strike on the Mozambican town of Mapai that saw Rhodesian forces occupying the town for 3 days, was celebrated in the media. The myth of Rhodesian military superiority was further

fueled by this adventure, with few stopping to consider that there was no strategic advantage to Rhodesia holding this unimportant little town, and that escalations of the war would only erode what little foreign support Rhodesia had and further endanger its already precarious position. Within months, “external” operations became routine strategy as an increasingly desperate Rhodesian army attempted to stem the mass incursion of guerrillas into the country from Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana. Moorcraft (129) notes that by 1976, the war was costing the Rhodesian government 1 million Rhodesian dollars a day.¹⁹ Military service obligations for territorial soldiers extended to 190 days a year for men of active service age; young national servicemen were placed on continuous service, effectively putting their career and tertiary education plans in abeyance. The war and its prosecution infected every aspect of Rhodesian life. The only escape was through immigration, and from the mid-1970s Rhodesia began experiencing a net loss of white population on a monthly basis. Even though immigrants left virtually penniless, the cost of staying was too high for many.

An advertising slogan used by Rhodesian tourism marketers once proclaimed: “Rhodesia is super”. In the final months of the war, Rhodesia had become a place of horror where absolutely no one was beyond the reach of violence. Suburban shops were bombed, the border town of Umtali was shelled by ZANLA and FRELIMO forces inside Mozambique, and the main Rhodesian oil storage depot in Salisbury was destroyed. Rhodesia had fought to a standstill and had effectively lost the war. Since 1976, the RF had convinced the white electorate to concede on the issue of white hegemony. What was once an anathema became a strategic necessity; a survival strategy. It was as if the reel of tape on which white Rhodesia had recorded its short history had snagged and unwound itself in a mad rewind cycle. Peace had to be sought. The Lancaster House conference in late 1979 paved the way for democratic elections and the Rhodesians’ nemesis, Robert Mugabe, won a convincing victory. The myths they had bought into shattered like fragile glass. Ninety years of white rule ended on 18 April 1980 and, as Moorcraft saliently notes (184), the white war heroes, who just a short time before had been an object of Rhodesian pride, became a huge social embarrassment.

¹⁹ The Rhodesian dollar was subject to strict exchange control, but was pegged to the US dollar.

The immediate post-war period seriously disrupted white Rhodesian identity. For many of them, life in Zimbabwe was simply untenable after all that had happened, and so a wave of emigration occurred in the months after independence. The white exodus took people to many places, but perhaps the bulk of that emigration was to the UK as many Rhodesians could claim British citizenship either by birth or descent. Their move was not seamless however, with Elkins and Pedersen (16) noting the peculiar settler colonialist dilemma that followed them:

Yet, whatever choices they made, settlers continued to be a lightning rod for postcolonial anxieties and dilemmas. In the former empires, repatriated settlers were often viewed with disquiet, as bearers of right-wing extremism or as nagging reminders of imperial enthusiasms many now preferred to forget.

In an attempt to retain their Rhodesian identity, many of these emigres formed Rhodesian associations and, by the mid-1980s, a magazine *Rhodesians Worldwide* had a huge subscriber base. As well as functioning as point of contact, the magazine devoted articles to Rhodesian history and perpetuated the myths we know infiltrated white identity in Rhodesia. The magazine has since migrated to a digital platform²⁰, but a perusal of the web site demonstrates that it retains its core purpose of perpetuating the Rhodesian myths, and creating an online memorial space that Kylie Veale (2004) notes “allows quick if not instant content creation, unlimited editing and updating, and a lifespan that is not subject to the degradation of the physical world.” For those who remained in Zimbabwe, things would evolve differently. Robert Mugabe gave a magnanimous speech at the independence celebration in which he made this call:²¹

As we become a new people we are called to be constructive, progressive and forever forward looking, for we cannot afford to be men of yesterday, backward-looking, retrogressive and destructive. Our new nation requires of

²⁰ See <http://rhodesians-worldwide.com/>. A few print copies are produced for those elderly subscribers who are not computer and internet literate.

²¹ The full text of Mugabe’s speech is available at <http://www.zbc.co.zw/news-categories/opinion/18369-president-mugabes-1980-independence-speech>.

every one of us to be a new man, with a new mind, a new heart and a new spirit. Our new mind must have a new vision and our new hearts a new love that spurns hate, and a new spirit that must unite and not divide.

For those who stayed, the visible reminders of the myth, the statues of Rhodes and the various pioneer monuments were quickly taken down. The notable exception being Rhodes' grave in the Matopos hills which the Zimbabwean government has seen fit to preserve despite its distasteful presence. Rhodesian army units were disbanded soon after the war and new flags, uniforms and symbols were introduced to signal the change. If the myths were shaken, the settler colonial lifestyle continued almost without pause. People still employed household servants. Jobs became plentiful as the economy recovered and with the end of the war, pastimes like the sports clubs, fishing, hunting and game-viewing quickly resumed their former popularity. Tourists returned and a new era of peace and prosperity seemed to be beckoning. It would be a few years before the horror of Gukurahundi and the Zanu-fication of Zimbabwe society became apparent. The generation of whites who were too young to serve in the war and who grew up in Zimbabwe, have largely abandoned the myths and have adopted an identity different to their parents.

For the Rhodesians who survived the war and moved on to new countries, the struggle continued. Divorce, alcoholism, dysfunctional relationships, disrupted careers, abandoned education, restlessness and untreated PTSD were (and remain) rampant social issues in the ex-Rhodesian community. It is not surprising that these people tended to look for camaraderie and support in the various ex-Rhodesian groups and regimental associations that sprung up, mainly in South Africa where a sizeable proportion of whites moved.

These ex-Rhodesian associations serve a dual purpose. As well as catering to the emotional and physical welfare of their members, they function, too, to keep the old myths alive by recording microhistories and providing spaces for memorial and commemoration. The political developments in Zimbabwe post-independence have deprived ex-Rhodesians of access to sites of memory, so alternative spaces have been created. An example of this is the memorial erected in 2012 at the Voortrekker Monument near Pretoria that commemorates the downing of the two Air Rhodesia

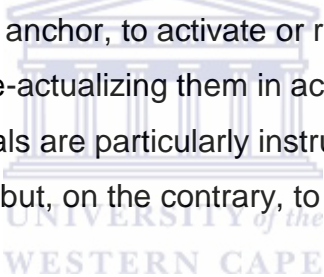
aircraft during the war. There is a deeply tangled irony to the erection of this monument in post-Apartheid South Africa at a place many regard as synonymous with racist memorialization. The monument contains an inscription that whilst memorialising the tragedy of the events, offers a distorted worldview with its suggestion that somehow, these two events are early signs of international terrorism. It reads, in part:

This memorial is to commemorate the lives of 107 holiday makers and crew murdered in the world's first 9/11 styled attacks to destroy passenger aircraft in flight, when Air Rhodesia's Viscounts Hunyani and Umniati were brought down with Sam-7 missiles on leaving Kariba airport on 3 September 1978 and 12 February 1979.



Fig. 6. Air Rhodesia Viscounts monument, Fort Klapperkop (Source: <http://allatsea.co.za/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/viscountnew03.jpg>)

Amongst this war generation the desperate attempts to hold onto some form of meaning has had the perverse effect that very few ex-Rhodesians will admit the possibility of an alternative reading of their recent history. The small number who opted to remain in Zimbabwe have probably, through expedience, modified their stances accordingly. But for those in “exile” any suggestions that the cause they adopted was monumentally futile, indefensible and unjust, and the price paid far too high, challenge too deeply their fragile, unstable identity for any meaningful or sustained discourse on the war and the political situation that spawned it. As Bouchard points out (5), invented traditions or national myths require


 the construction of a narrative and a continuing process of remembrance designed to magnify the anchor, to activate or reactivate the imprint, and to stimulate the ethos by re-actualizing them in accordance with the ever-changing contexts. Rituals are particularly instrumental in this regard, not as a way to heal the wounds but, on the contrary, to reopen them and to reload the myths.

This is why acts of memorialisation continue in the ex-Rhodesian community and until the generations that were part of the war finally pass on, the Rhodesian national myths will continue to enjoy a degree of traction. The Pioneers will be celebrated, Ian Smith will be venerated and the loss of white Rhodesia blamed on cowardly Britain, the duplicity of South Africa’s white politicians²² and the expansionist policies of godless communism.

The final mutation of the Rhodesian national myth, that modern Zimbabwe is a failed state that negates all the achievements of the whites and can now only be equated with dung, is contained in Vic Mackenzie’s cartoon below. It is a racist, binary view held by the majority of ex-Rhodesians, and one that is too easily justified by the

²² Ian Smith is vocal in his assertion that the National Party government forced Rhodesia’s government to acquiesce to black rule.

abusive and antidemocratic nature of Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF regime. David Lowenthal's pithy suggestion (331) that "we alter the past to become part of it as well as to make it our own" is most apt in the case of ex-Rhodesians, and I have demonstrated how national myths and settler colonialism shaped Rhodesian identity and history. I am left only to reflect on the bitter irony that the tumult generated by these myths blinds ex-Rhodesians to their culpability and precludes most from critically assessing their role in the war and complicity in its savagery. In the chapters that follow, I will do much to demonstrate how Lotter was at times, complicit in sustaining the myths but also show how these myths began to erode in his poetic consciousness.

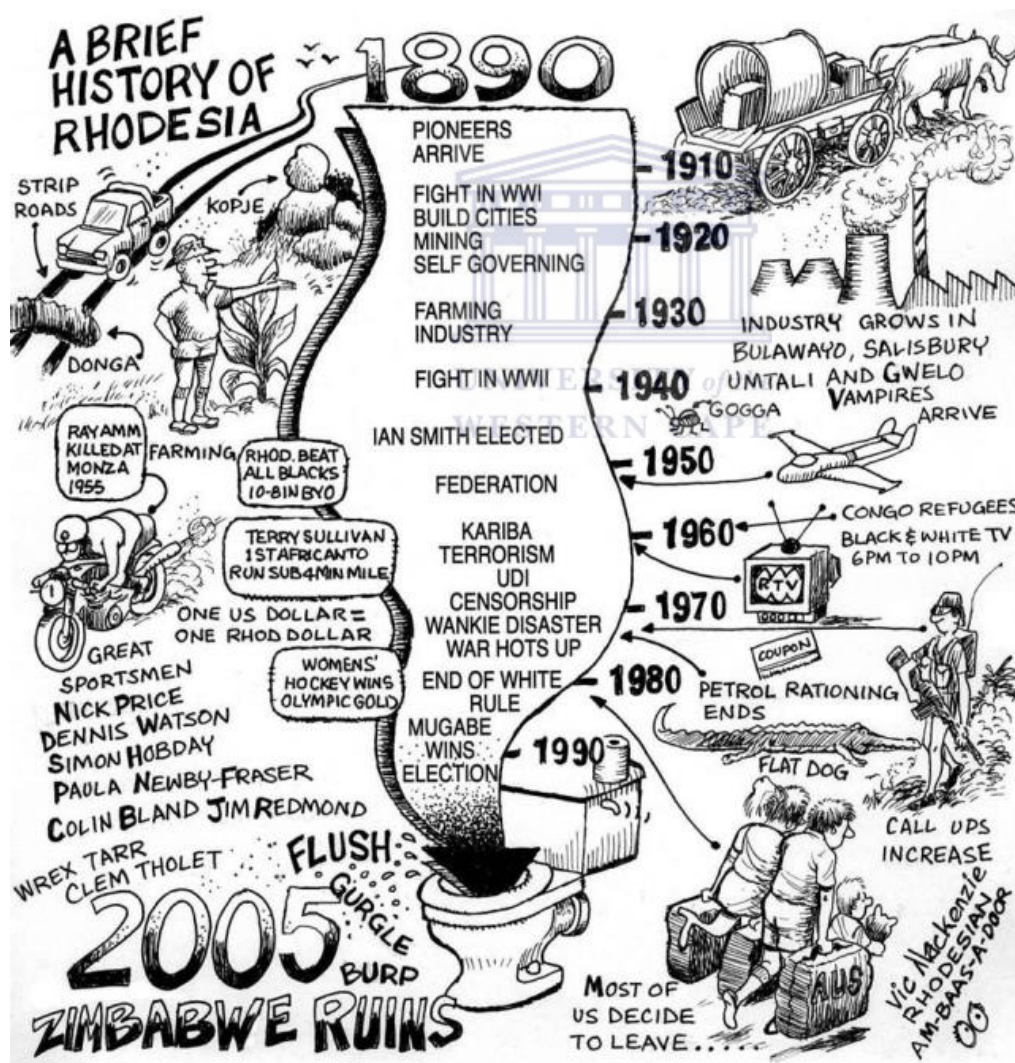


Fig. 7. "A Brief History of Rhodesia". Cartoon by Vic Mackenzie. (Source: www.memoriesofrhodesia.com/pages/newsletter/memorylane/history.html)

Chapter Three: Review of war literature

“Listen up - there's no war that will end all wars.” (Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*).

Warfare is as old as humankind. Lawrence Keeley argues this point effectively and notably dispels the myths he attributes to social contract theorists that prehistoric humanity was less capable of organised violence than its modern counterpart. Keeley's conclusion is both startling and depressing as an oblique comment on a consistent characteristic of human nature: “primitive and prehistoric warfare was just as terrible and effective as the historic and civilized version” (174). He notes that war:

remains the most theatrical of human activities, combining tragedy, high drama, farce and even low comedy. War displays the human condition in extremes. It is thus not surprising that the first recorded histories, the first written accounts of mortals, are military histories (3).

Shaw and Wong observe that evolutionary biologists have determined that “there are strong indications that many of the injuries apparent in remains of *Australopithecus*, *Homo erectus*, and *Homo sapiens* of the European fourth and pre-fourth glacial periods resulted from combat” (4). The Bible, when read as an ancient accretion of texts particularising the emergent history of the Israelites, records the outbreak of hostilities in the first book of the Pentateuch:

At the time when Amraphel was king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goyim, these kings went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboyim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). All these latter kings joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea Valley).⁴ For twelve years they had been subject to Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. (*New International Version Bible*, Gen. 14. 1-4)

Accounts of battles, contests and campaigns occur frequently in the Old Testament, providing Biblical scholars with rich material to mine in their quest to pursue themes such as the legitimacy of war, tactics and even codes of conduct in warfare.

Early writings are replete with accounts of warfare and Keeley discusses these in some detail, but specific examples in the Western literary canon might be Homer's *Iliad*, and Julius Caesar's campaign records – two well-known examples of pre-Common Era writings on warfare. The *Iliad* is an epic poem that constructs foundational mythologies and offers, perhaps, a recognisably “literary” framework, whilst Caesar's writings occupy a textual space we might consider to be closely allied to contemporary memoir and commentary.

In the Common Era, records of warfare specifically literary interpretations become more commonplace and accessible. The oldest extant “Old English” text, *Beowulf*, is a mythical epic poem that recounts the battles of the heroic figure, Beowulf. In “Middle English”, the Pearl poet is believed to have given us the 14th century epic *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* – a multi-layered piece that unpacks the chivalric code as one of its themes. Another famous example would be Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which though focusing on the entertainment value of individual stories that are infused with social commentary and bawdy humour, also gives us an insight into medieval warfare through the character of the Knight. The emerging canon of English literature is replete with heroic and mythical battle accounts but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to dissect these in much detail.

It is the dramatist William Shakespeare who perhaps was the first recognisable writer in English to deal with warfare poetically and across a multitude of thematic platforms. The history plays, we know, deal in great detail with the various monarchies in England and unpack the power plays, rivalries and confrontations that patterned English history between the 12th and 16th centuries. *Julius Caesar* offers microscopically intense examinations of political intrigues and civil war and in *Coriolanus*, the drama of the General, Coriolanus, centres on the dichotomies of his role as a military man in times of peace. His collapse is triggered because he is utterly ill-equipped for life outside the binary dualities of the military. Even in a tragedy as sublime as *Romeo and Juliet*, the consequences of enmity are vigorously unravelled and form an intrinsic element in our appreciation of the drama. It is not presumptuous to suggest that Shakespeare ranks amongst the greatest “war poets” if we consider the thematic range, the tenor and scope of the imagery and the quality of poetic language in the various works attributed to his hand. It is ironic, however,

that the epithet “war poet” is more commonly associated with work attributable to poets working in considerably later years to Shakespeare. Part of the reason for this is that the terms “war poet” and “soldier poet” (as compound noun structures) date from comparatively recently. The *Columbia Encyclopaedia* suggests the term “soldier-poet” emerged in the 1840s and is linked to the German revolutionary poet, Georg Herwegh. What this information alerts us to is the possibility that our understanding, particularly of the contextual and historical temporal parameters of “war poetry”, may need substantial revision. It is a point made eloquently by Santanu Das (albeit in reference to the poetry of WWI) that it is “important to retain an expansive definition and a flexible critical framework alert to different political, cultural and ideological trajectories” (8).

Malvern Van Wyk-Smith’s influential work: *Drummer Hodge: The Poetry of the Anglo Boer War 1899-1902*, constructs an erudite argument for the emergence of war poetry as a distinct sub-genre prior to the cultural flowering occasioned by the Great War. Two well-known poems support Van Wyk-Smith’s observation. Tennyson’s “The Charge of the Light Brigade” reflects something of the proud preoccupation with the nobility of martial sacrifice. The final stanzas, particularly so:

Cannon to right of them,
 Cannon to left of them,
 Cannon behind them
 Volley'd and thunder'd;
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,
 While horse and hero fell,
 They that had fought so well
 Came thro' the jaws of Death
 Back from the mouth of Hell,
 All that was left of them,
 Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
 O the wild charge they made!
 All the world wondered.

Honour the charge they made,
 Honour the Light Brigade,
 Noble six hundred.

Kipling's postscript, "The Last of the Light Brigade", strips away valorous myth to reveal the hubris of war and underscores the tragic futility of the charge and the corporate amnesia that rolled across England in later years, rendering the glory of the moment ragged and somewhat pathetic:

There were thirty million English who talked of England's might,
 There were twenty broken troopers who lacked a bed for the night.
 They had neither food nor money, they had neither service nor trade;
 They were only shiftless soldiers, the last of the Light Brigade.
 They felt that life was fleeting; they knew not that art was long,
 That though they were dying of famine, they lived in deathless song.
 They asked for a little money to keep the wolf from the door;
 And the thirty million English sent twenty pounds and four!

It is sobering to reflect that Kipling's piece, written some forty years after Tennyson's, did not inflame critical opinion and appeared just a few short years before the final imperial adventure of the 19th century – the South African War.

Van Wyk-Smith records that the professional British army that went to South Africa at the turn of the 19th century was uniquely positioned to respond critically and culturally to the campaign because:

While literacy was almost non-existent in the ranks and rare even among non-commissioned officers in the Peninsular War [1804-1817], the men who went to South Africa in 1899 were the products of several decades of universal literacy and the franchise. They were the beneficiaries of almost a century of democratic campaigns in the fields of politics, education, social organization, humanitarianism, and, more specifically, army reform. But their great-grandfathers who died at Waterloo were either of the elitist few who accepted almost unquestioningly the military and social code that gave them their

superior position, or they belonged to the multitude who had no voice, either political or literary (3).

Van Wyk Smith's observation that the British army that fought in South Africa marked a new phenomenon, a literate, modern army that could and did write poetry has another outcome too. He demonstrates that the sort of common belief articulated by critics like Simon Featherstone (7) that "war poetry, as it is now generally presented and interpreted in the anthologies, is the poetry of 1914-18. Its purpose is seen to be telling the truth about war, and its prevailing attitudes as pacifist" is too narrow a position. Van Wyk Smith (5) makes an articulate case with his assessment that:

One careful way of tracing out the pattern of war poetry through the ages is to see it as a constant oscillation between two equally ancient views of war as either heroic and ennobling or tragic and brutalizing, with the latter conception of war gradually gaining dominance from the mid nineteenth century onwards.

We should not underestimate the significance of this development in the scholarship of war literature. Themes of war have figured in literary history, and Featherstone's view about the emergence of war poetry as a sub-genre associated perennially with WWI has much currency, yet Van Wyk-Smith articulates a position that deserves serious consideration. He draws our attention to the fact that the British army that went to South Africa in 1899 comprised a military corps across rank and file, which was both overwhelmingly literate and socially engaged. The soldiers of this war were, for the first time, able to articulate their thoughts and observations in diaries, letters home and in creative works. Previously, soldiers may literally only have been able to recount their stories orally, to a limited and equally undiscerning audience, most likely in a public house! It is also Van Wyk-Smith who draws our attention to the fact that "humanitarian opposition to war", particularly as expressed in critically engaged textual and other discourses by people like Emily Hobhouse and Olive Schreiner, predates the sort of emergent activism of anti-war voices we tend (wrongly) to believe surfaced with Wilfred Owen. Owen may have famously, ironically and tragically given the anti-war actors a stage, but the sentiment is demonstrably a feature (albeit sometimes hard to trace) in previous literatures occasioned by war. This does, though, pose the twin questions: why does the war

poetry of WWI seem to occupy such a significant polemical position and why, perhaps, do so many believe that war poetry is forever figured with this conflict?

Bertrand Russell (63) probed the social pathology (“psychology of war fever”) that permits or inspires the seeming incongruity of one apparently civilised and humane society opting to pursue organised violence against another. He suggests that:

besides the conscious and deliberate forces leading to war, there are the inarticulate feelings of common men, which, in most civilized countries, are always ready to burst into war-fever at the bidding of statesmen. If peace is to be secured, the readiness to catch war-fever must be somehow diminished. Whoever wishes to succeed in this must first understand what war-fever is and why it arises... To this victim of order and good organization, the realization comes, in some moment of sudden crisis, that he belongs to a nation, that his nation may take risks, may engage in difficult enterprises, enjoy the hot passion of doubtful combat, stimulate adventure and imagination by military expeditions to Mount Sinai and the Garden of Eden. What his nation does, in some sense he does; what his nation suffers, he suffers. The long years of private caution are avenged by a wild plunge into public madness. All the horrid duties of thrift and order and care, which he has learned to fulfil in private, are thought not to apply to public affairs: it is patriotic and noble to be reckless for the nation, though it would be wicked to be reckless for one's self. The old primitive passions, which civilization has denied, surge up, all the stronger for repression. In a moment, imagination and instinct travel back through the centuries, and the wild man of the woods emerges from the mental prison in which he has been confined. This is the deeper part of the psychology of the war-fever.

The history of World War I is well recorded. It is the literature, particularly the poetry of the war, that is under scrutiny and the question of why it holds a privileged position. If we take Russell's argument that essentially men get caught up in a war psychosis probably against their better judgement, we can understand that many who enlisted early in the war did so (at least initially) for patriotic, jingoistic reasons. Philippa Lyon observes that patriotism was a prime motivating factor in initial

mobilisations, and this sense of duty is echoed in much of the work that dates from the early part of the war. She states:

[m]any of the First World War poems included in this anthology [*The Virago Book of Women's War Poetry and Verse*], however, demonstrate an uncritical belief in the importance of patriotic duty and the necessity for, and appreciation of, men's service (40).

Lyon also notes that the British government of the time understood the value of popular writers and poets expressing public support for the war effort, and rallied figures such as Robert Bridges and John Galsworthy (but not exclusively) to use their skills in the propaganda bureau (41). The style of assistance rendered was, as Lyon records, "to produce histories, journalism or poems that would validate the Government's actions in going to war" (42). There are many, many examples of this style of poetry. Rupert Brooke was an immensely popular poet who addressed these themes and his sonnet, "The Soldier", is a famous example:

If I should die, think only this of me:
 That there's some corner of a foreign field
 That is for ever England. There shall be
 In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
 A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
 Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
 A body of England's, breathing English air,
 Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.
 And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
 A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
 Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
 Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
 And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
 In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Brooke's poem is typical of the sort of patriotic or positively intoned work set in motion by this vast but loosely connected literary machine, a process of integration

highlighted by Foulkes (11) in his observation that individuals assimilate the dominant ideologies manifest in society. At some point though, the mood changed. There was no sudden shift; no sudden tearing of a loose knit fabric of synergetic themes and concerns. The drift towards a sentiment that was anti-war evolved and flowed, as it were, out of the ooze in the trenches.

Paul Fussell's analysis of the disaster at the Battle of the Somme, "the largest engagement fought since the beginnings of civilization", gives us a clear understanding of an alignment of conditions that contributed to a change in the prevailing mood and occupations of war poetry:

out of the 110, 000 who attacked, 60, 000 were killed or wounded on this one day, the record so far. Over 20, 000 lay dead between the lines, and it was days before the wounded in No Man's Land stopped crying out ... Another cause [of this fiasco] was traceable to the class system and the assumptions it sanctioned. The regulars of the British staff entertained an implicit contempt for the rapidly trained men of "Kitchener's Army," largely recruited among workingmen from the Midlands (13).

The sheer scale of the horror and a growing suspicion that the general staff were incompetents and dismissive of the troops' morale, precipitated the rise of the soldier poets as anti-war voices. John Stuart Roberts writes that Siegfried Sassoon repositioned his work to provide "a thoroughly caddish antidote to the glorification of the supreme sacrifice and such-like prevalent phrases" (88). Sassoon was not alone. As Das notes, "war poetry is most closely bound up with the politics of cultural memory" (26), and Lyon records "the growing interest in preventing war, the keenness of writers to become involved in the social and political struggle[s]" (59). Thus, in the years following the disaster at the Somme, anti-war themes accumulated more literary currency than the contesting voices of propaganda and heroic military myth-making. We need to contextualise this and remember that World War I involved battles on a scale hitherto unimagined, and that it was the first modern war fought by conscripted armies with access to terrible and efficient military technologies. The decimation that occurred altered the demographic profiles of the economically active population in all the European countries involved. Small wonder,

that in the years that followed, war poetry in the mind of the reading public became synonymous with work generated by WWI and, understandably (though inadequately), thematic concerns seemed centred on anti-war sentiments. The expectation, of course, being that literature occasioned by wars following the Great War would defer to the conscience-driven positions taken by the acknowledged poetic masters. This was not to prove the case.

The Spanish Civil War generated a different critical and artistic response. John Press reminds us that:

[p]oets do not group themselves into movements and schools, or later their habits of composition, in order to justify the labels cherished by so many compilers of literary textbooks and by some tidy-minded, pigeon-holing sociologists. A poet's job, at any given moment is to solve certain problems, technical, intellectual, imaginative, and spiritual, knowing that their solution will pose a further set of difficulties and challenges. Only in this solitary exploration of his uniqueness, and not in any flamboyant pursuit of the contemporary, can a poet hope to grasp that elusive and indefinable reality which stamps the work of all major poets – the spirit of the age (75).

If in the case of WWI the “pity of war” overshadowed the historical-political agencies at work, something quite different occurred in Spain. Roberts offers this neat catch-all: “the overture to the Second World War was the Spanish Civil War which galvanised artists of the Left around the Republican cause”. This accurately positions the Spanish war ideologically and pins it to a larger, temporal framework that is dominated by the poetry of WWI. The participants in Spain's war were divided firmly between forces on the right (the Fascists) and forces on the left (those of Republican, democratic bent). Lyon suggests that the poetry of this conflict had a significant shaping effect and resulted in the reworking of war poetry as a sub-genre, moving it away from forms of positioned conscience and objection to one of ideological commitment (81). Significantly, the war attracted international volunteer combatants, most, but not all, choosing the Republican side. A number of politically engaged artists and writers took part in the conflict, again mostly, but not exclusively, on the Republican side. The South African poet, Roy Campbell for example, had

fascist sympathies and travelled as a war correspondent with Franco's forces and later famously clashed with the English poet, Stephen Spender, who had been attached to the International Brigade. If the combatant / artist's political awareness grew out of their experience of WWI, it is safe to say that those who took part in the Spanish war entered the conflict because they were already personally invested, committed ideologues. Much of the [English] poetry born in Spain's war reflects the ideological investments of their creators. Many examples could be chosen, but this short excerpt from WH Auden's longer poem "Spain" is at once a breath-takingly handsome piece of writing as well as a strong evidence of Auden's left-wing political commitment:

On that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot
 Africa, soldered so crudely to inventive Europe;
 On that tableland scored by rivers,
 Our thoughts have bodies; the menacing shapes of our fever

Are precise and alive. For the fears which made us respond
 To the medicine ad, and the brochure of winter cruises
 Have become invading battalions;
 And our faces, the institute-face, the chain-store, the ruin

Are projecting their greed as the firing squad and the bomb.
 Madrid is the heart. Our moments of tenderness blossom
 As the ambulance and the sandbag;
 Our hours of friendship into a people's army

We need to consider too, that this was the *Spanish* civil war, so material written in English is not the sum total of the sub-genre. Significant pieces were written in Spanish, by writers with either Republican or Fascist leanings. Thus we have an entire body of war poetry distinctly different, ideologically, to that occasioned by WWI. The outbreak of WWII was to occasion an altogether differently aligned and thematically arranged body of work.

Lyon also notes that “during the early phase of the Second World War, anxiety was expressed in the press that British poetry was proving unable to engage with the new hostilities” (92). This argument is repeated by a number of commentators. Dominic Hibberd offers a sound explanation for why active poets were, perhaps, slow to react to the outbreak of this new major war:

The poets of the Second World War had read their Owen and Sassoon, and in some cases their Rosenberg, and went into battle with few illusions. The surviving poets from the previous war did not speak out against its successor; some of them at least believed it to be necessary and inevitable, and no one supposed that it would be glorious (17).

This corporate sense that somehow the second war was a just if vile struggle against fascism fed into a poetic consciousness that was immersed in modernism and acutely tuned to the thematic concerns surrounding the “pity of war”. We should not forget, too, that in this struggle, the experience of war was, ironically, “democratised”. War was no longer the preserve of the enlisted or conscripted man and located in remote cross-channel battlefields. The war was felt at home; the average man and woman in the street had personal experience of the Blitz, they witnessed the air duels fought above them and were part of the preparations made to defend the nation against the real threat of invasion. Rationing, blackouts, emergency drills and evacuations brought the experience of danger, hardship and alienation home to every inhabitant of the United Kingdom, regardless of age, sex or social class. Thus, crudely put, no poets were needed to sketch these details as they had become part of a national knowledge commons. If there was a time lag between the outbreak war and the arrival, in print, of literary responses to the war, the volume of work that accumulated is surprisingly large.

Catherine Reilly’s work *English Poetry of the Second World War*, gives valuable indications of the scale and range of poetic responses to WWII. She notes:

It is now recognized that there was a wartime increase in the reading of poetry, as there was in every kind of literature. The general popularity of

reading was a characteristic of the war, when normal social and family life was severely disrupted (x).

Similarly, Molly Guptil Manning describes the massive campaign orchestrated across the Atlantic to gather and produce books of all types for distribution to Allied soldiers and POWs. These sources point towards a publishing boom, but Reilly in particular records that the number of active poets in this war far exceeded those we recognise from WWI. Her assessment of the thematic concerns and the gloss that became attached to work rooted in World War I is worth quoting at length:

The themes of the poems and verses of the Second World War are as wide-ranging and divergent as the war itself. All its phases are well-recorded, for example Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, El Alamein, Monte Cassino, the Battle of the Atlantic, Stalingrad, Burma, D-Day, Arnhem and many others. The poems concerned with the bombing of civilian populations are legion: most frequently found are poems on the bombing of London and other British cities, and on the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The groups of people written about most consistently are evacuees, refugees, concentration camp victims, Nazi storm troopers, prisoners of war (especially those held by the Japanese) and air pilots. The leading figures of the war (Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt, Hitler, Mussolini, Montgomery, Mountbatten, Rommel and others) are the subject of many poems. The war is depicted in all its theatres, at sea, in the air and on the ground. Throughout the war, servicemen were drafted overseas to British bases in exotic countries like India and Egypt, where the sights, sounds and smells of the alien cultures affected all of them in some measure. The poets among them were soon stimulated by the strangeness of the atmosphere in these places, despite the burden of heat, flies and monsoon rains. A new kind of war poetry emerged. The poets wrote of the fighting, the waiting, the boredom and the routines of military life but they also described the foreign lands where they were stationed in vivid and imaginative language. Much of the poetry inspired by the war deals with personal involvement, the sense of loss or longing, or it describes the emotions felt during a time of action. The incidents of war did not make the poetry; the poetry was made by the poets' honest responses. The work of the major

poets is characterized by a cool control and economy of language which suggests that the poets of the Second World War were more worldly-wise, sophisticated and far less idealistic than their counterparts in that earlier war (xiv).

It may seem disingenuous to isolate one or two poems that “typify” poetic responses to WWII, but Keith Douglas’ piece: “Vergissmeinnicht” ably demonstrates the combination of “cool control and economy of language” with a deep sense of pathos. Even in death, a sense of crushed humanity remains and larger questions float in our minds:

Three weeks gone and the combatants gone
 returning over the nightmare ground
 we found the place again, and found
 the soldier sprawling in the sun.

The frowning barrel of his gun
 overshadowing. As we came on
 that day, he hit my tank with one
 like the entry of a demon.

Look. Here in the gunpit spoil
 the dishonoured picture of his girl
 who has put: Steffi. Vergissmeinnicht.
 in a copybook gothic script.

We see him almost with content,
 abased, and seeming to have paid
 and mocked at by his own equipment
 that's hard and good when he's decayed.

But she would weep to see today
 how on his skin the swart flies move;
 the dust upon the paper eye

and the burst stomach like a cave.

For here the lover and killer are mingled
 who had one body and one heart.
 And death who had the soldier singled
 has done the lover mortal hurt.

Whilst the rubble from this war was still being cleared, another major conflict, the Korean War, broke out. W.D. Erhart pointedly notes that “the Korean War is the least remembered and least acknowledged of all of America’s wars” (222). A number of critics, Paul Fussell most notably, are dismissive of Korean War literature because the extant body is small and of varying quality. Precisely why this is so is difficult to understand considering the scale of the war and the fact that superpowers were protagonists. Stanley Sandler offers an insightful short analysis of this dilemma. He suggests that Korean War literature is insignificant for reasons “largely related to the war’s unpopularity and the absence of a strong national commitment” (112). Paul Edwards suggests that the Korean War marked a transition in war poetry, possibly because this was the first war where [western] combatants undertook fixed tours of duty rather than having service commitments that would span the length of the war. Erhart notes two interesting generalities regarding Korean War literature and poetry in particular. The first is to be expected: that the range of themes roughly overlaps with common enough themes in war poetry in general such as fear, disgust, alienation, guilt, loss and trauma; but his second observation is startling. Erhart suggests that “none of the soldier-poets began writing poetry about the Korean War until the 1960s... by then, such trends as the New York School, the Black Mountain Poets, and of course, the Beats, were helping to shape the course of American poetry in response to other concerns” (237). It is small wonder, then, why Korean War literature failed, as Erhart puts it, “to capture the American popular imagination”: the public conscience had shifted attention to newer socio-political issues. The same can hardly be said of the responses and receptions inspired by the conflict that followed: the Vietnam War.

Subarno Chattarji accurately distils the continuing hold of the Vietnam War on the American psyche. Writing in 2001, he says that

More than twenty years after the fall of Saigon, the Vietnam War continues to bedevil the American imagination and its foreign policy. Vietnam's effect on the former is evident in the large body of films, novels, memoirs, and poetry produced during and after the conflict (i).

It is well understood that since the Civil War (1861-1865) no single conflict has had such a polarising effect on American society than America's commitment in Vietnam. Even today, whilst citizens of the United States grapple with the socio-political impacts of the drawn-out "War on Terror", the rumbles of Vietnam continue to be felt. Most will come to a knowledge of the Vietnam War through a number of iconic films. *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, *Born on the 4th of July*, *Full Metal Jacket* and *The Deerhunter* stand as film monuments to the war and echo many of the themes that run through the vast body of literature that has accreted. Novels such as *Chickenhawk* by Robert Mason and Michael Herr's *Dispatches* continue to be read, and period folk music by figures like Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Barry Maguire and Neil Young remains popular. Poets like Michael Casey, W.D. Erhart, Yusef Komunyakaa, Bruce Weigl and John Balaban stand alongside dozens of others who responded, in one way or another, to the war. It is to be expected that in a war as deeply divisive as Vietnam, that thematic concerns would range widely and that a great degree of convergence with some of the "anti-war" spirit we associate with the poetry of WWI would be similarly present. Chattarji suggests that "[t]he best poems articulate individual memories and trauma; they negotiate the complex terrain of poetry and politics, and raise questions regarding dissent and marginalisation" (xiii). He also draws attention to a disturbing psychological thread that winds around the collective poetic consciousness of Vietnam War poetry:

There is particularly in stateside and early veteran poetry, an imaginative failure to grasp any real quality of the Vietnamese experience, so that the war becomes a site for exploring American pathologies and traumas. This failure reveals cultural assumptions deeply embedded in collective experience (xiii).

This is perfectly understandable. The Vietnam War was a deeply alienating experience for the US combatants. American soldiers (and most of them conscripts), served as pawns of a US foreign policy that was baptised in Cold War ideology. They were removed from the daily routines of peaceful life in the United States and relocated to the opposite end of the world. These men (and women) found themselves engaged in an ill-defined quasi-imperial struggle where the grand outcomes specifically excluded personal significance, yet required total personal investment. The land itself was hostile, the rules of engagement appeared opaque, and military objectives seemed geared towards meaningless tasks and actions. Their foes, the Viet Cong, were indistinguishable from the South Vietnamese people amongst whom they were located, and the very language deployed by American troops who referred to the enemy as “gooks”, “Charlie” or “VC” rendered the enemy a faceless, amorphous threat that emerged, seemingly at will, from the deep shadows of jungle, the darkness of the night and from amongst the teeming, bustling throngs in cities and towns. In a space so alienating and so deeply deprived of meaning or relevance, individuals, would, as Giovanni Levi notes, tend to look inward and “create their own identities, and groups [to] define themselves according to conflicts and solidarities” (109). There is no room on such a spectrum for any accommodation or understanding of the other. “Prisoners”, a poem by Yusef Komunyakaa, subtly portrays the omniscient throb of danger and brilliantly captures the total sense of otherness ascribed to the Viet Cong. Almost all marks of humanity are stripped from the hooded figures who stagger through this piece towards a grim, pointless fate:

Usually at the helipad
 I see them stumble-dance
 across the hot asphalt
 with crokersacks¹ over their heads,
 moving toward the interrogation huts,
 thin-framed as box kites
 of sticks & black silk
 anticipating a hard wind

¹ A croker sack is an American term for a utilitarian bag made from hessian.

that'll tug & snatch them
out into space.

One feature of Vietnam War poetry worth considering is the sense of alienation experienced by returning troops. We know that amongst the soldier poets of WWI, a rumbling sense of dissatisfaction, bordering on outrage, percolated through the work of poets who (rightly) assessed that the people at home were ignorant of conditions on the front, and thus lacked the moral capacity to speak to the war. Sassoon famously cast his Military Cross ribbon into the Mersey River and issued a public statement declaring his opposition to the continuation of the war. For many returning American troops the experience of reintegration into a society that was deeply divided on the war proved traumatic. Chatterji (102) notes that an entire category of Vietnam War poetry deals with “aftermath” issues, and here pieces dealing with themes of “exile, mourning, trauma and betrayal” occur in abundance. In these responses, the trope of soldier as victim emerges strongly. It is a trope we return to in our later examination of the poetry of Chas Lotter.

Roughly congruent with the Korean and Vietnamese wars was the outbreak of a number of smaller, low intensity conflicts we now call wars of liberation. The term is a discrete one in use for some decades now. A useful definition of wars of liberation as a conflict typology is offered by Baade (95): “wars of liberation, [are] waged to defend the people from foreign attack and from attempts to enslave them; or to liberate the people from capitalist slavery; or, lastly, to liberate colonies and dependent countries from the yoke of imperialism”. Whilst it might be argued that the Vietnam War was a war of liberation, the term is more recognisably applied to the sorts of insurgencies that occurred in former colonial possessions and which resulted in the attainment of independence from the colonial powers. The struggles that most occupy our literary archaeology are the Algerian War and the wars fought in Angola and Mozambique. Herein lies a small problem. The lingua francas of these territories are French and Portuguese respectively. The literary works tied to these liberation struggles were originally written in these languages and for our purpose, we have to make do with translations. Fortunately, this is not a serious issue as we are looking to identify concerns and themes of liberation war literature and measure these against the vast panorama of concerns we know exist in other war literatures.

The Algerian liberation war (1954-1962) was something of a harbinger of the African liberation conflicts to come. The war was a brutal contest between Arab nationalists, Algerian Pied-Noirs and the forces of the French Republic. The outcome, Algerian independence from France, is something of a classic study in guerrilla warfare with the forces of the Metropole ranged in a vicious, dirty and unwinnable contest to subjugate a people committed to asserting their independence. A number of writers responded to this conflict, but two, Albert Camus and Jean Senac, deserve attention for the timbre of their voices and their deep exploration of issues of identity and crisis rooted in the positions they, as Algerian Pieds-Noirs, took in the struggle. Camus wrote exclusively in French and a number of commentators point towards the deep sense of frustration and betrayal that permeated Camus' conscience during the war. Adam Gopnik's essay in the online version of *The New Yorker*, "Facing History: Why We Love Camus", deftly explores the dualities and contested mental landscape Camus inhabited and articulates well the collision of principles and philosophical abstractions that shaped Camus' response to the war:

Though impeccably anti-colonial, Camus refused to take part in the sentimental embrace of the National Liberation Front, the F.L.N. that became de rigueur in left-wing circles in those years. Struggling to explain why he could not abandon the idea of a French Algeria — or, at a minimum, of some decent compromise that would ensure majority rule while protecting the rights of the "settler" minority — he ended with the weak-sounding formula that he could not abandon his mother, which made it seem merely a question of blood. Lacking a better way of putting it, he chose silence, and this most indispensable of editorialists spent the last five years of his life, until his death, in a car crash, in 1960, with his own tongue under house arrest, vowing not to speak about the Algerian problem.

Jean Senac, another Pied-Noir, adopted a more committed position and aligned himself to the independence struggle. Katia Sainson (xv) points out that Senac's work was heavily shaped by his personal circumstances:

his illegitimacy and his obsession with ‘inhabiting a name’ was a constant source of tension in his life as well as a recurring theme in his work... He always called himself an Algerian. However as a pied-noir with ties to the FLN (the Front de Liberation National) that fought to overthrow France’s colonial rule, and later, as an adult living in a post-colonial Algeria that did not grant citizenship to non-Muslim natives, he always grappled with being an outsider because of his European descent.

An extract from his lengthy poem “Dirge for a Gaouri” paints this sense of alienation and fractured duality in broad strokes:

For that is exile,
 Endless, the place
 Denied. It is possible to live
 Without a homeland. Without ONE’S
 Homeland in one piece. The body
 Is ripped to shreds, faded
 (Torn old blue jeans)
 When his land is denied him,
 His land
 - Even a land of brambles,
 Boulders and gnawing
 At the heart. But still his!

Further examination of Senac’s poetry leads to an interesting observation about thematic concerns found in liberation war poetry. We know well enough that themes of loss, trauma and protest figure highly in war literature, but one feature that sets liberation war poetry apart slightly is a commitment to themes that celebrate revolutionary zeal and ideals. A similar consideration is evident in some poetry that dates from the Spanish Civil War. Frantz Fanon captures this essential spirit that quickens in much liberation war literature. He suggests that:

the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary, *shake* [emphasis added] the people. Instead of according

the people's lethargy an honoured place in his esteem he turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature. During this phase, a great many men and women who up till then would never have thought of producing a literary work, now that they find themselves in exceptional circumstances – in prison, with the Maquis, or on the eve of their execution – feel the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people, and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action (223).

Precisely what this means is difficult to articulate in a few sentences, but it is clear that Fanon imagines a liberation war literature suffused with, and defined by, a creative energy focusing on the total redefinition of a people's culture via revolution. This requires the overthrow of colonial literary models, forms and treatments to create a new, highly nuanced literature that is overtly political and which celebrates the assertion of a layered, independent identity. Fanon (227) describes the role of the revolutionary poet thus: "the poet ought, however to understand that nothing can replace the reasoned, irrevocable taking up of arms on the people's side." This is the fuel of creative fire in liberation literature and is the macro lens that offers, in clearest definition, a view of liberation war literature.

Following the Algerian revolution, a process of decolonisation swept through Africa. Most Francophone African possessions were independent by the early 1960s. Ghana had gained its independence in 1957 and Nigeria in 1961. The 1960s marked a decade of angst and ferment in Africa and in the march to decolonise, one conflict, the Nigerian Civil War, grabbed world headlines. Laurie Wiseberg has drawn attention to the growth of a substantial body of war literature in Nigeria in the post-civil war period:

A recent review in the *Journal of African Studies* (Povey, 1974: 354) notes a half-dozen writers who "have begun to speak with that familiar but still poignant voice of bitter appraisal." Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died* (1972) and Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* (1973) – each a reflection on their wartime imprisonment, Soyinka in a federal jail and Amadi in a Biafran one – are most revealing in juxtaposition and suggestive of how differently Nigeria's

intellectuals handled the trauma of war. Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War* (1972), Omotoso's *The Combat* (1972), Munonye's *A Wreath for Maidens* (1973), and S.O. Mezu's *Behind the Rising Sun* (1972) will also enrich Nigerian historiography, since fiction interjects the human factor that usually eludes academics (117).

Whilst war narratives and short stories are well represented, an extant body of poetry is rooted in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict. Preeminent of these is the late poet, Christopher Okigbo. A postcolonial poet before the term ascended into prominence, Okigbo rejected the quantum nation-state of "Nigeria" and met his death fighting on the Biafran side during the civil war. His status as a tragic soldier poet figure recalls the example of Wilfred Owen, but Okigbo's poetry is mystical, obscurely wrapped in strange imagery and pulses with musical rhythms such that it cannot position comfortably as war literature. Okigbo's biographer, Dubem Okafor, suggests that Okigbo's overriding concern was to act as a sort of prophet, warning about "the intractability of the ethnic blight and the instability of the cavernously avaricious (mis-) leaders of that country" (231).

Simultaneously with the march of decolonisation in Anglophone Africa, the Portuguese colonial possessions began agitating for independence from Lisbon. The Portuguese empire, with major outposts in East and West Africa, began to unravel in 1961 with the collapse of Portuguese control over the Goa enclave in India. Almost simultaneously, independence movements emerged in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau that adopted revolutionary guerrilla warfare as a strategy to end Portuguese dominion. Magarida Calafte Ribeiro (138) shows that Portuguese literature displays a distinct "interstitial position that results from an organic, complex tension between the nation and its empire on one hand, and the multi-faceted tension between Portugal and Europe on the other, [that] led to the co-existence of two types of discourse in the Portuguese collective imaginary; an epic and a ruinous discourse". Ribeiro's text neatly assays the tensions implicit in Metropolitan Portugal that found itself on the very periphery of Europe and increasingly dependent on its imperial possessions to secure an identity. The net effect on the modes of literary production proved interesting. Ribeiro notes that:

from 1961, 'the Empire began to write back to the metropolis', not only through the 'official' writers and Africans engaged in the liberation struggle, who had been active though censored for some time, but also through those sent to the war in Africa from the Metropolis. Through their letters, poems and other texts, they began to lift the veil that had concealed a fiction created by the doubly peripheral condition of the Portuguese: Portugal on the periphery of Europe and its own empire (168).

Similarly, Donald Burness suggests that:

much of the literature from Lusophone Africa during the past decade and a half [1960s-1970s] has been a political literature of protest, and parallels can be drawn between this literature and the pre-independence negritude writing of Francophone and Anglophone Africa (xii).

Agostinho Neto, one time president of Angola, remains one of Angola's best known poets. An excellent example would be his "African Poem":

There on the horizon
 the fire
 and the dark silhouettes of the imbondeiro trees
 with their arms raised
 in the air the green smell of burnt palm trees

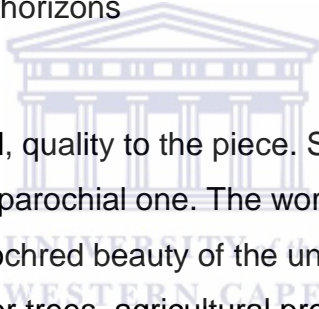
On the road
 the line of Bailundo porters
 groaning under their loads of crueira

in the room
 the sweet-eyed mulatress
 retouching her face with rouge and rice-powder
 the woman under her many clothes moving her hips
 on the bed
 the sleepless man thinking

of buying knives and forks to eat with at a table

On the sky the reflections
of the fire
and the silhouette of the blacks at the drums
with their arms raised
in the air the warm tune of marimbas

On the road the porters
in the room the mulatress
on the bed the sleepless man
The burning coals consuming
consuming with fire
the warm country of the horizons



There is a lyrical, semi-pastoral, quality to the piece. Significantly, the title suggests a pan-African view rather than a parochial one. The world the poem inhabits is traditional, describing the rich ochred beauty of the uncolonised land reinforced by the use of indigenous names for trees, agricultural products and musical instruments, yet the final three lines introduce a sense of threat and looming disruption that we may read as the impact of colonialism; it is ill-defined but the danger is total and, as Neto suggests, unchecked it will alter not only the landscape, but the very future of the people themselves. Burness regards Neto as the foremost Angolan war poet and broadly categorises his work as presenting “a gallery of human victims in his early poems. Forced labour, hunger, loss of dignity, loss of hope, humiliation, even death, assault the body and spirit of the African living under colonialist domination”, whereas later themes emerge detailing “the sacred hope of an Angolan future in which justice and human dignity will replace bondage and excoriating humiliation” (24).

Another writer is the white Angolan Artur Carlos Maurício Pestana dos Santos who writes under the pseudonym Pepetela. Dos Santos’ most recognized work is the combat narrative, *Mayombe*, a fictionalized account derived from Dos Santos’ own

experiences as an MPLA soldier during the liberation war. It tells the intermingled stories of a group of MPLA fighters and is noteworthy for its realism and simple, often poetic language. The ending, a sort of soft-focus camera zoom out from the freshly dug grave of the protagonist, Comrade Fearless, is deeply poignant and offers a vision of the land itself (the eponymous Mayombe forest region) resisting colonisation (Pepetela 183):

The flowers of the cotton tree fell gently on the grave, and mingled with the green leaves from the trees. Within days, the place would be unrecognizable. The Mayombe would recover what men had dared to take from it.

The overall impact of Angolan liberation writings has been the construction of a new poetics centred in the war of liberation. Burness (55) suggests that:

Angolan writing is not only an arm against colonial oppression, but also an arm against the tyranny of a European language over African thought and expression. Syntactic transfiguration, neologisms, altered phonetic spelling to reflect the word as it is actually spoken in the musseques – these are some of the devices used by Angolan writers to free themselves from the constraint of the language of Camões and Anthero de Quental.

It is to be expected that similar processes and literary realignments occurred in Mozambican literature of the period.

Russell Hamilton's review of literature in Mozambique draws attention to a number of inter-related issues. The total population of Mozambique was relatively small at the time, meaning that the number of artists working at letters was severely restricted. Similarly, a tension existed between the works of those [white] writers who were located within the ambit of the metropole and those [black and mezigisto] writers located on the fringe or frontier. Their concerns were different and often at odds with each other ideologically and stylistically. The advent of the FRELIMO-led liberation war changed the literary landscape only slightly. Hamilton notes that distinct thematic parallels can be drawn with Angolan war literature, but he acknowledges only one anthology of verse, Manuel Ferreira's *Literatura africana de expressão portuguesa*,

and is emphatic in his assessment that the work of writers and poets in Mozambique is thin and of “nebulous” quality. Memory Chirere’s online essay suggests that former Mozambican president Armando Guebuza’s poetry “takes one deeper into the meaning of struggle for Mozambican independence.” His piece “If you ask me who I am” is an authentic piece of struggle literature, declaiming black consciousness and referencing the struggle against centuries-old colonialism. The poet-speaker occupies a defiant space, one that leaves no room for negotiation or compromise.

If you ask me
 Who I am
 I will tell you nothing.
 I will tell you nothing.
 I'll show you the scars of centuries
 Which furrow my black back
 I'll look at you with eyes of hatred
 Shot red with blood
 Shed through the years...
 I'll tell you nothing
 But you will know why I fight.



It is a moot point questioning the paucity of liberation war literature centred in Mozambique. The Angolan archive is larger, for a similar sized population, but perhaps the peculiar convergence of circumstances including the greater distance from Metropolitan Portugal, a lower level of Portuguese literacy than in Angola, the belligerence of Mozambique’s white-ruled neighbours, Rhodesia and South Africa, and the plunge into civil war in the 1970s cut short the development of any significantly proportioned body of Mozambican liberation war literature.

The literature we can tie to the Zimbabwe war of liberation falls into two broad camps: Chimurenga and Rhodesian war literature. A substantial effort was made in the 1980s to assemble an authentic canon of Chimurenga literature. Many of the guerrillas who fought for ZANLA or ZIPRA were the products of either the Rhodesian (African) school system or had been pupils at any of the many mission schools

around the country. They had been influenced (as Alexander and McGregor note) by:

the texts that shaped the emergence of the region's literate class, as well as generations of school children across the globe, such as the bible (in various translations), John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and other staples of a mission school education. They show the influence of boys' adventure stories, Rider Haggard-inspired imperial romance and travel narratives, and what scholars of the First World War have referred to as 'high diction'. This 'high diction' was used in the popular media in World War I: it drew on abstractions, late romantic idiom and a vague spiritualism, expressed in terms and phrases such as the 'renewal of youth', 'glorious baptism of fire', 'sacrifice', 'comradeship' and 'peril' – some of which appear in guerrilla accounts (85).

These themes, these "abstractions" heavily flavour Chimurenga writing even though the basic recipe remains true to the ingredients and methodology of liberation war literature already mentioned. Chimurenga writing, defined as the work of guerrillas or guerrilla sympathizers, began during the war and continues (with adjustments) to this day. The Zimbabwean editors, Mudereri Kadhani and Musaemure Zimunya produced the seminal anthology *And Now The Poets Speak* in 1981. It has been extensively updated and revised since then, and stands as the authoritative one volume text collection of definitive Chimurenga poetry. A rich variety of voices, some well-known, others not, are represented and the editors themselves propose a thematic, contextual framework that operates to isolate Chimurenga writing in the sub-genre of war literature. They describe the intention and effect of the collection as an:

[a]n anthology [that] looks in two directions: first, in the direction of the revolutionary war; secondly, in the construction of peace – *A luta continua*. In the first part, the poets portray our historical experience of colonial domination, rampage, imprisonment and the blood that flowed. Parallel with this preoccupation runs a second concern: suggesting ideas for the creation of a morally superior alternative (xiv).

The morally superior alternative here is a new Zimbabwean literature and the elevation of Chimurenga writing to foundational status in the new (postcolonial)

Zimbabwean canon. Clearly there is no room (until now) on this spectrum for “Rhodesian” war writing as it is perceived to occupy a tainted space and represents ideas that are an anathema to the spirit and ideals of Chimurenga. A fine example of Chimurenga poetry is this starkly determined piece: “If we must die” by Forbes T.K. Karimakwenda:

“If we must die”
 We must not die
 Like dogs
 Or Martyrs
 Or for that matter
 Alone.

The piece is unusual in two respects; it is clipped and blisteringly precise; whereas much Chimurenga writing swells and is voluminous, suggesting “high diction” and/or oral literary influences. This poem is text message-like in brevity and offers a chilling, violent vision. By way of contrast, a typical example of the measured cadences and rhetorical appeal of much Chimurenga poetry is revealed in this first stanza of Zimunya’s poem, “Who are we: Heroes’ Day, 1980”:

Who am I, what am I, brother,
 to sing and to dance, in Zimbabwe,
 and be free, in Zimbabwe,
 but not Nehanda, not Kakubi, not Maondera, or Takawira
 who am I to be free?

Like much Chimurenga poetry, this piece is deceptively simple. The repetitions, the broad, rhetorical questions are couched in fluid, unassuming language but the poem is loaded with oblique references that will easily escape the casual reader. The freedom being celebrated is hard won and, in the midst of celebration, the poet recalls those who fought for freedom but did not live to see it. His references to Nehanda and Kakubi recall, as Tanya Lyons records (78), the foundational significance of the 19th century spirit mediums Nehanda and Kakubi, figures who continued to be channelled in the 1970s to offer spiritual legitimacy for the modern

war of liberation. “Mapondera” references the 19th century Zimbabwean soldier hero to legitimize the struggle for liberation, and “Takawira” alludes to the noted educator and politician who was one of the founders of ZANU. The richness of Chimurenga literature is beyond the scope of this thesis and has been well covered, particularly by Zimbabwean academics. It is a grave mistake, however, to think that Chimurenga literature does not include treatments we might regard as anti-war.

Tanya Lyons (257) notes that the feature film, *Flame*, provoked huge controversy in Zimbabwe (including unsuccessful attempts by the various veterans’ movements to have it banned), because it revisited and critically assessed the role of women guerrillas during the struggle. The film countered the carefully constructed heroic mythology of women guerrillas as African amazons by suggesting a fractured and dislocated anti-reality where many women found that they were firstly concubines and domestic workers and only after that, guerrilla fighters. An interesting novella that breaks with the heroic, populist rhetoric of Chimurenga writing is Alexander Kanengoni’s *Echoing Silences*. Kanengoni, himself a former ZANLA guerrilla, weaves a deft narrative around the protagonist Munsahwe, a guerrilla who begins to question the methodology of his comrades and who suffers severe trauma we recognize as PTSD. The whole becomes a sensitive and deeply introspective piece that disrupts the trope of the guerrilla as a noble figure. Chimurenga writing occupies a privileged position in Zimbabwean literary discourses, but increasingly, work that interrogates post-independence is beginning to surface. Preben Kaarsholm’s essay in Maponde’s *Versions of Zimbabwe*, records

Post-liberation violence, dissident terror and the pungwes [revolutionary political community meetings] of the Fifth Brigade in Matabeleland – all important themes to come to terms with, but silenced during the 1980s – were addressed for the first time in a published novel in Chenjerai Hove’s *Shadows* (12).

As Kaarsholm notes, a tangential development in Zimbabwean literature is a determined engagement with the collapse of ideals centred in Chimurenga, and the opening of public debate on the future of democracy. The opportunity is thus arising where I suggest that a reengagement with Rhodesian war literature is a viable

means to add significance and moral authority to the rich tapestry of Zimbabwean literature.

Rhodesian war literature occupies a troubled and diminishing space. The work of Rhodesian authors and poets who engaged with the war is tainted in popular imagination by associations with colonialism and a fatally compromised moral position. Memory Chirere, in his online essay “Exploring the Rhodesian soldier literature”, notes that “Rhodesian soldier literature, music and culture have retreated from the public sphere.” There is a good reason for this: Rhodesia lost its war and the defeated have dispersed, grown old and some have passed on. Most have been rendered voiceless by the passage of time. An examination of the Rhodesian war literature that accumulated during the war years (1965-1980), reveals some interesting aspects. A number of novels were published in Rhodesia and South Africa that dealt with the war. Daniel Carney’s *Whispering Death*, Peter Stiff’s *The Rain Goddess* and Wilbur Smith’s *The Angels Weep* represent the range of these works. These works are potboilers, one dimensional, racy narratives that played to the gallery chanting for heroic myths of bush war victories over “terrorists”, and their thinly disguised subtexts support the politics of white supremacy. They are outstanding mostly for their combined crassness and turgidity. Doris Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing* predates the war and is perhaps the only “Rhodesian” novel that successfully and intelligently engages with issues of race, privilege and the tenuous position occupied by colonial society. Rosemary Moyana (309) accurately assesses the shallow state of Rhodesian fiction thus:

there is no time when the Rhodesian novelist attempts to show an understanding of what African nationalism meant and how it was threatening to engulf white dominance in Rhodesia. Chennels puts it succinctly as he says, when the Second Chimurenga came, whites did not recognise it because so far as they were concerned, it could not be a war, but perhaps another rebellion: Their failure to understand what was happening around them was entirely predictable. Victims as they were of their own discourses, fostered over the years and kept ignorant by their media of developing ideologies among Black nationalists, the settlers and their novelists had few means of correctly analysing the situation in which they found themselves.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the novels...is their limited understanding of both the motives of the nationalists and the progress of the war. This lack of understanding is, indeed, striking because even in some of the novels published in the 1980s and 1990s, when the war had already been fought and won, the blacks are still described in the old stereotyped way and the African liberation war leadership is still mocked and reviled as useless or portrayed as communist stooges.

An archaeology of Rhodesian poetry reveals a differently shaded set of responses to the war. Crystal Warren's *Bibliography of Zimbabwean Poets* suggests that 75 poets can be identified as speaking with a Rhodesian / Zimbabwean voice. This cast of poets represents, of course, a lexical set that spans colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe. Narrowing the focus reveals something surprising. During the war years, very few Rhodesian poets actively engaged with the war. The small Rhodesian literary journal, *Two Tone*, continued publication throughout the war years and examination of the journal reveals that even at the height of the conflict, poems dealing with the war were few and far between. State and self-censorship may account for some of the black poets living in Rhodesia not responding to the war, but quite why the few white poets, on the whole, did not engage with the war to any large degree is difficult to determine. The poet John Eppel has a well-established reputation, and a number of his pieces refer or relate to the war. There is a sense of deliberate detachment to Eppel's work; he was in the war, but did not embrace it. His poem "Spoils of War" offers an insight into his priorities at the time:

It took me all afternoon, in full view
of swaggering Frelimo, to dig up
that girl-sized stem. What a hullabaloo,
I thought, would this create in peace time. Sup-
pose they invoked the law (Government Notice
14 of 1975). I
had no permit, and they'd certainly miss
this fatso, though it grows abundantly
in Vila Salazar. *Adenium*
Obesium enjoys the hot, dry lowveld;

It would flourish in Colleen Bawn, become
a talking point at the club.

Eppel is referring to an occasion on one his military call ups when, stationed at Vila Salazar on the Mozambique border, he had occasion to root up (for transplanting purposes) an attractive example of *Adenium Obesium* colloquially known as the Sabi Star plant (a protected evergreen succulent shrub much prized by gardeners for its showy flowers). The tone is sardonic and slightly humorous; Eppel juggles (before dismissing) the double threats he faced – possible prosecution by Rhodesian nature conservation authorities and the hostile forces of FRELIMO across the border. The poem probably dates from the mid 1970s, a period of increasing military activity. Reading Eppel, one becomes aware that he owes no allegiance to the Rhodesian cause; his military duty is an unwelcome, burdensome irritation and in his poem “Thin White Line”, he traces his ancestry and comes to the conclusion that his location in white Rhodesia has made him a “polecat”. Thus references to the war do not figure highly in his work from the 1970s. In a sense, his measured pursuit of topics and themes not associated with war take on a semi-positional poetic stance; an undeclared personal manifesto that either he will not engage with the experience of combat, conflict and his own actions in the field, or he will not publish any poems on those topics. It is to other voices we look for more embedded engagement with the war.

Whilst *Two Tone* may not have functioned as a platform for poetic engagement with the war it was through publication in this journal that Chas Lotter emerged as a Rhodesian soldier poet. His poem “African Lullaby” appeared there in 1975, but an independent publishing initiative in 1978 marked Lotter’s emergence as a credible new Rhodesian voice speaking directly to the war, someone with a more thoughtful, measured opinion than, say, the authors of the potboilers we have already discussed. Peter Badcock, a Rhodesian graphic artist and poet published his work *Shadows of War* in 1978, and it contained some poems by Lotter. *Shadows of War* was a spectacular commercial success selling the initial print run of 1500 copies. These sales were remarkable for what was, in essence, a minuscule and unsophisticated market. It is quite likely that interest in the book was driven by Badcock’s decision to design the book in coffee-table format such that each poem

appeared alongside a corresponding pencil sketch (see fig 1 below). The pencil sketches were also published as limited edition, stand-alone lithographic prints and appealed to a market receptive to “war art” as affordable collectibles.

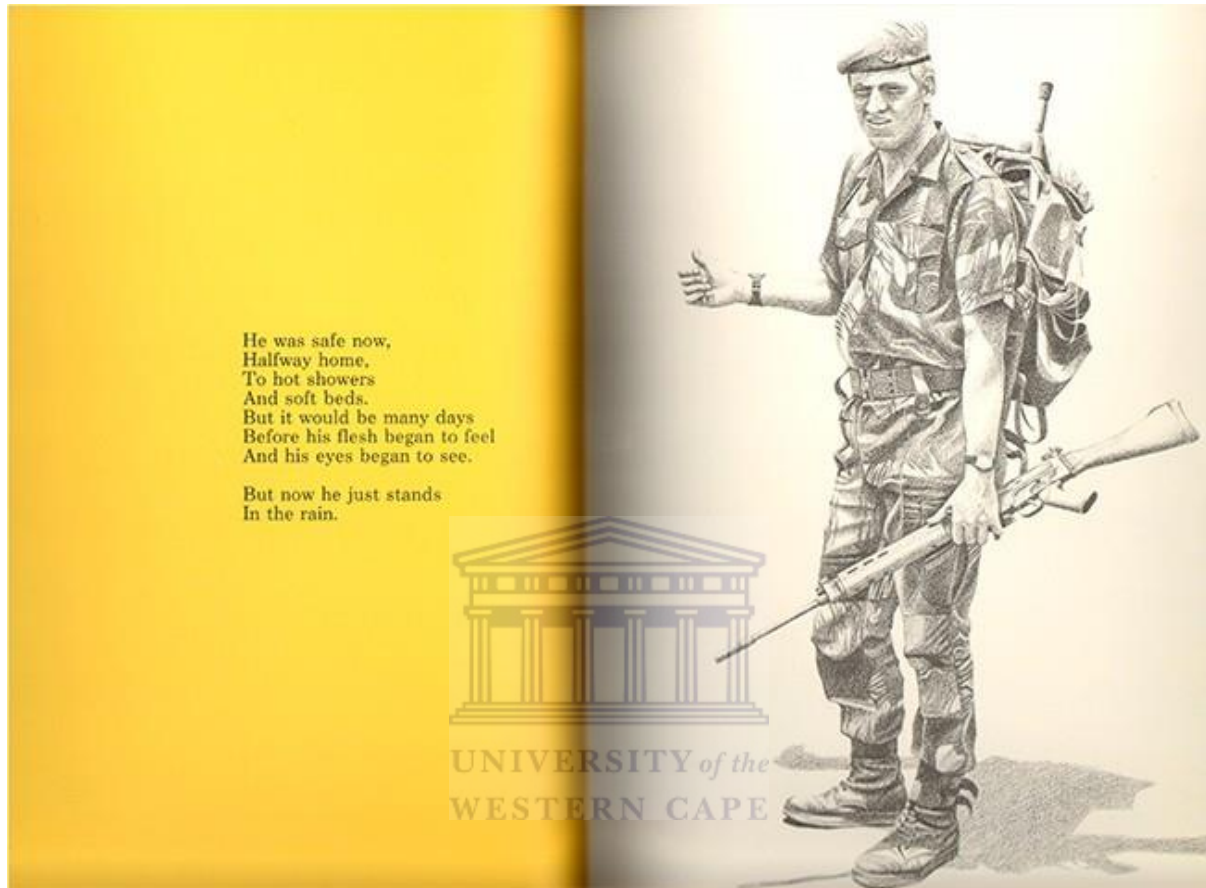


Fig. 1. “The Hitchhiker” (Source: *Shadows of War*).

Publication of *Shadows of War* was followed by *Faces of War* in 1980, which repeated the same design formula, but this time included a substantial number of Lotter’s poems. Lotter’s “breakthrough” into commercial publication was something of a lucky accident. In a personal interview (2014) with this writer, Lotter recalled how he moved from being a minor contributor to *Shadows of War* to co-author of *Faces of War*:

I said, “Okay, well here’s a proposal for you: whatever poems you choose to match your drawings, it’s a bad match. Who’s writing the poetry for that?” he said, “I am”. I spoke out, “Well, I’ll do it. Any that you feel that you’re not

making a match for with the poetry that you're writing, let me have a bash. You show me your drawing, you explain it to me and I'll go away and write a poem to try and match your drawing." And as you've seen from the final result I ended up doing that for a significant number of his drawings and some of my stuff he rejected and used his own poetry. A goodly number he accepted. Which allowed me to ambush him at the end and say, "Peter, now I think I've made a major contribution to this book, I'd like my name on the title page."²

Faces of War is thus credited as the combined work of both Lotter and Badcock. Like its predecessor, this book was also a commercial success, selling its initial (Rhodesian) print run of 1500 copies. It was reprinted in South Africa in 1982 and sold a similar number of copies. Again in a personal interview, and in response to my question why the books were successful, Lotter ventured the opinion that they appealed to an audience who would not normally buy poetry collections, being:

Soldiers and families of soldiers. Why? Because this was a window into a world that had been kept separate from the rest of the population. My husband/brother/son goes off to war and comes back and doesn't talk about what happens: here is a window into what was happening. I go off to the bush and I don't want to talk about it when I come back and somebody has taken the trouble to capture my feelings. That's what I think sold it and it was that unique – and you've gotta give Peter Badcock the credit – of visual and verbal ingenuity.³

Emboldened by this success, Lotter submitted his manuscript *Rebel Rhodesia* to Galago Press in Johannesburg in 1983. The book was published in 1984 (as *Rhodesian Soldier and Others Who Fought*), and matched Lotter's verse with original, period photographs supplied by the publisher. This too, was a commercial success, selling its printing of 2000 copies. *Rhodesian Soldier* contained 75 of Lotter's poems and represented the largest single collection of Rhodesian war poetry ever published. Lotter fell out with the publisher (a circumstance we will return to in a later chapter) partly due to royalty issues, and Lotter's dissatisfaction with the heavy-

² Lotter, Chas. Personal interview. 5 – 7 September 2014.

³ Lotter, Chas. Personal interview. 5 – 7 September 2014.

handed editing and censorship imposed on him by Peter Stiff, the owner of Galago. To a great extent, Lotter's dissatisfaction with the project's handling and his realization that a market existed for his work, prompted him to focus his energies on another project, *Echoes of An African War*. This collection, a total of 120 poems (some of which had appeared in previous publications), was published in 1999 by Covos-Day Publishers in Johannesburg. It too matched original period photographs with Lotter's verse, but was designed as a stand-alone poetic narrative spanning the course of the war. Lotter says as much in his preface to *Echoes of an African War*

Most of the poetry in this book was written whilst on active service in the bush... Some poems were written in an attempt to come to terms with the realities of that service. Others were then added to try and record the full spectrum of a young soldier's experience in an African war. The final poems capture the feelings of the older man – whom that soldier became – when looking back at what is now history (7).

Lotter's oeuvre totals 373 poems, of which 135 have been published in a variety of local and international journals, as well as in the anthologies and collections already detailed. It is my contention that Lotter stands as *the* soldier poet of the Rhodesian war due to the volume of work he has produced, his focused engagement with the war in all its moments, his publications record and the multiple thematic stances he adopts.

Lotter served as a front line medic throughout the war and therefore was expected to be a fighting soldier as well as a medical attendant. The nature of his service meant that he rotated through various fighting units of the Rhodesian Army instead of serving in a particular regiment. He was deployed on internal and external operations and saw an inordinate amount of action. He kept extensive diaries during his war service and these diaries, taken together with the manuscripts, offer a uniquely detailed vision of the Rhodesian war in all its horrors. His work does not follow an easy path. There are moments when he seems complicit in war-mongering, moments when he appears to reflect the stereotypes and myths of "white" Rhodesia, but the evolution of this poet's conscience is discernible. Later pieces mark a movement towards cognitive dissonances as he grappled with the descent into

public madness that the war ultimately became. Humour, grief, anger, boredom, horror and deeply experienced trauma spill from Lotter's pen, and in pursuing this study, I will critically examine the entire oeuvre of this soldier poet, and analyse the themes and issues his poetry reveals, I will seek to demonstrate, too, the emergence of a politically astute pacifist conscience in a committed democrat who speaks authentically of the Rhodesian experience of the war.



Chapter Four: Chas Lotter – towards the earliest poems

“The poet may be used as a barometer, but let us not forget that he is also part of the weather”. (Lionel Trilling).



Fig. 1. Sergeant Chas Lotter (Source: Lotter archive)

A thesis that is part literary biography and part academic analysis of one man's poetic works requires a high degree of investment and participation in the unfolding of that man's life and artistic oeuvre. In positioning myself thus in this study, I defer first to Fiedler (260) who argues that:

the poet's life is the focussing glass through which pass the determinants of the shape of his work: the tradition available to him, his understanding of "kinds," the impact of special experiences (travel, love etc.). But the poet's life is more than a burning glass; with his work, it makes up his total meaning.

Fiedler, of course, was writing in the 1950s and pushing back against the (then) dominant positions of I.A. Richards' practical criticism and New Criticism. Numerous innovative and useful critical approaches have been assembled since then, but Fiedler's concerns lead me to propose that an approach to Lotter's war poetry requires an invested, hybrid critical approach. Thus this chapter is constructed around a scaffold that permits a semi chronological examination of Lotter's work. This approach will permit me to explore the nuances and developments in Lotter's work, apply contemporary theories such as trauma theory and aspects of postcolonial discourse, all the while moving towards a recognition and examination of the mounting levels of trauma and cognitive dissonance that emerge in Lotter's work as the war moved towards its crescendo. Before we reach that point however, we must explore the course of, and influences upon, Lotter's early life to track the awakening of his poetics and the forms that would come to dominate the work of this soldier-poet.

There is substantial evidence in his pre-writing biographical history to suggest that the war was not the catalyst that suddenly galvanised an interest in poetry writing. Indeed, a subtle matrix of influences, people, positions and landscapes synergised to propel Lotter towards an interest in poetry and to write with intention and vigour before the war intruded into his reality. The net result was a man who would respond to the war with an increasingly fine-tuned ear and a confident, sometimes strident voice.

Chas Lotter was born in Germiston, South Africa, in 1949. His father had been a “Red Tab”¹ volunteer in the Union Army and had served in North Africa. With the coming to power of the Afrikaner Nationalists in 1948, he perceived that his advancement in South Africa might be obstructed for political reasons (due to his service in the Union Army outside the country), and so chose to move his young family to Rhodesia in 1953. Lotter Senior moved away from his career as a radio technician and opted to try his hand at farming. He eventually secured an opportunity in the Gatooma (Kadoma) area – a small, semi-rural community some 170 kilometres west of the capital, Salisbury (Harare), almost centrally situated in the country (see Figure 2 below). The region is mineral rich and was once the centre of cotton and mixed farming, some mineral exploitation and textile production. In correspondence with me, Lotter recalls that:²

The first and greatest influence on my life was my father. We were a close-knit family whose home was a house of books, ideas and debate. One of my father’s favourite sayings was that third rate minds talk about people, second rate minds talk about things but first rate minds talk about ideas. My father loved to debate at the drop of a hat. I remember many, many evenings when a comment would spark off a debate on an issue or an idea (any issue or idea) and result in a lengthy, often heated debate.

Thus, by all accounts, Lotter’s childhood was happy and like many of his peers who similarly had the run of a rural African farm to explore, he became savvy in bush craft and developed an affinity for the bush. His parents integrated into the community and adopted some of the national myths discussed in detail previously. The Lotters were initially supporters of the Rhodesian Front, the political party that Ian Smith famously led, but Lotter Senior invoked the wrath of the party hierarchy when, at the RF’s National Congress, he stood up and publicly labelled Ian Smith a liar.³ This of course, was near heresy in Rhodesia and the consequences were felt immediately

¹ Union Defence volunteers who agreed to serve outside the country wore “red tabs” on their epaulets.

² Lotter has written a reflective essay detailing the influences on his writing. He emailed the document to me on 31 August 2014.

³ This action by the RF would have a deep and abiding influence on Lotter. He processed the episode into a “bitter rejection of the RF and all that it stood for.” Again this information is derived from the email dated 31 August 2014.

and for a protracted period thereafter. Lotter Senior was formally expelled from the RF. A more insidious campaign of shunning was ordered by the party hierarchy and Lotter records that “his [father’s] business was boycotted for nearly two years – something that nearly broke him financially”. Although the punishment was clandestinely ordered, it was publicly felt. That Lotter Senior did not surrender to this intimidation reflects something of the air of independent thinking that was a feature of the Lotter home.

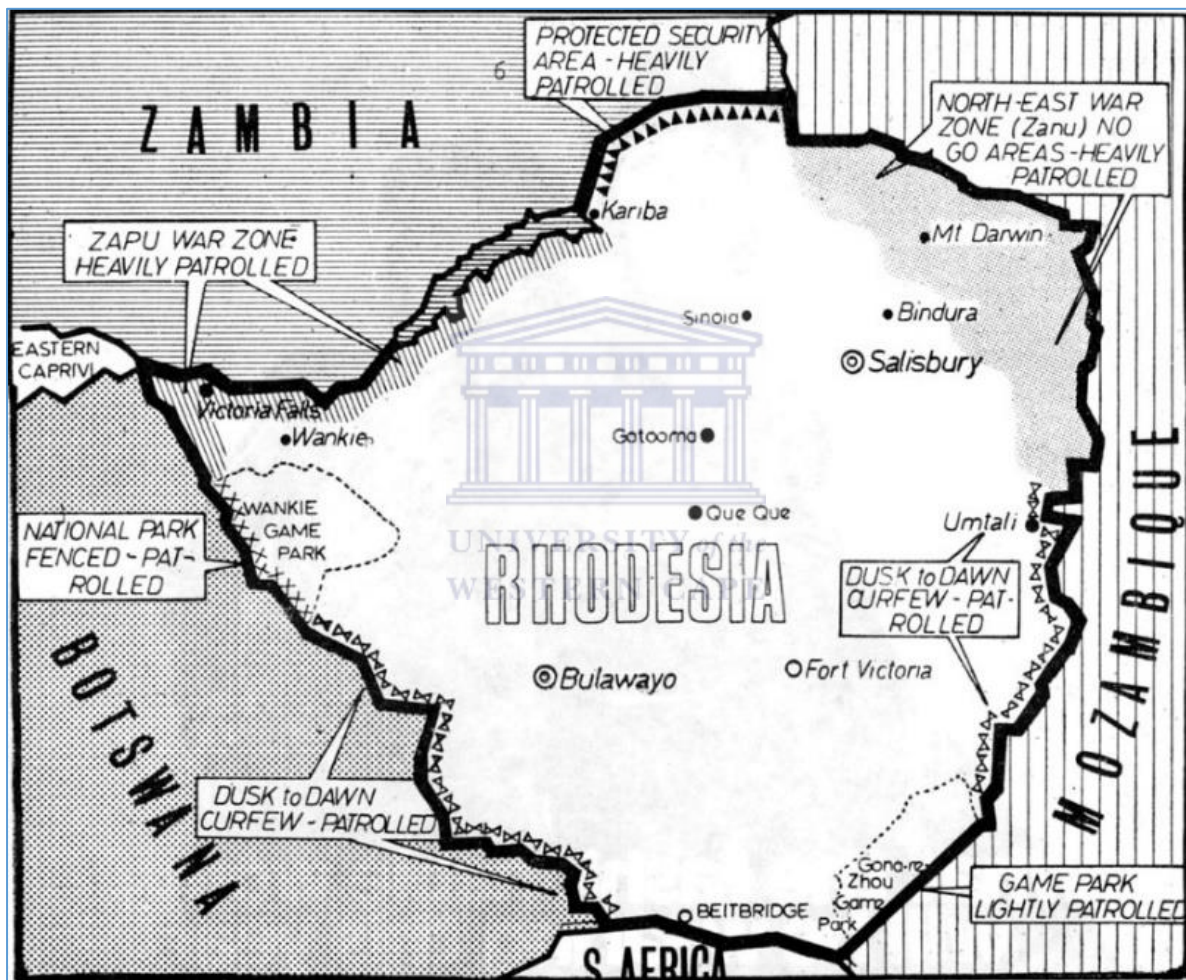


Fig. 2. Map of Rhodesia at UDI (1965), detailing urban centres and conflict areas (Source: <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/rhodesia/rhodesiaudimap.htm>)

In a home that was filled with books and where discussions were encouraged, it was natural that the young Lotter became a voracious reader whose tastes ranged far and wide to encompass works of fiction and non-fiction. This continues to this day,

and Lotter has a purpose-built extension to his Irene home that serves as creative space, mini-museum, armoury for his large collection of historic firearms (Lotter is a specially licensed collector and has an academic interest in the history and development of firearms) and home to an impressive collection of over 4000 titles, embracing classics of the English literary canon, first and rare editions, contemporary world fiction, African literature and works that feed into his broad interests in world history, economics, political thought, military history and firearms.



Fig. 3. Lotter and friend in the library/armoury at Lotter's Irene home. (Source: Author).

Lotter's schooling was entirely conventional for white children of the period. He attended Jameson High School in Gatooma, and undertook an academic course of study that would culminate in his sitting for the Ordinary Level examinations and then, a year later, the Matriculation Level public examinations conducted by the UK's Associated Examining Board. Rhodesia's Ministry of Education was not equipped to administer an independent curriculum and certificate its students; pupils were prepared for overseas public examinations that permitted successful candidates to

undertake tertiary education in Rhodesia or South Africa. One of the subjects Lotter opted to take was English literature. Here he was exposed to representative works from the English canon only. In the 1960s and 1970s, “O” and “M” Level English Literature pupils would not have been formally introduced to works of South African, Commonwealth, Caribbean or American literature written in English. Lotter’s formal poetical education was equally benign and he recalls grappling with the Romantics, Victorians and those modernists and postmodernists then deemed “safe enough” for school pupils to engage with. He was, however, privately taken with the work of Wilfred Owen and the soldier poets of WWI, a fascination that would play out and influence his own writing career once the war and its implications infiltrated Lotter’s consciousness.

Atypically for a Rhodesian school pupil, Lotter was not much interested in organised sports, particularly those staples of Rhodesian schools: rugby and cricket. His antipathy towards these pursuits and his independent-mindedness caused much friction with his teachers, and he became labelled as a difficult pupil who did not easily negotiate his way with authority figures. His disinterest in sports and an individual outlook on life ensured, too, that he was always something of an outsider at school and he never felt part of any “in” group. Lotter certainly does not recall his school days with any warmth, and resists crediting all but one of his teachers with having a positive influence on his interest in literature or his incipient career as a poet. He is quite vocal about this, stating to this writer in an email on 31 August 2014 that:

My teachers never lost an opportunity to tell me that I was useless, was wasting the money which my father spent on school fees and that I should leave school and go find a job. The inevitable happened. I believed them and lost all interest in my school work. It is my belief that there is a special corner of hell reserved for teachers such as the bunch that I was afflicted with. A teacher is a powerful authority figure and can shape a child’s mind – for better or for worse. The only real lesson that I learned at high school was that it is dangerous to be different. My real education – how to think, how to apply logic, how to love learning – came at home. The sole exception to this teaching clusterfuck was the biology teacher – a woman named Catterall. She

came to me one day and told me that she had just spend[sic] the break defending me in the staff room, that she had told her fellow teachers that she believed in me and that I could and would excel. As a result of her sole intervention and her encouragement, I excelled first at Biology, then at English, Mathematics and at History. I even won the annual school Mathematics prize. I enjoyed the English language classes and will admit that it was there that learned the basics of the art of using words properly – no thanks to the teacher, though. I just enjoyed playing with words. I remember that I wrote some dreadful poetry in that time, mainly as schoolwork. I remember writing one long, pompous poem about the manifest destiny of Rhodesia. Fortunately, all that drivel is long since lost in the mists of time.

He certainly did not contribute creative work to any school magazines and wrote privately and erratically in his formative years. His extramural interests leaned towards cultural activities; he was a member of the school's chess and drama clubs and spent much time assisting in the school library. My task of literary archaeology is complicated by the loss of early draft materials and the lack of any records that shed light on Lotter's earliest creative outputs. This is understandable as many young writers see their craft as a private pursuit, and do not consider keeping meticulous journals or diaries that chronicle the state and development of their creative output. Lotter is also on record as stating that he destroyed this work as he was not satisfied that it had much merit. Therefore, Lotter's earliest work has been lost and cannot be factored into any discussion about his artistic development. Similarly, with the passage of decades, Lotter is unable to accurately assess or deconstruct the conditions under which his initial work saw fruition. In an email to this writer dated 23 August 2015, he suggests that he became more methodical as he matured and saw merit in keeping a personal archive. He later began keeping drafts and dated his works, but even so, some potentially valuable early material has been lost either because he never transcribed the works from note books, or the notes were mislaid or discarded in one of the moves he undertook post-war:

I did maintain separate notebooks for poetry drafts and notes for possible poems. I threw away these notebooks after I had typed out the poems. These notebooks are lost and gone. Many first drafts are lost forever.

This is a disappointing but understandable. Lotter's immediate post-school moves did little to quicken his latent poetic talent.

Upon leaving Jameson High School at the end of 1967, Lotter did not pursue any plans for tertiary education. Instead, he embarked on a career as a trainee accountant. He was admitted as a clerk at KJS Wicker, a firm of Chartered Accountants in Salisbury (Harare) and worked there for a year. At the end of 1968, he moved back to Gatooma and joined PL James (an accountant in private practice) as a clerk. Lotter remained with PL James for 2 years, and seemed comfortable and settled in this small community. His family lived in the area and a young man with prospects in businesses had no great motivation to concentrate on writing poetry. The first disruption to this extended hiatus (and which was to sow the seeds of his later creative work) occurred when he was called up for his initial period of national service (conscription was in effect for all white males) in the Rhodesian army. He reported to Llewellyn Barracks near Bulawayo on 7 January 1971 to undertake 8 months of basic infantry training and military duty.

Quaintly (given that he was already 21 years old), his parents received a form letter signed by Lt. Col. AW Slater, Commanding Officer of Depot, Rhodesian Regiment, dated 21 January, 1971.⁴ This lengthy circular was designed to illuminate parents about the conditions their sons would experience sons in training. It begins with this understated paragraph:

He will find the first six weeks very hectic and hard but I think this is only to be expected as Army life is possibly quite different from what he has been used to before being called up and there is only a short time in which to prepare him to take part in the defence of his country.

⁴ The form letter exists in hard copy in Lotter's archives, I have an electronic version on hand (pdf).

The letter continues with information about sports and recreation facilities (including the assurance that recruits had access to “cold beer” but not hard liquor), food, medical facilities, religious matters, leave procedures, recruit contact details, a procedure for the filing of any complaints and finally, a note on the purpose of army discipline that ends with the encouraging suggestion: “I am certain you will see an improvement in his physique and self-discipline”.

There are no extant poems that date from Lotter’s period of basic training, though he did revisit the experience later once he began writing poetry regularly, and it is clear from those poems that the events described in the letters penetrated his psyche and accurately inform the later poems. We gain an initial impression of the experience from the letter sequence Lotter wrote to his parents.⁵ The letter sequence from Lotter’s time at Llewellyn Barracks, however, does much to illuminate the evolution of concerns and positions that he would adopt, presenting, as they do, an emerging frame of ideas, observations and opinions that he would visit, adapt or rework in the poems he would write within a few years.

The first letter is a brief, two-line note detailing his obdurately constructed “army” address – rank, surname, service number and his company particulars were required on all correspondence. The absolute brevity of the message clearly shows that army instructors allowed their raw recruits the absolute minimum of free time in this initial induction period.

A second, more comprehensive letter is dated 11 January 1971. It is written in a rapid style, suggesting that spare time was not in abundance and Lotter mentions, too, that his attempt to volunteer for an officer section course was stillborn as the few available positions were oversubscribed. He also details the typical spit and polish procedures, hazing, manual labour, physical training and drill that seem universally part of first phase basic military training. The letters that follow are not dated. They are, however, numbered and this gives us a certain chronology against which to observe the evolution of Lotter’s early relationship with the army.

⁵ These letters were preserved by Lotter’s mother and have been converted to electronic (pdf) format. I have these letters as part of a resources pack that Lotter burnt to DVD for me in 2014.

A number of letters cover the period leading up to his first pass (expected on 18 February 1971). These are mundane in nature and address matters of family interest mostly. Some insights into Lotter's army lifestyle and his independent-minded character emerge though from a letter written 17 days into his period of service. He notes, with some degree of pride, his rapidly increasing level of physical fitness and a weight loss of almost five kilograms. Significantly, he addresses a plea to his mother that she must not, under any circumstances, lend out his books. His personal library was already a source of pride and Lotter clearly continued to read voraciously and widely even in barracks during basic training. There is very little political content to any of Lotter's army letters. This is probably indicative of the general somnolence in Rhodesian politics at the time rather than an indication of Lotter's political outlook.

In one of the letters home, Lotter notes wryly that he feels alienated in the barracks. He records that with one or two exceptions, his barracks mates are either "giggling schoolboys or rock spiders [pejorative Rhodesian slang for Afrikaners]". Although Lotter is slightly older than the average recruit, this comment points towards an aspect of Lotter's character that becomes increasingly apparent. He cuts a solitary figure and is a man who feels "other" much of the time; a person who maintains strongly held and confidently argued opinions and does not easily accept the status quo. As we shall see in later discussion, this becomes something of a two-edged sword. Lotter is able to stand on the periphery of situations and make detailed observations, and this greatly informs and advantages his poetry, but he also becomes the target of potential bullies (though these get their comeuppance in fairly swift order), and narrow-minded authoritarian figures. This sense of isolation slides, occasionally, into a deeply sensed alienation that we shall see becomes cognitively dissonant at times in the war diaries and some poems. This feature is a significant trope in his later work, and it feeds directly into the staggered evolution of his moral code and political doctrines during the war years and beyond.

In his sixth letter home, Lotter continues a vigorous correspondence on a variety of topics with his parents. He records being injured and requiring a few sutures, he makes an amusing correction to the form letter sent out by Colonel Slater regarding the quality of food served to the troops, indulges in some more speculation on economic history, and notes that the Special Air Service (SAS) had tried recruiting

men. Lotter specifically assures his parents that although he was initially tempted to try out for Special Forces, he had decided not to. An important signal in the letter is his suddenly piqued interest in service in the medical corps.

One interesting insight in the eighth letter is Lotter's oblique comment that he is not intimidated by the army's idiosyncratic approaches to discipline or the dull methodologies employed to turn civilians into fighting soldiers: "all the bull, while not being welcome, means nothing to me. This attitude should prevail." This outlook would surface in future camps, and a number of inserts in the war diaries detail Lotter's uneasy relationship with military authority, his sometimes bleakly caustic assessment of military intelligence, tactics, equipment and the foibles and incompetence of some officers and NCOs. These themes would jar Lotter's sensibilities and surface on numerous occasions in the war poems.

The eleventh letter is particularly interesting, for Lotter informs his parents that he is a trainee medic. He expresses keen interest in the course and revels in the challenge of an accelerated period of relevant study: "the medical course is rather crammed – we have covered in 3 days what we covered in a term at school". There is no indication in this letter of how Lotter was placed on the course, but we can surmise that this independent-minded young man saw an opportunity to influence the future course of his military career and took it. This decision would have significant consequences, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. The remaining letters in the series continue with family matters. It is clear, though, that the medical course has given Lotter a purpose, and the final letter home reveals that he has passed the course and has been promoted to corporal. He has been posted to Bulawayo, which means that he will not immediately be deployed on active bush duty. Although he maintained a prodigious reading schedule throughout his basic training phases, there is no indication in any of these letters that he was writing creatively. In discussions with Lotter, he cannot recall doing so with any purpose. I suggest that we can safely deduce from this that he was not, as he lacked the time, inclination or opportunity for private creative work in barracks. Thus, of his sporadic, pre-war poetry efforts, few examples survive.

At the end of his 8 month basic training, Lotter returned to full-time civilian employment and re-joined PL James in Gatooma as the office manager. Again, there are no diaries or letters that shed light on this period. He completed his Territorial Army call up camp in June 1972, but kept no diary, appears to have written nothing on the camp, and his service had no measurable personal impact that might have translated into poetry. His earliest surviving work, the exotically titled "Ich Suchen Das Zauber Word" (I seek the magic word), dates from 1973. The poem exists in manuscript form and is dated 28 March 1973. The piece foreshadows techniques Lotter was to develop and exploit in his later works.

The years ahead with oppressive weight
 Press in on me as realisation strikes
 Of what I still have to see and learn
 Before my words say what they should
 How they should.

I write my words and puff with pride
 For the word is right and the thought is there
 Then I look again at the scrawled cliché
 Thinking that the end is only a dream.

Then I think again and know that I
 Will one day be able to
 Do it.

Das zauber word, das zauber word
 Das verdammt zauber word!

Damn you.

The poem is an experimental piece, and has never been offered to any journal for possible publication. Lotter claims to have written it to impress a German-speaking woman to whom he had taken a fancy at the time, hence the affectation of the German title. It is cast in free verse, wrapped in run-on lines in the now archaic style

by which each line's first word is signalled by an upper case letter. The piece may be naïve, but it is an early poem and typically displays traces of the qualities of anticlosure identified by Barbara Smith (237), a device Lotter came to master in his later war poems:

[I]n much modern poetry and in modern poems otherwise quite similar in style, one may readily observe an apparent tendency toward anti-closure. To a considerable extent, this tendency reflects the proliferation and dominance of forms and modes such as free verse and interior monologue in which the structural resources for closure are minimal. More significantly, it seems to reflect a general preference for, and deliberate cultivation of, the expressive qualities of weak closure: even when the poem is firmly closed, it is not usually slammed shut -- the lock may be secure, but the "click" has been muffled.

The effect is a searching, self-conscious piece in which Lotter appears to be wrestling with a phenomenon that Garber (249) submits is "the voice of cognitive silence. It keeps recalling us to areas where explanation fails". The lines: "realisation strikes / Of what I still have to see and learn / Before my words say what they should" well illustrate this phenomenon, and if the poem stumbles on this note, its overt concerns (a fascination with isolating words that precisely contribute towards the development of thematic considerations) succeed in signalling an embryonic poetry career, and point at Lotter's increasing attention to detail. He becomes progressively more concerned with precision in language deployment in later works, with his draft revisions showing multiple, sometimes minute experimentation with word choices.

Lotter was 24 in 1973, in stable employment in a community he felt a part of. He was beginning to mature, and thoughts were forming in his mind of long term relationships. He wrote another "love poem" in 1973, the aptly titled "Moments". The piece is tender and private. Lotter has never considered submitting it for publication. He links its origin to a brief affair with an unnamed married woman – he was not married at the time. Typically for an early piece, the poem adopts an artifice that

defers to established Romantic traditions – a cast that Lotter acknowledges, in an email sent on 30 July 2015, with wry self-deprecation: “I was being all literary ek sê”.

A lingering hand, and our entangled minds
Shut out the world.

We float, riding the Elysian wave. Time peeks
Round the curtain and, baffled, withdraws.
Dawn's shadow, striding,
Falls across our murmured words.
Past, and future
Are shattered things, which
We left behind.

For this is our love. To take what we have
Content, grasping each morsel
As fate lets go.

Let tomorrow come.
When, if,
It can find us.



The line: “We float, riding the Elysian wave” is an image originally rooted in Greek mythology but appropriated and adapted by other poets, notably Byron and the 20th century American lyric poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay. It is likely that Lotter had read and was subliminally influenced by these poets, but he does not consciously try to reproduce their themes or treatments. His poem departs substantially from the former’s elaborate architectures of intricate rhyme schemes and finely-wrought stanzas. Instead, he produces a piece that whilst lacking the polish or technical finesse of Byron and Millay, offers a valid interpretation of the intensity and fickle nature of a love affair. The bittersweet final stanza toys with anticlosure, but the overall effect is a subtle acknowledgement of the transient nature of this love; Lotter seems aware of the obstacles that conspire against its adopting a perennial course. The poem may be raw, its subject matter may teeter around the edges of clichéd

semi-eroticism, but it points towards a sensitive mind and is evidence of a man prepared to respond to his experiences in a literary way beyond the usual exigencies of letter writing or journal keeping. Quite why he chose to work exclusively with the free verse form is an intriguing question that deserves closer attention.

Part of the answer may lie in any indication that he was consciously absorbing or responding to trends and developments in poetics. I have asked Lotter to consider this question carefully. His emailed response on 19 September 2015 is illuminating:

My exposure at school was to rhymed verse...I have a strong feeling – no more – that I swapped to free verse for two reasons. The first was that, in the early 1970's, I was starting to want, more and more, to capture the important events of my life in verse and, obviously, I wanted to do it effectively. The second, I think, was that I became tired of the restrictions of rhymed verse – the eternal slog to find a word with which to end a line, a word which fitted rather than dropping into place with that dull, predictable thud which we have spoken of. Also, when you consider my relationship with my high school teachers and with Jameson High School, there was probably also a thread of rebellion in my decision; a decision that I was going my own way with my poetry and fuck the sadists that taught me as well as the horses they rode in on.

From this forthright and fruity response and through my intimate acquaintance with Lotter's letters, diaries and the total body of work he has produced so far, it is clear that his was no formal apprenticeship in the craft of poetry writing. Although he experimented with poetry writing, it was done in amateur, random circumstances, with no initial intention of preserving his pieces or reworking them to the point that he might submit them for publication. His technical skills thus appear to have evolved haphazardly through a fluid interaction with his own reading and possibly the literary influences of his (then) close friend, Steve Edwards. Edwards, as Lotter recalls, was a man of diverse interests and was similarly widely and well read. He was deeply interested in ecological issues and published a book *Zambesi Odyssey* in 1974 that detailed an unsupported canoe trip down a length of that river. Edwards had distinct

literary tastes and was the first (along with Dr Olive Robertson in 1979 or 1980) to read and actively critique Lotter's war poetry when the latter had assembled his extant Rhodesian war poems into the self-styled "20 pound manuscript" – *Rebel Rhodesia* – that he offered (unsuccessfully at first) for publication when he arrived in South Africa. Edwards had previously encouraged Lotter to write (and Lotter credits Edwards for inspiring him to maintain a series of war diaries), but suggested novel writing instead. In Lotter's Kariba war diary of 21/1/1976 – 27/2/1976, there are brief notes about a potential novel, but this came to naught. Some of Lotter's manuscript war poems show evidence of Edwards' annotations and suggestions, but Lotter seldom incorporated these into the final manuscripts. The relationship soured in 2001 and Lotter has not spoken to Edwards since. I suspect that whilst Lotter valued having an independent critical eye on his work, he was not prepared to be pushed into directions that he felt were cul-de-sacs or which violated his own sense of poetic intuition. He abandoned the novel in the earliest of planning stages (its brief echo remains as a few pages of rough notes in the Kariba war diary), and made a conscious decision to work exclusively as a poet. We can conclude, then, that whilst Edwards was closest to Lotter at the time and encouraged and fed Lotter's literary appetites, he had no discernible influence on the forms, styles or thematic concerns evident in the bulk of Lotter's poetry.

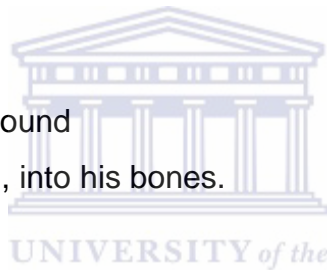
Lotter's proclivity for working with free verse seems, then, to be a natural gravitation towards an established and popular technical form that permits much experiment with tropes, diction and rhythm across lines, whilst still retaining a discernible grammatical and verbal unity. I would suggest, too, that for practical purposes, it was easier to jot notes in rough in small notebooks (about 90 x 120 mm) that could be stored in his battledress pockets or pack, notes that were free verse poems in microcosm. Indeed, some of the diaries (written in notebooks of this description) show draft poems written and experimented upon – typically such drafts are crossed through once Lotter has worked on them and created a more stable manuscript. The free verse form thus suited Lotter, and the materials available to him were practical for a man who would soon face extended periods of military service.

Lotter completed a Territorial Army camp in mid-1973. Whilst there is no diary or letter series that sheds light on this service period, one poem, "Sentry", appears to

have come out of this experience. It is possibly the first “war poem” that Lotter wrote, certainly it is the oldest surviving one. The piece was created on 13 November 1973 and polished over the years until Lotter judged it fit to submit for publication in *Two Tone* in December 1977; it has been republished several times since then. It is an economical work at a mere 37 words and is reproduced in full below:

One lonely man
 Forgotten
 And swallowed by night.
 When a breech-block snickers.
 And the two-am quiet
 Breaks
 With a safety-catch click.
 Gelded, he freezes

And his soul holds the sound
 As it percolates, tainting, into his bones.



It is opportune that a war poet’s oeuvre begins with a piece like this. The silence of the night collapses in that sinister moment when the sentry hears a weapon’s working parts being activated. The single word “snickers” is simultaneously onomatopoeic, taunting and threat-laced. The image is crisp and well-wrought with Lotter expertly catching the churning instant realisation of imminent, possibly fatal danger. The image contained in the line “Gelled, he freezes” is a superb physical rendering of this suddenly imposed tension. Ordinarily, gelding implies the prevention of reproduction, but in an unconscious ironic twist, the word’s usage here signals the beginning of a fruitful career as a war poet! It is not necessary for the piece to resolve the tense moment; it matters not whether this was a false alarm or the prelude to a fire fight; the poem’s focus is on that instant when tranquillity and somnolence shatter and the synapses in the sentry’s brain fire automatically. That moment is conceived with skill and economy, making “Sentry” an effective and evocative piece.

“Sentry” signals an unconsciously ironic beginning to a body of war poetry. In a sense, it prefaces the work that follows, laying the groundwork of tension and hinting at the mad cycle of appalling violence to come. We can read the sentry as Lotter’s doppelgänger. We know him to be a figure who inhabits the periphery, someone who keeps watch and who walks a solitary path. The work that follows “Sentry” is thus a multi-stranded poetic examination of the horrors of a lonely African war.

In 1974, Lotter completed a military camp of some weeks. The dates are no longer fixed clearly in his mind, but it was likely in the middle of the year. He kept no diary and wrote nothing that can be tied to the war in any way. Significantly, though, he wrote 10 poems in 1974, possibly most in the period before the camp. These poems range widely in subject matter. One develops the strong impression that Lotter is focusing his lens upon issues, events or emotions that have sudden appeal. There is no thread that binds them; these are individual pieces, not an integrated set that simply dates from a certain period. The quality of the poems varies, as one might expect from a poet consciously beginning to exercise his craft. Most have not been published and probably for good reason. Although Lotter tackles issues with sincerity and vigour, it is clear that he is serving an apprenticeship in poetry. Paul Fussell (88) makes the apt observation that one of the marks of a settled, accomplished poet is the internalisation of the principle “that every technical gesture in a poem must justify itself in meaning”. Lotter is not at that point yet with his poetry. The pieces are often rough-hewn (particularly if read aloud), suggesting, too, that Lotter has not yet mastered the ability to seam rhythm and line length. Some of the images, also, somehow do not quite gel or cooperate with the larger thematic intentions of the pieces. In the unpublished poem “The Voice”, for example, where Lotter is confronted in a vision by a figure who challenges him to be self-reflective on the course of his life so far, he uses the lines “I saw / The dour and bearded Voortrekker man / Who began my line”. Though the subject is recognisable, the implicit tautology in the linking of “dour” and “Voortrekker” creates a figure who rather than speaking with the intoned voice of ancestral spectral authority, presents instead as unconvincing, one dimensional and clichéd. The overall effect is to unintentionally undermine the gravitas in which the poet intended to wrap the piece. Similar issues, to one degree or another, are noticeable in the (unpublished) poems “Time

Between”, “Revival”, “Job Hunter” and “Unpaid Overtime”. One poem, “African Lullaby”, stands out, however.

Written on 13 March 1974 and revised into its current form on 7 April 1974, it was Lotter’s first published poem and appeared in *Two Tone* in June 1975. The piece demonstrates the emergence of a trope to which Lotter would return many times and which would exist, sometimes, as a point of reference for a type of interior monologue in some of his significant war poems:

I am alone.
 Alone with the reality of an ancient Africa,
 Lost in the unruly vista of an
 Older, harsher form.

And I crouch
 Shelled and husked
 In its tumbled wildness.



My insignificance
 In the universe
 Flaps, brittle-winged, above me.
 And roosts on my shoulder
 Cackling.

Every sinew cries out
 For ordered views of endless concrete
 Four walls to surround me
 And the sounds of city traffic
 To sing me a lullaby.

The poem seems to create a sense of trepidation as its speaker is intimidated by the raw nature of a wilderness that in its simple state of ageless, disconnected being, ironically confronts and disrupts the comfortably predictable rhythms of modernity’s

cityscape. It even appears to construct positions that run counter to the traditional concerns of the pastoral mode. That is a misreading. Lotter is a man we know to be comfortable with his outsider identity. He has a fascination with, and spiritual connection to, the bush. It is “the reality of an ancient Africa” that has the capacity to infiltrate his soul and leave him feeling “Shelled and husked / In its tumbled wildness”. The image is curiously anomalous. Here Lotter suggests that the removal of nature (shell and husk) from the seed of his essential nature brings him closer to that (wilderness) which is unrefined. It is an experience Lotter comes to appreciate and actively seek out to this day, for he regularly retreats to wilderness areas to be alone with his thoughts and his pen.

These excursions are more deeply invested than an urban dweller’s simple appreciation of nature and the outdoors; they are energising shaman-like experiences that Lotter seeks when the relentless cycles and pressures of his daily life threaten to overwhelm him. The work also shows the emergence of a poet becoming more adroit with his management of technical composition. The images are crisper, the rhythms appear more controlled and confidently crafted. This wilderness trope figures in some of the war poems that follow but in territory that becomes increasingly disordered and contested. A final pre-war poem from 1974, “My God Is Veiled” offers us insight into his relationship with organised religion, a view that would change substantially after the war.

This short poem was written on 17 April 1974 and revised into its current form on 4 December 1977. It has never been published:

I have looked for Him for too many years.
 I have wandered empty churches
 And I have peered in a thousand faces.

I stand on the wrong side of two thousand years
 Of priests who each, pottering, adds his stone
 To the wall that hides His face.

Where is my God?

Now I begin to look in my heart

Now my eyes turn inward

Now perhaps I shall find him.

“My God is Veiled” is something of a curate’s egg. The information he provides in the email of 31 August 2015, that “even way back then, I was beginning to question the atheist views that I had absorbed from my father” informs the piece. He is careful, in this piece, to account for the distance he puts between himself and organised Christianity. The first stanza is the familiar sceptic’s argument about declining church membership and the visible lack of spirituality in so many who may profess otherwise, but these commonplaces evaporate in the remarkably original and vivid image contained in the second stanza. The lines, “I stand on the wrong side of two thousand years / Of priests who each, pottering, adds his stone / To the wall that hides His face” contain an evocative and original image. The conundrum contained within the suggestion that somehow an omnipotent deity could be masked from view by a wall, highlights Lotter’s unease with the myriad doctrinal positions he believes clergymen have fabricated over the centuries to alienate people from any true understanding or experience of God. The final stanza is disappointing and seems tacked on as an overly pious afterthought; indeed the poem would likely be more effective without this stanza. What is interesting to note about the content and position of the piece in Lotter’s chronology (it is the eighth poem) is not so much the spiritual quest that appears to frame it, but a deeper subtext that reveals a poet speaker resolutely disinclined to accept or adopt binary positions on religious, ethical and moral issues. The war poems and diaries discussed in subsequent chapters return on several occasions to instances where Lotter is challenged. His responses show no linear evolution towards an established moral code, but rather a chaotic journey across a spectrum of strongly expressed and often divergent and occasionally contradictory opinions to the more stable moral position of democrat and pacifist he adopted post-war. That will be unpacked in detail later. What is clear though, is that by the end of 1974, Lotter was on the cusp of embarking on a committed journey as a war poet.

His work at this point seems to have moved beyond a phase of pure experiment. Though some of the poems are definitely journeyman pieces, there is a palpable sense (in the “better” pieces I have examined) that Lotter is purposefully seeking to craft and refine his work. The publication of “African Lullaby” suggests that he was in control of the creative process to a degree sufficient to catch the attentions of the *Two Tone* editor, Dr Olive Robertson. 1974 figures significantly too in the larger socio-political context in which Lotter was operating back in Gatooma, because it was the year of Rhodesia’s own “phony war”. Moorcraft (39), suggests that

by the end of 1974, Rhodesian intelligence estimated that only 70 to 100 hard core guerrillas remained operative inside the country. The insurgents could perhaps have faced total elimination within a few months, if the security forces had kept up the pressure. But then the international factor ruptured Salisbury’s COIN campaign. It went by the name of détente.

If 1974 was a period of relative quiet that allowed Lotter to exercise his craft in the 10 poems he wrote that year, then 1975 marked a rupture in the cushioning fabric of that extended moment. Politically and militarily, Rhodesia found itself in an earnestly compromised position and Lotter began the first of an increasing cycle of call ups. The significance of this phase (1975 onwards) is that it fractured the mediated reality of Lotter’s Gatooma life. Although a Territorial Army soldier, he would serve as an operational medic in a war whose stark realities stood in opposition to the banality of civilian life. Lotter, the questioning outsider, would soon become acutely aware of a monstrous disjuncture between this unfolding war on the frontier, the airbrushed “truths” that issued from Rhodesian media and the sheltered, vapid landscapes occupied by Rhodesian civilians not yet drawn into the war. These tensions would precipitate a sudden sharpening of Lotter’s vision and prompt him to turn his attentions almost exclusively to the war for the next six years. His output increased exponentially and his diaries would record in precise detail the experiences that would begin to infiltrate and shape his poetry. This will form the thrust of examination in the chapters to come.

Chapter Five: Two short years: 1975 -1976.

“The most shocking fact about war is that its victims and its instruments are individual human beings.” (Aldous Huxley).

In 1975, Lotter’s horizons broadened. He left the sleepy familiarity of small town Gatooma and the security of his close-knit family for the capital, Salisbury. There he took a job at More Wear Industries (a heavy engineering firm that made, inter alia, mine and ambush-resistant vehicles), and tried to adjust to the faster-paced life found in the vibrant city. Outwardly Lotter made the move to further his career prospects, and he had no inkling that the war of which he had a small taste thus far was set to escalate dramatically and intrude heavily into his life. Until mid-1974, the war had seemed contained and call-ups were confined to a couple of weeks annually. The Carnation Revolution in Metropolitan Portugal changed the dynamics overnight and opened an entire front on the east of the country once Portugal abandoned its Mozambique colony.

Like many other young men, Lotter would experience an exponential increase in his military commitments from 1975 onwards, an increase that became increasingly unwelcome and disruptive year by year. We already know that Lotter had an aloof relationship with military authority and was deeply sceptical of the RF party line to which many Rhodesians blithely subscribed. Perhaps for these reasons as well as a suspicion that although he was a largely unenthusiastic participant, something of great consequence was unfolding, Lotter began keeping a diary that detailed his experiences of military life. His poetry output increased too and would focus exclusively on the war in the years to follow. What is immediately apparent, however, is that the subject matter or ideas in the poems, the diaries and occasional letters home to his family do not neatly align with each other and, at times, occupy positions that are prone to fluidity and sometimes compete to the point of contradiction. There is no easy lock-step progression from diary observations to poetic responses – these two modes of expression converge and diverge chronologically and thematically. There is good reason for this, and I aim to demonstrate, now and in later chapters, how these distorted echoes of one man’s voice do much to interrogate the zeitgeist of the Rhodesian experience of war yet also, strangely, seem at times, to be complicit in its construction too. It is not a seamless procedure either.

Reading the diaries and poems, one becomes aware that there are distinct moments when Lotter's gaze penetrates the binary mythologies of the Rhodesian experience. In his moments of doubt, he rejects the sort of claim made by Scully (61) that "the Rhodesians are hardy, outgoing folk. They observe many simple virtues that have long disappeared in the sophisticated west. The Rhodesian does not suffer from inner anguish or self-doubt". But this is not constant and just as often, it seems that Lotter is complicit in the maintenance of Rhodesian myths. The contradictions loom large and gather, indicating mounting cognitive dissonance (a process conceptualised by Leon Festinger in 1957) as the war progresses. To Lotter's credit, as we shall see, part of his strategy in reducing the levels of dissonance he experiences is to confront these issues and permit the possibility of changed attitudes and realigned moral positions. This process unfolds slowly in Lotter's life and work and continues to this day.

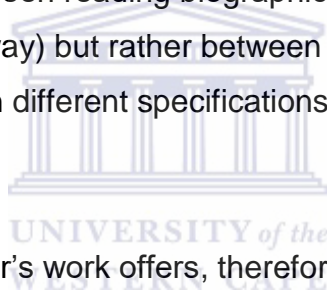
Although this study is not a formal biography, critical approaches to biography offer a useful means of approaching and navigating the discordant texts in question. Hermione Lee (63) alerts us to changing attitudes to, foci and representational stances in biographical writing:

Biography is never just the personal story of one life. It always has political and social implications. The politics of 19th-century biography had to do with consolidating a national story. In North America, a distinctive national culture was being forged between the wars of Independence and the Civil War; in Europe, national identities were re-shaping themselves through a period of immense turbulence. In Britain, at the start of the century, great social changes, fears of unrest, political repression after the Napoleonic Wars, led to an investment in heroic Lives as a form of security. Later, they became expressions of imperial confidence and assertiveness.

Biographical criticism has similarly undergone challenges. Its formerly privileged position came under attack in the twentieth century, most notably by the Formalists and critics wary of any sense of "biographical fallacy", who objected to any attempt to the intrusion of biographical data into textual analysis. The trend has continued, with

contemporary cultural studies theorists regarding biographies as texts that are part of larger discourses on issues of hegemony, sexuality, gender and race. Although I take cognisance of these competing discourses, I am wary of introducing critical subgenres that cater to specialist interests, and deflect from my larger purpose of critically analysing a significant body of war poetry. Lee (13) strikes the right note of balance when she suggests that “[b]iography, even more than autobiography (where the writer can choose how much to talk about the world surrounding the self), has a duty to the stream as well as to the fish”. To manoeuvre around the strident claims of competing theories and the intention / meaning debate, I find the carefully targeted approach of the American critic and scholar, Stanley Fish, a contributor to *Contesting the Subject: Essays in the Postmodern Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Criticism*, particularly useful:

the choice... is not between reading biographically and reading in some other way (there is no other way) but rather between different biographical readings that have their source in different specifications **of the sources of agency** [my emphasis].



A biographical reading of Lotter’s work offers, therefore, opportunities to assess the diaries and poems as prisms of the changing political and social attitudes in 1970s Rhodesia against the background of the war, its escalation and outcome.

Simultaneously, I need to caution that this will not present as a neat, consistently linear progression of theme, technical skill or reach. In adopting Fish’s approach, I will demonstrate that the poems and diaries of this period are in constant, sometimes strident dialogue about agency, with Lotter assuming varied and occasionally reversed ethical and political positions. It is through a detailed examination of these nuanced and sometimes precariously positioned texts that we can appreciate and track the transformation of Lotter from civilian to soldier, and the evolution of his changing ethical positions and his political consciousness to something approaching grounded stability in the post-war period.

Lotter’s only camp of 1975, Operation Inlet (27 August to 7 October), saw him deployed as a part of the Rhodesian army’s strategy of saturating rural areas with

mobile forces to counter the build-up of ZANLA's guerrilla forces and thwart their mass politicisation of the rural populace.

Lotter pasted a lengthy army memorandum into his diary which attempted to define the task of the Rhodesian forces and offer "rules of engagement". The document begins with a lofty "National Aim":

To sustain a united and sovereign Rhodesia; which guarantees a permanent home and equal opportunities for all its communities; which maintains responsible government and civilised standards, and which is recognised by the free world.¹

We can see that the document is fanciful from the beginning. Rhodesia was not recognised by any country in the free world and never would be, precisely because it did not grant "equal (democratic) opportunities to all". To achieve that "National Aim", the "operational requirement is for the establishment of efficient administration, stable social and economic conditions, respect for law and order and the elimination of the terrorist and his organisation."² The document then offers advice on dealing effectively with local populations (most of it common sense anyway), but builds to this bald directive that non-judicial means of ensuring cooperation with the army's purposes would be both required and condoned

You should demand and enforce whatever obedience is required from the people to accomplish of your mission. At times, vigorous action may have to be taken, and when this is the case, disciplinary or punitive measures or action essential to good order should be executed with firmness and authority.³

The fact that Lotter included this memo in his diary suggests that it intrigued and probably alarmed him. He did not elucidate his thoughts at the time, but we can surmise that a rational man, with an interest in ethics, philosophy and history, would

¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Operation Inlet 1" N.D. 1975. MS. 17-18/18.

² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Operation Inlet 1" N.D. 1975. MS. 17-18/18.

³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Operation Inlet 1" N.D. 1975. MS. 17-18/18.

have found that its content, so riddled with contradictions and ethical problems that it generated sufficient concerns to warrant saving it.

Just before this camp, Lotter had published his first poem, "African Lullaby" in *Two Tone*, and this six week camp would generate 7 poems, all of which were subsequently published. This camp proved very different to Lotter's previous periods of duty, and his sudden exposure to the gravity of the military situation Rhodesia faced was eye-opening. In a letter to his parents dated 26 September 1975, he noted:

The Rhodesian Army seems to have lost its temper... I have never seen so many troops from so many different units before. Activity is unreal. War zone is the only way to describe the situation.

His private thoughts, recorded in the diary, are more forthrightly expressed suggesting that he was circumspect about the register and detail in family correspondence, possibly to avoid alarming his parents unnecessarily and to preempt censorship by military authorities (though this was not a common occurrence). Privately, he dissects Rhodesia's military situation with acuity:

Intelligence says we lost the initiative we held in December 1974 because we observed the ceasefire. We lost on 3 grounds: (1) Material – ter [sic] resupplied, (2) Strategic – ter regained ground, (3) Psychological – ter told the tribesmen the Rhodesian Army was defeated. They had killed 1000's of us and that was why we had withdrawn to the main bases. Operation Inlet is to regain the initiative Rhodesia now has more men in the field than at any time since WWII.⁴

When measured against the letter, this entry reveals that he is shocked at the reality on the ground, and he would make many similar, sober observations in later diaries, suggesting that he was never taken in by the cheap propaganda that cast the Rhodesian security forces as masters of counterinsurgency who dominated the

⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Operation Inlet 1" 30 Aug. 1975. MS. 3/18.

battlefield, and took the fight to the enemy. The diaries, with their intimate portrayals of events and attitudes thus offer a useful counter to the romanticised mythologies of the Rhodesian war potboilers that grossly inflated the capacity and competency of the Rhodesian forces, a theme I will pursue in a later chapter. I suggest that Lotter uses the diaries for two broad purposes.

On a micro level, the keeping of a diary offers him a daily routine, a focus and purpose that he maintains with zeal partly to keep himself occupied during lengthy periods of “down time”. He seems determined to record his experiences on army service, and so his immediate task in the diaries is to chart the course of each camp and capture his thoughts and observations in the freshness of the moment. We know Lotter to be an outsider who is uncomfortable in the shared space of communal living such as an army camp, so this diary writing habit becomes as much a personal discipline as a strategy to claim a personal and reflective space that resists outside intrusion. On a macro level, these diaries function as source notes for his poetry, and although he does not regularly respond immediately in verse, it becomes clear that he returns, sometime years later, to the substance of the diaries to inform the position and shape of his poems. In this case, though, Lotter’s Operation Inlet deployment would prove immediately fruitful.

His first piece, “Dusk”, exists in manuscript form in the diary (dated 6 September 1975), and was first published in the Zimbabwean journal, *Mahogany*, in 1980. Since this camp would shake Lotter and challenge his beliefs and perceptions about the Rhodesian army and the prosecution of the war, it deserves examination in full.

A cigarette curls around my lungs
As I watch the stars.

Twilight steals in
On the cool night breeze
And sits on my bones.

I love the city
With its noisy splendour

But I love the bush
And the stars at night.

“Dusk” is not an overtly war poem on a first reading. On one level, it is a beautifully composed moment of the simple pleasure experienced by a man alone and at repose. It is a stance that Lotter savours, and he is well able to convey the deep serenity of the occasion. The opening lines appear to be a meditative engagement with a sublime moment. The curious image of cigarette smoke that “curls around my lungs” may be lost on today’s non-smoker, but the tobacco lighting ritual and its context (a relaxing smoke) creates a soporific mood that is washed through with the cool peace of twilight. The poem’s final lines echo a diary entry from 30 August 1975 in which Lotter writes of “the forgotten pleasure of lying awake and looking at bright stars.”⁵ There is an implicit irony in the poem and the diary entry however. The moment does not occur on a holiday. The context is military service in a war zone, and so we are teased to consider the potential for cognitive dissonance here. Operation Inlet would challenge Lotter and disrupt his perceptions about the political and military situation in Rhodesia, so although the poem’s power lies in Lotter’s ability to focus on the deep, simple pleasure of this moment, we soon become aware, as does he, that experiences like this will give way to events that leak horror. Part of the power of “Dusk” lies in our realisation that the distance between Lotter and the war’s reality was fast closing. Lotter was not consciously aware of this convergence until it became glaringly obvious that he was caught up and complicit in the war. After that, his choices become interesting to track and analyse.

The diaries reveal that Lotter reflected on the socio-political situation in the country, but with sometimes wildly juxtaposed views. In an entry dated 31 August 1975, he appears genuinely encouraged by his observation that some of his fellow (white) soldiers seem to be inching away from the RF’s white hegemonic ideologies and open to the possibility of vertical integration of black people into all levels of Rhodesian social, political and cultural experience. He writes that “slowly, slowly, the tone is changing to ‘It’s his country too.’”⁶ Yet just a few days later (on 4 September

⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Operation Inlet 1" 30 Aug. 1975. MS. 3/18.

⁶ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Operation Inlet 1" 31 Aug. 1975. MS. 4/18.

1975) Lotter records an account of a possible mutiny by black RAR (Rhodesian African Rifles) troops in 1973. His words are uncharacteristically venomous and wrapped in an angry racist catch-all phrase: “RAR or not, excellent soldiers or not – a kaffir is still a kaffir.”⁷ The remark is deeply troubling and feeds into the stereotype of the Rhodesian white supremacist. Without detracting from the severity and degree of offence contained in Lotter’s words, I believe it requires deeper investigation.

On a basic level, there are signs that this may not be typical of Lotter’s larger political thinking. His diary style is usually matter of fact, composed and thoughtful. The register of these comments suggests that the views expressed are more off-cuff, throw-away and thoughtless remarks written in a moment of outrage. The entry burns with hot emotion suggesting that he atypically wrote the piece hurriedly and in such a vile frame of mind that he abandoned his usual rational approach to diary entries. Lotter’s character adds further light and may account for the strident tone and markedly racist (temporary) position he adopts here. He subscribes to the neo-chivalric codes of his parents and places enormously high value on a personal sense of commitment and integrity of action. Thus it is likely that this was the narrow lens through which he viewed the news of the RAR mutiny and regarded it as an act of deep, double betrayal and judged it in simple binary terms.

Firstly, it broke the rules he believed governed the conduct of professional soldiers and, may well have made it difficult for him to publicly justify his belief that the RF was leading the country to destruction.⁸ It is also most likely that Lotter did not consider fully the implications of the alleged mutiny. His inability to deconstruct the potential ethical dilemma, for instance obedience to questionable orders, and lack of agency these black soldiers had as both as military men and subjects of white “Rhodesia” likely blinded him to the complex and fraught moral position they would have found themselves in. It is also quite possible that the story he reacted to was either false or grossly inflated over the years. It is understandable if deeply regrettable, however, that Lotter (a white Rhodesian) neglected to analyse the situation and, instead, defaulted to a narrowly racist mind-set in summing up the event. Without excusing Lotter, I submit that we cannot use this single entry to

⁷ Lotter, Chas. “War Diary: Operation Inlet 1” 4 Sept. 1975. MS. 13/18.

⁸ See my discussion on this in Chapter 4.

summarise all of Lotter's politics. As it turned out, the stress of that moment was to be eclipsed by events that took place a few days later – an event that would challenge Lotter's moral position far more deeply than any vague, dated report of a mutiny by a few black troops.

On 12 September, 1975, Lotter made the following entry: "The mandate given us is incredible. From 6 [pm] to 6 [am], shoot - no comeback. If innocent people get shot by accident, that's too bad. War is war and no one will penalize the killer."⁹ He is clearly thunderstruck by the implications of this standing order, and a mere four days later its grim reality burst into Lotter's life and cast a lingering pall on his experience as a part-time soldier. It is an incident that Lotter has only relatively recently (18 November 2015) been willing to share with me by e mail, and one that is so ghastly that he deliberately excluded any reference to it in the diary. One can only speculate why this is so. Some four days after the diary entry, Lotter was deployed with other troops to an ambush position opposite a minefield. The area was under strict 6 to 6 curfew. That night, the soldiers discerned determined human movement through the minefield – shovels were being used apparently – and once figures emerged into the killing ground, the ambush was sprung and the troops poured determined fire into the immediate area. There was no return fire and the troops were aghast when those who survived the fusillade retreated back into the minefield where the concealed charges claimed further victims. Not all were killed in these blasts, some were injured and lay disabled, screaming in pain and horror, unable to move. In the morning, it became clear to the soldiers that the casualties of the previous night's action were not guerrillas, but civilian tribespeople.

We cannot, some 40 years later, truly appreciate the enormous disruption this night caused to Lotter's psyche, and can only speculate that this is why Lotter kept an army memo that ironically states "action essential to good order should be executed with firmness and authority". He withdrew into his thoughts and a day later penned three pieces in a burst of creative energy that would become "Ambush Party" (*Rhodesian Soldier* 62), "Battlefield" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 45) and "Minefield" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 62). These three works are shockingly powerful pieces that map out the

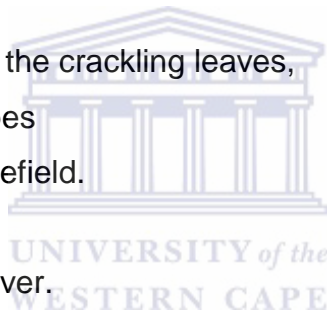
⁹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Inlet 2" 13 Sept. 1975. MS. 14/66.

sequences of that night's action, cordon the soldier-poet's memory from investigation and, obliquely, serve to privately memorialise the anonymous victims. The night's events precipitated a massive collision between Lotter the soldier, trained to kill and Lotter the medic, trained to save life. The poems are worth investigating in full.

"Ambush Party", the first of the trilogy, sets the scene for the horror and slaughter to come. The piece was first published in *Rhodesian Solder and Others Who Fought* in 1984 and has, until now, never been consciously linked to "Battlefield" and "Minefield". Lotter has deliberately avoided making the link, but it is now incumbent on me to treat the poems as a mutually cooperative set that requires simultaneous, close reading.

I am one
 With a silent file of men
 Treading lightly through the crackling leaves,
 One with the other shapes
 Moving towards the minefield.

We settle quietly into cover.
 First watch begins
 On the flank away from me.
 We wait.



The poem's opening lines appear bland, but informed, as we are, by Lotter's recent disclosures about the events to come, they disrupt the poet speaker's recognisable persona and dissolve him into the fluid anonymity of the group. The device subtly signals the poet's determination to erase any sense of culpability from recognizable individuals. The last three lines of the first stanza ripple with steeled menace and mounting tension. Any sense of individuality quickly disappears as the soldier figures distort into semi-spectral "shapes". The mine field stretched out before them in the second stanza is locked in the present tense, yet it also captures the tensely indeterminate period that precede an action and resolutely deny assignation of any sense of culpability, for the responsibility to watch and spring the ambush is not invested in an individual. Instead, it lies with a "flank" – "away from me". The poem is

skilfully drawn together, with no superfluous images or verbal choices to detract from the creeping tension and the sense of deadly expectation to come. The anti-closure in the final line delivers tension and suggests a distortion of linear time that would slip into in the viscerally imagined and ironically titled second piece in the sequence.

“Battlefield” was first published in *Contrast 54* in December 1982 and has been republished several times. The title, informed by new evidence, takes on an ironic cast. Was this truly a battlefield, there being no return fire? Or does it point towards the crisis of conscience, an internal, mental battle that might overwhelm a soldier’s mind after such an incident? Lotter’s treatment is cinematically precise and focuses the reader’s imagination with starkly rendered detail to great effect:

Above me shines a Judas moon
 Its malevolent rays
 Poking through the fleshless arms of a burnt-out tree
 A soldier hates the swollen moon.
 He hates the open ground.
 Night is kind. It hides and swallows us.
 But this reveals, is a spotlight in the wings
 Waiting to point, to shout, There!
 It picks out bushes, trees, shrubs -
 Us.
 As we lie in the black, burnt grass
 Tightly watching the approaching murmur of men,
 Willing our stillness to hide us.

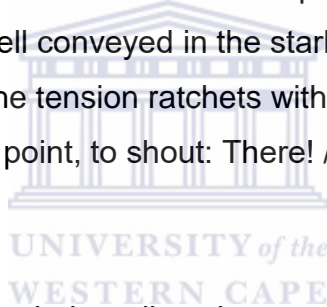
No innocent walks here. Innocence died
 In a place like this.
 Instead, shadowed figures glide,
 Clash in a burst of noise
 Litter the ground with their human debris
 And leave.

Yet the moon still shines

On a field of battle.
 A starkly desolate
 Beautiful

Place.

The opening lines contain the vivid image of the treacherous moonlight shining on the scene. The interplay of light and dark in Lotter's poetry is interesting. In "Dusk", the gathering darkness was welcome, here an inversion occurs. The light, traditionally a symbol of security, becomes the source of threat, with the image wonderfully contained in the loaded pairings of the "Judas moon". It is the soldiers who seek to hide in darkness, deriving their security from its camouflage but as much as the moon's pale light may betray the presence of the soldiers, the threat also doubles back to strike at the othered ones creeping across that ground. Images of death and destruction are well conveyed in the stark silhouette of "the fleshless arms of a burnt-out tree" and the tension ratchets with the staccato rhythms echoing placed gunshots in "Waiting to point, to shout: There! / It picks out bushes, trees, shrubs / Us".



The second stanza works particularly well as the poet-speaker inverts an implicit order and prefaces the deadly clash with "No innocent walks here. Innocence died / In a place like this." The lines are curious, indeed a little mystifying until we realise that the speaker is anxious to wrap the deadly moment in ambiguity. Readers unfamiliar with the back story will struggle with these lines, misinterpreting them as an unconvincing attempt to justify an atrocity, but Lotter plays on the word "innocence" to emphasise the treachery of fate that caused the deaths of people guilty only of curfew breaking, and that in firing the fatal shots the amorphous group of soldiers lost their innocence. Like Macbeth, they were tainted by the innocent blood they spilled that night. The shadowed figures can be read as both soldiers and victims, adding to the unease in the poem and admitting the possibility of lingering trauma that would follow the soldiers, like shadows after the event. The moment of action is crystallised in the pitiless details of "Clash in a burst of noise / Litter the ground with their human debris / And leave" – the poet appearing to exclude any consideration of ethical concerns and refusing to spare the reader from a moment of

brutal horror. The poet compounds the dreadfulness of these sudden, violent deaths by stripping the dead of their humanity and equating them with “litter” and “human debris”. In a strange way, the “light” also functions metaphorically here to shed light on the terrible events of that night, exposing the tragedy and brutal finality of the moment for all to see. “Battlefield” is thus a brutal yet well-conceived poem that compliments the “pity of war” trope we have come to associate with war poetry. The horror is not restricted to the piece for, like the shed blood, it spills into “Minefield”, the final piece in the trilogy that unpacks the horror of that night, a horror that continues in the reproduction of the poem and its consignment to active memorialisation .

A double parade-ground fence

Marches

Coldly off to an unknown place.

Between, like malevolent toads,

Lurk the mines.

Desiccated animal bodies mark spots

Where game abortively crossed.

They lie in the sun, the meat is not worth

The risk of recovery.

Instead, they remain as a warning

Ignored by the others,

The human bodies often found

Hunched around the hole they blew in the ground.

Or worse

The keening wrecks who were only disabled

And sit

Not daring to move, forward or back

For fear

Of what surrounds them.

The opening stanza of “Minefield” (first published in *Rhodesian Soldier* in 1984) is a lucid description of the *cordon sanitaire* – the minefield that Rhodesia army

engineers laid along much of the lengthy border with Mozambique. Lotter's tight opening lines draw our attention to the sheer scale of the minefield with a simple yet effective oxymoron. The minefield is both contained within "a double parade ground fence", and yet also appears to have a limitless span that "marches / coldly off to an unknown place". The menace sown in the earth is similarly well-wrought in the brooding violence of the image "like malevolent toads / lurk the mines". What renders the whole so effective is our realisation that although the presence of the minefield is demarcated by fencing, the locations of the individual mines are concealed, making the landscape seethe with menace.

The second stanza builds a slow connection to the previous two poems. The images of animals caught in random blasts reflect, as Jean Cannon (44) has noted, a common enough theme of nature devastated by war, but is rare in Lotter's work and requires some investigation. I asked him about his relationship with the bush and whether the singular absence of animals from his war poems held any particular significance. His response, via e mail on 29 August 2016 is illuminating:

Now that I am thinking on it, several things are puzzling me about myself. I cannot for the life of me recollect encountering anything but a bare minimum of wildlife during all of my nine years in the army. All I can recall is three examples. The herd of kudu which we encountered on that Recce camp which we snuck up on, the hyena which stole my white phos grenade in the Zambezi Valley (no war diary for that camp unfortunately) and the dead animals which tried to cross the minefields.

Why? Did the animals really stay out of our way like that? I doubt that this was so. Further, as you can see from the entry in the Recce diary (ref. 25/44), that the encounter with the kudu left a deep and lasting impression upon me. Why did I not write about it? The incident with the hyena left me with a deep and abiding dislike of them since, if he has [sic] bitten into it when he picked it up by my sleeping self instead of biting into it when he got back to the perimeter, I would have been crispy, deep-fried meat. Yet I did not write about it! The only animals that made it into my poems are the dead ones in the minefields and all they get is a passing mention (*Minefield*)...

Then I think on to modern times. When I go to the bush as a family, we go looking for game and when we find it, I enjoy the sight. Yet, you know how deeply the Richtersveld affected me and the wildlife there is minimal. On the river, we only saw daily birds, monkeys and baboons. Off the river the only animals which we saw in our whole time there were (count them) one small group of kudu once, one jackal once and the odd bird flying high.

I think that you have taught me something about myself. Animals are a nice-to-have but I am not there for them.

I think that the bush or the desert are important to me for the wide-open spaces, the silence and the lack of people.

The 1970s predated modern global concerns for environmental issues and here Lotter reflects outdated conservationist concerns, a stance Michelè Pickover (7) believes is grounded in the patriarchal hegemonic concept that animals are objects to be used for human benefit rather than any conception of them as living beings with an inalienable right to life. The idea is certainly consistent with the social attitudes towards animals in the period in which Lotter reached maturity, but I would suggest that the infrequent reference to animals in his poetry is rooted more in subconscious choices based on his own personal bias towards an identification with the timeless presence of physical landscape rather than the creatures that inhabit it. For that reason, his poems are sometimes nature studies with most traces of living creatures removed from the habitat. Lotter's relationship with the bush is tied to the war and seems to be in a constant state of tension or redefinition, and this may also partly explain the absence of animals in his work. The final comment in the e mail reinforces a thought that appeared on 5 October 1975 in the diaries – that the bush functions partly as a personal symbol for his chosen exclusion and isolation from others. He writes on this occasion: "I might be deluding myself but I feel the Outsiderness [sic] growing, nurtured by the bush. Whether I am feeling Army-love for the bush or whether I am developing a genuine love for it, I cannot be sure of yet."¹⁰

¹⁰ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Inlet 3" 5 Oct. 1075. MS. 15/25.

What is clear, however, is that his comments when viewed in total, obliquely situate him in a period when animal rights were less foregrounded than they are today.

Another reading, of course, is that Lotter views the war as a human activity and indicates this limitation by generally excluding animals except in casual reference to them being occasional victims. Yet in this brief description of the carnage wrought on the wildlife (the animals are “desiccated”), Lotter appears to be suggesting that the indiscriminate lethal reach of these mines poses an ethical dilemma and prepares us for the grim account of the human cost – not just the sight of mangled corpses, but especially those “keening wrecks / who were only disabled / And sit / Not daring to move, forward or back / For fear / Of what surrounds them”. The poem is visually precise and understated. Lotter’s purpose here is to memorialise the horror of that night’s incident.

The creation and private linking together of these three poems suggest that Lotter ring-fenced the incident in his psyche and chose to repress it, probably because internally he could not reconcile the civilians’ unnecessary and horrifying deaths with the bald excuse of curfew breaking. For some, that ethical dilemma would not pose any problems, but not so for Lotter. The injustice and tragedy of that night’s events bothered him enough to make a permanent poetic record. As we have seen, the incident continues to elicit a traumatic response forty years after the event. Thus these poems function as a private set with the minefield occupying a unifying symbolic position. Part of the power of the minefield metaphor is the nuanced latency it contains. Just as the mines “wait” to claim victims, the action the soldiers precipitate and the trauma that they are then forced to witness suggests that combat operations are ethical, memory and behavioural minefields, that actions have unintended and sometimes brutally final consequences for (innocent) others. The experience is thus permanently etched into Lotter’s psyche and surfaces in these linked poems. Eelco Runia suggests (316) that “commemoration hinges on the idea that acts of people are committed by us – not, of course, in person, but as members of the group, the nation, the culture, and ultimately the species that brought the catastrophe about”. This aptly explains why Lotter wrote the poems, why he initially spliced them in sequence and also why he disassembled the connective strands prior to publication. The fracturing of sensibilities and sense of dissociation is, ironically,

part of the psychic commemorative process yet deeply secreted in the black box of trauma recall. The incidents of Operation Inlet clearly affected Lotter profoundly, but beyond these three poems there is no evidence that on this camp he continued to analyse or process the horrific deaths he witnessed or translate his thoughts into a consideration of his own, larger participation in the war. If anything, the opposite seems to have occurred, suggesting that Lotter was so traumatised that he sought to bury the experience and block access to the thoughts.

A month later, on 19 October 1975, Lotter penned the piece “Freedom Song” – an angry, atypical poem that occupies a lonely, troubling position in Lotter’s body of work. For this reason, it deserves attention:

The terrorist
 Is excused
 His rape and frenzied pillage,
 May mutilate and burn,
 Commit a few atrocities
 And drink from skull-carved cups.
 For “freedom” has no crimes.
 Hear the mighty chorus of mutilated souls.
 Hear the muted agony
 Of crippled men and boys.
 Hear the screams of innocents
 And clearly understand. This
 Is orchestral backing
 To Uhuru's chant.
 Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika. Amen.

It is a disturbing poem that jars and squats on the fringe, and it is difficult to tie into the diaries or any of the larger thematic concerns of Lotter’s other work. Part of the problem is the poem’s intention. It seems that in the moment of this poem, Lotter’s politics suddenly undertook an unsignalled, seismic shift to the far right, leading him to write this caustic piece with no other purpose than to demonise the guerrillas. The poem is excessively high-blown and collapses under the weight of the racist images

and a register that appears borrowed from the RF's crude propaganda machinery. It opens with the loaded, dehumanising label "terrorist" and quickly descends into an out-of-control, savage critique of the guerrillas ranged against Rhodesia. A torrent of barbarous imagery rips through the piece and presents the insurgents as faceless fiends who "drink from skull-carved cups" – images that bring to mind grotesque settler colonial caricatures of indigenous people as barbarous cannibals as likely to cook and eat white men as to trade with them. The poem is perplexing for both its vituperative nature and the shallow, unconvincing polemic that drives it.

"Freedom Song" reinforces the Rhodesian national myths mentioned in a previous chapter, and although the poem is deeply flawed and tumbles along an eccentric orbit, it remains an important reminder that human nature is fickle, that artistic works may be challenging and defy neat categorisation. This is an observation made by Andrew Rutherford (84) who tracked the momentary camouflaged appearance (in the *Sherston Trilogy*) of a "Sassoon who patrolled blood-thirstily in No Man's Land to avenge the death of friends" - the same man who threw his MC ribbon into the Mersey in protest at the continuation of WWII! Thus what "Freedom Song" demonstrates here is that there are moments when public and private discourses on war can be so cognitively disruptive, that they can inexplicably switch position and so overwrite each other in the poet's imagination. This is what appears to have happened here: the sceptical, considered Lotter of the diaries seems to have submitted, momentarily, to the attractions of cant and hysteria that poured from Rhodesia's public broadcaster. Lotter's own recall (albeit much later, on 24 November 2015) of the poem's origin suggests this is exactly what occurred. He writes that:

You know how the government propaganda was – pervasive and always reporting "terrorist atrocities" in loving, gory detail. Therefore, my best bet would be that some particularly gory atrocity had just been splashed all over the news and had made me so angry that I reached for pen and paper. Perhaps it is simply a good example of how good the propaganda of the time was – and of how naïve I still was at the time.

Yet I am not completely convinced that “Freedom Song” can be written out as a baldly propagandised piece. There is the faintest ripple of irony in the poem suggesting that “Freedom Song” also marks a stirring in Lotter’s mind, a recognition that perhaps the methodologies of the Rhodesian soldiers from “Ambush Party”, “Battlefield” and “Minefield” and the guerrillas cast as “Terrorists” are not that far apart on any moral spectrum. There is also the faint suggestion that, in a small way at least, Lotter envies the guerrillas’ apparent ability to disregard conventions of war. Certainly the thought crystallises and appears on a few occasions in Lotter’s later war diaries, notably in the diaries of his 1977 camps in the Honde Valley and at Nyanyadzi. Lotter’s next camp, was a call up that took him to the Kariba area in January and February of 1976, and revealed a man who was grappling with pressing personal problems and considering unusual solutions.

For some time, Lotter had been unsettled in his job at More Wear, and this led him to question the wisdom of accountancy as a career. He had chosen to study towards a Chartered Institute of Secretaries qualification, and whilst he was certainly capable of pursuing the course and had an aptitude for business, the career choice seemed routine, mundane in nature and unlikely to fuel Lotter’s desires for intellectual development. It was not a sudden crisis either. On the Operation Inlet camp, Lotter had mused:

I would like to get my degree in English or Philosophy or some related major. In that direction lies my interest and in that direction I must go. Accountancy was a false start.¹¹

This Kariba camp was a relatively quiet one, militarily speaking. Kariba itself is a resort town, and this relaxed atmosphere furnished Lotter with ample time to mull over his situation and weigh his options. He seemed, however, to be seduced by a sense of adventure that was fed by a perception that the Rhodesian situation was escalating, and likely to prove regionally and possibly globally, historic. He reasoned, quite logically under the circumstances, that if he remained committed to Rhodesia, then his (enforced) continued service in the military would turn him into a participant

¹¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Inlet 2" 8 Sept. 1975. MS. 4/66.

in a larger drama. This was a situation that he intended to exploit, for it gelled with his demeanour and outlook on life. He recorded on 6 February 1976:

I become more convinced of the imminence of a major war in Africa in which Rhodesia shall be involved and therefore, matters military must become a larger interest of mine and, hopefully, advancement in the army will be mine before the shit hits the fan... Pacifism was useless in war time. Once the thing started, you had to win it as Nelson or Wellington [sic] and then, if you chose, begin all over again as Jesus Christ. Ergo everybody must get into the fight.¹²

This growing sense of excitement, the sense that he was part of history-making, was fed by his belief in the interconnectedness of events, and that people can choose to be actors or passive spectators in life's drama. Coupled with mounting dissatisfaction with his civilian employment, this prompted one of the strangest episodes in Lotter's life thus far. This man, who had held the military at arm's length in basic training, the same man who relished his position as an outsider, the man who chose not to follow the herd, who did not share the RF's politics, began to consider enlistment as a regular soldier in the Rhodesian Army. Furthermore, he was not content to be a basic infantryman, for he seriously weighed the possibility of joining the Selous Scouts, Rhodesia's most glamorous and notorious elite force.

¹² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Kariba" 6 Feb. 1976. MS. 21/29.



Fig. 1. Selous Scouts insignia (Source: www.theselousscouts.com/insignia.php).

It is understandable why Lotter felt drawn to the Scouts. The unit had a fearsome reputation, its members were involved in high-risk actions and it was peopled with unconventional characters – the sorts of outsiders, risk-takers, and independent minded people Lotter identified with. The selection process was legendary, with Ron Reid-Daly, the officer commanding the unit stating that (149):

A special force soldier has to be a certain very special type of man... In his profile it is necessary to look for intelligence, fortitude (“guts” potential), loyalty, dedication, a deep sense of professionalism, maturity, responsibility and self-discipline. The ideal age was 24 to 32 years.

Lotter believed he had the requisite character and the determination it took. What is clear is that Lotter was not looking for cheap glory. The diary entry of 12 February 1976 records an intense period during which he tried to crystallise his thoughts about applying for SS selection. At the end of a carefully tabulated deconstruction of all his options, Lotter notes:

Of all the possibilities [10th Battalion RR, Rhodesian Light Infantry, Special Air Service and Selous Scouts] this [SS] is the hardest to attain and most enticing... the unit appeals to me tremendously because of the work it does

and the idea of living off a TF SS wage drew my attention immediately. The decision is not motivated by blind patriotism, however.¹³

Lotter rationalises that successful selection to the Selous Scouts territorial force would satisfy his need for a physical challenge, give him the war experience his sense of history making craved, and enable him to pay his bills, begin building a capital base, and also devote about six months a year to pursue his own, private interests that were leaning towards writing, and an ever expanding personal reading programme. Perhaps idealistic and naïve, he continued to seek an alternative to the prison of his collar and necktie job.

Lotter recorded the emotions and swirling thoughts of these days in "The Osprey Calls". The piece is inward looking and has never been published, probably because it is too interwoven with the diary to stand on its own. Substantial fragments exist in manuscript form in the diary entry of 11 February 1976, suggesting that Lotter was particularly taken with his plan's potential. The poem is more interesting, technically efficient and vastly more convincing than "Freedom Song":

A stark osprey leaps from
A cap badge
And attacks a secretary bird.

First the one then the other
Threatens to swallow its foe.

Inward continues the battle.

It tears me apart.

I wish it was over.

The future swells

¹³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Kariba" 7 Feb. 1976. MS. 24/29.

And clouds
 About me. Rows of neatly-printed figures
 Swirl and form. Manoeuvring to defend
 Their place in me.

Further away murmurs a cadence of marching feet
 Which strengthens and fades
 Strengthens and fades
 Grows and threatens the ledger and pen
 And grows again.

The first stanza is heavily coded. The “osprey” is a direct reference to the badge of the Selous Scouts and the “attack” on the “secretary bird” references the conflict between Lotter’s dream of joining the Selous Scouts and his studies towards the CIS qualification. Though the contest seems an uneven one, it is noteworthy that the raptor does not emerge victorious. The lines “First the one then the other / Threatens to swallow its foe” aptly convey the battle between two competing ideals in Lotter’s mind, and the contest continues throughout the poem. What is clear from the diary is that Lotter’s interest in the Selous Scouts is not motivated by patriotism or a particular desire to be plunged into hot action. His greatest motivation was to prove himself up to the gruelling selection process – a process that drew as much on a man’s mental resources as his physical strength and stamina. This was the sort of spirit or character typology that had accreted around the Pioneer myths, and perhaps Lotter saw this as an opportunity to set himself apart by passing the selection test. Indeed, considering the impact that the incident in the minefield had on him, it is highly improbable that Lotter lusted after action and violence.

Rather, his motivations seem more individualistic, perhaps even self-serving. As we saw in his basic training, from the moment he sees himself committed to the war effort, he tries to position himself so that the arbitrary and escalating demands of military call up do not divert or overwhelm his individual interests and passions. Lotter’s character is such that he resists any sense of authoritarian control over his life, and the desire to be the master of his own fate probably drove his thinking in the moment. He does not easily resolve this dilemma and the poem’s last two lines

suggest that he would not make a quick decision, or take one without considering all the possible opportunities. Whether Lotter saw the Selous Scouts as the ultimate professional soldiers (and thus less likely to blunder or make morally questionable combat decisions as occurred in the ambush / minefield incident noted previously) is intriguing but impossible to determine with any degree of satisfaction.

One intriguing intrusion in the diary was that he was considered writing a novel. On 19 February, he declared that “I want to collect these army wartime anecdotes before they fade in my memory.”¹⁴ The anecdotes to which he refers are probably derived from his own experiences rather than those of others he may have come across. A day later, he sketched out two possible ideas that might be the basis for a war novel. He writes, in his typically taciturn fashion: “Ideas for 2 novels: (1) About Rhod. Army (2) About WWII – basically from a soldier’s point of view”¹⁵. Beyond these very basic thoughts, Lotter did nothing more about developing these ideas. Frustratingly, the diary ends suddenly at this point, and there is no further detail about his plans either with regard to his novel writing or to join the Selous Scouts. Both appear to have been still born, and Lotter resolved his girlfriend problems so satisfactorily that within a year, he married Avril Bushell. One final note is that in my early discussions with Lotter, he made it clear to me that he discovered early in his career that his forte was poetry writing:¹⁶

what really got me started as a poet, though, was my need to share my war experiences with someone rather than to keep it [sic] all bottled up inside me until I exploded. In the Army, the attitude was “be a man; real soldiers don’t cry or show emotion”. Family members brushed me off since no-one wanted to face the reality of what was happening out there in the bush. So, rather than crack, I spoke to a piece of paper. Subsequent to the war’s end in 1980, the habit of writing has remained. I would be lost without it.

The Kariba episode illustrates the constant state of flux Lotter existed in. The fortunes of the Rhodesian army, the escalation of the war, the foolishly impractical

¹⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Kariba" 19 Feb. 1976. MS. 27/29.

¹⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Kariba" 19 Feb. 1976. MS. 27/29.

¹⁶ Lotter, Chas. "Re: Interview." Message to Mike Hagemann. 20 October 2004. E-mail.

political situation, his personal circumstances, all are in constant change. Lotter's output in the period was limited, but shows great range in thematic treatment. Pieces as intense and challenging as the "Ambush party", "Battlefield" and "Minefield" trilogy contrast with the strangely drawn "Freedom Song" and the circumspect and coded construction of "Osprey Calls". Collectively, they indicate a mental state that would oscillate disharmoniously with the increasing demands that the war would place on him. A part of him craved challenge and adventure, and he would look beyond the youthful mainstream interests of alcohol, sports and women. But his character, underwritten by a curious mix of independence of thought, a keen sense of his connection to history and human development, a deep affinity with wilderness regions and personal codes rooted in "traditional values" such as honour, personal integrity and a solid belief in the binary absolutes of right and wrong actions, would prevail. Lotter would follow an uncharted, turbulent course into full-blown participation in a war that would utterly rearrange his circumstances, and permanently rewrite his ethical and political positions. The year that followed, 1977, would throw an unrelenting series of tests Lotter's way. He would complete two action-filled camps, and though he wrote no poetry that year, he would fill his diaries with ideas he would revisit along the path he followed to become the most prolific soldier-poet of the Rhodesian war.

Chapter Six: Into the Storm: 1977-1978

Boyd “Bible” Swan: “Wait until you see it.”

Norman “Machine” Ellison: “See what?”

Boyd “Bible” Swan: “What a man can do to another man.” (lines from the 2014 WW II war movie : *Fury*).

My epigraph comes from the 2014 movie epic *Fury*. In this pivotal scene, the character Norman Ellison, a young army clerk with no experience of war, is hurriedly drafted to replace a member of a Sherman tank crew who has been killed. The subplot explores his initially fraught integration into the tightly knit veteran crew and his transformation into a vengeful and ruthlessly efficient soldier. The lines are prophetic for the movie’s character and plot roughly parallel the experience Lotter would have in his own war. In 1977, Lotter began to find his feet as a war poet even if the year began with something of a poetic drought. He had shrugged off the previous year’s career doubts and private uncertainties regarding his relationship with Avril Bushell, and the pair married in the Salisbury Presbyterian church on 29 January. The new Mrs Lotter did not get to see much of her husband in that first year of marriage as Lotter found himself engaged in a frenetic cycle of call up camps. The frequency of these rotations, spanning some 22 weeks in the year, well illustrates how the military pressure was mounting on Rhodesia, and how this pressure began to impact on most families.

Lotter’s first camp of the year saw him based at Honde, and spanned the period 18 March to 8 May, 1977. His second camp took him to Nyanyadzi from 23 June to 1 August, and from 25 September to 25 November he was posted to Chipinga. All of these tours took Lotter to the eastern border region of Rhodesia, and he was active in areas that were thoroughly infiltrated by ZANLA guerrillas and considered “hot” operational areas. A feature emerges in an examination of Lotter’s 1977 output. He kept extensive and detailed diaries on each of the camps, but there is a distinct time lag between the diaries and his poetic responses. I asked Lotter to consider why this was so and he ventured in an email on 17 February 2016: “If I am to speculate then I would note that it was the year I got married. Maybe I was in luv [sic]. Seriously,

marriage is a major sea-change in one's life."¹ The truth, I suspect, is more likely an indication of the cognitive dissonances and disruptions that Lotter experienced as he was confronted by the reality of the war's escalation. This state is revealed in the extent and thematic concerns of the 1977 diaries.

In his previous war diaries, Lotter had noted the disjuncture between white civilian perceptions of the war and the military reality facing Rhodesia. Not all men in the military served as front line troops, therefore not all civilians had an accurate idea of the scale of Rhodesia's military engagements. He had been alarmed and shocked out of complacency, and his experiences in the army in 1977 would underscore and increase this sense of disruption and cast him into a deeply pensive mode that would last for much of the year. If his poetry output stuttered and lagged, the diaries certainly did not, and in those pages Lotter assiduously combined factual detail with searching and troubling questions about the course of the war, his involvement in it, the likely outcomes, and future consequences.

The first pages of the Honde diary reveal a Lotter whose attitude to the army and Rhodesia's prosecution of the war would face a hard test. The camp did not start well. Married for just a few weeks, he had been snatched away from Avril at very short notice, and he rails bitterly against the insensitivity of military bureaucracy: "2 DAYS NOTICE! SHIT. Not looking forward to it this time as I have previously. Leaving a wife behind makes a hell of a difference."² To add insult to injury, he faced a possible charge for avoiding call up, but as one would expect from a man who has never been overawed by military authority, he shrugged this off. What alarms him is something else. He carefully notes that "never before have I heard a TF [part-time soldier] say outright we could lose this war [and] kit issued is not up to standard – it's getting old and battered and no new stuff is appearing."³ Lotter's observation runs counter to the Rhodesian propaganda that trumpeted the army as the finest counter insurgency force in the world and equipped with weapons superior to those available to ZANLA and ZIPRA. Tellingly, too, Lotter noted in the diary for 21 March that 23 of the 80 men called up failed to report. He speculates that the cause was white

¹ Lotter, Chas. "Re:Stuff." Message to Mike Hagemann. Date 17 February 2016. E-mail.

² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Honde 1" 19 Mar. 1977. MS. 2/64.

³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Honde 1" 19 Mar. 1977. MS. 3/64.

emigration, but his subtext was that white morale was flagging and conscription avoidance was spreading. Lotter was well aware that the gap between the propaganda and the truth was stretching alarmingly. As the camp continued, he faced ever more challenges, and the diaries reveal a man grappling with strongly contesting thoughts and emotions.

On 24 March, Lotter made a telling political comment. The context is a diary entry that begins with his expression of opposition to an increased call up cycle that would effectively put him in the army for six months of every year. After alluding to black nationalist inflexibility, he moves onto a carefully constructed criticism of the racist positions many RF members held to, positions he believed were unacceptable and serious obstacles to political progress:

All this I would have been willing to do if there was an attainable end result. There is not. The war may not be won without massive Western aid of men and materiel. Furthermore it cannot be won without a political solution being thrashed out. This is impossible with the present protagonists and with the mentality of the rank and file RF. There are **still** TF who blithely talk of hote slaying and with that mentality, could never accept an effort to thrash out a viable multiracial society. Why risk my life for nothing?⁴

Lotter's diary compounded this sense of intractable inner conflict in two consecutive diary paragraphs. He comments that "[t]he officers are getting young! I have seen, in the last 2 days, a 1st Lieut and a major who cannot be over 21 and a Lieut Col. Who can't be over 30."⁵ Immediately thereafter he cautions against "being deceived by oneself over the possible success of the war which is impossible barring a *deus ex machina*. However I enjoy soldiering – the actual thing not the spit and polish and loud bark – and I enjoy playing with lethal objects."⁶ An undercurrent of studied concern frames his observation about the youth of the officers, and then there is the brutally frank observation about the likely outcomes of the war, and the admission that he enjoys danger. There is a constant fluidity in Lotter's attitudes to the military

⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Honde 1" 24 Mar. 1977. MS. 10/64.

⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Honde 1" 24 Mar. 1977. MS. 11/64.

⁶ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Honde 1" 24 Mar. 1977. MS. 11/64

and Rhodesia's political situation. He vacillates between decisions to emigrate, because he can see the war is lost, and firm commitments to stay the course. This permeates the diaries, appearing time and again, suggesting ongoing, largely futile attempts to contain the contradictions implicit in the military and political situation in the country.

As hard as this may be for readers to understand, this exemplifies the "sacrifice trap" -- an argument first proposed by the activist Kenneth Boulding (206) to explain why nations, groups and individuals remain committed to causes that they know are lost. It is certainly true of Lotter, and I suggest that his emotional and physical investment in Rhodesia and the war was so deep and so entangled that he could not clarify his position and set a definitive course of action. Common sense might prompt emigration, but the adrenaline-fuelled lure of combat violence and a mighty sense of pride at being deeply involved in something of historical significance would intoxicate him and override any rational thought. He acknowledges and confronts this dilemma repeatedly, and it is a recurring trope in his work. The complexities inherent in Lotter's character conspired to make him something of a "bittereinder"⁷ too. An insight into Lotter's character is revealed in his relationship with the former Waffen-SS soldier, Arvic, of whose death from cancer Lotter learned on 26 March whilst on this camp.

Arvic was some years older than Lotter, and was an employee at More Wear Industries when Lotter took up his post with the firm. He had been a member of the Waffen-SS, the military wing of the Nazi party. Significantly, many Waffen-SS survivors felt doubly othered after the German defeat in WWII. At the Nuremberg trials, their organisation was declared a criminal group and they were treated differently to the regular German armed forces. It was a fact that galled Arvic and followed him for the rest of his life. Lotter noted as much in an email to me on 11 September, 2016:⁸

⁷ The term "bittereinder" refers to Boer forces who continued with guerrilla action against the British to the "bitter end" – the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging on 31 May, 1902.

⁸ Lotter, Chas. "Re:Arvic." Message to Mike Hagemann. Date 11 September 2016. E-mail.

He [Arvic] was very bitter about the whole thing.

He would have a couple of drinks and start lecturing me about how people did not want to understand there was the SS, who were concentration guards and genocide squads, and then there was the Waffen-SS who were the FIGHTING men. He would say that the Waffen-SS were the best soldiers that the world has ever seen and that they could roll up any other unit from any other army. (In this he had some justification. I have read that Waffen-SS were regarded as the best soldiers of their time and that the only unit which could even come close to matching them was the British Guards.)

He firmly maintained that, the moment Germany surrendered, the Waffen-SS were marked men. If caught, they were lucky to make it to Nuremberg. If they made it to Nuremberg, they did not come out alive. He was of the opinion that they were marked men – simply because the Allies said so, the facts were irrelevant.

I remember him telling me once how he went back to Europe and stood on one side of a river. On the other was Estonia – his homeland – and how it saddened him that he could never cross that river since he would be arrested on sight.

Despite their age difference, the two men soon developed a deep and mutually enriching relationship. Lotter acknowledges that he does not form friendships easily, and is quite happy with his own company, but he was powerfully drawn to this similar outsider: this European exile from a defeated, disgraced army. It appears that Lotter's individualistic approach to life and the issues of the day found traction with Arvic. It is highly unlikely that Lotter's friendship with Arvic included a sharing of Nazi sympathies as Lotter grew up in a household that despised Nazism. Lotter's father, as we recall, had volunteered to fight in North Africa in WWII against the German forces. It certainly helped, though, to consider that Arvic was responsible for introducing Lotter to Avril Bushell! Arvic's death hit Lotter hard and prompted a simple poem, "Farewell Arvic" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 67), which he composed on 26 March, 1977:

Stunned

I sat in a ruined house
 Alone. My mates had seen the message
 Which told me Arvic died.

I wrapped my grief around me
 And wept, quietly, where none could see.

The day dragged away
 Night crept in. An unknown hand
 Reached around the empty door frame
 Handed me a brandy - and withdrew.
 I drank my private toast
 As the cookfires sparkled in the dark
 And the stars
 Looked through the broken roof
 In cold, bright sympathy.



He was a friend, an old man, a soldier
 Not here. He lost a war
 In Europe, long ago
 But
 Thus shall I remember him
 No empty glasses
 Turned
 In a regimental mess. Instead
 An old tin mug
 Of rotgut fire. Emptied
 By a younger soldier
 In yet another war.

The poem begins obviously enough, with Lotter capturing the sting of grief that floods his world, but is not felt by his comrades who cannot penetrate the meniscus

of grief that envelops him. Tellingly, and in keeping with the machismo of military culture, Lotter seeks out privacy, “where none could see”. The third stanza introduces, albeit briefly, a fleeting moment of comradely empathy as “An unknown hand / Reached around the empty door frame”, but thereafter Lotter suggests his grief is so acute, so privately expressed, that only the mute, impossibly distant stars seem to know or care. It is a haunting portrayal of loss that also comments obliquely on the incapacity of men (in general and soldiers specifically) to demonstrate the ineffable pain of grief. The brooding sense of isolation and nuanced loss (personal, reputational and finally, military) translates, in the final stanza, into a poignant and tightly written private memorialisation. The poem is underwritten by the suggestion that the world did not care for Arvic, despised his cause and shunned him. The ultimate outsider, Arvic’s passing was not marked by pomp and military custom. Instead, the poet creates his own culture of the moment and the “old tin mug / Of rotgut fire” translates into an apt salute. The dramatic irony of Lotter assuming Arvic’s pariah position would only surface in his poetry after the war was over. Lotter had little time or inclination to become maudlin on this camp. For the duration of this commitment, he was heavily involved in follow-up operations.

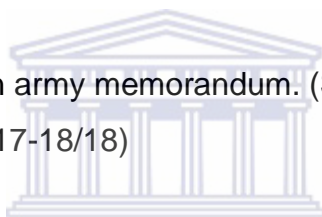
He appears to have enjoyed the physical nature of the work and relished the sometimes dangerous aspects of soldiering, but a series of incidents towards the end of his Honde camp gave him cause for concern and set him examining, again, the morality of Rhodesia’s fight and his own ethical positions. Throughout this camp, Lotter had noted a change in military tactics. No longer were the soldiers engaged in aimless sweeps of the countryside or delayed reactions to old information. Instead, they were deployed on aggressively specific, outcomes-oriented tasks such as ambush laying, propaganda pamphlet drops and hut burning. The army’s rationale behind the burning of huts was punitive. Villagers suspected of having sheltered guerrillas had their huts and possessions torched. For peasant farmers, this was devastating and instantly turned them into refugees, caught between the pincers of the Rhodesian army and the guerrillas. It is impossible to reconcile this tactic with the instructions contained in the Rhodesian army memorandum Lotter salvaged and pasted into his Operation Inlet diary two years previously. The relevant section of this army memorandum is reproduced as Fig. 1. below.

Each S.F. member should carry out his own personal Human Relations programme. (This does not imply that you must not be firm in enforcing laws or regulations, not that you should ever cease to be alert and ready for action). The following are ingredients of such a programme:

- driving in a courteous manner
- acknowledging courtesies from others
- providing roadside assistance when practicable
- displaying decency to older people
- respecting the dignity of a human being
- showing friendliness to mothers and children
- respecting customs and religious practices
- respecting a person's private property
- paying a fair price for goods

Drunkenness, brawling, interference with local women, bullying of children, pilfering, souvenir hunting and any other form of similar behaviour is strictly out. War is not an excuse for brutal and barbaric behaviour.

Fig. 1. Excerpt from Rhodesian army memorandum. (Source: Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Inlet 1" N.D. 1975. MS. 17-18/18)



Lotter recorded his participation in hut burning thus on 28 March 1977:

WESTERN CAPE

The first four houses were vacant and burnt with enthusiasm. The occupied one gave Ray Brink second thoughts – he discovered it is a different story to put match in front of frantic owners. A number of men found this. Others regard it as a job and others enjoy it. I was interested to discover I enjoy firing their huts and herding them round at gunpoint.⁹

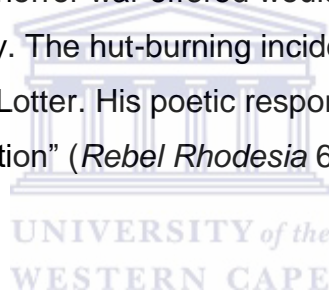
This stark admission is deeply uncomfortable to confront and should be considered an atrocity. I suggest that what needs interrogation is not only the question of an atrocity, but also the difficult questions of deferred and co-opted agency that arise when the anonymous forces of political and military institutions assume control and direct individuals (in this case Rhodesian soldiers) to act out lethal strategies. Certainly what Lotter is describing here speaks to the disruption and ultimate collapse of any "normal" ethical spectrum during war time. Analysing the combat

⁹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Honde 2" 28 Mar. 1977. MS. 11/19.

memoirs of the American soldier-poet, W.D. Erhart, Subarno Chattarjii (22) offers a contextualisation that we shall see applies to Lotter's case, for in Erhart's work there is:

a trajectory from "innocent" patriotism to disillusionment, anger and dissent – a trajectory available in other narratives, such as Ron Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July* – and one which replicates the frustrations and disillusion of First World War writers.

Of course, extraordinary catalysts are required to propel this "trajectory", and certainly exposure to sustained violence and the commission of morally problematic acts (whilst under orders) would be the source. Lotter would follow a similar trajectory and, paralleling Erhart's, it would unfold over an extended period, and only after total immersion in all the horror war offered would he begin the slow process of reclaiming his personal agency. The hut-burning incident(s) however, made a deep and immediate impression on Lotter. His poetic response to that moment emerged, some months later, in "Retribution" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 66), a violently disruptive and profoundly disturbing piece:



We came

From the hills at dawn
 Marking our trail
 In fiery progress. Grim shapes
 Moving from kraal to kraal
 With chaos in our hands.

Fires
 Pinpointed habitation across the valley floor.
 Not a hut was spared.
 An explosion belched
 As a landmine
 Deep-hidden, in a granary, met the flame.
 A radio

Crackled urgently; a booby trap had been found.

People scurried

To rescue possessions.

Livestock scattered, fleeing, with no place to go.

I stood on a rise.

Watching the smoke billow, blot out the sun.

Hell must be like this. Panic, fear

Fire and smoke. Devils

Egging you on.

But I feel no pity.

This war

Has gone on long enough.

“Retribution” has been widely published. The opening is cinematic in its depiction of the soldiers, stripped of personality and humanity who descend as demonic creatures from the hills to deal destruction: “Grim shapes / Moving from kraal to kraal / With chaos in our hands”. The poet speaker adopts a curiously detached narrative position even though, by association, he is part of the section’s actions, and he notes the deeds in sterile, emotionless detail. Even evidence of the villagers’ collaboration with the guerrillas does little to adjust any notional scales of justice. The title, “Retribution”, implies vengeance for some unspecified act against the Rhodesians, but what this act might have been is unclear. I suspect that the title is an oblique attempt to justify a horrific act perpetrated by the soldiers. Indeed, their actions remain troubling and ghastly in their implications. Perhaps the larger shaming frame of the piece is the acknowledgement that “I feel no pity. / This war / Has gone on long enough.” This challenges the reader, and as much as we (who are comfortably removed from the scene of action) are appalled by the fate that befell these villagers, questions arise about the larger forces at work in a militarised society that conspire to turn ordinary men into monsters, and compel them to become the creators of their own and others’ trauma narratives. A further diary entry confirms how this process of mores subversion would infiltrate Lotter’s experiences.

He records on Friday 29 April 1977 the story of the (black) RAR Sergeant-Major who administered a “vaginal beating” to a peasant woman suspected of sleeping with guerrillas: “[the RSM] cut a stick, had two men hold her legs open and beat the shit out of her cunt until she talked.”¹⁰ Lotter did not personally witness or participate in this atrocity, but he heard about it and accepted it as more than likely true.

Significantly, he records the incident with journalistic precision but avoids expressing any opinion on the incident. I am inclined to think that the report and its context met with Lotter’s tacit approval at the time. Paradoxically, just days later, he is deeply critical of the pamphlet drops he was involved in. On 1 May 1977, he writes that “I still feel this is wrong. You cannot hand out leaflets saying terror and death is the way of the ter [sic], burn huts at the same time and maintain credibility.”¹¹ The obvious contradictions between condoning vaginal beatings to gather information and being disturbed by hut-burning are evidence of Lotter’s unstable and contradictory moral outlook. What is happening here I suspect, is a contest between Lotter’s desire to see the war successfully resolved in Rhodesia’s favour and a growing dis-ease with the army’s methodologies in this fight. The net effect, of course, is the steady erosion of Lotter’s once clearly conceived ethical positions and his ebbing confidence in the Rhodesian cause. His diaries for the remainder of the Honde camp further suggest that his ethical boundaries were constantly changing, and on the subject of violence and bloodshed his views shift, mutate and swing so much that by mid-1977, he had lost the ability and / or will to calibrate his moral compass. It is a feature that infiltrates the poetry he would write later that year and well beyond 1978.

Barely 10 weeks after completing his Honde commitment, Lotter found himself back on military duty. This time he was posted to Nyanyadzi, again on the “hot” eastern border. Almost immediately, the tone of the camp was such that Lotter’s waning faith in the Rhodesian army was further diminished. He records being approached by a member of a psychological warfare group who attempted to recruit him: “evidently they too have people ‘taking the gap’ – South and are looking for men”¹² but equipment issues irk him most. He notes that for the first time, the men have access

¹⁰ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Honde 2" 29 Apr. 1977. MS. 13/18.

¹¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Honde 2" 29 Mar. 1977. MS. 14/19.

¹² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 26 Jun. 1977. MS. 3/63.

to 106mm recoilless rifles – heavy-duty weapons designed for use against armoured vehicles and fortified structures in conventional warfare settings. What galls Lotter is the lack of ammunition. His diary entry of 26 July 1977 is scathing:

The 106's are a laugh. There are 2 rounds for 2 guns here. "Don't worry, there are more available if necessary. We can fly them in in ½ an hour". Bullshit! What the hell is the use of the things except as shiny toys and talking points?¹³

On 27 June he observes that during "this camp and last that SF (security forces) are having difficulties getting to grips with the ter."¹⁴ The inward reflection takes on an angry tone; in a long entry on 28 June, he contemplates the equipment unserviceability issues he and the others face. A day later, he extends his observations to the vehicles available:

[these] fucked out vehicles seem to be a major problem for the 10th. Is it just the 10th or the whole army? My rifle is giving trouble – not working when the action is performed forcefully. 2nd camp now I have had a bad weapon. The Company has been in the field 10 days and one vehicle has packed up completely. The equipment is getting old and worn.¹⁵

Though he does not state so explicitly, Lotter must have been increasingly concerned that he (and others) were being sent into harm's way with inferior equipment. The observation is an unconsciously ironic assessment of the political situation in Rhodesia where the RF was approaching the situation in a confused state, unable to assess the gravity of the condition and offer anything more than piecemeal reform and token changes. Like the 106 mm recoilless rifles, RF policy announcements and concessions to change appeared large and potent, but could not deliver anything more than a false sense of security or stop the advance. Lotter's dissatisfaction with the army, the war's course and the Rhodesian political situation would openly emerge on this camp as his morale plunged. Equipment issues aside,

¹³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 26 Jun. 1977. MS. 4/63.

¹⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 27 Jun. 1977. MS. 3/63.

¹⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 29 Jun. 1977. MS. 9/63.

Lotter the loner found that his comrades (drawn from a cross-section of white society) were mostly irksome, dim and unsavoury characters. He writes deprecatingly of them on 1 July 1977:

[I] feel as though I am surrounded by ruffians, cutthroats and scallywags. With the new way of operating, many are simply staying black [covered in camouflage face and body cream], or not shaving or not bathing or all three.¹⁶

Lotter is no class-conscious prude or snob, so his comment was less a complaint about scruffiness and more an oblique observation that the war was removing any veneer of probity that may have once been claimed by the Rhodesians and applied to their cause. As the camp progressed, Lotter retreated further into the sanctuary of his diary, and its pages offer an intriguing dissection of the Rhodesian army and military culture that stands in diametric opposition to the propagandist pictures at the time of the chipper, brave and resourceful Rhodesian troops on the ground: Lotter notes, on 5 July 1977, that

The Major evidently addressed the company on mobilization and pointed out he had the power to shoot a troopie. Stated he will have no disobedience such as Courtney-Bishop last camp who threw down his MAG [machine gun] and refused to walk further. If it has reached the stage where he found it necessary to use those strong words, it has indeed gone far.¹⁷

This sort of threat has echoes of the legalism that infected British military culture in WWI, and hardly seems appropriate for the mid to late 20th century. Lotter's sullen silence on the matter suggests that he is not impressed by the threat, and that it did nothing to adjust his perception that Rhodesia was on its way to losing the war. Another attempt by military authorities at heavy-handed propagandising of the troops attracts, in equal measures, Lotter's derision at the crassness of military authority and his utter consternation at how easily cowed his fellow troops (all adult men, not gullible teenagers) proved in the face of an insulting absurdity:

¹⁶ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 1 Jul. 1977. MS. 15/63.

¹⁷ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 5 Jul. 1977. MS. 22/63.

Also handed out at Battlecamp were song sheets; “Whistling troopie”, “Rhodesians never die” and “We are the shumba drinkers”. Troops had to sing these whenever they marched. Natural reaction was ‘SHIT’ and most threw their sheets away.¹⁸

Lotter internalised these dilemmas mostly, but on 17 July 1977, he self-diagnosed a state of mind that clinicians might regard as evidence of depression and a precursor of PTSD: “The blackness is still with me. As per usual, I am drinking far more than I usually do. I have reached my ‘saturation point’ as far as the army is concerned.”¹⁹ This period of service coincided with Ian Smith’s public broadcast about movement towards the so-called “internal settlement”. Lotter captures the moment in this dry prose:

Several of us listened to Smith’s broadcast with half an ear expecting the usual political bullshit and were startled up when he announced the general election and internal settlement with abolition of racial discrimination as a platform. It ignited considerable argument, most of which tended to the belief that he would lose some parliamentary support and hasten the end of law and order in Rhodesia.²⁰

White Rhodesians had, by this time, become somewhat inured to political drama. UDI was already a decade old and there had been any number of opportunities for a political settlement, a return to constitutional legality, the ending of economic sanctions and the war. Yet all had seemed, somehow, to wither and fail to bear fruit, so Smith’s latest declarations did little to change perceptions. It would be disingenuous of me to claim that white Rhodesians were oblivious to or ignorant of politics, but as colonists they were, by nature, conservative in outlook and not inclined to consider views and positions that might ultimately threaten their privileges and the status quo. Naturally, the political situation was a concern at the time, but more pressing issues than political uncertainty were influencing them. Petrol rationing, shortages of basic consumer goods, constant danger, the inconvenience

¹⁸ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 5 Jul. 1977. MS. 22/63.

¹⁹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 17 Jul. 1977. MS. 38/63.

²⁰ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 18 Jul. 1977. MS. 40/63.

of call ups and the militarization of civilian society posed more of a threat than any radical political change. Lotter assessed the mood accurately in his diary entry on 19 July 1977 when he followed his comments on Smith's speech with this note:

In a way, government is in a cleft stick. They must have men in the army at six week intervals to maintain security. However the Army at such regular intervals acts as an emigration catalyst. One is privy to information in the army which is not available to civvies and the frequent exposure to Army hardship and bullshit produces a dissatisfied animal who just wants out.²¹

This is an observation echoed by analyst Barbara Walter (126), who notes that in 1977 "[w]hite emigration from Rhodesia rose to fifteen hundred a month... Call ups for military service affected almost all white males and hurt an already beleaguered business community." To put this in perspective, this figure suggests that in 1977 alone, around 5 per cent of whites left the country. The rate accelerated in the years to come. The figure was likely much higher as many did not officially emigrate, they simply never returned from trips outside the country. Indeed, so serious was this drain of white manpower that Josiah Brownwell (72) notes the bizarre fact that in 1976, the Rhodesian Minister of Immigration (Elias Broomberg) had his department send a letter to every would-be emigrant asking them, candidly, why they were leaving the country and what the government might do to induce them to stay. That and other political developments aside, Lotter's remaining time at Nyanyadzi would prove hideous.

A few days before demobilisation, Lotter was peripherally involved in a "blue on blue" friendly fire incident. He was not at the scene of the action, but gave instructions via radio to those attending to the two casualties. The casualties were evacuated after a difficult night time extraction, but the news came later that one of the soldiers had died. The death of someone in the group, made doubly unbearable by the knowledge that the casualties were the result of the soldiers' own errors and not enemy action, cast a pall over the few dozen men who had been on this camp

²¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 19 Jul. 1977. MS. 42/63.

together for the past few weeks, with Lotter summing up the mood of the moment thus:

We sat under a cloud for a few minutes. Even I, who makes a point of not allowing strangers' troubles to bite me, was affected. It is, I feel sure, the drumming home of the fact that you could be killed tomorrow. At such a moment a man contemplates his own death for a moment. But then Terry said "but life goes on" – and we changed the subject. One cannot dwell on it.²²

Lotter's determination to ring-fence his emotions and place distance between himself and his army comrades is not an unusual or callous singularity. Sean Longden (35) notes the phenomenon is a universal means of shielding oneself from trauma that occurs in the chaos and tragedy of battle. In Lotter's case, it was not a wholly effective strategy and as he witnessed more and more horror, the effects would begin to mount. He may well have been glad to leave the Nyanyadzi camp, but just a few weeks later, he was called up for service in Chipinga, again on the eastern border and an area that was "hot" with guerrilla activity. This camp, too, would have a massive impact on him.



Lotter's Chipinga rotation began on 25 September 1977, with a short period of refresher medical training. He would need it. On 29 September, 1977, he was part of a reaction unit sent to a scene where a white infant had been murdered by guerrillas. It was a particularly savage attack, made all the more horrible by the fact that the girl's parents witnessed it. Lotter's diary deals with the incident in detail, and he is struck by the ghastly truth about how war has changed peoples' characters and stitched a terrible pattern into the psyches of the combatants:

This incident highlights how the war has changed. In the Viljoen murders [first "white" civilian casualties – 17 May 1966] the gunfire which killed the parents woke the child. The ters took it out of its cot and comforted it. Since then the war has become more brutal.²³

²² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Nyanyadzi" 21 Jul. 1977. MS. 44/63.

²³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Chipinga 1" 29 Sep. 1977. MS. 7/42.

Lotter's observations are surprisingly neutral (considering the larger context), and there appears to be a subtle shift towards a deeper level of analysis in his Chipinga diaries. He notes, for example, on 2 October:

Have conducted my 1st interrogation on hotes [pejorative Rhodesian slang for black people] stopped in our road block. Pleased to find that I do not get a thrill out of it but neither does it worry one. Only feelings a bit of sympathy for the young teenagers. But ters are anything down to 12 years old.²⁴

The Chipinga diaries thus appear to become a personal site of interrogation and with a strategist's eye, Lotter remarks (on 12 October) the effect the war is having on white society and the Rhodesian economy:

Listening to conversations one becomes aware of the growing percentage of TF who are unemployed. They have no job to go back to in their six weeks out either because they cannot find one or because they prefer living off the Army. I feel the first category is the majority... I fear the cracks in the economy are now becoming too large to conceal. The economic, never mind political end is near.²⁵

Lotter spots the inconsistencies in the propaganda fed to the Rhodesian public and easily concludes that the war is not going as well as the military claims it to be. In a lengthy entry on 18 October, he reflects on the army deferment rate [men seeking exemption from a particular period of call up] topping 50 per cent, and he even broaches a military taboo by suggesting that the Rhodesian army is losing in contacts with the guerrillas:

General pattern of contacts all over Rhodesia the same as I commented on here. We are failing to get to grips with them and when we do it is often SF who suffer minor casualties. The ter is definitely becoming better trained but I

²⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Chipinga 1" 2 Oct.1977. MS. 7/42.

²⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Chipinga 1" 12 Oct.1977. MS. 23/42.

wonder if the growing lack of enthusiasm by TF is a factor. "Why get killed – the war's lost!"²⁶

Lotter adds an important and lengthy review that dissects the political situation, army strategy and military thinking. The entry, dated 21 October, spans a number of diary pages and demonstrates his ability to penetrate the propaganda and draw his own conclusions about the deteriorating military situation. Some of the points he raises are detailed below. His original entries are numbered, and I have omitted those of little significance to this discussion. My own comments are appended to each entry in italics parentheses.

1. No national strategy because situation changing all the time and Smith forced by circumstances to play his hand close to his chest. This was offered as an explanation. I regard it as a condemnation (*of Smith's political acumen and / or competency*).
2. Because there is no national strategy it is impossible to have an operational strategy. A terrible situation for an army to be in. (*I read this as Lotter's oblique assessment that Rhodesia is well on its way to defeat*).
5. An admission that SF are having a problem getting to grip[s] with the ters because the ter has the support of the people. (*This is a tacit admission that the Rhodesian political struggle has failed*).
6. A surprising statement that Euro (white) farmers are not cooperating wholeheartedly with SF. (*This coded comment suggests that cases were emerging of white farmers sheltering or even cooperating with guerrillas forces – certainly it suggests that whites were not as unified in their support of the Rhodesian war effort*).²⁷

²⁶ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Chipinga 1" 18 Oct.1977. MS. 30/42

²⁷ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Chipinga 1" 21 Oct.1977. MS. 34-35/42.

The most damning point he raises is his seventh (of ten in total), in which he introduces the spectre of Rhodesian security force atrocities

7. SF leaders were understandably reluctant to give statements [to any official Rhodesian military commission investigating SF atrocities] which could hang them at a later date. (*The entry counters the Rhodesian myths of the war that exclude any suggestion of Rhodesian dirty tricks or atrocities*).

This analysis would take on new meaning a few days later when he was involved in a contact in which he knows he killed someone.

The sequence of events of 27 October, 1977, have never surfaced in any of Lotter's poems though the implications have, as this study will show. The action was precipitated by a helicopter gunship and fire was traded with a number of guerrillas. Typically, the clash occurred at short range in the bush and Lotter fired into bundles of clothing (persons) concealed in the undergrowth. He recorded the incident in minute detail later that day in the diary:

We then formed line abreast and swept into the camp. Had not gone 20 yards when someone spotted a figure lying under some bushes. He opened up. We all opened up. I fired 6 shots, another bloke fired 15, so not less than (8x6) 48 and up to (8x15) 120 rounds were fired at the target. Three nannies [black women]. Ter screws had taken cover and hoped to be missed. Thoroughly dead... After I fired my first rounds at the clothes my apprehension vanished and I began to enjoy the scene. When the dead ter was culled the rounds made his body actually jump. When we culled the nannies they jumped and bounced as well. Fascinating to see a tracer strike home and the red fire burning in the body.²⁸

The diary entry makes for unpleasant and gory reading but the subtexts are interesting and shed light on Lotter's state of mind. Lotter's fascination with the details of the incident and his frank admission that he enjoyed the bloodletting

²⁸ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Chipinga 2" 27 Oct.1977. MS. 2/15.

demand further investigation. Language signs in the entry offer insight into the culture of violence Lotter was acquiring.

The slang term “culled” was in common usage in the Rhodesian forces and underlines the dehumanisation of guerrillas in the collective Rhodesian psyche. Dave Grossman, a former psychology professor at West Point, makes the same argument (92) in *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*:

Even the language of men at war is full of denial of the enormity of what they have done. Most soldiers do not "kill," instead the enemy was knocked over, wasted, greased, taken out, and mopped up. The enemy is hosed, zapped, probed, and fired on. The enemy's humanity is denied, and he becomes a strange beast called a Kraut, Jap, Reb, Yank, dink, slant, or slope. Even the weapons of war receive benign names — Puff the Magic Dragon, Walleye, TOW, Fat Boy, and Thin Man — and the killing weapon of the individual soldier becomes a piece or a hog, and a bullet becomes a round.

Lotter noted a similar phenomenon emerging in the Rhodesian military and kept records in his diaries of such terms throughout his service. It appears that the slang intrigued him, and he made notes probably to keep the meanings and contexts fixed for later use. For example, on 17 September 1978, for example, he noted: “A new phrase: “LONG SWASTIKAS” meaning to run hard and fast. Derives from the outline of a man running with arms pumping.”²⁹ The entry includes a simple comical sketch to preserve the context and perhaps also to underline the gallows humour that appears to surface in soldiers’ speech at the most apparently inappropriate moments, but which function to mediate the grotesque and stabilise the psychic seismology of war. As tempting as it may seem, any attempt to link the cartoon with Lotter holding latent Nazi sympathies is speculative at most. It is my opinion that the image is solid evidence only of the sorts of levels of inappropriateness that drive so many examples of black humour. He is, after all, merely recording the moment as part of his interest in a developing Rhodesian army patois and is not the creator of it. The sketch in the bottom right hand corner and diary extract are illustrated below.

²⁹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Bindura-Urungwe 2" 17 Sep. 1978. MS. 30/39

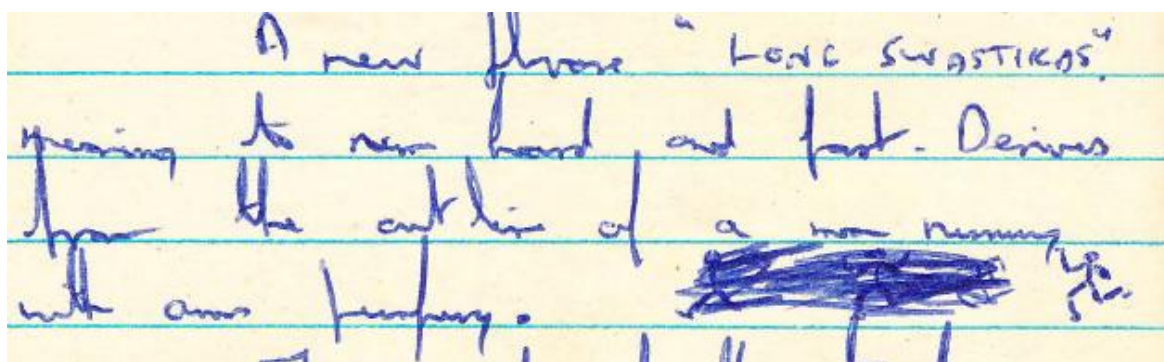


Fig. 1. "Long swastikas" (Source Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Bindura-Urungwe 2")

Lotter's diary entries detail his growing attraction to killing with his philosophical positions hurtling in chaotic motion around an increasingly unstable axis. Lotter had lost any sense of moral absolutism, and was moving into dark emotional and spiritual territory where that which he knew was deadly dangerous and morally fraught, was also steadily reeling him in. Lotter likens the experience to narcotic use, and today it is common to speak of combat addiction in the same broad terms as drug, alcohol, gambling and sex addiction. By the end of 1977, Lotter was probably addicted to war.

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Chris Hedges (3), the war correspondent whose book informed the major thematic concerns of the film *The Hurt Locker*,³⁰ astutely unpacks the concept of combat addiction and proposes that war (regardless of location or the protagonists) creates its own potentially toxic micro culture – one that repels many but one that a few find almost instantly addictive:

I learned early on that war forms its own culture. The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug, one I ingested for many years. It is peddled by myth makers – historians, war correspondents, filmmakers novelists and the state—all of whom endow it with qualities it often does possess: excitement, exoticism, power, chances to rise above our small

³⁰ The plot of *The Hurt Locker* revolves around the character, Sergeant First Class William James who is a leader of a US Army Explosive Ordinance Disposal team. Sgt James relishes in the action and such is his attraction to the nature of the job, that at the end of his tour, he is frustrated and decides to abandon his family and returns to the war and bomb disposal.

stations in life, and a bizarre and fantastic universe that has a grotesque and dark beauty. It dominates culture, distorts memory, corrupts language and infects everything around it, even humor, which becomes preoccupied with the grim perversities of smut and death. Fundamental questions about the meaning, or meaninglessness, of our place on the planet are laid bare when we watch those around us sink to the lowest depths.

Lotter left the Chipinga camp disillusioned with the military and political situation, but so seduced by opportunities to experience violence that he was unable to make the apparently logical decision to emigrate from Rhodesia. In 1978, he wrote the viscerally honest piece, "The Beast Within" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 88). It addresses this dark side that had infected his character. It is a grotesque poem strung together with knots of crude images that snag and tear at the reader's sensibilities. It concurs with Hedges' suggestion that "the capacity for evil that lurks just below the surface within all of us":

It lurks inside us all.
 In some well chained; in others
 On the verge of breaking free.



Explosion! Contact! Attack!

And a visceral, vicious, primeval surge
 Erupts.
 Bring me blood; let me gnaw my fill
 Of broken bones and human marrow.
 Let me out. Your life is tame.
 Let me show you what we can do.
 The moment's ripe, a thought from you
 And I can break my chains.
 Together, we can kill and maim.
 Feast on painful screams and moans.
 Burn, loot, laugh
 At the scurrying figures scattering through the smoke.

Let me free!

I am that part of you

Passed down from the killer ape

I am only chained by your weak-kneed

Civilised ways.

Why do you suppress me so?

When I can help you conquer fear.

Survive

And enjoy the means.

Lotter's suggestion that violence is linked to some kind of beast that inhabits the human psyche is a common enough literary theme. Golding's 1954 novel, *Lord of the Flies*, for example, famously extended the trope to children and destabilised the myth that the very young are somehow innocent and incapable of evil. Lotter's poem is unusual in that the poet speaker is multi-layered. The speaker is the beast, yet the addressee is also the civilized, moral part of the same speaker. The beast invites the civilized part to participate in and enjoy the activities of the beast. In this analysis, the suggestion that this beast lurks in all is similarly not an unusual one and the catalyst for the loosing of "the beast within" is the violence of combat action, so aptly conveyed in the single, explosive line: "Explosion! Contact! Attack!" These disruptors are so potent that they can instantly subvert social mores. There is something demonic and also curiously alluring about this beast's invitation to the "civilized" side of the addressee, for "Together we can kill and maim". In turn this suggests that culpability can be diluted and shared. The powerful thread of temptation runs unchecked in the final stanza and in these lines we see the closest thing to an admission from the poet about the nature of the trade-off he might secure through letting loose his personal beast. Certainly in the diary on 25 November 1977, Lotter admits to something that is so bizarrely and distastefully derived that it demands exploration:

My self-confidence has increased vastly as a result [of the action]. I feel that after that, no-one must mess me around over more mundane matters. I feel, in a sense, liberated from the more mundane reality of day to day routine.³¹

Grossman is an acknowledged authority in the psychology of military violence, so his identification (254) of the psychological determinants and emotional increase that participants in combat action experience make much sense to me:

if the demands from authority and the threatening enemy are intense enough to overcome a soldier's resistance, it is only understandable that he feel some sense of satisfaction. He has hit his target, he has saved his friends, and he has saved his own life. He has resolved the conflict successfully. He won. He is alive!

I suggest, too, that Grossman's observations help us to better comprehend Lotter's strange claims to increased levels of confidence. His emotional state appears to move beyond surviving the moment to become something of a triumphal celebration. In killing the woman, Lotter had loosed the beast and, whether we like it or not, found his Muse. In 1978, he would continue his copious diary keeping, but he equally turned his pen to poetry and would begin the assembly of a sizeable body of war-related poems.

³¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Chipinga 2" 25 Nov.1977. MS. 14/15.

Chapter Seven: Staring through the flames in 1979

“The opportunity for defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself.” (Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*).

1979 was the year in which Rhodesia capitulated. Sanctions, political manoeuvres and the grinding pressures of unwinnable war forced Rhodesia’s leaders to the negotiating table. By the end of that year, an internationally brokered settlement had been signed and a tenuous ceasefire had come into effect. Lotter, the combat-hardened veteran, began the year with grim determination. He had long known the cause to be lost; he had read the signs, noted the collapse and mapped out the march to defeat in his diaries. His own family had abandoned Rhodesia, yet he resisted any thought of following suit and so he continued to fight, drifting through a mental landscape riddled with incongruities. It is a position that seemingly defies logic and is one that Lotter, even today, battles to explain satisfactorily. When pressed, he is fond of applying a Walt Whitman quotation to himself and has referred me to it on several occasions over the years: “Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes).”¹ I suggest, though, a deeper, more satisfying explanation can be found.

Wolfgang Schivelbush writes extensively on the tortured culture of defeat. His work deconstructs the sometimes baffling inconsistencies and bizarre positions that emerge in people who have suffered defeat. His ideas resonate strongly and, I suggest, do much to account for Lotter’s psychic state:

There are two fundamentally different types of defeat: the first results from a decisive battle, from the sudden recognition of one’s own inferiority, which is followed by the loss of will to fight, then flight, dissolution, capitulation and subjugation by the opponent’s armed forces. The second type of defeat involves no loss of the will to fight. The image of battling on to the last man so that the end is not capitulation, but extinction, plays a central role in the

¹ The quotation comes from section 51 of Whitman’s “Song of Myself”.

mythology of many cultures. In this scenario, defeat is seen as the highest form of exaltation (63).

In the diaries, Lotter alludes, on several occasions to Götterdämmerung² and his poem “Casualty Rate” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 92) references Thermopylae. Clearly Lotter had no inclination to give up the fight and he maintained this attitude for his remaining service period. If Lotter’s confidence in the potential positive outcomes of the war had evaporated, the same cannot be said for the status of his art.

Emboldened by his contributions to *Faces of War* and the publication success that book enjoyed, Lotter realized that he was capable of assembling a large collection of poems that would stand as a poetic narrative of a Rhodesian soldier’s war. Thus in 1979, Lotter began fleshing out a manuscript that would eventually settle as *Rebel Rhodesia*, a substantial manuscript of 124 poems with an explanatory prelude and short notes to the various sections. From the prelude (reproduced below) it is obvious that the perceived or intended audience of *Rebel Rhodesia* would be Rhodesian and would have some knowledge of the war and its circumstances. Lotter’s intention with this manuscript was to create a verse record of a Rhodesian soldier’s experience of war, moving from a point of relative innocence to the veteran of sustained, savage conflict. The title evokes the RF-led rebellion of UDI and alerts us to the potentially partisan readership that would most likely be the soldiers in the war, their friends and families. The title encapsulates the secondary intention of the work, a sustained verse engagement with the myth that Rhodesia’s real enemies were not so much the liberation armies, but the western forces (particularly Britain) that ranged against the settler colonial project and were opposed to the maintenance of white Rhodesia.

Lotter would serve three tours of duty in 1979. His writing tempo increased significantly but a curious feature emerges. It is clear that Lotter’s intention to create the collection *Rebel Rhodesia* hovers over many of the pieces, influencing themes and treatments. Reading the poems of 1979 chronologically, Lotter seems to evoke

² Götterdämmerung is similar to a scorched earth philosophy in war. The term is associated with Wagner’s four-cycle musical dramas: *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

PRELUDE

I have tried to capture in this book the feelings and experiences of the ordinary white man who lived through the Rebel Rhodesian Era as a man of military age, who served in the field and who was therefore closely involved in the war.

I make the distinction of being closely involved in the war because there were an unbelievable number who, even in the worst years, either had no idea or did not want to have any idea of what their sons and husbands were involved in. The latter is not an indictment but a comment on a basic fact of human nature. At a high exposure level, a mental barrier is erected against any more of the harsh, ugly truth.

The man-in-the-street was, of course, aided and abetted in this by the lack of hard information and by the soothing propaganda consistently pushed out by the Government.

Time and time again I would return from a call-up and try to give the stay-at-homes some idea of what was going on out there; time and time again I bloodied my nose on a brick wall. People either could not or would not accept that the war was not just something nasty out there in the bush which became vaguely embarrassing when talked about. They could not really accept the slow, steady deterioration of the situation, would not see the ravenous, blood-thirsty monster sniffing round their back doors while they wrapped themselves in a complacent fog of not-knowing and lost themselves nightly in the soothing TV world of make-believe.

I write for them but, most important of all, I write for the common trooper. I saw less of the war than many others who served but I hope he will recognise something of what he went through.

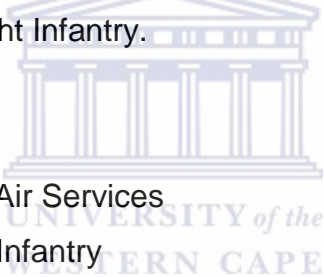
Fig. 1. Prelude to Rebel Rhodesia. (Source: Lotter archive).

his muse to give content to the imagined collection. Yet there is another, darker creative process at work too. The majority of the pieces seem to fit Lotter's design, but a number of the poems that emerge are deeply tortured pieces. In an interview with Lotter on 6 September 2014, he admits that he deliberately sectioned off these

darker, difficult poems and had no intention of including them in *Rebel Rhodesia*, realizing that his potential reading public (white Rhodesians) would likely reject works that undermined the myths they held dear:

But there's a second category of stuff which I left out because I knew it would not go down well with my chosen audience. People with the military experience, ex-soldiers, families of those people, and if I put them in, I don't think the book would have sold.

By way of illustration, three poems "Elite", "Police Reserve" and "Breaking Point" all seem to have their origin in early January, 1979. Atypically, these dates cannot be fixed with absolute accuracy, but Lotter seems to think they date from that time. "Elite" (reproduced below) is a bland, almost jingoist poem that pays homage to the perceived elite units in the Rhodesian army – the Selous Scouts, the Special Air Service and the Rhodesian Light Infantry.



When we meet
 Selous Scouts, Special Air Services
 Or the Rhodesian Light Infantry
 We walk small. Proud of what we have done
 But shadowed by these quiet men,
 Though RLI is not so quiet,
 We are soldiers to the core.
 The true professionals
 Knowing more of war
 Than we ever will.

"Elite" is overly hagiographic and the postured humility of the lines: "The true professionals / Knowing more of war / Than we ever will", do little to satisfy the discerning reader, particularly those who anticipate a reasoned engagement with the war. "Breaking Point" is more satisfying in scope and thematic concerns. The final

lines are grimly ironic but offer an insight into the social impact of the war – the call up age limit advancing absurdly as the war escalated:³

I remember when two years service was all
 You needed to be
 Too old to fight
 Then it was until you were thirty-eight
 Then fifty
 Now sixty
 What next?

“Breaking Point” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 97) ably demonstrates the impossibility of mediating tensions between commitments to military and civilian life:

This double life we lead, takes a double toll.
 I somersault in and out of uniform
 Try to deal with my civilian job
 Somersault!
 Try to remain alive, alert.
 Somersault!
 Try to solve the problems my absence has caused.
 Somersault! Somersault! Somersault!

What of my wife?

When was the last time we devoted enough time to each other?

I am tired.

Every atom of my body screams at the thought of going on.

If the war does not end soon

I will end it

By leaving.

³ By the end of the war, men of 60 were required to serve, albeit not as front-line soldiers.

Lotter, of course, would not make good on the threat implicit in the closing lines and the dilemmas he describes were the lot of most men in uniform. What is apparent is the frustration and pointlessness of it all. The repeated words “somersault” emphasise the respective, numbing cycle of call ups and an all too brief return to civilian life evoke old-time circus animal tricks. The inference is that soldiers like Lotter are performing for anonymous masters. The poem operates in absurd territory. Lotter chooses to stay, accepts the severe disruptions even whilst complaining bitterly in private about it. We recognize that his threat “I will end it / By Leaving” is somewhat empty, with the whole suggesting that the poet speaker feels he has no control over his life. It is bizarre, suggesting in its contradictions an emerging intent to rescript the narrative of defeat. As much as Lotter complains, as much as he declares he will go, the truth is that he will not. He is in it to the end. The logical question is why? Karen Beckwith (10) offers this intriguing possibility: “[a] narrative of defeat may reinforce collective identity, valorising having at least engaged in the struggle or conflict” and this, I suggest, partly explains the divergence between Lotter’s stated intentions and his realised actions. It is in his character not to quit. It is the pride of acknowledging defeat but remaining on one’s feet at the end as it were and, in a way, a celebration of the neo-chivalric code that we know Lotter adheres to, the warrior code that does not permit one to roll over in meek surrender. Certainly what is contained here is a rejection of any binary notions of defeat as complete and involving total capitulation. That said, the poem remains a sad piece as the reader is aware that Lotter knew the escape route, but failed to step through that open, albeit tight, doorway.

Whilst occupied with the larger concern of filling in his *Rebel Rhodesia* design, Lotter would return to his theme of increasingly elderly servicemen in August 1979 in the humorously titled poem “Mashfords Militia” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 96).

Great-grandpapa dusts off his musket,
 Hauls out the sabre
 He used in the charge at Colenso,
 Pins on his medals
 And rattles along
 In wheel chaired pursuit of a fleeing felon

Mashfords was a well-known firm of undertakers in Rhodesia at the time. The implication, of course, was that even the old, decrepit and dying would be required to “do their bit”. The figure “Great-grandpapa” cannot be read as Lotter’s own relative, instead he is a generic figure representing the oldest members of Rhodesian society. The Boer war reference is not any kind of coded signal, but simply a humorous marker that underscores the advanced age of some of the men in uniform. Grim humour aside, Lotter’s purpose is to highlight the Rhodesians’ desperate manpower needs during the war. Irony would ripple through the poems Lotter wrote but did not intend to publish in *Rebel Rhodesia*. An example of this is “White Situpa”, written on 16 January 1979:

It has
 Become commonplace
 To pick up a gun
 And carry it
 Wherever we go.

The black man laughs.
 For generations
 He has carried his situpa,
 Faced dire consequence
 Without it. Now
 He laughs
 At the white man's situpa
 Without which we dare not travel
 If we wish
 To avoid
 The consequences
 Of ambush.



The poem references the despised “Situpa” – an identity document much like the South African “passbook” that blacks were required to carry at all times. The poem

works well, with Lotter juggling the nuanced ironies of whites having to carry guns at all times (as blacks had to carry the situpas). The situpa was a document of movement control and the veiled intention of the poem is a carefully camouflaged political comment that it is white minority domination that has led to this war and the permanent militarization of white Rhodesian society. The fears he experienced were not confined to the realm of nightmares. Whereas the black man's situpa was a flimsy document, the white man's situpa is a gun and this is something vastly more cumbersome and overt; the consequences for not carrying it lethal, rather than irksome. If the political frame seems lightly wrought, the intention was cast in steel and so potentially controversial that Lotter did not intend to publish it, certainly not in *Rebel Rhodesia*. Lotter's already brittle psyche was to face a bruising test on his first call up of the year – he was based at Villa Salazar on the Mozambique border from 28 January to 25 February, 1979.

Villa Salazar occupies an unpleasant space in Lotter's memories. The old border post's Portuguese name reflected local honours reciprocated during the Portuguese occupation of Mozambique. The position across the border was known as Malvernia, after Lord Malvern, the former southern Rhodesian premier. The border was hotly contested with Rhodesian and Mozambican troops regularly trading insults and fire. A minefield surrounded the position and the buried ordinance was unstable, leading to numerous un-commanded detonations and shattered nerves. Lotter records in the diary a disturbing nightmare he experienced on Friday 2 February. In the dream he went insane and murdered close (civilian) friends with his service rifle. Lotter rationalizes the episode thus: "Perhaps it was all a vocalisation of fears of what the war does to you",⁴ but the self-diagnosis is limited and the homespun therapy wholly inadequate. The fears Lotter experienced were not confined to the realms of nightmares either. On 4 February 1979, he penned the piece "Fear is the Killer". It is unpublished and reveals itself as an intriguing piece of desperate amateur psycho-analysis:

It gnaws your stomach
Unsettles your mind

⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Villa Salazar" 3 Feb. 1979. MS. 6/62.

Makes you unprepared
 For the moment of action
 When that comes.

Fear is natural, human,
 A warning built into us
 But rage and lust
 Too
 Are human
 And, like fear
 Must be controlled.

Know fear
 Live with fear
 Use it to sharpen your senses
 Put the fine-honed edge
 On alertness.
 Channel it
 So that it may be used
 Without destroying you.



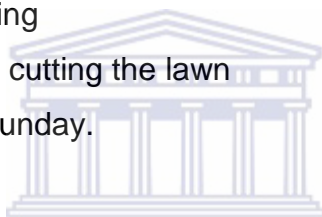
The first stanza's simple, ordered images work well to underline the unrelenting immediacy of fear. When the poem moves into the second stanza, we see symptoms of PTSD emerge. The poet speaker occupies a simplistic binary position and in claiming overt control, reveals that he is actually not in control of his emotions. The contradictions flow into the final stanza and the stoic final lines become a little pitiful as we realize that the poet's self-prescriptions are inefficacious medicine. Such fear cannot be controlled, its effects are cumulative, insidious and cannot be positively channelled in any way. The destruction of the psyche is almost assured without professional intervention.

Lotter would turn, again and again, to the addictive and dangerous drug of war. Whether he was trapped and unable to extricate himself from the situation in Rhodesia or whether he secretly wished to feed on the war for as long as possible,

knowing its end was imminent, is impossible to untangle. The truth probably contains elements of both contrasting positions and is consistent with his sometimes contradictory character. Just a day later (on 5 February) he penned “Legacy of War” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 126). The first stanza is overwritten and clichéd, but the second stanza is more arresting.

We have ridden the wave of destruction
 Known combat's wild, free power,
 Fed on the drug of life renewed
 Amid the smoke and the flame.

Now that War's End approaches
 How many
 Will be unable, or unwilling
 To be shackled again to cutting the lawn
 And visiting Auntie on Sunday.



Lotter is describing a common enough theme in war poetry – the weird sense of ennui many veterans experience after their war service. Sebastian Junger,⁵ a journalist with front line experience in Afghanistan reckons the response is rooted in human evolutionary biology and the deeply complex nature of relationships that are formed amongst soldiers in war. In a 2011 NPR radio interview with Neal Conin, he said as much:⁶

I think the more profound draw to combat is the sense of utility, the sense of purpose and, above all, the incredible unity in a group, in a platoon in combat. It's something that can't be duplicated very well in society, and I think it really goes back to our evolutionary past, these hunter-gatherers in small groups in a very dangerous world. And I think it resonates on a very deep level with these young men.

⁵ Junger's film *Restrepo* won an award for best documentary at the 2010 Sundance Festival. It examines the lives of a US army unit on a deployment to Afghanistan.

⁶ Transcript is available online at <http://www.npr.org/2011/07/20/138548989/junger-we-must-understand-many-troops-miss-war>.

The idea that a psychologically healthy person could miss war seems an affront to the idea that war is evil. Combat is supposed to feel bad because undeniably bad things happen in it, but a fully human reaction is far more complex than that. The phenomenon of a former soldier who misses war is so common and occurs in so many different contexts, that I am led to believe that it matters little how long the service period might have been, the psychic impact is significant enough to trigger repeated episodes of recall and longing to indulge in violence. It is a well-documented feature of veterans' lives, with David Gerber (289) observing and noting that that the pattern occurs independently of the conflict typology or the duration of an individual's service. His findings suggest the psychic disruption is so wide spread that all that seems necessary to prompt its manifestation is exposure to situations of sustained, extreme (shared) danger and violence. The net result, in each case, follows a predictable pattern. The bland routines of civilian life afterwards simply do not offer the levels of shared stress and intoxicating opportunities to practice violence, and I would suggest that revealed in the diaries and poems of the period is enough evidence of this ennui, itself also a classic symptom of latent PTSD. Lotter's struggle to order his contesting thoughts and the dangers and distractions on this camp would compound the rising tide of stress.

He records this stress in his diary on 5 February: "The attitude of the troopie persists. He has lost interest in the war totally, is still without a cause and is only concerned with coming out with his skin in one piece."⁷ The sort of strain placed on these troops is echoed by Chris Cocks in his memoir, *Fireforce*, based on his time as an RLI paratrooper. He would write:

I found I was very nervous about going into action. For the first time in my life I began experiencing bouts of raw naked nerves, and I realised I was suffering the same experience I'd heard others had undergone when their time in combat was nearly up... every danger seemed heightened and the desire to remain alive intensified. This was the time when the percentages were running out...In 1976 we [meaning troops of the RLI] had been enthusiastic when the [call out] siren sounded – it was great to get out and see some

⁷ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Villa Salazar" 5 Feb. 1979. MS. 9/62.

action. On top of that anything was a welcome relief from the boredom and drudgery of camp routine. But things had changed. We didn't have enough helicopters or enough troops to cope with the overwhelming tide of incoming guerrillas (248-249).

The thoughts both Lotter and Cocks express run counter to the mythologized popular accounts of the Rhodesian soldier as ever cheerful and ready to fight. In his autobiography, *Bushcat: Minstrel of the Wild*, John Edmond would recall this late period as a time when the broadcast media would saturate programming with morale boosting content such as the popular "Troopie" songs and affirming, supportive messages.

The Rhodesian radio was swamped with requests for the songs [the "troopie" folks songs he recorded]. Radio and TV announcers were all stalwarts in the morale boosting of all Rhodesians whether they were in the field or not. Names like Mike Westcott, Don Burnett, Caroline Thornycroft, Martin Locke, Sonia Hattin, Pat Rogers, Leslie Sullivan, Sally Donaldson and many others beamed their cheery voices over the airwaves (249).

If that was indicative of the tone of the public voice, then an altogether more guarded and reluctant one was emerging privately as soldiers like Lotter and Cocks could see what was happening. Indeed, we track this tension in his poem "Motivation" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 92) written later that same day of 5 February 1979:

No talk
 Of victory or the noble cause
 We are fighting for
 But rather
 Of the chances we have
 Of ending this war
 Alive
 And well.

The stripped down, clipped lines reek of defeat. The piece is clearly an extension of the diary entry and was not intended to find a place in *Rebel Rhodesia*. One is left to wonder, however, if anyone can truly be “well” after an experience like this. The question remains unanswered. Even though Lotter had lost faith in the cause, he remained strangely attached to the trappings of military service. He penned the unusual but effective poem “War Stories” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 47) also on 5 February 1979.

Beware the loud ones
 Who refight their escapades
 In voices which leak cigars and beer.
 Who take a high-decibel umbrage
 At the slightest trace
 Of disbelief.

Look instead for the quiet ones
 Who shout the least
 And have done the most,
 Whose exploits you only hear of
 In snatches
 From others.



There is a latent bitterness that drips through “War Stories” and no clue in the diaries as to what might have sparked it. The image of “voices which leak cigars and beer” suggests that Lotter had already encountered the “wannabes” – men with little or no military service of substance who invented or exaggerated their experiences ostensibly to impress an audience. I would suggest, though, that this is a too simple synthesis of an altogether more complex and powerful social phenomenon. The occurrence of wannabes is a little-understood one, attracting, as it does, scorn, disgust and misunderstanding in equal measures. Kirby Farrell in *Berserk Style in American Culture*, postulates that in any society shot through with incongruities, injustices, and societal disruptors, such as might occur in war time, circumstances can occasionally so align that some people might tip into berserk mode. Even those who do not act out this mode, are *enticed* by the notion of running amok because:

“[as] an idea, abandon is radically equivocal and ambivalent. Even berserk fury is horrific in its potential for destruction but alluring as a promise that escape from inhibitions can open up access to extraordinary resources” (104). The wannabe, scorned by many, is enticed by the allure of unchecked violence and destruction even when it is repackaged as imaginary heroic combat. It is a powerful psychological force and a glaring symptom of a society under extremely high levels of stress and disruption. “War Stories”, though ostensibly dismissive of the “wannabe”, functions also to describe how the war’s insanities had titrated their corrosive way into all levels of Rhodesian society. In the strangest of ways, those who may not have experienced much action or confronted the horror of the war personally, wished to partake of that horror even by proxy, if need be. Indeed, it might even be argued that in Rhodesia, any white who was not affected, in some way by the war, would likely feel deeply othered, excluded from the communal experience of violence and shared danger.

The war took a particularly nasty turn on 12 February 1979. A second Air Rhodesia Viscount airliner was shot down. This time there were no survivors, and all 59 aboard the aircraft were killed. Lotter records the sense of disquiet in the camp at the news of the second airliner downed: “Again the crash has made many people say they are gapping it [going to leave]. The Lieutenant gave us a talk after dinner. The crap turning exercise is failing as there is just not enough manpower.”⁸ Lotter’s use of the word “again” when linked to examples of horror suggests a function more heavily invested than its status as an adverb. It occurs often in this context in the diaries and is a signal word that marks his deep sense of frustration, anxiety and bitterness as the cycle of violence repeats ceaselessly. The first Viscount crash stunned white Rhodesia, the second, coming just a few months later, compounded the horror. The aftermath of the crash percolated into Lotter’s poetry. Angry and powerless to retaliate physically, Lotter’s pen blazed hatred towards those responsible in a single, raging poem: “Viscounts I and II”:

Twice
I have sat in Army bases

⁸ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Villa Salazar" 12 Feb. 1979. MS.18/62.

Round a radio
 In a ring of hate.
 Seen the newscaster's words
 Engrave their lines across our faces.

Joshua Nkomo, fat-gutted barbarian chief,
 Smirk in your Zambian lair
 For now.
 Sooner or later
 You will die
 For this.

The poem may lack finesse, but a few points are notable. The first is the observation that the piece did not appear in the *Rebel Rhodesia* manuscript. I initially found this odd, considering that it would have found traction with a Rhodesian audience. Later I began to suspect that Lotter had serious misgivings about the poem and shelved it. He has always been reluctant to “send out” poems that do not meet his particular artistic standards or which he regards as needing further refinement. His manuscripts show that on many occasions, he would return to poems and rework them, sometimes years after they were initially set down.⁹ The image “a ring of hate” well describes how the news temporarily united soldiers who may have been thinking about abandoning the country. On a deeper level, it recalls the sort of laager mentality that sometimes descends on people with their backs to the wall. The passion, however, flared only until the volatile fuel of the moment was spent. The second stanza captures the sudden transformation of Nkomo from nationalist leader to morbidly obese ghoul in the eyes of white Rhodesians. Interestingly, the poem casts Nkomo as a “barbarian”, implying, of course that the opposite label could apply to the Rhodesians. The situational ethics are unconsciously ironic and indicate a degree of amnesia on the part of the poet and the white public at large. We are conscious, here, of Rhodesian’s own barbarism – the attack on Nyandzonia was labelled an atrocity by Ken Flower, the CIO chief and Rhodesian strategies in the

⁹ For example, his poem “Contact That Wasn’t” was created on 23 February 1979 and revised again on 27 July, 1991 – some 12 years later.

war had been harsh in many cases. Chris Cocks (245), for example, relates the ease with which a wounded guerrilla was summarily executed by a fellow soldier:

McCall checked out the wounded man who was losing a lot of blood and whimpering in pain.

“Do you reckon he’s worth keeping?” McCall asked.

I shook my head.

“Okay, Bob, sort him out.”

Smith put his FN rifle against the man’s temple.

The guerrilla’s eyes widened in horror. He obviously couldn’t believe what was happening to him.

Smith pulled the trigger...

Until just a few months previously, Nkomo had been engaged in secret talks with Ian Smith and a plan had been mooted to form an alliance in opposition to ZANU. The Rhodesian public, in a rare display of public disagreement with Ian Smith, bombarded the newspapers with vituperative letters. They made it clear that they would not stand for any coalition with Nkomo after the Viscount incidents and Nkomo’s chances of power sharing went into terminal decline. If “Viscounts I & II” was Lotter’s public reaction, a more measured piece, “Mushroom Club” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 114) dates from the same period. Though not a particularly well-wrought poem, it gives us a clear indication of Lotter’s sense of disquiet and total distrust of any political process or politicians. It is a stance he adopted when he witnessed his father’s ostracisation by the RF just a few years after UDI and it is a position he maintains to this day:

We are treated like children,
 Wrapped in the cotton wool of official silence
 Where the harsh, ugly truth
 Won't get to us.

If you fall from grace by disbelieving the official truth -
 You are a victim of the propaganda war.
 You are told,

The enemy has seized your mind.

The only “victims”

Of the propaganda war

Are those who stayed when reason fled.

The title of the poem references a witticism of the time, many joked that the RF government treated its citizens like mushrooms, “kept in the dark and fed on bullshit”. The poem, however, has no such humorous intent. It is a bitter, surly complaint. Lotter’s target, though not exactly spelled out, is the Rhodesian Front government. In a further brief investigation of the nuanced defeat narratives, Lotter attempts to pick through the reasons why people like himself continue fighting. His introspection founders, however, and he defaults to holding the (RF) politicians and their minions responsible for the dire situation that has unfolded around him. What is unusual here, however, is that the opinion Lotter expresses is probably not the position that the majority of white Rhodesians adopted. Bizarrely, even as the myths collapsed around them and Rhodesia began disintegrating, the majority of the whites continued to support the RF. Even in the 1980 election, the RF’s victory in taking all the seats reserved for whites showed that they still enjoyed the support of the vast majority of the white electorate.¹⁰ The closing stanza is a neat assessment and articulate condemnation of a strange sort of doubled madness. Lotter’s inclusion of the word “victims” in quotation marks is meant to be deeply ironic. Lotter is suggesting here that far from being victims, those who stay are deluded. Part of the fascination here is that Lotter is one of them himself! So on one level, Lotter seems concerned with the madness that is the mindless violence being wreaked by all sides and the apparent inability of Rhodesia’s political leaders to undertake negotiations with the nationalists to end the war. On a deeper, implied level, there is an internal, personal madness as Lotter cannot rise above the contradictions of his own position.

On several occasions in the diaries he declares he will leave Rhodesia and yet he does not. There is no satisfactory explanation for this baffling contradiction. The only

¹⁰ In this election for the 20 reserved white seats, the RF won 6 seats by ballot and the other 14 by default as their candidates were unopposed.

suggestion I can make is that Lotter's inertia had a strong psychic component – as a war addict, he was unable to separate the desire to experience the challenge of service, camaraderie and the potent rush of combat from the ethical, moral part of his nature that could rationalize matters and muster logical objections. It is a position that people who have not experienced combat find almost impossible to understand let alone reconcile. Perhaps the closest civilian equivalent would be the inveterate gambler who continues chasing the odds he knows are stacked against him in the hopes of a big win. Yet this is a very common trope in war memoirs. Carl Alberts, a former SAAF gunship pilot who became a mercenary pilot in the service of Executive Outcomes, describes in fascinating detail how the lure of adventure overcame the practicalities of job security and benefits in the SAAF when approached by an EO recruiter:¹¹

My dilemma was that I had only three years to complete my medium-service contract with the air force [SAAF], which would then entitle me to a pension, medical cover and a reasonable cash gratuity. Executive Outcomes, on the other hand, could only offer a monthly contract. The financial package on offer was far more than I could earn in the South African Air Force, but I needed more security in terms of employment. Lafras [Luttingh – the EO recruiter] therefore agreed to guarantee me a minimum twelve-month contract, which I signed (12).

The sort of illogicalities that Alberts and Lotter express would make for interesting psychological deconstruction, but that task is beyond the scope of this study. As further evidence of the hugely unstable state Lotter occupied, on this same day that he had blazed in bitter rage at Nkomo, he also penned the quietly pensive and empathetic piece "War Widows" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 102):

People talk
Of the gulf between our races
Which must be crossed
To mend these times of ours.

¹¹ Alberts went on to fly in Angola, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast in dangerous circumstances with none of the logistical support he was used to as a SAAF pilot.

What grief? By now
 The community must be rare.
 Where families have not mourned.

Whether the widow weeps
 In a Salisbury mansion
 Or in a rude grass hut
 The tears
 The hole left in her life
 Are still the same.

It would be too easy to simply claim that Lotter had “calmed down:” when he wrote this piece. Rather, it demonstrates a canny ability to push aside the clamour and venom of the day and see things from a more advantageous and essentially humane point. Perhaps this is Lotter’s outsider status emerging again, but it signally demonstrates that he is able to empathise with the highly “othered” victims of the war, a rare quality and a sure mark that his essential compassion was not, as he might have thought, fatally compromised. The poem may not venture as far as addressing the causes of the war or deal with the settler-colonial induced inequalities in Rhodesia’s society, but it does admit that trauma and suffering are an experience that ultimately black and white both share. For the remaining part of the diary Lotter would relate how the constant state of readiness, the daily contacts and the uncommanded explosions in the minefield began to wear the men down. At times like this, rational behaviour tends to melt away and so Lotter records a number of odd happenings that point to the disintegrating morale and strained sanity of the troops stationed in Villa Salazar.

On 11 February he records the tale of a man who “took a bet to hurdle the trip wires of the ploughshares [type of Rhodesian anti-personnel mine].”¹² Further evidence of strained minds and bizarre imaginings emerge in the strange tale he records on 21 February:

¹² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Villa Salazar" 11 Feb. 1979. MS.16/62.

[I] was told a story coldly and with a straight face which I will record in the same way. Captured ter who was involved in an attack on a farmhouse was asked why they (ters) had not pressed the attack as there were only 2 Euros (whites) in the house. He expressed disbelief and said that there was a whole household of troops returning fire.¹³

Similar stores entered Rhodesian folklore, the most popular (at the time) attributed to an anonymous guerrilla who claimed that angels were seen guarding whites. The comforting myths (for that is all they are) function on one level to spiritually legitimize the Rhodesian cause, but we can also note that such supernatural stories are not uncommon in war time and probably entered popular (English) culture around the time of WWI – a time of great disruption and peril in Britain. Arthur Machen's 1915 book *The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War* ensured that generations of school children were inculcated with the myth of the Angel of Mons¹⁴ and encouraged to believe these supernatural accounts that angels and heavenly beings might intervene at moments of mortal danger on the battlefield. In countries with a Christian tradition and an inscribed collective memory of scripture, this is not unexpected. It is telling that most of these fantastic stories seem to accrete around the biblical myth of the fiery furnace found in Daniel 3:22 – 25:

²² The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego,²³ and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty."²⁵ He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire.

¹³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Villa Salazar" 21 Feb. 1979. MS.25/62.

¹⁴ The myth of the Angel of Mons holds that British troops were defended from attacking German troops by phantom archers during the Battle of Mons (22-23 August 1914).

These tales may be seen as utter nonsense in the context of a modern, post-Biblical and postcolonial culture, but we cannot underestimate the sustaining power of this sort of potent cultural artefact that was latently inscribed upon the [white] civic imaginary and located some 40 years ago. Indeed, how else might any sense be written into moments of great psychic disruption and terrible distress?

On 25 February, Lotter began work on a piece “Bring Back Yesterday” that speaks to the feeling of hopelessness that was beginning to overwhelm him on this camp. The poem is simple in construction, but poignantly direct. It is probably one of those pieces Lotter kept to himself and had no intention of publishing given that its themes are in opposition to the Rhodesian myths.

It used to be
 When the man
 Who has actually been in a contact
 Was a strange and rare animal
 To be examined in awe.
 Guard was a waste of sleep,
 Patrols were there to be done
 As quickly as possible
 While enjoying the short break from the office
 In the sun.
 If, by some remote chance
 Those cookboys with rifles
 Happened to be
 Around
 They fled
 As soon as they heard
 We were coming.

In those days
 We used to complain
 How boring the Army was.
 Now we fervently wish

For a camp
Without action.

The single word “yesterday” in the title serves to underscore how quickly the war’s tempo had increased and how this increase had impacted upon the lives of the soldiers. This is no nostalgic plea, it is a desperate groping for a recent time when it seemed that order prevailed and a sense of quiet routine ruled ordinary life. Not any more, as the poet laments. He notes wryly that any sense of Rhodesian superiority has vanished; “the cook boys with rifles” of yesterday are today’s canny and resourceful guerrilla fighters, they are winning the war; not the Rhodesians. Significantly, the Rhodesian national myth of the valiant, conquering soldier has all but disappeared from Lotter’s verse, and he expresses a near heresy too in the stark closing lines, “Now we fervently wish / For a camp / Without action”. The action continued, however, and played havoc with Lotter’s mind.

On 16 February he would write in the diary: “my nerves are shot. I have a constant trembling of the hands. Listening to the ploughshares [mines] go off every second day and anticipating mortar fire is no good.”¹⁵ The strains of the camp, the obviously escalating and certainly lost war and the chaotic political situation, all caused Lotter to assess his situation towards the end of the camp. On 19 February he would pour out his disquiet in this determined diary entry:

I am thoroughly sick of this half life and I have reached my limit. Before I came close to going and changed my mind. Now I want hard benefit in my hand, not pie in the sky and promises for tomorrow. I want to see tangible benefits emanating from the fact that I am staying or I go. This is finally it! To be honest, I am looking for a reason to go.¹⁶

Perhaps the only positive outcome of this camp was Lotter’s poetry output. The last 30 pages of the diary include a number of poems in manuscript form, many of which were refined and would find later publication success. Somehow, in this time of

¹⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Villa Salazar" 16 Feb. 1979. MS.22/62.

¹⁶ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Villa Salazar" 19 Feb. 1979. MS.24/62.

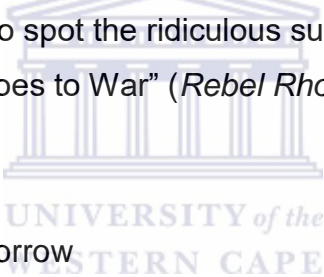
craziness, Lotter found the time and discipline to work at fleshing out his design for *Rebel Rhodesia*. He would continue with the task on his next tour.



/Chapter Eight: One year: three countries

Every man gotta right to decide his own destiny,
 And in this judgement there is no partiality.
 So arm in arms, with arms, we'll fight this little struggle,
 'Cause that's the only way we can overcome our little trouble.
 (Bob Marley: "Zimbabwe")

Lotter undertook a comparatively short tour in April 1979. A general mobilization of all reserves had been called as the transitional government attempted to ensure that the election could take place. It was no stab at an April fool's joke when Lotter recorded on 1 April "seems that the army is getting a jump on the ters."¹ This call up was the largest troop concentration ever mustered in Rhodesia's history. It was, in effect, the last roll of the dice, a final attempt by Smith to win the political battle. Lotter's acerbic wit and ability to spot the ridiculous surfaced in a memorably humorous piece "Coca-Cola Goes to War" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 105):



I was caught
 Between laughter and sorrow
 As the commandeered trucks
 Rolled past.
 The election demands an all-out effort.
 But this?
 This incongruous sight shall stay with me
 As an evergreen memory.

The context of the poem is quite simple. He spotted a soft drinks delivery truck carrying troops. This moment could have been written by another as a mirror of the heroic small boat evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk (Dunkerque) in 1940, but in Lotter's hands, it collapses into a grotesquely ironic comment on how desperate the Rhodesian cause had become. Had the men been on circus wagons it would have been a less pathetic sight!

¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Muzorewa Election" 1 Apr. 1979. MS. 1/34.

Lotter experienced wildly contrasting emotions on this camp. He sensed that he was part of an historical moment and said as much on 17 April 1979:

Today the great majority rule election begins. I find this a numbing thought that this has finally come to be. Here I am, a rabid racist, working to make a black power election come off successfully and not working for it unwillingly as I believe that it must be done as it is the last chance for a successful future in the country.²

The term racist here describes a form of identity-based politics that is now discredited. In the context of 1970s Rhodesia, it had a less aggressive and narrow intent though by inference, whiteness was privileged. Such thinking is unacceptable today and the probable pragmatism of Lotter's larger view disappears, however, in the connotations that have since attached to the word(s) "racism", turning it into a synonym for racism. The history of racism is interesting and it is a 20th Century dogma distinct from the broad church of ideological Apartheid in South Africa (here I must note that Lotter holds the view that Apartheid was an unworkable folly). Kwame Anthony Appiah notes that racism owes much to the thinking of W.B. Du Bois, writing at the turn of the previous century. Appiah's interpretation of Du Bois steers the argument away from any association with pseudo sciences such as phrenology or eugenics.

Du Bois' argument in "The Conservation of Races" is that "race" is not a "scientific"—that is, biological—but a sociohistorical concept. Sociohistorical races each have a "message" for humanity, a message that derives, in some way, from God's purpose in creating races. The Negro race has still to deliver its full message, and so it is the duty of Negroes to work together—through race organizations—so that this message can be delivered. We do not need the theological underpinnings of this argument. What is essential is the thought that Negroes, by virtue of their sociohistorical community, can achieve, through common action, worthwhile ends that will not otherwise be achieved. On the face of it, then, Du Bois' strategy here is the antithesis of a

² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Muzorewa Election" 17 Apr. 1979. MS. 7/34.

classic dialectic in the reaction to prejudice (loc 859)... The thesis in this dialectic—which Du Bois reports as the American Negro’s attempt to “minimize race distinctions”—is the denial of difference. Du Bois’ antithesis is the acceptance of difference along with a claim that each group has its part to play, that the white and the Negro races are related not as superior to inferior but as complementaries (loc 863).

Appiah suggests that “racialism” is idealistic at best and, in modern thinking, probably at least extrinsically racist. This is, however, a gloss acquired through modernity and Du Bois was the first black man to earn a PhD from Harvard.³ His main work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) codified “racialism” but also sealed his academic reputation and set him up as a civil rights activist and early pan-Africanist.


Quite how the ideas of an African-American intellectual and academic migrated to Rhodesia is unclear. British Israelism (and to a much lesser extent, its second-cousin, the Worldwide Church of God cult founded by Herbert W. Armstrong) as a “racialised” way of viewing the world and social interactions, had a few supporters in Rhodesia but the pseudo-religious nature of BI beliefs were probably too extreme and certainly too complex to make inroads into a white Rhodesian society where most people were nominally adherents of established protestant denominations such as the Church of England, Methodism and Presbyterianism, and did not interrogate their own faith’s core beliefs let alone esteem arcane scriptural exegesis.⁴ I do not think, therefore, that BI accounts for Lotter’s interest in racialism. I would suggest rather that Du Bois’ ideas, or rather the faintest aspects of them, had entered the public domain and influenced political and social discourses. Lotter probably read material that was indirectly linked to, or derivative of, Du Bois and that it struck a chord with him. On a practical level and in the context of 1970s Rhodesia, it is likely that “racialism” was used euphemistically by Lotter and others and seen as a more benign alternative to the extremes of an Apartheid-style ideology or surrender to black hegemony. There is little evidence to suggest that Lotter unpacked racialism in

³ Du Bois’ thesis “*Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the United States of America: 1638-1871*” was submitted to Harvard in 1895.

⁴ British Israelism supposes that Englishmen are literal descendants of one of the lost tribes of Israel. The theory was at its most popular in the 19th Century and is now totally discredited.

much detail, but it is probably true to state that he held more considered political views than the average white Rhodesian. It is a repetition, but a necessary one: Lotter had never supported the RF whereas the vast majority of white Rhodesians did and without question at that. If anything, Lotter's profession of "racialism" marks a late attempt to modify the heavily coded social designs and philosophies that underwrote British imperialism and colonialism; a system that was, by then, discredited and in obvious retreat.

Perhaps spurred by the scene of troops on the delivery truck, Lotter cast his gaze widely that day and was perturbed by what he saw. His assessment of the Rhodesian army's state of readiness and ability to prosecute the war is bleak: "The whole chaotic mess frightens me. Officers with no experience leading men with no training. The whole lot backed up by fuck all."⁵ And yet in the midst of all this, Lotter would find the moment to write one his most evocative war poems, "Grim Reapers" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 86):



These stark men
 Who have not yet celebrated
 Their coming of age.
 Whose carefree years have been pickpocketed
 Out of their lives.
 Who have lost the carelessness of youth.
 Gained the callousness of Death's companions.

The poem begins with Lotter conflating the traditional hooded figure of the Grim Reaper and the young Rhodesian soldiers. The conflation is completed as we realize that these Grim Reapers are not old or mature male figures (as we might associate with the traditional literary depiction of the Grim Reaper), but men who have not yet attained legal majority. The image resonates discordantly as we realise that their brief "carefree years" have been surreptitiously stolen. The poet speaker does not directly accuse anyone, but we are tempted to charge the politicians and generals

⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Muzorewa Election" 18 Apr. 1979. MS. 11/34.

with responsibility. In this respect, the piece is synchronous with the trope of lost youth we tend to associate with the poetry of WWI. The sense of victimhood and blasted horror that permeates Owen's opening stanza in "Anthem for Doomed Youth":

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
 — Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
 Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
 Can patter out their hasty orisons.

This "blasted horror" is not present in Lotter's work ("Grim Reapers"). He was, of course, well aware of Owen's poetry and also how the idea had attached itself to WWI poetry. I suggest, though, that he sought to modify it somewhat. In Lotter's hands, the lost youth trope is subsumed by his recognition that these young men, many of whom would survive physically, have all lost their innocence and acquired a far darker, dangerously unstable mind set. In a way, "Grim Reapers" pitches us forward in time and we are led to ask: what kind of man emerges after a set of experiences like these? What vitality survives, what aptitude for peaceful cooperation with others, what capacity for empathy or even unconditional love might remain? Lotter's title says it all: the outlook for these men is grim. The anti-closure we have seen before becomes a potent and skilfully deployed device here, the rhetorical questions hanging heavily. Lotter's piece may lack the elegiac musicality of Owen's, but it makes a similarly profound statement and is no less damning.

Lotter continued to experience wild swings of emotion and, towards the end of this call up, he came face to face with the reality of Pfumo re Vanhu troops. His reaction to them demonstrates the scramble by many to hold onto some sense of rationality. The Pfumo re Vanhu troops were essentially private militias fielded by Ndabaningi Sithole's internal ZANU party and Abel Muzorewa's United African National Council. Grand claims had been made by these politicians that the combatants who appeared almost overnight were ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas who had switched sides. As mentioned in the first chapter, Pfumo re Vanhu were a propaganda exercise, and Reid-Daly tries to lay the blame for the Pfumo experiment squarely on the shoulders

of Sithole and Muzorewa, neatly side-stepping the fact that it was the white government which sanctioned this experiment that had been conceived by white Rhodesian intelligence officers. Lotter's assessment is more down to earth and suggests that unemployed black youth were coerced into joining Pfumo rather than volunteering. He says as much in the diary on 19 April 1979 and wrote in his diary:

Roger Lewis, the INTEL bloke says his role is to recruit Pfumo re Vanhu. They go into a kraal line at night, take every male of the right age and hustle them off to the police station. [T]hey are then invited to join up. Most do. They are then given 28 days training and sent back to their home areas.⁶

The Rhodesian media made much of these "turned guerrillas", the strangely dressed and dreadlocked men with AK-47 assault rifles who were shown on television apparently deployed on operational duty on the side of the government. Propaganda pamphlets, like the one below, were printed in bulk and distributed throughout the country in a concerted attempt to spread the message of Pfumo re Vanhu's existence to the masses in the countryside and win rural support back from the guerrillas.

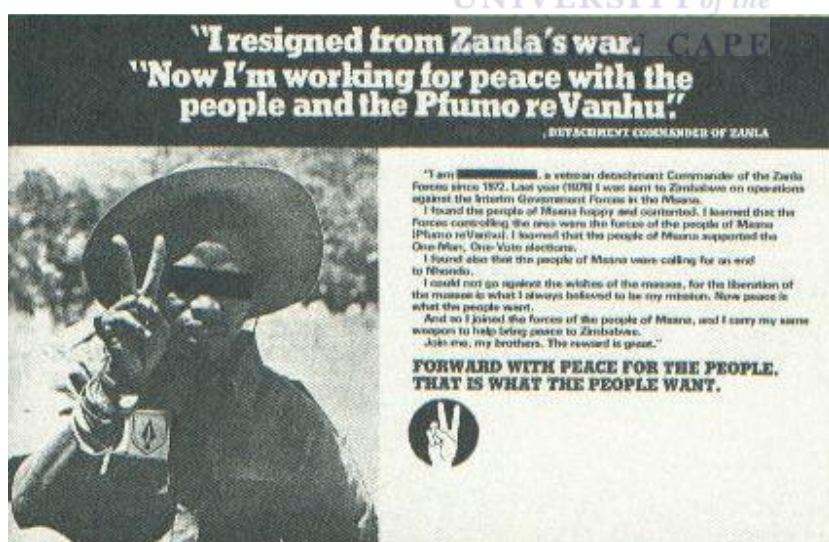


Fig. 2. Rhodesian propaganda pamphlet promoting Pfumo re Vanhu. (Source://www.themukiwa.com/rhodesianwar/sfa.htm).

⁶ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Muzorewa Election" 19 Apr. 1979. MS. 15/34.

Lotter attempted a poem “Talk With a Former Enemy” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 111) inspired by his meeting of some Pfumo troops. It is a curious piece, overlong, so I will not reproduce it in full here. What does become apparent though is that Lotter is underwhelmed by the experience.

As they came through the gate with communist weapons
 Our instincts commanded us
 Shoot!
 But reason stilled hands that were reaching for rifles
 As the sight of their uniforms, auxiliary brown,
 Sank in.

The first stanza, immediately creates an “us” and “them” opposition that is never resolved in the poem. The distinction is reinforced through the reference to the “auxiliary brown” uniforms of the Pfumo troops.⁷ What is worth noting is that Pfumo members were rendered as “other” in their relationship to the existing arms of the Rhodesian security apparatus. It was not just the visible difference of uniform (all other units wore the same Rhodesian brushstroke pattern camouflage uniform), Pfumo deaths were not reported to the public as part of SF casualty statistics,⁸ their members were ineligible for Rhodesian force allowances and benefits, they could not expect to be awarded any Rhodesian medals and decorations, and their combat deaths were not included in any official Rhodesian casualty lists. Lotter picks up this sense of otherness, and disquiet rumbles throughout the poem. In a brief moment of comradely spirit, Lotter reaches out: “He shared my tea / While we spoke of the trade he held before the war. / His hopes of a job thereafter”.

But the moment is short-lived and puny. It is the final stanza, with its focus drawn out by the departing Pfumo vehicles that is noteworthy:

When their vehicles arrived

⁷ These were similar in some respects to the former SADF “nutria” uniforms, but not of the same cut, style or material and were made in Rhodesia.

⁸ This is one aspect that distinguishes the Rhodesian SF. All casualties were reported. The white population was too small for this information to be hidden away and similarly the SF relied on black troops so much that black SF casualties could not be hidden either. It was also probably in Rhodesian interests to be assiduous in this respect to immediately disprove guerrilla propaganda of casualties inflicted on SF.

I did not regret their going.
 But I knew
 My world had changed
 I had been forced
 To face a part of the new reality
 And, as important to me,
 I had managed to deal
 With my new comrades-in-arms
 With dignity.

The poem lacks finesse, although it has been published a number of times. Putting aside matters of artistic quality, the vision offered in these simple lines:

But I knew
 My world had changed
 I had been forced
 To face a part of the new reality



is personally redemptive in nature. This is Lotter's true character, the grim commitment to *Götterdämmerung* is gone, it reveals a man whose attitudes are being refined and there is the briefest glimmer of hope that he will emerge from the war with more nuanced ethical positions. The final lines are superfluous and needlessly self-congratulatory. The Pfumo experiment collapsed spectacularly, and in late 1979 Rhodesian troops (RLI mostly) and police undertook military operations to eliminate (kill) Pfumo members who were regarded as too ill-disciplined to be allowed to continue operating. That experience aside, Lotter was able to look back on the election call up and in the diary on Sunday 22 April he mused: "I am extremely glad that I participated in this historical event. The white man committed himself to a peaceful hand-over of power to the black and bust his gut to make it happen."⁹

⁹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Muzorewa Election" 22 Apr. 1979. MS. 23/34.

Lotter's view was probably not one shared by many of his comrades. Some, particularly those of a racist, right-wing mind-set, regarded the "hand over" as capitulation to the twin demands of Britain and the black nationalist parties, and would have been happy to continue fighting. The others, of more sanguine bent, were simply too sapped by the continuous spate of call ups and exposure to violence to rise above their own cognitive dissonance. If most suspected the war was all but done, Lotter saw no such chance for peace settling in the months to come, and this would emerge in two remarkable, wistful poems later.

He returned to civilian life for a brief spell and his thoughts turned, again, to fleshing out the manuscript *Rebel Rhodesia* and working on a brief from Peter Badcock to supply a few poems for the planned publication: *Faces of War*. Lotter was galvanised by the project, and it did much to cement his confidence and give him direction in these turbulent times. He wrote excitedly about this on the Recce camp later that year.¹⁰ In the space of a single month, he wrote five pieces. Lotter took a short break away from Rhodesia in July 1979 and stayed with his parents, who had relocated to South Africa, and were based at a saw mill at Welgevonden in an area of ethereal natural beauty. Lotter found the place enchanting and enjoyed an all too brief moment of rest and solace there. That trip inspired some poems, and one, "Haven" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 135) stands out as exemplifying Lotter's war weariness and his desperate need to be done with the business of war:

Uptight, angry, uncertain,
I came from Rhodesia's war,
Came to walk by small, cold streams,
And rest in my father's hills.

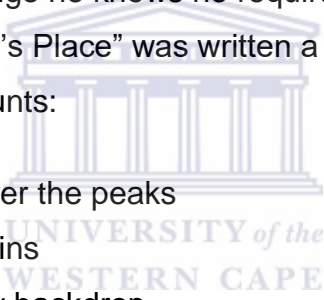
High in the Blyde River Canyon
I fed on the essence of magical places
Welgevonden, God's Window, Wonderful Outlook,
My being surrendered its poison

¹⁰ On 3 August he wrote in his diary: "I am bubbling with satisfaction. I suggested the commission [to Badcock] and was given it but it was a new venture and I did not know whether I could write a song to another man's tune. As it has turned out, my 9 years of Army experience has given me the background to draw on!"

To the cleansing pinewood winds.
 The land reached out and held me.
 Its silence stroked my raw-edged nerves,
 Washed my aching soul.

I watched the still, calm lake
 Ripple slowly
 Below the house,
 Rested my eyes on rolling, forested mountains,
 Locked my gun away
 And drank of the rich, red wine.

Lotter craves peace. His being is shattered, his soul has been poisoned. The last two lines powerfully signal the change he knows he requires. A similar, but vastly more effective piece, "Tom Bombadil's Place" was written a day later on 7 July 1979. It is remarkable on a number of counts:



Runnels of white spill over the peaks
 Creep down the mountains
 The mountains, a smoky backdrop
 To this haven where Gandalf walks.
 Shadowfax drinks from the cold clear water,
 Lifts his head to the Hey! Now! Come hoy now!
 Of Tom's song. The stream
 Chatters a musical chorus; a refrain
 In the chant of an older.
 Magical, age with its roots in the soil
 Lost
 In the mechanical dirge of progress.

Come stand with Tom
 By the old stone bridge
 Listen to the wind play its lonely psalm
 On the pine tree woods.

Slough off your burdens
 Watch Graybeard rustle his leaves
 Drink your wine, refresh your soul
 With the Elves and the Ents
 Of this wondrous, forgotten place

The allusion to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* would have been too obscure for the average Rhodesian reader looking for poems that speak of war, but in my reading, Lotter conjures up the spirit of Tom as a natural prophet who holds out the chance of quasi divine peace. It might be stretching things a little to conflate Lotter and Tom Bombadil completely, but Lotter's character is such that he would easily identify with Tom Bombadil's comfortably assumed outsider status. The poem's setting is majestic, yet it is the figure of Bombadil and not the primeval landscape that dominates. Lotter's private reading is wide-ranging. He is well versed in the classics of the English literary canon and enjoys reading science fiction and modern fantasy. His personal reading meant that he was well aware of the power of narrative and character. He drew on this knowledge and exploited Bombadil's special functions to shape the poem's intention. It is a moot point whether Lotter was aware of Tolkien's letter (178) to Naomi Richardson on 25 April 1954, but Tolkien's purpose and Lotter's seem cannily aligned:

I might put it this way. The story is cast in terms of a good side, and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. But if you have, as it were, taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, then the questions of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless.

I suggest that this is the buried frame and larger intention of the poem and it suggests the slow emergence of a new credo, where Lotter composes direct and tangible reactions against the war and suggests, too, that he is determined not to become the embittered possessor of the thousand yard stare, or an old soldier on the lookout for another war. The respite of Welgevonden was temporary, for he knew that as soon as he returned from the short holiday, he would be back in the war.

A mere two days before he reported for his "Recce" camp (19 July to 24 November 1979), Lotter sought out private space and penned "Appeal" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 91), probably one of the tightest and most emotionally riven pieces he ever wrote.

Don't mind my hands

Padre.

They shake like this

When I'm in base.

I dream of death

Padre.

Scream in the dark

To chase the nightmares away.



I drink

Padre.

To keep my memories

At bay.

I am nineteen

Padre.

Why then do I feel

So old and worn?

Why can't it be

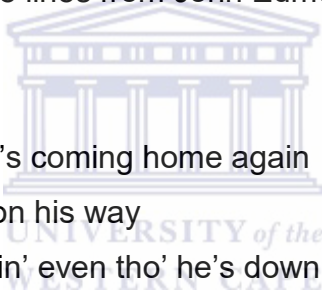
Like in the books

Padre?

Padre.

For God's sake answer me!

The poem is economic in construction but huge in intention. The poet speaker's words stammer out in short bursts emphasising the oxymoron (the teenage veteran) that wraps the piece. Lotter's subject is just a boy, but one seriously damaged by his experiences, and significantly the Padre who hovers in the background is invisible to us, helpless and mute. "Appeal" is a clinical description of PTSD and damning evidence of the trauma served upon conscripts. That the Padre can offer no comfort is equally telling, for in a way, Lotter suggests that there is no justification for this war, and no succour available to those who must fight in it. The poem tells an ugly truth and is miles away from the heroic mythology that suffused the Rhodesian folk songs such as these saccharine lines from John Edmond's 1977 song - "Whistlin' Troopie."¹¹



Oh the Whistlin' Troopie's coming home again
 The Whistlin' Troopie's on his way
 You can hear him whistlin' even tho' he's down
 He whistles all his blues away...

Edmond's "Troopie Songs" and Clem Tholet's wistful ballads celebrating the Rhodesian myths were exceptionally popular. Although they may have jollied bar crowds, their beer glasses leaving wet rings on the tables, they functioned as flimsy cultural markers, located in naivety and spoke nothing of the menace, terror and danger that "begins to steal into your bones."¹²

Lotter's association with the Recces (not be confused with the South African Special Forces of similar name) proved fruitful. He felt strangely drawn to this unit of misfits, sociopaths and petty criminals, sensing that he was with hard, dangerous men and

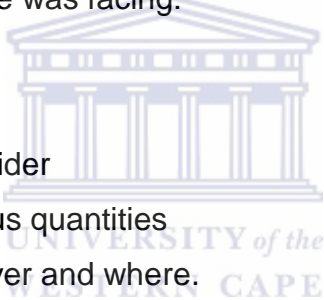
¹¹ John Edmond is a Rhodesian / South African folk singer who has been active for over 50 years. In the 1970s he was hugely popular for his cheery "Troopie Songs" and toured the country giving concerts and selling LPs. The songs are jingoistic and saturated with Rhodesian national myths.

¹² An apt line from Tobias Wolff's *In Pharaoh's Army* – a memoir of his service as a US special forces officer in the Vietnam War

would experience a different, darker side of life. He wrote in his diary on 25 July 1979:

They don't want to stay out of trouble, they want the gooks [guerrillas] to find them so they can kill them... They are men who have a genuine wish to kill built into their natures, men for whom the war is a godsend. They hate blacks but do not seem terribly concerned about serving Muzorewa's government. I have the feeling they would serve anyone who gave them their head. Putting aside moral judgments, they are an elite unit and I sincerely hope I can keep up with them. I emphasise again, these men are killers.¹³

Lotter's fascination with the deviance of their characters translated into a poem "Natural Killer" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 77) that whilst not particularly notable, does capture something of the oppositions he was facing:



Karel the cheerful,
Muscled, hardy: long strider
Drinker of beer in copious quantities
Lover of women whenever and where.
Soldier and craftsman in equal proportions.

Karel, the winner in many engagements,
Eager for more.
Karel, who kills
With all the emotion
Of a diner selecting his meal.

In ordinary circumstances, as Lotter suggests, Karel would be the lad about town, carefree and careless, interested only in hedonistic pursuits and likely to spend as much time in pubs as anywhere else. There is nothing odd there, the stereotype is

¹³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Recce 1" 25 Jul. 1979. MS. 5/44.

well known and often propels the humour in British television comedy programmes. But Lotter's second stanza quickly informs the piece and leads us to totally revise our understanding. Karel is "cheerful" only because his brutal inner nature is allowed free reign. He is a psychopathic killer, utterly remorseless, incapable of compassion and the final image of him is curiously and grotesquely wrought in the image of "a diner selecting his meal". Lotter requires his reader to step back and think here. How can a human being present as so dispassionate, so cruel, and so deviant? What is apparent, however, is the suggestion that this man is offered up as further evidence of the deeply disrupted and damaged society white Rhodesia had become. It is a far cry from the myth that portrayed white Rhodesians as fundamentally "good ouens [chaps]" keen on sports, beer, women, ribald jokes and barbeques. Lotter saw the problem here and it emerges again in his diary. On Sunday 4 August 1979 he wrote:

I think it has been accepted for centuries that many men find in war an outlet they need and cannot find elsewhere. Today I finally saw the hard proof of this. One man (Carlos) said: "I will be sad when it's all over. It's been great. What the hell are we going to do when it's finished?" War is a way of life for them and TF service gives them the opportunity to do as much or as little as they wish. Returning troops have always been a problem after any war. What are we going to do with ours?¹⁴

Although Lotter tended to "live in the moment" whilst on camps, this did not stop him from considering larger questions and the diaries reveal as much. On 4 August, he wrote:

It also saddens me to see how easily the veneer of civilization sloughs off and how we become the same as those we hunt down. The same. The only difference is our atrocities are official and therefore condoned. The exigencies of war.¹⁵

The diary entry is strangely conflicted. On the surface Lotter appears to suggest that war has corrupted the Rhodesian national psyche and seems to question the claim

¹⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Recce 1" 4 Aug. 1979. MS. 25/44.

¹⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Recce 1" 4 Aug. 1979. MS. 26/44.

that Rhodesia still holds the moral advantage in the war. But if we consider David Coltart's assessment that an enduring official discourse held that "Rhodesia was fighting for the whole of Western society and the battle was against 'forces of evil' which were threatening to eradicate Western civilization" (27), then the entry prompts a more measured and even contradictory reading. The phrase "we hunt down" suggests, for example, a positioning of the Rhodesian forces as morally superior and vengeful in their pursuit of the guerrillas. The entry (and others like it) can be further contextualized, however.

I need to point out that a peculiar strategic intersection occurred on this camp. Lotter the poet, Lotter the autodidact, Lotter the amateur philosopher, Lotter the settler colonialist, and Lotter the combat veteran are all competing internal voices that emerge as players in the drama that spills over the diaries and poems. I would suggest that these competing voices are less evidence of any sort of decline into schizophrenia as markers of a process involving continuous overwriting of personal narratives that are scripted as he moves in a landscape structured around collapsing nationhood, chaos and imminent defeat. Looking at the poems and diary entries from the Recce camp, it is clear that as much as Lotter is deeply engaged in "catching the moment", he is also struggling to process the complex and contradictory emotions that he feels, because all of these identities/internal voices are entangled with each other. He was extraordinarily productive at this time, and many of the poems appear to have been written to fulfil his goal of creating *Rebel Rhodesia*. August 10 was a particularly fruitful day, for he found space to pour his soul into his poems and let his mind run free in the privacy of the diaries. He spent some time considering the plight of a black rural subsistence farmer who had been abducted by Rhodesian soldiers on a raid into Mozambique. This innocent civilian was taken and held by Rhodesian forces simply because he might prove a source of information on guerrilla movements and concentrations in Mozambique. Lotter was disturbed by this and the strange state of limbo it cast the man into. It ate at his conscience such that he wrote:

The morality of war still escapes me. My sympathy for him is limited since I know others are far worse off; dead, dying or maimed. But where are the

ethics of it? There is one set of human ethics for peace and another for war. To do this in peace would be an affront to the law and to justice. Not to do it in war could mean lack of information which will condemn other men to die. But where does it stop?¹⁶

The straightforward register detracts somewhat from the impact the incident had on Lotter. His apparent inability to “take a side” is, I suggest, not problematic and here I am indebted to Sarah Nuttall’s (7) rubrics of “entanglement” and agree that gestures towards appropriating ethical positions can be seriously self-limiting, perhaps even contradictory. Certainly the simple binary oppositions of complicity or rejection are just too flimsy. This distress would stay with Lotter for a long time; it prevailed for years after the war, and his post-war writing demonstrates a singular drive to try and recover any degree of meaning from the experience. This, coupled with his aim of assembling *Rebel Rhodesia*, is probably why Lotter was so prolific in 1979 and why his themes would range so widely.

On 10 August he wrote nine pieces. Of these poems, “Assault Course”, “Technical Death” and “Mine Lifting” are strikingly vivid. In conversation with Lotter, it transpired that these poems were written “to order” as it were for Badcock’s book *Faces of War*, and that he had seen Badcock’s drawings and wrote the poems with the style, subject and presentation of the drawings in mind.¹⁷ “Technical Death”, for example, displays this photo realism in a short, precisely constructed poem that cooperates particularly well with the matching macro lens style sketch.

He sits at New Sarum
 Loading the engines of war
 With long-range, technical death.

You don’t have to be
 Tall, bronzed and fit
 To be a warrior

¹⁶ Lotter, Chas. “War Diary: Recce 2” 10 Aug. 1979. MS. 13/35.

¹⁷ Lotter confirmed this in an e mail to me on 30 September, 2016.

Today



Fig. 3. “Technical Death”. (Source: *Faces of War*).

The sketch paired with “Technical Death” captures the armorer’s studied care as he loads munitions into an aircraft’s weapons system. Lotter’s poem draws ironic attention to an increasingly common phenomenon in modern warfare – that combat is no longer a face to face mortal contest and that death can be dealt from a

distance. This is a position of increasing relevance as we consider the deployment of armed drones and the use of robot devices to effect lethal force.¹⁸

Interestingly though, a few pieces emerge that speak more to the loss of identity I have already mentioned and which take as their locus the poet's determination simply to survive. "First Lesson" (unpublished) written on 10 August is a good example of this feature:

Know each other.
 Train to become
 The left and right hands of one team.
 Out there
 One's error
 Will kill the other.

The poem is short and ruthlessly pared down. Aptly, it functions like a simple machine. The soldiers are depersonalised, stripped of any recognisable human traits and have become the moving parts of a war engine. For it to function (and for them to survive) the parts must work in perfect, instant synchronicity. Similarly, the few lines of "Your Choice" (unpublished) pare this notion down to the extreme:

Alertness lives, complacency dies

 If you want to survive
 Remember the rule of the bush.

The whole piece becomes a simple distillation. What is required to survive is wrapped in the single word "alertness". In this moment there is no room, whatsoever, for larger thoughts of identity, nationhood or ideology. The only thing that matters now is maintaining an animal-like degree of hyper-vigilance. The consequences of any lapse in concentration are, as the poem suggests, immediate and fatal. If there is a larger sense of fatalism emerging, it is understandable, for this is a common trope in war poetry. The war, once a distant thing of the "border", has infiltrated every

¹⁸ Dallas police used a robot delivered bomb to kill the lone shooter, Micah Johnson, on 8 July 2016. This is reckoned to be the first such act in history.

fibre of Lotter's being. Yet even in these deep, dark moments of private hell, Lotter is able to take a step back.

On 12 August he wrote "Dirge of the Lost Souls" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 95). The poem is built on the common trope of the wandering lost soul. In Lotter's hands, though, it is modified and translates into a subtle condemnation of all those promoting and prosecuting the war. Though a little starched in places, the poem is gripping:

The guard gripped his rifle and listened
 To the wind as it swept around him
 Howling its tale of the souls it carried,
 Souls condemned to roam
 Unshriven.

No hero's fanfare or guard of honour for them.
 They moan through the night,
 Condemned to keen down the years
 Bewailing their unburied bodies.

Listen
 At night in the bush
 To the thin, shrill pleas of those
 Caught in the crossfires of war.

"Dirge of the Lost Souls" is built on Catholic dogmas of absolution but as the unresolved tension builds, we realise that there is no pardon or release available. Significantly, Lotter deconstructs the identities of the dead in the first stanza and paints a quick but forbidding picture of their eternally tormented predicament. The second stanza deliberately excludes guerrillas ("no hero's fanfare") and Rhodesian soldiers ("guard of honour") from the haunting picture. If we are initially puzzled at who these souls might be, Lotter leads us carefully to this dreadful realization: these are the "unburied", suggesting they are civilians, specifically black people caught in

the war's pincers.¹⁹ The confirmation comes in the last line: "Caught in the crossfires of war". The poem is notable for the humanity it preaches, for Lotter demonstrates deep empathy with these victims and although it is not obviously proclaimed, the anti-war theme is deeply reinforced as we consider the piece as a whole. On occasions, though, Lotter's compassion and sense of justice would be put to strange test.

In preparing to leave the camp, Lotter's group heard about the sad case of (black) members of the local community who could not access their salt pan because Zambian troops across the border would fire mortars at them. Lotter's motley crew hatched a plan to provoke a fight with the Zambian army to avenge this injustice, and Lotter recalls somewhat gleefully how on the night of 13 August "[w]e fired off two mortar shells at Kanyemba [in Zambia] and made the night sky hideous with tracer for half an hour in an attempt to get the Zambians to retaliate. No dice. They were not stirring."²⁰ Whatever challenges the Recce camp posed, Lotter looked back on it with some satisfaction, confident that he had kept up with ruthlessly fit men and proved his worth to his comrades as a fighting soldier. His final entry on 15 August relates: "feeling tired but satisfied that I made the grade."²¹ The entry reveals another side of Lotter's character: he firmly believes that individuals should do their fair share of any common task. It is part of the "honour code" he inherited from his parents, and as much as he criticises shirkers in his diaries, there are numerous entries that demonstrate that he includes himself in these expected standards of conduct and performance.

He had been exceptionally productive on this camp. The final ten pages of the diary contain manuscripts of poems that he would return to, and again, most seemed to be material for *Rebel Rhodesia*. He demobilized back in Salisbury and returned home to Avril. They managed to go on an overseas holiday to Spain²² for a few weeks and

¹⁹ All cultures have funeral and memorial customs, but in southern Africa, funeral and mourning rites play a vital part of custom and culture. Leaving people unburied and unmourned is a calamitous thing.

²⁰ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Recce 2" 13 Aug. 1979. MS. 20/35.

²¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Recce 2" 15 Aug. 1979. MS. 22/35.

²² Rhodesian passports were accepted by very few countries. Spain and Greece (emerging from lengthy periods of right wing government) and Switzerland (traditionally neutral) were the only European countries that would admit holders of these passports. There were no direct air links, so the Lotters had to fly via South Africa.

whilst they were away were able to enjoy a brief, normal existence. The war continued its violent course, because the transitional government headed by Muzorewa had failed to gain international recognition. The British, sensing an opportunity, proposed all-party settlement talks at Lancaster House to win a settlement and end the war as soon as possible. Against this fast moving backdrop, Lotter would pour his soul into his poetry.

In the last four months of 1979 Lotter would write close to forty poems. He kept no diaries when he was not in the army, so pinning down the back story relies on speculation. What is apparent, however, is that in these four months he would write with furious purpose. There were two larger driving forces propelling his work. We know that he was planning his own collection, *Rebel Rhodesia*, and assembling the material and the notes for this planned publication was one factor. He had also been approached by Peter Badcock to contribute to *Faces of War*, so this task was also on his mind, although it probably permitted much thematic overlap with his own book concept. He was also in a deeply unstable position as, like many white Rhodesians, the future seemed bleak. That, and his war experiences, reverberated around his mind and some quite remarkable poetry was the result.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine all of Lotter's poems written in 1979, so I have had to select pieces from this period that illustrate notable tropes or concerns he had. Amongst the many poems that he wrote to occupy the planned publications, a number speak of a keening sense of identity collapse, barely suppressed trauma and weary fatalism. "I am Death" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 99) illustrates this well.

This man mocks me with his songs
 Scatters sharp steel-edged words
 In his vain attempts to cut me down
 Into pieces a human can hold,
 Understand,
 Lose his fear of.

Poor, scurrying, ink-scratching man
 I am death.
 I have no need of songs
 Or capital letters to mark my state.
 I was, I am, I always will be,
 Everywhere, with everyone.
 Let the little man chant his psalms
 Play with his charms,
 His seconds tick off the milestones,
 His road, like all others
 Leads to my halls.

Clearly the speaker is Death himself and whilst Lotter may have begun in a self-deprecatory way, the intent of the poem becomes manifest in the second stanza. Lotter has seen so much violence and has been so caught up in this war that there seems no escape. The universal truth of human mortality is catapulted forward and we see Lotter's fears emerge. In his continued engagement with this war, "His [own] seconds tick off the milestones". Lotter seems resigned to the fact that it is only a matter of time before he, too, will fall in this fight. Expressions of fatalism are common in war literature, but there is an edge to this piece. Lotter's fatalism is closely linked to the "culture of defeat", and echoes similar concerns that emerged in some German literature at the end of the war and in the immediate post-war period. Ingo Stoehr (245) suggests that

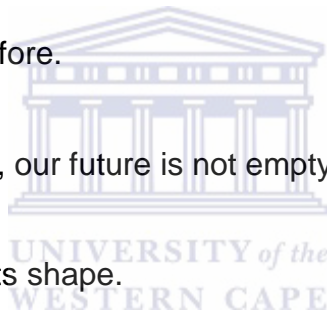
During the early years the search for a simple language dominated, as did the theme of war, where "war" represents a wide thematic field from war events themselves to the effects of war's aftermath on civilian life. In the wake of Germany's total defeat and collapse, disorientation was often expressed as the individual's subjection to blind fate.

The difference, of course was one of physical extremes. Germany was invaded, devastated and occupied. The same level of destruction and subjugation did not occur in Rhodesia, but the loss of identity and particularly, the sense of some thwarted national purpose (in Germany, the national socialist project, in Rhodesia

the “defence” of Western civilization), is remarkably similar and becomes a theme that is braided with trauma, and it emerges strongly in Lotter’s work. An example is “Rhodesia, The End” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 137) written just a few weeks before the Lancaster House conference began.

We were a strange, quarrelsome folk
 We were many. We were all the peoples
 Of this troubled land of many names,
 We believed in destiny, and when ignited,
 Even by leaders themselves misguided,
 We moved, we strove, we wrought.
 We crossed our metal in the fire of war.

We moulded a nation
 Where tribes existed before.
 Note well.
 Our time has not ended, our future is not empty.
 It has merely changed its shape.



“Rhodesia, The End” is a peculiar poem with apparently contradictory aims. The title suggests that Lotter is intent on drawing a curtain over the imaginary space of Rhodesia. The “we” of the poem should rather be read as white Rhodesians even though Lotter claims “we were all the peoples”, because it is simply not plausible at this point to assert that black Rhodesians shared the same aspirations as the whites. Although the poem acknowledges the end of Rhodesia, its larger purpose seems to be an attempt to ameliorate the defeat and lessen the emotional pain “Rhodesians” must have felt on 18 April, 1980, when independent Zimbabwe was born. But the piece quickly becomes overly mawkish particularly in those lines (4 – 6) that are linked to the old Rhodesian myths and which recall the pioneer and wilderness civilising tropes. Where the poem becomes problematic, however, is in Lotter’s attempt to excuse the Rhodesian leaders as merely “misguided”. This is unsatisfactory, particularly as the poem was written towards the end of a brutal and devastating war, when one would expect either a more surgical deconstruction of the

attitudes and policies that white Rhodesians held or, at least, an acknowledgement of grievous error and terrible miscalculation by the Rhodesian leaders. What probably fuels the piece is a belief Lotter may have held (expressed in lines six and seven) that Rhodesians displayed courage in the fight. What is missing, of course, is the recognition or admission that perhaps the cause was unjust. The poem is redeemed though when we consider that Rhodesian “patriotic” myths and symbols have been effectively rinsed from the poem’s structure and intentions.

The careful use of the past tense emphasizes the slippage into history. The outcome of the Lancaster House conference was always going to be a shoddy solution of compromises that suited no particular party entirely. The urgency of stopping the war meant that deeper issues such as land tenure (one of the bitter points of contest throughout the settler colonial period) did not form part of the constitutional framework under discussion. If this marked the tentative beginnings of modern Zimbabwe, it was, for the Rhodesians, literally “the end” – the end of their hegemony, the end of their “national myths”, the end of their privileged position and their cherished way of life. So, in this piece, Lotter attempts, with limited success, to capture the damaged emotional spaces and tattered identities he and his peers occupied at the time. It is a theme that boils to the surface, too, in “Aftermath” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 7), written a day later on 21 August 1979.

This war
 Had its stirrings when I was ten,
 Split my family, drove my father from his land,
 Brought poverty down upon

Those blackmen who had helped to raise me,
 Whose sons I played in the hills with,
 A life ago.

This Army
 Has had me in its ranks
 For nine hard years. I have seen
 Friends dead, women torn open,

Babies carved like a Sunday joint.

In the long shadow of this brothers' war

I am to be obsessed by what.

Tranquility?

Death

Walks through my bitter songs,

Talks with me

In rough, familiar tones.

Lotter was 30 when he wrote this piece, so the opening lines speak loudly about how much of his life has been shaped by war. The idea continues and is particularised in the lines: "This Army / Has had me in its ranks / For nine hard years." The disruptions of the war are compounded by the image of "this brothers' war" in the fourth stanza. The line's meaning is not clear. It may be intended to recall the somewhat clichéd "brothers in arms" trope, but I suspect that Lotter's intention is closer to suggesting that this was a civil war that divided families. We have previously discussed this issue, and need to reject that suggestion as both false and a gross over simplification of the casual factors of the war. The final stanza reintroduces the trope of sudden, violent death, and here the power is made manifest when we realize that men of 30 usually have stable careers, life-affirming purposes and goals to work towards. Like many others, Lotter has given his youth to war, necessarily neglected his career and family and has been damaged as a result. The anti-closure offers the lingering suggestion that this trauma has been indelibly stamped into Lotter's psyche. We need, of course, to remember that even though the political process was unstoppable and had a logical conclusion, the war continued with abject ferocity in the interim, and Lotter would be trapped for some months in this bizarre state of martial limbo.

Lotter has written very few pieces that are overtly political. His own interest in party politics had withered after he witnessed the RF's treatment of his father in the late 1960s, and there were no organized political party structures in Rhodesia that

attracted his sympathies. His distrust of politicians (but not the processes of political expression) set and became impervious early in his adult life. His political poems tend, therefore to be loud broadsides, and do not address particular politicians, policies or ideologies. "Lancaster House" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 120), written on 3 November 1979, only eight weeks before the official ceasefire was supposed to take effect, illustrates this approach.²³ It is an angry swipe at **all** the politicians involved (British, Black Nationalist and RF).

The politicians strut pompously
 To yet another conference table.
 For the umpteenth time bellow and strike a pose.
 What care I for all this?
 Their babble rolls on.
 We continue to die.

The piece is a simple, angry retort that relies on brevity and venom for effect. There are no finely crafted images, no pretence at meter or rhythm. Its effectiveness lies in our noting and accepting Lotter's anguish. Even though the end was near and apparent to all, the violence continued, plunging Lotter into a bitter and accusatory state of mind, echoing a theme we tend to associate with the poetry of Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen. Indeed, the closing lines from Owen's "Dulce et decorum est" come to mind:

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,
 The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
 Pro patria mori.

In the closing weeks of 1979, Lotter cast his gaze outwards and in one single piece, "The Shadows Gather" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 130), captures the grotesque zeitgeist. It is a short piece, but expresses interesting ideas:

²³ 28 December 1979 was the official date on which the ceasefire was supposed to take effect.

The long night settles in morbid gloom
 Upon my city.
 Fear skitters through the darkness,
 Babbles his tale
 Of a dawn
 Which will not come again.
 Nightmares
 Take solid, harsh form,
 Scratch, slobbering, on flimsy doors.
 Time has jumped, changed its shape while we slept
 Tomorrow
 Is no longer ours.

The poem quickly abandons the urban landscape and the nocturnal motif becomes a scene of ill-defined horror. The beastly imagery of lines seven to nine are horrific and anarchic in quality. Though these lines speak about the sort of madness many whites experienced, namely the ever present spectre of appalling violence enacted daily, it also addresses another component to the madness whites faced, a madness rooted in the erosion of their sense of security, their collective “Rhodesian” identity, and the collapse of their hopes for the future. Lotter cleverly inverts the nightmare trope to suggest that the nightmare is in fact reality, and not a nocturnal fantasy. Dan Wylie (188) similarly captures the ghastly atmosphere²⁴ of those months in his memoir of his service in the war:

So it goes: messy and out of our control. Our heads are stupefied with anxiety and hope, relief and cynicism, disgust and self-assurance, all in about equal measure. The country we were taught to defend has somehow slipped away, but the country we need to heal is still there, unchanged, harbouring just the same beauties and ills.

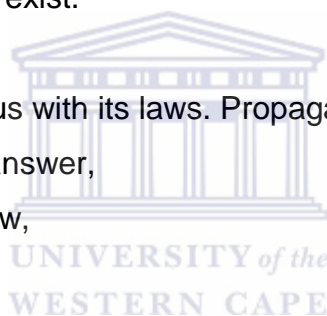
Lotter would re-engage with this theme and undertake an honest self-assessment of why people like himself remained stuck in this dreadful situation in the simple, two-

²⁴ I was serving in the British South Africa Police in 1979 and recall this as a time of great danger, fear and confusion.

stanza poem “The Last Few Thousand Whites” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 98). He wrote it on 12 December, 1979, the very day that the British Governor, Lord Soames, arrived in the country to supervise the imminent ceasefire and prepare for the general election that would lead to an independent Zimbabwe.

Why do we carry on
 In this apprentice slaughterhouse?
 Hang desperately on
 To the last few vanishing threads of hope
 Like the Portuguese did in Mozambique.
 Cannot we face the facts
 Of civil war, sudden death, economic distress
 Danger to our wives, our families;
 A future which does not exist.

The government holds us with its laws. Propaganda lulls us.
 Yet this is not the final answer,
 It is the basic human flaw,
 Instinct not reason,
 Which refuses to tear up its roots,
 Face reality
 And go.



The poem is a sober attempt to analyse the peculiar choices Lotter and many whites continued to make by staying in Rhodesia to the very end. He freely admits in the first stanza that ample historical evidence exists that resisting decolonization and fighting an insurgency is a hopeless act. He compounds this knowledge with something of an excuse in the second stanza, declaring that “The government holds us with its laws. Propaganda lulls us”, but he is also honest enough to admit the fundamental truth: he and the whites that have remained are caught in the sacrifice trap which Lotter articulates as: “Instinct not reason,/ Which refuses to tear up its roots,/ Face reality / And go”. December marked the return to nominal British control, and the settlement agreement was signed on 21 December 1979. Lotter captured the bitter irony of the moment in a small poem “The Queen’s Christmas Broadcast”

(unpublished) on 25 December, 1979. Local television broadcast the monarch's speech – the first time it had aired in Rhodesia for 15 years:

Rhodesians are watching this show tonight.
 Children
 Who have never known
 British Dominion, sanction-free shops
 Or peace.
 Will they laugh as they watch this film
 Of snotty-nosed Commonwealth peasants
 Mixed with fruity English tones?

Comic absurdity aside, the poem has a tellingly sad intention that stands as an indictment against all those who conspired to allow this tragedy to unfold. That children might live their entire lives not knowing peace is tragic and unforgivable. The second last line is an oblique reference to the sense of disconnection, now almost complete between the Rhodesian settler colonial project and the “mother country”. The unstated irony here, however, is that many of the children of these white Rhodesians would grow up similarly disconnected from Rhodesia either due to emigration or the necessity of adapting to life in black-ruled Zimbabwe. Even though the poem is set in the very last weeks of Rhodesia's existence, it does not mark the end of Lotter's army service. He did not stow away his kit and begin to plan his post-war future. A peculiar crisis would follow.

Lord Soames arrived in Salisbury and a Commonwealth Monitoring Force (CMF) of a few thousand troops was airlifted in to supervise the assembly of guerrillas and to monitor the ceasefire. The CMF did not have the manpower, weaponry or resources to act as peacekeepers or intervene militarily to enforce peace. Ironically, the only local forces able to respond to wholesale violations or guarantee the pre-election process were the Rhodesian security forces. Lotter would face his final call up in 1980. He bitterly resented the reason for, context and events on this camp, and he kept a detailed diary of the experience. His service in this late, phony war period produced some remarkable poetry, and within months his life would move in a

completely different direction as he joined the white exodus from Zimbabwe. Emigration would challenge Lotter, but see his work published not as he supposed in the manuscript of *Rebel Rhodesia*, but in a greatly adapted form as the book *Rhodesian Soldier. and Others Who Fought* – a collection that established Lotter's position as *the* Rhodesian soldier poet. We will look at these developments and the work that resulted in the following chapter.



(Chapter Nine: The end and emigration)

“But now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me. I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship. Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us that you are poor devils like us, that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, and that we have the same fear of death, and the same dying and the same agony-- Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy?” (Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*).

In January 1980, the end of the war and the birth of independent Zimbabwe were clearly in sight. Within a short, four-month period, guerrillas would assemble in predetermined assembly points, most Rhodesian troops would return to their barracks, electioneering would begin and the country would attain independence on 18 April 1980. Lotter and his wife were actively planning to leave independent Zimbabwe, but remained a while, ostensibly putting their affairs in order and possibly also gauging which way the wind might blow in the months to come. This was more common than one might think and a number of whites reversed their decisions when they judged that conditions in Zimbabwe might, after all, not be intolerable for them. Like all emigrants Lotter would only be able to take R\$1000,¹ basic household goods and a single second hand car. His other assets would have to be liquidated, and the proceeds lodged in a frozen account or simply given away. He watched, keenly, as the country underwent radical change, with no clear indication of the outcome. In this twilight zone, he would keep an extensive diary, and write a number of pieces that capture the moment and its uncertainties. These were strange, unpredictable times and he sought to preserve their bitter, volatile flavour.

On 7 January 1980, he wrote “Father Knows Best” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 124). The poem is a private, reflective piece that ripples with bitter intent:

How smoothly do the radio
And TV reflect

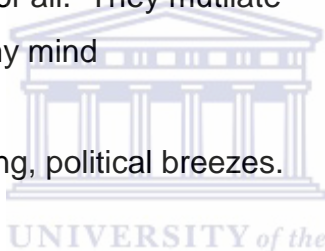
¹ In 1980, the Rhodesian dollar was pegged at 1:1 to the US dollar.

The changing tone, the moral swing
The readjustment of our thoughts.

Last month that man
Donned his pious look to preach
Of the latest
“Terrorist atrocity”
This month
With unchanged face and nimble doublethink
He tells me that
“Guerrillas clashed with SFA.²”

Words.

The wickedest weapon of all. They mutilate
My logic. Try to sway my mind
In tune with each
Of their vagrant, changing, political breezes.



Lotter captures the instant when the language on state media changed.³ In fact, “[t]he changing tone, the moral swing” was far from smooth. In adapting their language, the newsreaders noticeably dropped words such as “terrorist” and began using the value-neutral term “guerrilla”. Lotter’s title “Father knows best”, is, of course, an angry side-swipe at the patronising tone of the politicised state media. The unstated irony, of course, is that things were really no different in the old Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation; there the newsreaders had similarly reflected the state line and their language had supported the official discourse. Many Rhodesians had happily accepted the RBC’s voice, but Lotter never did. Part of his anger is historic, as Lotter had always viewed the Rhodesian mass media with suspicion, and had not bought into the propaganda that belched forth in huge daily doses. The final stanza, though cast in Lotter’s voice, speaks of the confusion that many whites were experiencing at the time, with the image “mutilate / My logic” ably

² SFA – security force auxiliaries, the Pfumo re Vanhu forces.

³ The Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation was a small operation. It employed a handful of TV and radio news readers, all of whom were household names to white Rhodesians.

catching Lotter's sense of terrible disruption, an inability to predict the future based on his experience of the past. It was a feature of white experience at the time, with uncertainty and latent fear percolating through the white community. Whereas Rhodesian media had previously adopted the supposed voice of the silent majority of whites, this construct was visibly collapsing. Murray Edelman (12), in his analysis of the power of public rhetoric, makes the point that "conflicting cognitions are therefore, a compelling device for marshalling political support or opposition and at the same time a psychological mechanism through which people can live with the policies they resent or resist". Lotter's distrust of all politicians is known, and the poem certainly captures his rejection of this new form of manipulation. He was well aware that the same presenters who had voiced RF propaganda, were now in the service of the regime in waiting. The dramatic change in public discourse expressed by the state broadcaster was traumatic for those who clung to the old myths, and they could only sit and watch in horror as these crumbled to dust around them. Lotter would cultivate his outsider position and chart these changes with perspicacity in his diary.

He received notice of a call up that would cover the election period, and shortly before he reported for duty, he wrote "Brothers" – a poem that would certainly not have been intended to find a place in *Rebel Rhodesia* because of its tacit acknowledgment of Rhodesian dirty tricks and atrocities.

These years
 Have brought us
 Far closer to the enemy than
 We allow ourselves to think.
 When he is ruthless, hard and cruel
 You cannot fight by the Queensbury Rules.
 You learn his ways
 Bit by bit,
 Begin to use them
 Slowly, so slowly
 You don't
 Even notice it.

The honest admission: “You learn his ways” begins to challenge the romanticised myths of the Rhodesian soldier pursuing a just cause but at this point it stalls ethically by not including admission of previous oppression in the settler colonial era. Indeed, such territory seems deliberately cordoned off by the addition of the qualifying statement “these years” (the Rhodesians’ war experience) being responsible for the Rhodesians’ adoption of savage and brutal tactics. In the lines “Far closer to the enemy than / We allow ourselves to think”, lies the tacit admission that Rhodesian soldiers do “cross the line” on operations. Lotter’s attempt to justify this adoption of barbarism is contained in the hackneyed and altogether unconvincing lines: “You cannot fight by the Queensbury Rules. / You learn his ways”. Where Lotter does succeed in his intent, however, is his recognition that the (Rhodesians’) descent into brutality is a consequence of a process framed in deadly subtlety and shot through with recurring moments of moral compromise. In this respect, the piece breaks with the trope of the Rhodesian soldier as somehow the noble fighter for civilized standards. Indeed, the poem’s closing displays such a degree of discomfort and disquiet that one cannot but wonder if the Rhodesians can claim any defensible moral position. There is, though, a discernible sense that Lotter recognises this moral erosion in himself and is greatly perturbed by it. This sort of introspective soul-searching is not resolved, and the instability of this position becomes a common thread in the diaries and poems. Indeed, his writing shows extremes of thought that reflect his ongoing struggle to identify, expose and process the accumulations of bitterness in his soul. It welled forth, and there would be little relief from these challenges when Lotter reported for election security duty in January 1980.

One of the first diary entries dated 27 January 1980 reads:

The next election call up looms. The firm [More Wear] has tried to get me off without success, so on 15 February 1980 I am off completely against my will. Avril and I have made a decision back in November when we came back from overseas – unless the hotes give us a reason to stay we are going after the election. So far we have seen no reason to stay and every reason to go. Communists hold rallies and make dire pronouncements, terrorists have

become guerrillas and the white[s], who at the last election tried to split the vote to keep Muz [Abel Muzorewa] retained are treating him like the last white hope and are desperately hoping he will win. An uneasy truce prevails under the supervision of Lord Soames, a truce which is broken daily. It seems to be a situation of no hope and no reason to do Army service.⁴

Lotter is clearly in a deeply troubled state. Reluctant to serve another tour knowing that the “cause” is lost, and surrounded by daily reminders of assembling guerrillas and a switch to radical political rhetoric in the public broadcast media, he penned the caustic piece “Medals Parade: 1980” that same day. It has numerous flaws and remains unpublished, but I include it here to illustrate Lotter’s angry, confused state of mind, which he shared with many “bittereinder” whites at the time.

Comrade Phineas Sithole, step forward.

For savagery far beyond the call of duty
 In that you bayoneted three screaming babies
 In cold blood
 You have been awarded
 The Gold Star of Zimbabwe; Third Class.

Furthermore, you will be glad to know,
 The babies' berserk mother
 Who so needlessly attacked you
 Will be charged with assault
 Next week, before the military courts.

The piece may refer to the scene in 1977 when Lotter was present at the scene of the baby Natasha Glenny attack.⁵ The poem is mocking and bitter in tone and intent. Significantly, in the second stanza the trope of the cowardly terrorist has not been abandoned and is modified into a grotesque parody of heroism. The third stanza

⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 27 Jan. 1979. MS. 1/69.

⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Chipinga 1" 29 Sept. 1977. MS. 7/42.

implies that whites may well expect to face kangaroo courts and rough justice. The poem is crudely-wrought, overly partisan and racist in tone, but it needs to be read in the context of the dystopian landscape that Lotter and many whites inhabited. David Caute (389), the British novelist and journalist, accurately caught the character of these surreal months that preceded Mugabe's election triumph:

...white Rhodesians stared morosely at their newspapers, which for the first time displayed pictures of grinning guerrillas in high morale, normally terrorists were depicted only as corpses, as "floppies" with their intestines coiling from their stomachs or as "on-sides' renegades who had taken advantage of the amnesty programme. But never this.

The early part of the election diary makes several references to the collective angst that had settled over white Rhodesians. Lotter records: "Avril and I are squabbling a lot. It is election nerves. It is not only us, we can see it in everyone around us. Nobody knows what [is] happening, civil war, general mobilisation or what."⁶ It was not just pre-election jitters that were getting under Lotter's skin. He may not have said it outright, but what he was describing was, in effect, the implosion of white identity in Rhodesia, and this cannot be explained as simply the result of military defeat.

Postcolonial theory offers a useful means of navigating the entangled interactions of privileged masculinity, class distinction, supremacist thinking and capitalist means of production that have been shown to dominate and shape the lived experience of white colonists and settlers. It is not my intention here to add my own overlays to this already well-charted terrain, or to stray down the path of whiteness studies, but Bertens (208) observes that:

Racial stereotyping, for instance, first of all repeats this process of identity-creation that it construes not only those who are stereotyped, but also the stereotyper himself – in opposition to the stereotyped. It functions to construe or confirm the stereotyper's identity. However, the repetitiveness of acts of

⁶ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 11 Feb. 1980. MS. 3/69

stereotyping points to a continuing uncertainty in the stereotyper; apparently the stereotyper has to convince himself over and over again of the truthfulness of the stereotype – and thus, by extension, of his own identity.

I find myself in broad agreement with Bertens' argument, but suggest some modification to his position. Although the war introduced multiple unquantifiable stressors into the lives of white Rhodesians, the war's loss alone cannot satisfactorily explain white identity collapse. Rather, I suggest that the implosion started years earlier with the decolonisation campaign of nationalist politicians; those pressures, along with escalating guerrilla warfare, combined and accumulated to the point where the feedback loop mechanism of stereotype maintenance that Bertens advances, was increasingly disrupted and finally overthrown. The seismic shock that shattered white Rhodesian identity, in 1980 then, was not just the sting of a lost war,⁷ but also the sure knowledge that once Mugabe ascended to power, their hegemonic political position, their privileged access to capital, their control of the means of production, their advantages in land tenure, social class and their identity-reinforcing social institutions (such as schools and clubs) would either disappear entirely or be radically reconstructed. This point needs emphasis. As Teresa Barnes notes in her contribution to *Trauma and Topography*, Rhodesia also privileged white masculinity:

Colonial Rhodesia...overflowed with macho events. In a way, colonial Rhodesia, born and perpetuated through violent, penetrative conquest, was a macho event. The Rhodesian hero was a white male who unambiguously dominated both nature and the natives (7).

Thus as the Mugabe regime assumed and consolidated its power, these gendered markers of white life and privilege in the former settler colonial project would come under scrutiny and face either radical revision or destruction. White people knew this, it had been predicted as part of the RF propaganda war in the 1970s and they were consequently deeply afraid of it. Another altogether more bizarre disruption would

⁷ By way of comparison, the Germans and Japanese, though roundly defeated in war, did not suffer complete identity loss. They continued living in their homeland as much of their social structure and civil institutions remained recognizable, even if heavily modified by the Nuremberg trials, politically sanctioned amnesia and the Marshall Plan.

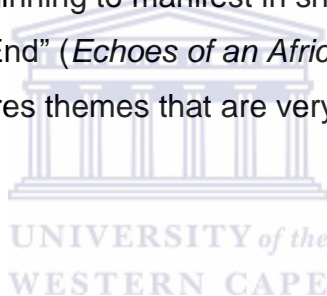
occur too. Heidi Grünebaum (117) suggests that “the hegemonic codes of social regulation under late capitalism are reproduced in the *lived minutiae of the everyday* [emphasis added] precisely due to their lived ordinariness.” In adapting Grünebaum’s initial argument, I would suggest too that the war which Rhodesians had lived with for over a decade, had become, perversely, their own lived ordinariness. The end of the war thus instantly removed this toxic yet stabilising influence, so that the community white Rhodesians once claimed (often cast as an eerie reconstruction of British unity and stoicism during the Blitz), faced rapid and total dissolution as Zimbabwe’s independence approached. The net effect of these changes on individuals was, of course, highly traumatic, deeply marked and massively divergent. This was certainly true for Lotter as we shall see.

The cumulative effect of years in the army, vicious combat action, and dealing with death and destruction was beginning to manifest in sharply defined PTSD. On 30 January, he wrote the poem “End” (*Echoes of an African War* 141). It stands out as an anguished piece that explores themes that are very different to the poems he had written thus far.

Grant me your touch,
 Death.
 For I am spent.

My friends have gone to your distant lands
 One by one.
 Why have they received your peace,
 Why not I?
 May I not cease to struggle too?

You follow me through
 The pain and the wounds,
 The blood and the sorrow
 Lost hopes.
 You walk by my side



Watching, silent, patient.

Come Death,

Touch me.

I am ready

For your Dark Angel, now.

“End” is a curious piece, coming as it does, so close to the end of the war and yet not embracing any hope of peace this side of the grave. It is tempting to read the lines: “Grant me your touch, / Death. For I am spent” as fatalism cast in verse. I would suggest though, that it is more than this. The lines point to a psychic breakdown, trauma and disintegration that exists beyond the violent territory of combat action, if that is at all possible. In their examination of US military suicides, Braswell and Kushner (531) observe the conditions that may propel soldiers to psychic collapse *off* the battlefield and after the experience of combat.

Part of the reason why current explanations of military suicide have not examined the negative impact of military culture on suicidal behaviour is because they are implicitly framed by the assumptions underlying contemporary theories of suicide more generally. Most of these theories assume that integration into social groups is protective against suicide. This assumption was first and most famously enunciated in 1897 by Durkheim (1951), who argued that declining social cohesion results in increased individual alienation and egoism, which exacerbate the risk of self-destructive behaviours. Durkheim’s theory of the protective nature of social integration forms the foundation for what has become known as social capital theory... As such theories take for granted the protective aspects of socio cultural groups, they never consider the possibility that social integration [within a military culture] could contribute to suicidal behaviour.

The theory is applicable to Lotter’s case. As Braswell and Kushner point out, the collapse of social cohesion is powerfully disruptive and traumatic in itself. I have discussed how such disruption became a feature of white identity towards the end of

the war, so if we add to that a military culture (and the Rhodesian Army was steeped in this) that privileges gendered machismo stereotypes, promotes violence, resists critical thought processes and actively discourages soldiers from speaking about their trauma or experiences, it becomes perfectly understandable why Lotter may have moved temporarily into this dark, nihilistic space where death seemed the only option. Lotter's is a terribly lonely space empty of value, desolate and grim. He would battle to find his way in the months to come. The bizarre circumstances of the election call up fill an extensive final diary, and Lotter wrote with precision in an attempt to preserve the bitter flavour of those days.

On 15 February, he noted something peculiar: "Soldiers in strange uniforms and strange vehicles will be arriving tomorrow. We are forbidden to discuss it amongst ourselves or with others after the call up."⁸ The troops in Lotter's unit speculated who these strange troops might be, and wild rumours of British or even ZIPRA forces joining them circulated, despite orders that the matter was not to be discussed. Ultimately, the mysterious troops never arrived, but it became common knowledge that South African forces had been deployed in Rhodesia in the run up to the election.⁹ That same day, he confessed to harbouring an unnerving premonition: "I am windy and have a premonition of being shot. Hope I am wrong."¹⁰ Casting his gaze over his compatriots, he noticed, too, how the war had displaced the air of the happy-go-lucky blokishness his comrades had once assumed. In its place, he drily records a resurgent interest in religion:

It suddenly struck me that if one accepts there is a "force" or a "god", then the reason behind this war and all others this century is to make people think and search for a purpose, an answer to life which they would not look for in complacent times. Is the end result the return to "pure" religion which we see?¹¹

⁸ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 15 Feb. 1980. MS. 5/69.

⁹ I can recall working with South Africans dressed in BSAP uniform in Bulawayo just prior to the 1980 election and, some years later, I met a young man at Rhodes University, who told me he and many of his national service intake, had been issued Rhodesian camouflage and deployed in the Beit Bridge area, ostensibly to open a safe route south should the situation warrant an evacuation of whites.

¹⁰ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 16 Feb. 1980. MS. 6/69.

¹¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 18 Feb. 1980. MS. 9/69.

Although this is an intriguing esoteric question, it is not one that surfaces in the poetry, suggesting to me that Lotter was ambivalent about religion, and avoided casting any such musings into verse. Instead, he would turn, again and again, to themes of trauma and destruction.

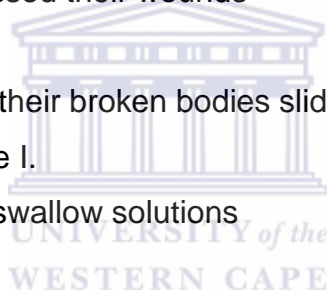
On 11 March, Lotter wrote the sombre “Think Well Before You Speak” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 125).

Speak softly, politician.

For the war-wounded moan in the rooms next door
And the graveyard down the road is full to overflowing.

Speak softly, politician

For when you have dressed their wounds
As have I
When you have helped their broken bodies slide down
A mortuary tray; as have I.
You are ill-equipped to swallow solutions
Which ignore
Our friends who paid the price.
As am I.



The poem begins quietly, with the first line becoming an accusing refrain that punctuates the poem and helps to focus our attention. It is clear that Lotter has little time for politicians of any ideology, and in this piece he carefully sets up an irreconcilable tension, an “us and them” dichotomy that weaves its way through bleak images of injury and death to deliver the poet’s powerfully sarcastic message: “You are ill-equipped to swallow solutions.” The piece does not invite reply, deflates the propaganda and emotional hyperbole as the politicians jockeyed and postured in the run up to the election. The poem shares themes with the anti-war poetry we associate with WWI, and similarly the soldier(s) are cast as deeply othered by their experiences, as victims of struggles they did not initiate, and who remain powerless to end their horror. Lotter’s anger simmered throughout this camp, and there was

little relief from the depressing reality that even though the war was all but over and well and truly lost, casualties continued to occur. Whilst he persisted in his efforts to flesh out his *Rhodesian Rebel* manuscript, his diaries and poems speak the language of angst, and he battles to comprehend the overwhelming sense of loss and futility sweeping its way through the white community.

On polling day, 27 February, he describes the mood thus: "Everyone including myself feeling tired and down. I think it is psychological...Ending up in a steady drinking spree that killed 2 bottles of brandy."¹² The drinking binge he describes is noteworthy. Lotter is not a hardened drinker and has made it clear to me in interviews that whilst alcohol was always a part of Rhodesian military culture, it was not normal for men to drink excessively on operational duties, precisely because soldiers relied on each other to be vigilant and prepared. Their behaviour thus seems overwritten with a sense of abandonment. Election news reports seemed to confirm the Rhodesians' worst fears: Mugabe's ZANU-PF looked set to win by a landslide.

Lotter noted with resignation (one gets the impression it came as no surprise to him) that "a colonel of RIC [Rhodesian Intelligence Corps] dropped in with the news that first indications are that Mugabe is winning."¹³ Lotter records that the news created alarm and despondency in the ranks and the mood soured. Whisperings of a putsch against ZANLA began to surface, with Lotter recording "rumours are that the Army is gearing up for a ZANLA threat on Salisbury, other centres and major lines of communication."¹⁴ Details would emerge later of a military coup against ZANU-PF ("Operation Quartz"¹⁵) planned by Rhodesian high command. If the plot briefly buoyed some, its non-implementation crushed any hopes of a last minute Rhodesian "victory". General Walls did write a secret letter to the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher on 1 March 1980,¹⁶ in which he made an emotional plea for late British intervention on the side of the Rhodesians and their internal settlement party

¹² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 27 Feb. 1980. MS. 26/69.

¹³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 28 Feb. 1980. MS. 26/69.

¹⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 29 Feb. 1980. MS. 30/69.

¹⁵ Operation Quartz would have involved a strike against assembled ZANLA troops. The "go" signal never came from Rhodesian Combined Operations HQ. General Walls was vilified by many Rhodesians in the years afterwards, and his involvement in Op Quartz was used by Mugabe to dismiss him from his post as head of the new Zimbabwe National Army, and force him into exile. He never wrote his memoirs, so his reasons and strategic thinking remain the stuff of speculation.

¹⁶ Full text of Walls's letter is available at <http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/120938>.

allies. He pleaded an emotional case “that if Mugabe succeeds in winning 51 or more seats, the election be declared ‘null and void’ on the grounds of official reports of massive intimidation frustrating the free choice of the bulk of the people” and his memo ended with the implied threat that he (Walls) “must reserve the right to take whatever action is necessary in the interests of the majority of people whom I am pledged to serve.”¹⁷ In retrospect, Walls and his military advisers were hopelessly naïve; the British were determined to cut the Rhodesian albatross loose and had no appetite or capacity to intervene militarily – as they would have been forced to do. These were strange times, with fear stalking the land and no hope left for white Rhodesia. If Walls vacillated on taking action, Lotter certainly showed greater resolve about taking control of his future.

On 4 March 1980, the prime minister elect, Robert Mugabe, made a conciliatory address to the nation on the state broadcaster. He spoke passionately, and attempted to reassure those whites who feared the worst was about to happen:

I urge you, whether you are black or white, to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together, as Zimbabweans, trample on racialism, tribalism and regionalism and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society as we reinvigorate our economic machinery.¹⁸

Lotter wrote the poem “Doubts” (unpublished) in reaction to Mugabe’s address. It reveals Lotter’s thinking in these turbulent times.

Let emotion drain away, let us
 Consider logic, for one calm moment.
 What if Mugabe's right? What if
 He is not the monster he has been painted as?
 What if
 He is statesman enough

¹⁷ See text of Walls’s letter at <http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/120938>

¹⁸ *Address to the Nation by The Prime Minister Elect, Robert Mugabe*. 4 March 1980. Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism, Salisbury: Zimbabwe.

To steer a middle course through the shoals of left and right ambition,
 To nurse the fragile flower of reconciliation, reconstruction,
 Make it bloom.

What if
 He is not a liar after all?

Then there will be peace, prosperity
 A chance for a man
 To live as he wants.

It may be so. Maybe.
 Myself, I am tired
 Of wait and see, of having my life moulded
 As others wish it to be.
 I want
 Guarantees. Which are impossible
 To find. Therefore
 I go.



The poem begins forthrightly, with Lotter playing his cards openly. The first four lines, appear pragmatic, but Lotter seems unconvinced. As quickly as he constructs this positive position, he demolishes it with the lines: “Maybe. / Myself, I am tired / Of wait and see, of having my life moulded / As others wish it to be. / I want / Guarantees.” If his attitude seems mean-spirited or truculent, it is worth noting that (like many in his position) Lotter was weary, not only of war, but also rendered deeply suspicious by the many years of political wrangling between the RF, the nationalists and the British government. There had been several attempts to set up settlement talks since 1965, but until Lancaster House all had all singularly failed to deliver on promises of peace and security. His closing argument delivered matter-of-factly and without fanfare of any kind is thus understandable under those circumstances. The relative economic strength and security of South Africa, despite the Apartheid policies which Lotter thought ridiculous, and perceived cultural similarities proved an attractive alternative and so the trek south was an altogether more realistic option than relocation to distant Britain or other foreign places. On 6 March, Lotter wrote in his diary:

Avril and I discussed going and set a firm date of 31 May 1980. She accepted it well and easily. It came as no surprise to us, we came back from overseas in November and set a going date of May, but let it drift. This really then is a reaffirmation of our earlier decision.¹⁹

They stuck to this decision, and secured visas and arranged to transport their goods. Lotter continued his copious diary writing and as the camp progressed, he would see more and more evidence that the social cohesion of white Rhodesian society had disintegrated. On 9 March, he would record with curiously detached detail the unthinkable – mass desertions from the Rhodesian army:

Roll call was taken today. Half the group and most of the officers are missing. They left last night. From the major's attitude, I gather not much will be done about it. He then inquired who had lost their rifles as 12 spares had been found lying around. Most of them turned out to belong to guys who gapped it [ran away] last night.²⁰

In the few short weeks before their departure, Lotter's mind turned again to the war, and he captured the humiliation of defeat in his piece "Tactical Error": written on 23 March 1980. This short poem has never been published.

We lost.
 And we deserved to lose
 Strutting around
 Wrapped in our follies
 Mocking
 Those cookboys with rifles.

How many hundreds of years ago
 Did military men lay down the rule;

¹⁹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 6 Mar Feb. 1980. MS. 48/69

²⁰ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 9 Mar. 1980. MS. 52/69

Never
 Underestimate
 Your enemy.
 But we
 Knew better.

The title is consciously ironic and indulges in a certain degree of word play that continues and creates the poem's power. The word "tactical" implies a single action undertaken in the hope of achieving a particular outcome, much like in team sports when tactics are deployed to gain momentary advantage and possibly advance the score. Yet the singularity of "tactical" becomes conflated with the larger purpose of strategy, with Lotter suggesting, somewhat ironically, that Rhodesian military strategy was based on blundered thinking. The initial almost benign register changes as the piece unfolds, so that the poet speaker's blunt words emphasise the calamitous consequences of prejudice and arrogance. The repetition of "lose" and "lost" leave no room for doubt and permit no comforting rewrite. The acrimony of the lines: "Mocking / Those cookboys with rifles" may seem racist at a first reading, but it is informed by a diary entry made on 3 October 1975 whilst Lotter was on the Operation Inlet tour. He recorded his reaction to just such a statement made by a Rhodesian army officer and swiftly judged the man's comment as: "Misinformation, misinterpretation, misrepresentation or a mixture of all."²¹ Lotter was not (even in 1975) about to believe this crude fiction, so his reference to it in the poem is for ironic effect, and damns, once and for all, the arrogance of white Rhodesians who "knew better". Typically, the poem adopts the anti-closure technique Lotter favours, as it smashes the myth of Rhodesian military superiority to dust.

There was no respite in civilian life either. Lotter bemoaned his superior's incompetence and concluded that he had no future at More Wear: "if we were staying I would have to look for another job."²² Whilst he made preparations to emigrate, the army had other plans for him, and Lotter found himself facing yet another call up (barely a week after completing the first of the year) – this time in the post-election period. He reported unenthusiastically and out of a sense of duty only.

²¹ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Operation Inlet 3" 3 Oct 1975. MS. 8/25.

²² Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Mugabe Election" 19 Mar. 1980. MS. 63/69.

Again he felt that he did not fit in, commenting baldly: "I have my books, my studies and my poetry and they can all get stuffed. I have...set myself a target of finishing the poetry for *Rebel Rhodesia* before I go home at Easter."²³ He set to the task with gusto and wrote some nine poems on the camp. Again his purpose seemed to be to swell the manuscript; he did however, also react to the rapidly changing situation in the country and penned some poems that clearly fell outside the scope of *Rebel Rhodesia*.

The diary provides some fascinating material about Lotter's thoughts in these last few weeks in the country. On 22 March he wrote at length, and intriguing insights emerge. He looked back at the war, why he fought, and how broken, disillusioned and betrayed he felt by the (white) politicians and the state broadcast media that had carried RF propaganda:

If what we believed in was wrong, why did we allow ourselves to accept it in the first place? If what we believed in was right why did we not rise in righteous indignation and hang our leaders from Salisbury's lampposts a dozen times over the last few years? My politics are shattered...I am a contradiction and a broken shell from which the essence has been poured forth...How am I to ever become whole again? How am I to throw off these shackles and reconcile my two halves, how am I ever going to find anything I can believe in again? I feel lost and betrayed...I will never, never forgive these people for manipulating my life and my mind as they have done since I was old enough to think about the world around me. This I swear!²⁴

I have always been impressed by the candour of Lotter's diaries. Even when he describes actions or moral positions that jar or are contradictory, he seldom attempts to mask the truth, and so his diary writings emerge as authentic and sincerely couched. There is no reason for him to conflate truth and fiction, as the diaries are a private, reflective space in which to exercise his intellect and give meaning to things that often fall far outside the spectrum of normal human experience, even if he does

²³ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Post Mugabe " 20 Mar. 1980. MS. 3/43.

²⁴ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Post Mugabe" 22 Mar. 1980. MS. 9/43.

not fully appreciate the implications of what he writes about all the time. There is, however, a subtle transformation that occurs in these final diaries, particularly in the extended entries that detail mounting anomie, aporia, loss of identity and unresolved, mounting levels of personal trauma that Lotter tries, unsuccessfully, to ameliorate through the self-reflective and confessional space of the diary. It becomes evident as one reads that Lotter is a man deeply marked by war. Indeed, in one extended entry that is couched in a stream of consciousness style, he writes with intensity and his words flow as a confessional flood:

What I have seen has coarsened me and marked me for life. A baby sliced to bits by bayonets and her shocked parents in the hospital. A boy, still alive, with his guts in coils between his legs, a burned corpse so charred he was no longer anything human, a man and his wife reaching for each other in death in a bullet-riddled Land Rover, pathetic naked broken bodies being washed on a mortuary slab, wounded men lying in that strange daze as I carted them off, a man lying in a maize field with wide, staring eyes and blood on his beard, a body tossed from a chopper onto an airfield with his head broken and his brains peeking out, many just ordinary corpses lying in strange postures, men being tortured with whips and electric prods, a woman being tortured with a gun barrel up her twat, quiet peaceful corpses, villages burnt, dozens of common skull bashings, a woman with an open head who still lived, a woman with burns covering most of her body, a burnt child, bodies heaped up by a grader and taken out to be disposed of in a petrol fire because they got too numerous, a corpse with its balls cut off and its prick removed with the culprit grinning and saying he would [make] a tobacco pouch of it, riding in a truck with my feet on a corpse and standing on it to get a better view, interrogations, searches, a thousand acts of casual brutal treatment of "kaffirs", a thousand cases of casual cruelty and hundreds of casual conversations on the subject and the gradual brutalisation of myself and of the men around me; the being woken at night by gunfire, the woman who was shot through the genitals, the doctor who operated on a woman and deliberately left an artery open when he closed her up, the doctor who stood on a fractured leg, asked if it hurt and then amputated the leg, the landmine

blast and all the other incidents which I could collect by going through my journals and my memories. All this has this has marked me. I would not be human if it did not.²⁵

And how it all marked Lotter too. There is a deep pathos inscribed in these diary lines, the tumble of violence, atrocity, death and destruction is offered matter-of-factly, but it is not Lotter's purpose to boast. The prose that spills in his characteristically untidy script serves a deeper purpose: his words are like a court record that preserves the vital memory of the evil and violence of those years. They are also amongst the most powerful and damning he wrote about the war, and go some way to memorialising the many unknown dead. There is no mistaking the anguish in his prose, and his inclusion of many Rhodesian atrocities also marks the beginning of Lotter's determined efforts to reclaim his soul. It is a process that Zimbabweans may need to consider and even formalise as part of a larger national dialogue of trauma recall, healing and reconciliation.²⁶ David Coltart (596) expresses just this point in his recent memoir.

In Zimbabwe many of the protagonists are still in the same country the war was fought in; nothing has been done to heal the wounds of the 1970s or 1980s, which have been allowed to fester. We still have tens of thousands of men and women fighting the war. It doesn't justify the gross human rights abuses that have been committed since 1980, but it does explain some of them. Until we have some process to enable us to come to terms with our past, our past will continue to haunt us and stunt our ability to develop. Furthermore, unscrupulous politicians will continue to exploit that past to consolidate their power.

Lotter's last call up to the Rhodesian army ended on 3 April, 1980. His final diary entry is tinged with annoyance at how things have turned out, and the speed at which things in his everyday world have changed also generates dissonance as he battles to process these changes:

²⁵ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Post Mugabe" 22 Mar. 1980. MS. 13-15/43.

²⁶ Unlike South Africa, Zimbabwe had no TRC process after the liberation war.

Last night I heard the radio announce itself as the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. Tonight I see ZRTV has a new logo and calls itself ZTV. I note the TV newscasters call it Zimbabwe. Perhaps it is politic to do all this before the official date of 18 April 1980, but the haste still annoys me.²⁷

The last poem that Lotter wrote before the official independence date of 18 April is "Fleeting Visit" (*Echoes of an African War* 85).

Have you ever heard
A dead man talk?
Have you ever walked
With ghosts?
Have you ever sat alone
And felt a spirit run his fingers up your spine?

I have sat with the shade of a long-gone friend
And heard him whisper in my brain
As his tattered shadow moved
In an ill-lit corner of the room.

The poem describes a ghostly encounter, and the image contained in the last line of the first stanza is terrifyingly rendered. The second stanza continues the treatment of this spectre's visit, and the poem's last four lines are guaranteed to chill the reader. The poem becomes an altogether weightier piece when we learn that this spectral visitor is Arvic.²⁸ The poem thus becomes doubly poignant as we realise that the old soldier's "fleeting visit" transfers the heavy mantle of exile to Lotter's shoulders.

Some six weeks later, Lotter and his wife drove south to the Beit Bridge border post. They left Zimbabwe with very little. The Rhodesian-era exchange controls remained

²⁷ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Post Mugabe " 3 Apr. 1980. MS. 42/43.

²⁸ Arvic was the ex-Waffen-SS soldier Lotter was close to. Lotter insists this poem was a supernatural occurrence, not a product of his imagination.

in force, and what little capital they could take with them would soon be swallowed by rent and service deposits. They settled in the Transvaal (Gauteng) and Lotter began job-hunting immediately. Amongst their few possessions was Lotter's precious "20 lb manuscript" – the collection he had assembled as *Rebel Rhodesia*. In an e mail to me on 2 May, 2016, he recalls

I was convinced I had a saleable story because Peter [Badcock] wanted my poetry for *Faces of War* and I also I knew that I had a wealth of material in my files. I approached [Dr] Olive Robertson to write the foreword...this time.

By the time of the Mugabe election (March 1980) and the post-Mugabe camp (March 1980), I thought I was just tying up loose ends in the 20lb mss and covering current events. Little did I know that the *angst* of emigration and loss as well as PTSD was still to come.

The Lotters' move to South Africa was disruptive and stressful. Though Zimbabwe and South Africa are physically neighbours, the similarities the Lotters anticipated proved largely illusory. They settled near Pretoria where the dominant white culture was conservatively Afrikaans and they, as English-speakers (and Lotter in particular with his antipathy towards any forms of nationalist rhetoric), found it tough to integrate. It is understandable that he went through periods of intense longing for what had been, and something of this nostalgia is caught in "Songs of Home" (*Echoes of an African War* 155).

Still

Your songs ring out your praises.

Still

Their power floods our homes.

Still

Their words tear through my heart

As the whistling troopie walks again

And my tears dilute

The bloodred wine.

Tonight, I raise my glass
 Not to remember. To forget,
 To ease the pain
 Your songs still bring. To blot
 All thoughts of what was home
 And what is now instead.

But the bottle is not made
 That is deep enough
 Nor a glass which is big enough.
 My roots are gone
 But my memories still cling on.

Lost and forlorn, I walk
 With strangers whose kindness
 Can help, but never mend
 The wounds left by your loss.



The framing reference of the “songs” are the “Troopie songs” made popular by the folk balladeer, John Edmond. Lotter, like many other ex-Rhodesians, had copies of these albums and the melancholic state invoked by the tunes is understandable even if the songs are clumsily and naively invested in the old Rhodesian myths. Significantly, the poem suggests that replaying the songs served only to underscore the sense of loss and disruption: “Tonight, I raise my glass / Not to remember. To forget, / To ease the pain / Your songs still bring”. The keening sense of lost identity is reinforced by the imagery of the second and third stanzas. Whereas alcohol is often associated with celebration, here it becomes a dangerous soporific that the poet imbibes in an attempt to “blot / All thoughts of what was home”. The sense of loss that soaks through the poem is pitiful enough, but the pressures of finding work, reviving a career, paying bills and adapting to civilian life added unique stressors to the couple’s lives. To those pressures, which in everyday life are recognised as particularly demanding challenges, were added the trauma of war service and PTSD. Sasha Gear (254), a contributor to *Beyond the Border War*, identifies this as

“transition stress” and I find myself in broad agreement with her argument and consider it applicable to Lotter’s situation:

Typically this involves a range of losses and pressures. A sense of loss frequently accompanies the questioning of the purpose on which much of a person’s life has been based. A loss of community and camaraderie comes with the shift from a life framed around collectiveness to the type demanded in the individualistic and market driven civilian world. Organisational support is replaced with remoteness and difficulty in accessing the structures that had up until that point shaped most experience. Bureaucracy, and perceived nepotism and expedience within these structures contribute to a sense of marginalisation, and can feed ex-soldiers’ anger and frustration.

This was certainly Lotter’s experience in the years immediately after emigration to South Africa. He experienced, too, something of the Vietnam veteran’s predicament, in particular a socially-scripted reluctance to acknowledge and engage with veterans that Chattarji describes as “a stolid, uncomprehending silence: an absolute refusal to know” (151). Returning Vietnam veterans found that the war they had fought in had divided society such that civilians (and even sometimes family and friends) were reluctant to discuss the war. It was more than ignorance; it was a stubborn refusal by those who remained in the US to engage with the war’s uncomfortable truths. Ordinary South Africans simply were not interested in Rhodesia’s war, for they had enough troubles of their own. Their own sons, brothers, friends, sweethearts, husbands and fathers were fighting “on the border” in South West Africa / Namibia and the fiercely competing discourses of South Africa’s own nascent insurgency and the regime’s military adventures in Angola eclipsed any interest the average [white] South African might have had in the Rhodesian war. Lotter was convinced, however, that he had a worthy manuscript in *Rebel Rhodesia*, and he began approaching publishers in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

If Lotter was confident in his work, the publishers he approached were less than enthusiastic about *Rebel Rhodesia*. At some personal expense, he had the manuscript typed up and bound. These were pre-computer and internet days, so his approach involved lodging these precious copies with various publishers. The

manuscript consisted of 124 poems, with a narrative structure that purported to take the reader through the war from recruit days to veteran status and beyond. The text was divided into sections, each preceded by an introductory note. There were no sketches or illustrations included in the draft as Lotter either did not have enough, or he believed the poems could stand on their own. Buoyed by the success of *Faces* and *Shadows of War* in Rhodesia, Lotter was disappointed when one after the other, publishers turned him down. At that time he was probably unaware that poetry publishing in South Africa was risk-intensive with sales typically in the low hundreds of copies for even the most successful and recognised South African poets. One of the publishers he approached was Ravan Press. Naively, Lotter did not adequately research this publisher, and so did not appreciate that his book was not the sort of thing Ravan would normally be interested in. A strange thing happened though.

He was contacted by Julie Frederikse who had been tipped off by Ravan. According to Lotter, Frederikse expressed interest in discussing his manuscript with him. In an e mail dated 9 October, 2016, he recalls the circumstances of their meeting, and her cavalier approach to copyright:

A few days later, I got a phone call from Frederikse saying that Ravan had put her on to me and asking for an interview. She said that she worked for the non-profit public broadcaster in the States and wanted the interview for a forthcoming show.

She arrived at my house one night with another woman who ran the sound, gave me back the copy of the mss which I had given Ravan and told me she was highly impressed. She interviewed me about my poetry while recording the lot.

Said goodbye with a tear in her eye and disappeared into the night. Next thing I knew about it was when I found her book [*None But Ourselves: Masses vs Media in the Making of Zimbabwe*] in Exclusive [Books].

Wrote to her expressing my displeasure and got back a curt reply saying that I had recited my poetry onto tape for her and therefore it was now in the public domain.

Look at the people she quotes in her book. I was not the only Rhodie she caught like this.

I suspect that the only reason why Ravan kept the mss was so that they could pass it onto her.

Lotter makes a valid point about the contributions of other ex-Rhodesians to Frederikse's book. Nothing justifies what they felt or said, but it is highly unlikely that in the immediate post war years ex-Rhodesians would have spoken with such candour unless they were under the impression that their interviewer was sympathetic. For example, an entry attributed to Johan Meiring, the former RBC Defence Correspondent and former Rhodesian army Psychological Operations member, is so spectacularly politically incorrect (even for the early 1980s) that it is hard to believe that he would speak with such racist venom to a journalist unless he was convinced that his opinions would be sanitised and / or agreed with:

I flew over the scene. It was unreal – there were *houts* [pejorative Rhodesian slang for black people] everywhere. It was like an anthill broken up. So we thought, wow, it's in the bag, Muzorewa's in. So what do these little fuckers do? Come in, feast off the poor Bishop and vote for Mugabe! (Laughs) Can't trust these *houts* (321).

Lotter's experience with Ravan / Frederikse had the unfortunate effect of making him deeply suspicious of journalists and, by extension, academics. So Lotter has, until very recently, refused to cooperate with academics who may have been interested in engaging intellectually with his poetry. Indeed, even though I have enjoyed a long relationship with Lotter, this study was only made possible once I could convince him that the exposure of his work to academic criticism was necessary if he wished his work to be taken seriously and not be dismissed as rumbling Rhodesian propaganda verses.

Though disappointed with the lack of interest from local publishers, he did not abandon the *Rebel Rhodesia* project entirely. He even wrote the unpublished, wry “Author’s Lament” in 1981 that deals specifically with his efforts to find a publisher:

I snared my soul
 With the nib of a pen, pinned it down
 On fresh, white sheets
 Of paper.

I sent it out
 For the world to see; sat back
 Warmed by creation's glow.
 And awaited the publisher's knock.

And waited...



The poem’s self-deprecatory last two lines adequately convey the reality check he experienced. Lotter’s fortunes changed in 1983 when he had lunch with Peter Stiff, a former Rhodesian policeman turned author and publisher.

Stiff had published two books in Rhodesia – the “true” adventure yarn *Tommy Goes Home* and the war novel, *The Rain Goddess*. Neither works were inspiring, with the latter work heavily invested in the quasi-heroic war tropes and fanciful plot lines that had come to characterise Rhodesian war novels thus far. More importantly, he had established Galago Books in South Africa with the purpose of publishing his own works as well as books on the Rhodesian war. At their meeting, Lotter pitched *Rhodesian Rebel* to Stiff, but the initial reaction was, as Lotter recalls, not that encouraging. As a publisher, Stiff was probably well aware of the parlous state of poetry publishing in South Africa. Stiff’s wife, Frances, was taken by the manuscript though, and she suggested that it be published as a coffee table format hard back with period photographs. Stiff apparently had a good stock of such photos, and after considering the idea, offered Lotter a publishing contract. His manuscript, put

together over the course of a number of camps, was substantially reworked, adapted and published by Galago in 1984 with a new title, *Rhodesian Soldier and Others Who Fought*. Lotter's initial pleasure at being published soon gave way to grave disappointment with the book and outright fury at what he felt was Stiff's unprofessional conduct.

I have pressed Lotter to explain his discontent, because *Rhodesian Soldier and Others Who Fought* did sell well,²⁹ and was the first image-rich text of the war to be published. In a lengthy interview, Lotter detailed his problems with the book and the publisher. They are numerous and worth discussion for the salutary lessons offered to aspiring writers about retaining artistic and editorial control, and monitoring sales and royalties. In terms of book production, Lotter believes that *Rhodesian Soldier and Others Who Fought* is not a particularly well-designed work. It has the look of a large scrap book, with pictures cut and pasted onto pages faced with plainly printed poems. The images are a mix of black and white and colour shots and suffer from low resolution reproduction problems. Page numbers 18 – 21 are missing, for example and in general “look” it displays the characteristics typical of pre-computer graphic design. The book is a functional if completely haphazard collection of poems, prefaced by a slim, jingoistic introduction and poorly supported by notes. It is far from the design of Lotter's original *Rebel Rhodesia* manuscript, and abandons the narrative track Lotter had been keen to etch into the work. On an artistic level, Lotter believes the work was compromised by Stiff's heavy handed editing. Stiff insisted on the book's particularly wordy title, and Lotter regards this as clumsy and misleading because the poems are about Rhodesian military personnel and *not* others who fought. Stiff apparently wished to suggest that the book paid homage to citizens on the periphery.³⁰ Even that semantic trickery might have been acceptable had Stiff not dropped poems he thought were anti-war, political in nature and thus “un-Rhodesian”,³¹ and changed others significantly.

²⁹ Lotter has no idea precisely how many copies were sold. Stiff hid that information, and this was part of the royalties dispute.

³⁰ Army storemen, military clerks, tradesmen and civilians in support roles.

³¹ Stiff rejected a number of Lotter's poems on these grounds alone – “Mushroom Club” (*Rebel Rhodesia* 114 and discussed in a previous chapter) was one such example.

In the case of excluded works, it is likely that this was part of Stiff's marketing strategy as he anticipated that the book would sell predominantly to the ex-Rhodesian community, and that while memories of the war were still fresh, sales would have suffered if it had contained works that subverted the Rhodesian myths some still clung to. Lotter remains incensed by this censorship, and the unauthorised mutilation of some of his other poems. A single example serves to illustrate Stiff's casual disregard for Lotter's creations. Let us compare two poems: "Raid into Mozambique" from *Rhodesian Soldier and Others Who Fought* and "Walk through my past" (originally intended to be in *Rebel Rhodesia*). I offer them as side-by-side comparisons so that the reader may gauge Stiff's changes. For ease of comparison, text devised by Stiff is highlighted in **bold** whereas text excised from Lotter's original poem is *italicised*.

"**Raid into Mozambique**" (Stiff)

War has scribbled its suspicions
Over my pleasant recollections
I remember, **Barragem**, a town
Where a friendly black mechanic
Fixed my car and I remember
A bar where we bought our beer
But most of all I remember
The open casualness with which
We wandered through the knots of people
Now as I **double** down the street
My canteen slapping my thigh
I desperately search for landmarks
To hang my fading memories on

My **Barragem** is gone

Weaponry, **fox holes** and craters
Abounded
But where was the neat, white **church**
I knew before?
The building I laid my kit in
Was acned by small arms

The war has crept in on places I knew
In my wandering, bachelor days

"*Walk through my past*" (Lotter)

War has scribbled its suspicions
Over my pleasant recollections
I remember, Magunje, a town
Where a friendly black mechanic
Fixed my car and
I remember a bar where we bought our beer.
But most of all
I remember the open casualness with which
We wandered through the knots of people
Now as I trundle down the streets
In an armoured vehicle
I desperately search for landmarks
To hang my fading memories on.

My Magunje is gone.

*As had my Vila Salazar
Where
My eyes called memory
A Liar.*

Weaponry, bunkers and craters
Abounded
But where was the neat, white customs Post
I knew before?
It stood with shards of roof

Devoured them
 Spat out a distorted image
 Of what was before

*As if an amateur barber
 Had botched its haircut.
 Its rooms were marked with the scars
 Of the Malvernian metal
 Flung at it.
 The building I laid my kit in
 Was acned by small arms fire,
 The remnants of that sleepy outpost
 Were encircled by mines
 To emphasise this was still an outpost.
 A military one.*

The war has crept in
 On the places I knew
 In my wandering, bachelor days,
 Devoured them
 Spat out a distorted image of
 What was there before



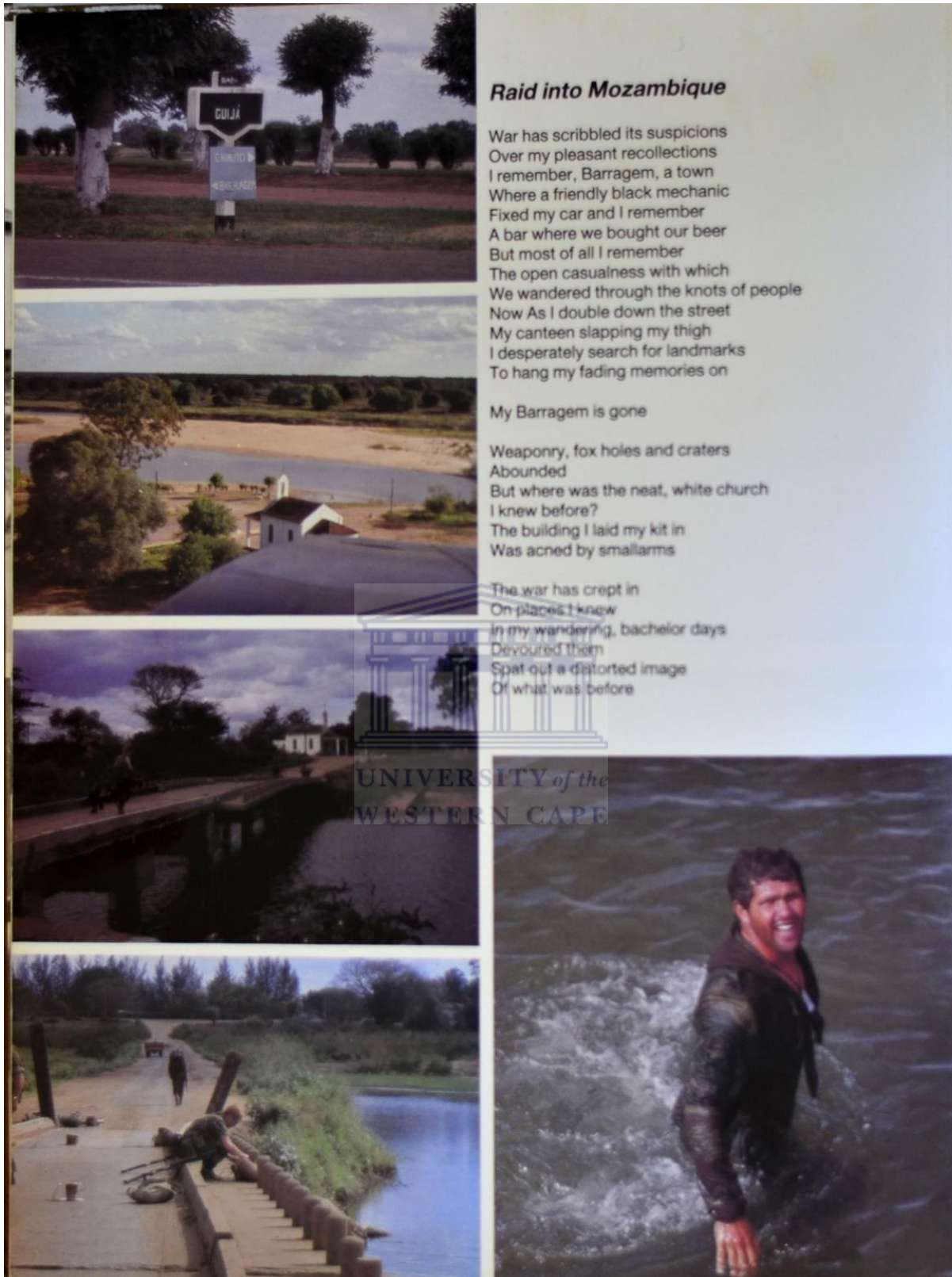


Fig. 1. Page "18" [sic] showing the design of *Rhodesian Soldier and Others Who Fought*. (Note the "white church" in photo second from the top).

One can understand Lotter's anger with Stiff. His poem has been subjected to brutal editing. Although it is common practise for poetry publishers to edit works, the ideal is, as Sameer Rahim suggests in an online article for *The Telegraph*, a light editorial touch by someone who, if not an accomplished poet, at least has a finely tuned ear for rhythm and meter, and can subtly tweak images that may lack definition. Stiff, with no formal training in poetry writing or appreciation has mutilated Lotter's piece in some places, added his own lines in others and finally, "glamourised" the piece by fixing it against pictures that suggest the poem is set in Barragem, Mozambique, and not Magunje, Zimbabwe. Stiff probably made this change because Barragem was the site of an external raid conducted by Rhodesian forces late in the war that inflicted crippling damage on Mozambican infrastructure.

Lotter was not part of the Rhodesian assault on Barragem, and so feels his veteran's integrity has been compromised through the suggestion that he (Lotter) took part in that raid, and wrote the poem in response to it. Apart from the chopped text, Stiff's most glaring intrusion is the replacement of Lotter's lines: "But where was the neat, white customs Post / I knew before?" with "But where was the neat, white church / I knew before". Clearly Stiff changed the poem to fit the picture (second from the top, on the left of the page) that accompanies the text. No doubt, Stiff thought a bullet-riddled church held more poetic cachet than a similarly strafed customs post. If one looks at the book design of *Rhodesian Soldier and Others Who Fought*, it becomes apparent, too, that Stiff was quite prepared to cut lines wholesale from Lotter's poems and make metrical changes in others. In the single example of "Raid into Mozambique" (Stiff version) and "Walk through my past" (Lotter original), the editor has cut 14 lines from the original to fit the "new" poem onto a page that is flanked by photographs of the Barragem raid. This is hardly sound editing; it is dishonest and unethical. There are other examples of introduced inaccuracies. For example, Stiff replaces Lotter's "bunkers" with "foxhole". The former is the common Rhodesian military usage for that period. Given this example, and there are others throughout *Rhodesian Soldier*, one can understand why Lotter regards Stiff's editorial intrusions as a deep betrayal of his artistic integrity. It is worth noting, too, that Lotter was not offered galley proofs or pre-publication mock ups to review before the book was published. It is perhaps asking too much of Lotter to suggest that he might have considered withdrawing from the project, as one can understand the lure of seeing a

definitive collection like *Rhodesian Soldier* in print despite its patent flaws. Even then, Lotter might have accepted the situation had Stiff not apparently reneged on the agreed quarterly royalty payments. As Lotter bitterly notes, the first royalty cheques indicated excellent sales and then, without notice or explanation the payments ceased, and Stiff fobbed off Lotter's complaints. Their relationship soured irretrievably and, as Lotter points out, Stiff treated two of his other authors, Chris Cocks³² and Ron Reid-Daly³³ in a similarly cavalier fashion. Unfortunately, Stiff has since died and his version of events cannot be tested. *Rhodesian Soldier* most likely sold out its entire print run, for no remainder copies ever appeared, and copies now command high prices. Whatever the book's flaws, it has become a collectible item, a fact that only partly assuages Lotter's negative feelings.³⁴ This sense of dissatisfaction, and the yearning to reclaim the intent of the earlier *Rebel Rhodesia* manuscript, continued to play on Lotter's mind.

In the 1980s, Lotter experienced mixed fortunes. His transition to civilian life was difficult. He suffered increased symptoms of PTSD, recalling to me in an e mail on 30 May 2016 that at that time his symptoms ranged from nightmares through to a sometimes coldly callous indifference to others' distress, and/or inappropriate and displaced emotional responses to external stimuli. At the time, no professional support was available for veterans, and most were left to deal with their trauma as best as they could. Sasha Gear's observation (257) that:

...while not all of South Africa's former soldiers suffer similarly in relation to trauma and transition – or some seemingly not at all – a range of significant burdens have been reported. These include unpredictable and disorientating tempers and aggression experienced as 'snapping' which sees the individual losing control and lashing out. Some maintain that the propensity for such outbursts has intensified with the passing of time. The opposite has occurred

³² Cocks wrote *Fireforce: One Man's War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry*. This book was initially published by Galago. His account remains the definitive and surprisingly balanced account of the infantryman's war. Like Lotter, Cocks also experienced heavy handed editing and an unexplained halt to royalty payments. He republished the book in 1998, restoring sections excised by Stiff.

³³ Stiff published Reid-Daly's *Top Secret War: The Story of The Selous Scouts*. The book was a best seller and Stiff followed it up with an unauthorised "pictorial" version. Reid Daly sued Stiff successfully in a South African court for this act and Galago was liquidated thereafter.

³⁴ Most recently (2016), Lotter has challenged Hannes Wessels, author of *A Handful of Hard Men* for the unauthorised use and editing of some of Lotter's poems in the latter's Rhodesian war book.

for others, and/or they have developed strategies to pre-empt and manage them by removing themselves from tension-provoking situations, controlling alcohol consumption and not carrying weapons. A small minority have accessed trauma counselling.

Lotter falls into the significant category of veterans who have not sought professional help (as Gear describes above), but rather developed their own forms of support. Part of his success is probably rooted in his character: he is a purposeful individual with a keenly analytical mind. He is used to setting and reaching meaningful personal goals, and his general moral stance remains heavily patterned by the gendered “honour code” he inherited from his family. He takes seriously, too, the responsibility of providing for his family, and making an honest way through life. He has never been comfortable in the role of employee, so it was perhaps natural that he established his own business to secure their collective futures. His initial efforts were characterised by trial and setback, but he pursued his interests in business, and established a successful nation-wide business consulting and accounting practice. His approach to PTSD has been novel. He had discovered during the war that poetry writing provided cathartic release, and a means to channel his experiences in a positive way. He continued with this creative self-therapy, and in the 1980s and 1990s continued to write poems located in the Rhodesian war. In retrospect, he credits the drive to secure the purpose of *Rebel Rhodesia* after the *Rhodesian Soldier* debacle as a therapy to resolve the cognitive dissonances that his war service occasioned.

In 1997, Lotter resolved that only a new book, true this time to the original narrative design for *Rebel Rhodesia*, could rectify the problems inherent in *Rhodesian Soldier and Others Who Fought*. It was opportune that around this time, Chris Cocks, the author of *Fireforce*, had established his own publishing company – Covos Books – with a remit to publish works that specialised in southern African conflicts.³⁵ Cocks, of course, intended to re-publish *Fireforce* to rectify similar editing problems that both of them had experienced at the hands of Stiff. The project they launched was *Echoes of an African War*, thereby establishing a thematic link to the earlier *Faces of*

³⁵ In 1999, Cocks partnered with UK based class action / human rights lawyer, Martin Day and the firm was renamed Covos-Day.

War and Shadows of War books. This time, Lotter was determined that the book would be something of which could be proud. The coffee table pictorial format had proved successful, so Lotter decided that this new work would exploit image resources to the full. By then the internet was commercially available and so preparations began to source images that would support the war poetry. Mass e mailings of ex-Rhodesian service organisations³⁶ and people round the world proved exceptionally fruitful, and within a year Lotter had assembled one of the largest private archives of Rhodesian war photographs in the world. Thousands of images were received, and each painstakingly digitised and burned to CD. A skilled graphic designer, Jonathan Harvey, assembled a small team that would select and prepare images for the book and Cocks committed to a glossy, full-colour image-rich text supported by an internet marketing campaign.³⁷ *Echoes of an African War* was published in 1999, and this time Lotter was satisfied with the integrity, scope and production of the book. It helped, too, that Covos-Day was able to negotiate successfully with Central News Agency (CNA), Exclusive Books and Wordsworth Books, ensuring the book's high exposure in the major book stores country wide. As part of the marketing drive, a Limited Edition of 150 signed leather-bound copies in boxed slip covers were produced too, but these were too expensive or not of a sufficiently limited number to sell out. Lotter regards this as a valuable lesson on the fickle nature of the collectible book market where "limited" implies one or two copies extant at the most. A similar phenomenon exists in the fine art collector's markets where even notables like Picasso degraded the value of their "limited" editions through overzealous authorised reproductions.

Echoes of an African War is not *Rebel Rhodesia*. It retains the narrative structure, and purports to relate the story of a soldier from recruit stage through to veteran and beyond the war that Lotter envisaged almost twenty years previously. Additionally, it benefits from the inclusion of fresh material, written in maturity and with the poet's ability to look back and reflect. It contains many contextually appropriate

³⁶ In the 1990s, a single web site, Rhodesians World Wide, existed as a contact point and the administrator, Alistair Honeybun, maintained a vast database of ex-Rhodesians complete with e mail addresses.

³⁷ It was around this time that I befriended Lotter, and had a small part to play in the creation of *Echoes of an African War*. I had taught myself web design and as part of the marketing strategy, I produced a website that provided content teasers, and an online gallery to display some of the photographs that had been collected.

photographs, detailed notes and facsimiles of rare war documents, thus broadening its appeal beyond a collection of poetry. The book was well received and sold almost its entire print run of 5000 copies. The target market was the ex-Rhodesian community, but a significant interest was attracted amongst overseas military veterans of other wars and students of the Rhodesian war. Lotter does not know precisely how many copies were sold. He received royalties for a few thousand copies, but Covos-Day went out of business in the early 2000s, and so final sales figures are not accurately known.³⁸ The book has become a collectible like *Rhodesian Soldier*, and the copies that appear for sale online are similarly offered at high prices.³⁹ Many of the poems, of course, have already been discussed, but it is worth considering the titular piece, “Echoes of an African War”, for the momentum it adds to the original collection of war-related poems.

When the war drums rolled and the dark clouds gathered.
 Was the time when we ran,
 Through the smoke as it rose from the burning huts.
 A brotherly band of hard, dangerous, young men
 Who held the fire in our hands
 And the storm in our souls.

These are the words that were torn from that time.
 Taken for poems, by a young man,
 Lost, afraid; caught up
 In the dust and the noise of an African war.

These words
 My children, Melissa and Carl,
 Were forced into print for you.

Read and remember

³⁸ Lotter acquired all remaining Covos-Day stocks of his book (a few hundred copies) before they could be seized by liquidators. He has managed to sell most copies of *Echoes* privately in the interim.

³⁹ The initial published price was about R150 in 1999. Internet vendors can and do sometimes ask prices in excess of ten times the original price.

My children, Melissa and Carl.
 Your life is a gift, your own
 To shape and to nurture; to live as you will.
 Must never be seen, as a trifle,
 To be casually tossed in the furnace of war.
 Nor as a tool to be sold and be used
 By the pawnmakers, solemnly striding,
 On through the alleys of power.

“Echoes of an African War” is clearly written from a position of measured retrospection. It may lack the visual immediacy and intensity of some of Lotter’s poems from the war years but the image contained in “the storm in our souls” suggests something of the inner conflict Lotter experienced through his participation in war. The poem edges towards a rejection of war in the address to his children in the second stanza, but Lotter neglects the opportunity to make a powerful moral statement against the war. Indeed, it may be argued that it is easier for Lotter to condemn all war rather than opening a debate about the moral efficacy of the Rhodesian war. He did, after all, fight in this war, so admitting that debate would be exceptionally difficult personally as well as commercial suicide. Instead, he couches his concern as fatherly advice “Your life is a gift, your own / To shape and to nurture; to live as you will” are lines addressed to his children. Lotter effectively communicates his eternal distrust of all politicians in the final lines with the recasting of the traditional (if clichéd) “corridors of power” as shabby and disreputable “alleys”. That functions as an apt and appropriate snub to the politicians and leaders who precipitated the crises that led to Rhodesia’s war. Indeed, that point was made clear in his diary entry of 22 March 1980 where he raged: “If what we believed in was wrong, why did we allow it?”⁴⁰ The answer is clear now, in Lotter’s mind at least. The “we” of the diary becomes a substitute for Rhodesians generally who collectively placed far too much trust in their political leaders; they accepted the RF and did not or could not see what was plain to almost all outside observers – that the RF, far

⁴⁰ Lotter, Chas. "War Diary: Post Mugabe " 22 Mar. 1980. MS. 7/43.

from having a vision for the future, was capable only of leading the country to destruction.

In the years since *Echoes* was published, Lotter has managed to conquer PTSD without professional support. His view that creative writing is good therapy has widespread support amongst therapists (Foa et al 486), who recognise that the act of creative writing is effective, because it channels “a combination of generic psychological processes (e.g. including imaginal exposure, cognitive restricting, stress management, resilience enhancement and testimony)” in a creative, cathartic process. He has encouraged a group of South African veterans of the Angolan campaigns to follow his example. The result of that intervention is the 2015 collection *Nubes Belli*, an anthology of verse in both English and Afrikaans, edited by David Lotter (no relation), by South African war veterans. The man who was encouraged into print in 1978 has mentored others to invoke their muses. Experience and the wisdom that comes with years have mellowed the man who once strode with fire in his heart.

Lotter today is a committed democrat, but beyond emphatically rejecting racism, sexism and homophobia, he declines to align himself to any particular ideology or set of political beliefs. In a sense, he remains a free spirit, a man of baffling contradictions, who relishes his freedom and independence, and pushes back vigorously against any form of authoritarianism. He professes to be a Christian, but typically does not associate with any denomination, or attend any form of organised religious celebration. He has steadfastly refused to join the ex-Rhodesians’ Flame Lily Association and although he occasionally attends Remembrance Day services, he does not attend any of the regular meetings of the various Rhodesian regimental associations.⁴¹ He takes his civic duties seriously, and exercises his vote according to his conscience. He supports no political party over the other, and is sceptical of much of what is served up in the media. A lasting personal credo is contained in the lines of his 1996 poem “Ideals Shaped By War” (*Echoes of an African War* 163).

Nine years were torn from my youth.

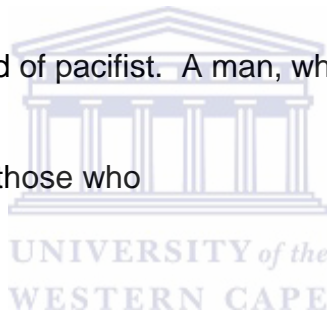
Years which shaped me, moulded me, made me.

⁴¹ The Flame Lily Association is a charitable foundation that aims to preserve “Rhodesian” culture, and support ex-Rhodesian pensioners in distress.

When War's End crashed about me; I faced
 The eternal choices a soldier always faces.
 Join new comrades in yet another war. Or
 Take my learned aggressions, my psychoses through
 A tattered, lost, civilian life.

Or
 Even rise to find the courage
 To turn, examine my soul. Decide
 Who ruled my life. And why.

I did. And so. Peace
 Is my way today. I am
 A pacifist, a strange kind of pacifist. A man, who
 Will offer
 Violence to none, save those who
 Will offer
 Violence to me.



Lotter lives by these beliefs to this day. The first half of the poem is plain and unremarkable, but the final stanza is clear evidence of his peculiar moral orientation. He claims to be a pacifist, and is on record that he will never again participate in any kind of military action, but his pacifism has a strange twist. In keeping with his contradictory character, Lotter's pacifism is not an absolute ethical position but a conditional one, likely enough rooted in the common Christian (albeit Old Testament) concept that permits violence on occasions:

Thus says the LORD, "Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor Also do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place. (Jer 22:3).

He reserves the right to inflict violence on anyone who attempts to harm him or his family. Also, this man who was so scarred by war, and who swears off violence, is an avid firearms collector. He holds a special collector's licence that permits him to acquire functioning, semi-automatic weapons, and has a walk-in armoury at home. The incongruity is difficult to comprehend and severely challenges any binary position that pacifists must, of ethical necessity, have nothing to do with weapons of any kind. Lotter rejects this view and sees value in preserving weapons, understanding their role in history, and studying and writing about them. His weapons are not stored for some kind of Armageddon, he does not hunt or fish, and he does not take part in organised competitive shooting. His firearms have been gathered together as private museum pieces, with most figuring hugely in the history of military conflict in southern Africa. His interest in firearms is increasingly academic in nature, and he is the driving force behind a forthcoming publication on the history of weapons manufacture in southern Africa.⁴² It is also possible that Lotter collects these firearms to underscore or reinforce his belief that war is a terrible act of futility that needs, constantly, to be foregrounded in human thinking.

Though his youth was shaped by politics and war, Lotter absolutely rejects any suggestion that he is the inconvenient product of colonialism and or/an aging relic of a distant and discredited imperialist ethos. He is quick to point out that unlike many Rhodesians (who were emigrants from Britain and thus European in orientation), his roots are African, with his ancestors arriving in Africa nearly 300 years ago. He is proud of this heritage and he has not wavered in vigorously asserting an identity that is determinedly African and not European in outlook. In 1978 he wrote the poem "Africa's Child" (*Rebel Rhodesia* 108) that pursues this theme, and he continues to robustly defend his claim that he is a citizen of Africa.

There is something more nuanced to Lotter's work than mere engagement with war too. It is unlikely that Lotter is grounded in literary theory, but one may recognise in his character and his poetry one of the driving concerns Coetzee identified in *White Writing* (61):

⁴² Lotter is the editor of *Firearms Developed and Manufactured in Southern Africa: 1949 -2000*. The book is scheduled to be published in March 2017.

The link between landscape and national character is a prominent theme of nineteenth-century German nationalism, finding its most extreme expression in the writings of Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, with their emphasis on the rootedness of a *Volk* in its native landscape... This *Volksideologie* certainly does not go without echo in South Africa. In the early, patriotic phase of Afrikaans poetry, in the first decades of this century, the task was explicitly laid upon the writer to find evidences of a “natural” bond between the *volk* and *land*, that is to say, to naturalise the *volk*’s possession of the land. In the logic of similitudes elaborated in patriotic poetry, from the spaciousness of the land follows spaciousness of character; a landscape that invites freedom of movement promises freedom of personal and national destiny; wide horizons are a sign of an expansive future; and so forth. In these respects, first the United States and then South Africa rehearse familiar themes from the ideological repertoire of Western colonialism.

This suggests that Lotter occupies a strangely constructed position, particularly his rigidly held belief that:

I belong

This is my land, my home.

I yearn not

For that strange, unfamiliar place called Europe.

I am an African

A white African.

Lotter continues to write poetry. His store of war poems has probably been all but exhausted, and so he increasingly turns his pen towards the textures and nuances of the wilderness and desert places that draw in and sustain him. He has now lived in South Africa for over 30 years, raised a family and built up a successful business. In all of this, a psychic settling has occurred and the restlessness and uncertainty that dogged him in his early life is gone. A curious detachment marks Lotter’s relationship

with people and the world today, a state that Andrew Gurr (146) identifies as common in writers who are in exile or expatriates because it is:

a reaction against the solipsistic trap of egocentricity. Narcissism and nostalgia alike blur the social identity which the searcher needs for his sense of home and therefore his own identity. Detachment is then the clearest signal the exile can give that he is free.

Lotter's fascination with wilderness areas continues and it is likely that Coetzee's "dream topography" best describes Lotter's attraction to the "vast, empty, silent space, older than man, older than the dinosaurs whose bones lie bedded in its rocks, and destined to be vast, empty, and unchanged long after man has passed from its face" (7). In his late middle age he has become deeply attracted to the barren and arid Richtersveld, and undertakes regular trips there to enjoy the moments of extreme solitude that the starkly primeval landscape offers. He is comfortable in his own company, doggedly walks his own path, and in his retirement has time enough to pursue his varied interests and maintain a prodigious and eclectic reading schedule. He is no longer overly concerned with publishing poetry, and claims to be at his most content when:

Alone, in a sleeping house
 My thoughts roaming free, exploring
 The paradoxical corners of
 My crowded, untidy, unsettled mind.

(Conclusion

“No, I'll choose my own way of going, let them sort out their problems, before they call on me to die for their rivalries.” (Stanley Nyamfukudza, *The Non-believer's Journey*).

In an early part of this thesis, I explained that my interest in Lotter's war poetry was more than a purely academic matter. I, too, am a veteran of the war Lotter fought in and the settings and incidents that inform much of his work are congruent with much of my own experience. I am younger than Lotter and was only 20 when the war ended, yet its course and outcomes had a significantly unsettling effect on me. I explained that for years I harboured great bitterness and clung to the myths particularly those that suggested the Rhodesian cause was fundamentally a just one. My own movement towards an ethical awakening and moral realignment happened independently of this study, but certainly what has emerged from my work on Lotter's poetry, is a far more nuanced personal understanding of my “Rhodesian” history and a greater appreciation of the challenges and contradictions that postcolonial societies face. In this thesis I have been concerned with tracking the development of Lotter's poetry and tracing the evolution of thematic concerns through his diaries and period pieces. I began thinking that my task would focus on demonstrating congruencies with tropes already evident in war poetry, and as much as I have shown this to be the case, it has also become clear that issues of settler colonialism facilitate a particular reading of the Lotter's work, and that this is a critical lens through which his work should be viewed and discussed.

Adopting this approach, I soon became concerned that I could not firmly anchor Lotter's diaries and poetry solely in a postcolonial framework. His work appears, at times, to be complicit in the imperial project and at others, to be indifferent or even in opposition to it. This complicated my initial plan to offer a neat taxonomy of Lotter's work, because I had initially anticipated that I would demonstrate a relatively clear linear movement from participation in and support of the war effort to a total rejection of it. In my mind, I had hoped that Lotter's work would follow the trajectory we tend to associate with the soldier poets of WWI. That was certainly not the case and I noted several occasions when even on the same day, Lotter would write pieces and / or create diary entries that that seemed contradictory in theme and intention. This confounded my initial attempts to reduce my analysis to binary positioning.

Something of a breakthrough occurred when I explored readings in settler colonialism. Elkins and Pedersen's theory (4) that the settler colonial experience is marked by contests that figure

ongoing negotiation and struggle among four key groups: an imperial metropole where sovereignty formally resides, a local administration charged with maintaining order and authority, an indigenous population significant enough in size and tenacity to make its presence felt, and an often demanding and well-connected settler community.

This provides a useful typology or point of reference to dissect the many contradictions and dilemmas served up in Lotter's diaries and poems. What has become clear is that Lotter's poetry reflects the chaotic tumble of his era in a vastly more nuanced way than the largely subjective memoirs and unit histories written by other participants in the Rhodesian war.

Whilst Lotter's body of war poetry is extensive and spans the entire course of the war, it is unlikely that he will continue to write war poetry. It is also my suggestion that it is similarly doubtful that any significant Rhodesian war poems from "new" voices are still to emerge. A number of factors mitigate against the latter. The first is the most obvious. The established poets have tackled their subject and, to put it bluntly, have lost their appetite to continue working around a subject that has now retreated into history. Lotter is on record as stating that *Echoes of An African War* fulfilled its purpose for him and that he has no desire, now, to add significantly to his work. Similarly, most of the people who took part in the war are also either elderly or at the very least in their late middle age, so the sober reality is that any urgency they may have felt to deal, artistically, with Rhodesia's war has mostly come and gone. The only exception to this is the planned publication by Peter Badcock of a one volume work that will bring together all the war-time pencil sketches he drew. In an e-mail to me on 23 March, 2016, he wrote:

You may be interested to know that we are publishing a new book this year called *A War Artist's Diary* bringing together 100 drawings from the 3 books, *Shadows*, *Faces* and *Images of War*. I am fed up with requests for

individual books here and from the US so this is a way of solving the supply problem, as well as marking the end of my career in this messy business.

That being said, occasional poetry pieces do still surface from time to time.

Social media has played a major role in sustaining the fragile settler colonial identity claimed by the dwindling white population that styles itself as ex-Rhodesian. Lately, Facebook has proved a popular platform, with a number of open and closed groups serving their parochial interests. Almost all the former units of the Rhodesian security are represented on Facebook, with groups serving the BSAP, The Rhodesian Air Force and RLI in particular. These sites tend to function as basic points of contact between former colleagues and, as might be expected, mundane matters such as retirement plans and death notices tend to prevail as the subscribers age and invariably pass on. These unit-specific FB sites occasionally give notice of books written by members, and these are usually amalgams of memoir and unit histories¹ with the sporadic self-published potboiler war novel² surfacing too. Another site, the Rhodesian War Veterans Association, is a closed Facebook group that functions as a sort of internet lounge and it is here that poems sometimes appear. Typically, these “late” pieces are puerile poems, often cast in tortured rhyming couplets or hammered together as Kiplingesque bits of doggerel. An example is Alf Hutchinson’s “Rhodesia’s Unsung Heroes”:

Rhodesia’s unsung heroes, were her farmers without doubt,
Tackling harsh elements, through flood and fire and drought.
Tough as nails they were, tilling a living from the earth,
Labouring from dawn to dusk, for all that they were worth.

Virgin bush they conquered, void of a sense of greed;
Stumping, ploughing , harrowing at last to sow the seed .

¹ See, for example, Gordon “Beaver” Shaw’s book: *Choppertech 1976-80: A Gunner’s Reflection of Fireforce Operations in Rhodesia*, first promoted on the Rhodesian Air Force FB group.

² Daryl Sahli’s novel *Steely Eyed Killers* was first promoted on a FB group. It is self-published and available on Amazon.

Then wait for nature's clouds to bless their crops with rain.
A harvest of tobacco, green mealies, wheat and grain.

These heroes both tilled the land, and fought a vicious war.
They were true Rhodesians, unsung heroes to the core.
Toiling on the lands by day, constant weapons at their side;
For their beloved Rhodesia, their homeland and their pride.

Most knew little of the hardship those farmers did endure,
In constant fear of attack; their daily lives so insecure.
Families sleeping in passageways, with all their food supplies,
Praying that a mortar, would not end their precious lives.

Stories they are legion of these farmer's sacrifice and pain,
Confronting untold hardships , they kept calm alert and sane,
They were the backbone of Rhodesia , Africa's breadbasket .
They were the priceless Diamonds in Rhodesia's Jewel casket.

Now with so called 'peace' they were caste [sic] forever from their lands,
Lands that they had cultivated with calloused bleeding hands.
You will forever be our heroes, filling our hearts with pride.
You join the host of unsung heroes... on the day Rhodesia died.

With its clumsy rhymes, punctuation oddities and spelling gaffes, this poem celebrates the discredited myths and it has generated fulsome praise from within the closed, critically undiscerning and partisan ranks of the Facebook group where it appeared. Comments like Dick Cunliffe's: "Alf may your good work continue. It would be great to see all your work published in a single book",³ seem to typify the dominant FB reaction to these late poems that surface. These naive, jingoistic rhymes probably serve a necessary nostalgic purpose for some and mark out an imaginary space for memorialisation, but they make no meaningful contribution to the body of Rhodesian war poetry and confined, as they are to celebrating

³ Comment was made on Rhodesian War Veterans Association FB page on May 5, 2014 at 3:37 pm, CAT.

discredited myths and pyrrhic Rhodesian military victories, do nothing to add to any larger understanding of Rhodesia's war. Beyond their mild curiosity value, I see no merit in such poems and cannot justify their inclusion in the small body of Rhodesian war literature. Indeed, I would suggest that they actually need to be carefully ring-fenced and treated with caution as they pose authenticity problems having been published so long after the war.

On a basic, chronological level, they are at severe odds with the reality of "the post-independence era [that] represents a new social, political and economic terrain that authorizes and shapes identities in different ways from the Rhodesian context where race primarily determined identity and power hierarchies" (Musvoto 230). However, the real danger is that in celebrating the threadbare Rhodesian myths these late pieces also attempt to reopen closed and discredited ideological space, terrain that has already been thoroughly explored by better poets like Lotter and (to a lesser extent) John Eppel who were writing during the war. These poems also critically ignore the validity of the accumulation of extensive, informed scholarship on the war and the political history of Rhodesia. Perhaps a more rewarding area of study some might consider is the fragile identity of white writers in contemporary Zimbabwe, particularly people like Cathy Buckle and David Rogers who work in a new, post-war context. Another interesting area of study might well involve an investigation of the work of poets and musicians like Chenjerai Hove and Thomas Mapfumo. Both are lions of Chimurenga art and both have rejected the Zanu-fication of Zimbabwe. Hove has since passed away, but Mapfumo lives in exile in the United States.

In the space of 30 years, the white population of Zimbabwe has dwindled to just a few thousand and not only has white hegemony been reversed, the position of whites has also been deliberately excluded from the ZANU historiography that appears to have been forcefully written over cultural spaces in Zimbabwe.

Chimurenga literature retains a hugely privileged position in Zimbabwean letters and this position is not likely to be significantly revised in any transition towards a post-ZANU polity. As Terence Ranger (215) points out, the spirit of Chimurenga, the liberation has, become as much a sustaining saga in Zimbabwean historiography as the racialised myths that once shaped white Rhodesian identity. This, too, might sustain scholarship of a comparative, enquiring nature. What may happen though,

and it is certainly my hope that this is so, is that in time, students of literature in Zimbabwe will see benefit in mediating some level of cultural dialogue between the Rhodesian war poets and the Chimurenga greats. I share the concerns of Slemon (1990) and McClintock (1992) who (amongst others) are wary of the binaries implicit in much postcolonial theory, and so I suggest that perhaps in the initial reflective space of academe, the identification of commonalities grounded in the various experiences of resistance may lead to a more nuanced understanding of the impact that colonialism, war, tribalism and autocracy have played in shaping modern Zimbabwe. This has certainly been my experience, and researching and writing this thesis has been a necessary therapeutic and educational exercise.

At the end of this thesis on a war poet, my thoughts naturally turn to the future of war poetry. I demonstrated earlier in this study that Malvern van Wyk Smith destabilized the popular perception that the pity-of-war trope first accreted in the work we associate with the greats of WWI. He argues convincingly that this is not so, and suggests that the history of war literature is inextricably linked to the total accumulation of literature(s) over time. It is a truism that as long as humans walk the earth, war will be an unfortunate part of the human experience, but I am not convinced that war literature, in particular war poetry, will ever again enjoy the easy prominence it did in the twentieth century. I have multiple reasons for suggesting that war poetry is likely to occupy an ever smaller artistic niche. In making this proposal, I wish, firstly, to consider the nature of current wars and the likely form of future conflicts.

As Van Wyk Smith correctly pointed out, the soldiers of the South African War were the first universally literate combatants. This has been the pattern ever since. Combatants in both world wars, Korea and Vietnam, were all literate people and the pattern is set to continue. Modern wars require the deployment of technologically complex assets, and so soldiers need to be literate and skilled. Even in those cases where sophisticated military powers are ranged against asymmetric groups such as the Taliban or ISIS, the opposing forces are also most likely literate people too. What is different in the 21st century, is that conventional armed forces are now exclusively professional troops. Conscription figured highly in the forces that were deployed in the previous century's major conflicts and, as Van Wyk Smith has suggested, it is

conscripts who are most likely to keep journals, write letters and react in a literary fashion, to their experiences. This is not to say that professional troops do not do so; that is an unsustainable binary logic; but the sort of push back that produces poetry invested with questions and ethical dilemmas tends to come from the combatant for whom participation has not been a personal and professional choice but rather a national, political requirement. Philippa Lyon (9) argues along these lines in her assessment of the initially slow output of poetry in WWII. Moving to contemporary conflicts, Simon Marr notes a similar phenomenon in his thesis presented to the Royal College of Defence Studies:

Since 2001, Iraq and Afghanistan have produced volumes of printed journalism, analysis and commentary, as well as an explosion of British autobiographical accounts about fighting in the dirt and dust of Basra, Maysan and Helmand provinces. Films, documentaries, televised journalism, and even theatre, have offered insights and drama. Visual art also adds to this rich mosaic. Even rock music is muscling in. Following the release of her most recent album, 'Let England Shake', with song lyrics that refer to the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, there has been speculation that singer-songwriter, PJ Harvey, may yet be commissioned by the Imperial War Museum as an official 'war singer'! But, there seems to be an absence of war poetry (4).

His observations are backed by substantial research that points to a critical gap in the poetic record of contemporary wars and he makes the salient connection (5) with Cecil Day Lewis' similar observation about the slow start to poetry occasioned by WWII. What Marr does not do, however, is offer a sustained reason why this may be so. I would suggest that there are a variety of reasons why this is likely so, some of which are closely intertwined.

Perhaps the primary difficulty is located in the *raison d'être* for modern wars, particularly those parts of the "War on Terror". We are all too familiar with the horror of 9/11 and note that the "War on Terror" began as an American response to what was perceived as a deliberate campaign by Al Qaeda to attack the United States. Without wishing to discuss the deeper ethics of the United States' reaction, it is

probably true to state that the “War on Terror” has undergone substantial strategic and political realignment since 2001. What began as a determination by the US government to avenge the 9/11 attacks transformed into a loose international coalition that shifted from the occupation of Afghanistan to the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq, and progressed to support for the revolutions of the Arab Spring. The “War on Terror” has lasted 15 years, longer than any significant war in modern history,⁴ and has become an intractable struggle that pits a vaguely determined Western, quasi imperial design against a determined foe cast, today, as radical Islamic fundamentalism. Cynics may argue that the war(s) has become more about extending American political and economic interests but the blow back has spilled beyond Afghanistan and Iraq to destabilise members of the EU and threaten SAHEL nations.⁵

Thus participants in the war on terror, by virtue of their volunteer, professional status, align themselves contractually with their nation’s agendas whether they fight the Taliban, support the new Iraqi regime or combat the modern medusa of ISIS. This does not exclude the possibility that unemployment or lack of training for the world of work propels them toward the military. So, by definition, they are unlikely to ever position themselves like the poets of WWI where larger questions about the conduct, purpose and duration of the war prompted interrogation. Crudely put, these potential soldier poets are mostly willing collaborators in the war on terror and are not predisposed to dispute the ethics of its waging. Although the poetic voices may appear largely mute, that is not to say that soldiers are not recording their observations about these wars. They are, but in a fundamentally different way that is the consequence of communications and media technological advances since the Vietnam War.

It has been said that the soldiers who took part in the 1991 Gulf War were the first military personnel who grew up playing video games.⁶ Since then, computer technologies, the internet and video gaming cultures have massively infiltrated and

⁴ The obvious exception, of course being the Colombian Civil War, now in its sixth decade.

⁵ The SAHEL nations are those North African countries between the Atlantic / Mediterranean and the Sahara desert.

⁶ See, for example, <http://www.digitaltrends.com/gaming/what-do-men-whove-answered-the-real-call-of-duty-think-about-military-games/>.

permanently changed human experience and cultural expression. Alex Pham, writing online in the *LA Times*, suggests that video games are used as recruiting tools for the US Army: “Eager to prove it's not your grandfather's military, the Army is developing video games to recruit and build awareness among Generation Y”, and Corey Mead (3) details the extent to which video technology has been incorporated into conventional infantry military training: “while live field exercises and training manuals are still crucial, they are increasingly being supplemented and supplanted by video games and digital simulations”. This was not the case previously, and to this we can add that every professional soldier deployed today is internet savvy and the owner of a smart phone device. This profound move to a digital culture has permanently changed the way that combatants diarize and respond, artistically, to their military experiences.

Today's soldiers go into battle with helmet mounted cameras like the HD capable GoPro. These soldiers have access to the internet in their bases and their operations are monitored and recorded through sophisticated satellite based communications devices. The battle ground has, in some respects, been stripped of a sense of mystique and has become crudely democratized. Soldiers produce video examples of raw combat footage that become instantly available and are freely uploaded to YouTube, likely without regard to military regulations.

A casual Google search of the phrase: “YouTube combat action”, returns close to 2 million results, with tens of thousands of uploads of combat action from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine and, indeed, wherever conflict is currently occurring. Combatants, be they US troops or members of ISIS or the Free Syrian Army, are recording their combat moments and making the feeds freely available on the internet. Whilst this sort of battlefield democratisation may prompt conventional militaries to be more accountable in their actions,⁷ the unregulated creation and dissemination of combat clips comes at the cost of any sense of editorial oversight, refinement or interpretative locus. Again it does not take much internet searching to find multiple scenes of terrible violence with moments of extreme suffering and lingering death caught in the most savagely graphic detail. It is way beyond the

⁷ One only need think of the impact of WikiLeaks on exposing US military secrets.

scope of this thesis to speculate on the ethics and dangers of such clips being in the public domain, but from a literary critical point of view, serious questions about authorial intent and artistic refinement need to be asked. A single example will suffice.

A YouTube clip located at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITfthuzXU7k> purports to show a US Marine sniper in action. The clip is a little over two and half minutes in length and focuses on an anonymous American sniper's casual business of lining up a shot at a figure in the distance. The soldiers in the clip speak in cool, dispassionate tones and at 2:10 in the sequence (immediately after a single shot is heard), one of the team members announces "the target is down". The clip is typical of uncountable thousands like it. There is no context and no rationale; it is stripped of any form of interrogation and lacks any sense of framing empathy as the human victim is depersonalised and reduced to a "target". The entire scene presents, ironically, as something utterly routine and mundane. The visual immediacy of these sorts of video clips and the ease with which they are compiled and distributed means, of course, that the horror of war is freely and explicitly made known, but I submit that the net effect of these clips is a gross sensory overload that leads to cognitive dissonance. The numbing of personal responses through repeated exposure to violence robs the viewer of the opportunity to engage ethically and intellectually with a situation. By way of comparison, Bernard Henrie's poem "Sniper in the Spanish Civil War" also deals with the act of killing at long range, but the poem's engagement with the topic is wrought with great technical skill and admits to a lingering ethical dilemma. The writing of poetry requires a cognitive process and the refining filters of mind and "pen" ensure that the product, a keenly wrought poem, is invested with a level of humanity that is simply absent from the passively accreted, if visually immediate, YouTube clip:

Morado is a color I learned
 in Barcelona and the phrase:
 pasarlas moradas:
 to have a bad time of it.

A bandolero across

your girlish chest,
 your silhouette posed
 against the slowing sky,
 dead from a sniper bullet
 shot at great distance;
 rough as a garden weed
 Spanish to the touch.

In this closing discussion, I am not suggesting that war poetry as sub-genre will disappear any time soon. Far from it. War will always generate some kind of literary response, but what I submit will happen is that the poetic record will likely become fragmented, and so students will have to broaden their search criteria in the quest to find and explore “new” war poetry, and be prepared to explore perspectives or positions that may once have fallen outside the currently recognised parameters of “war” literature.⁸ War poetry has until now privileged the work of male writers but the modern experience of war may yet moderate this gender stereotype. In 2007, Private Michelle Norris became the first British female soldier to be awarded a Military Cross for gallantry under fire.⁹ The perception that somehow only men can write “authentic” war poetry thus cannot continue as women increasingly serve as combatants alongside male soldiers. Similarly as modern militaries ever more modify or abandon their oppositional attitudes towards openly gay and transgendered soldiers serving under arms, it is quite possible that the queer perspective of war may also figure in future literatures of war. An intriguing recent development, too, is the rise in a variation of “combat stress” reported by drone pilots.

James Dao, writing online for the *New York Times*, traces this phenomenon and reports that the problem is compounded by the US military’s institutional negation of the “validity” of drone pilot’s “combat experiences”. The cartoon reproduced as Fig.1. below, typifies this emerging stereotype. The “Top Gun” drone pilot is contrasted to the macho movie-inspired image of the traditional fighter pilot and is presented as a myopic, obese youth slurping on a soda and clutching a smart phone or tablet

⁸ Philippa Lyon (1) offers an erudite explanation of what these might be.

⁹ See <https://mondaybooks.wordpress.com/2014/12/19/women-on-the-front-line-have-they-asked-michelle-norris-mc/> for an intriguing discussion about the expanding role of women in the military.

computer. Humour aside, the cartoon ignores the reality that drone pilots kill humans as effectively and completely as their “in aircraft” compatriots. At some point, it is likely that drone pilots may begin channelling their experiences into memoir and literature and when that occurs, a fascinating sub-genre of war literature may well open up.

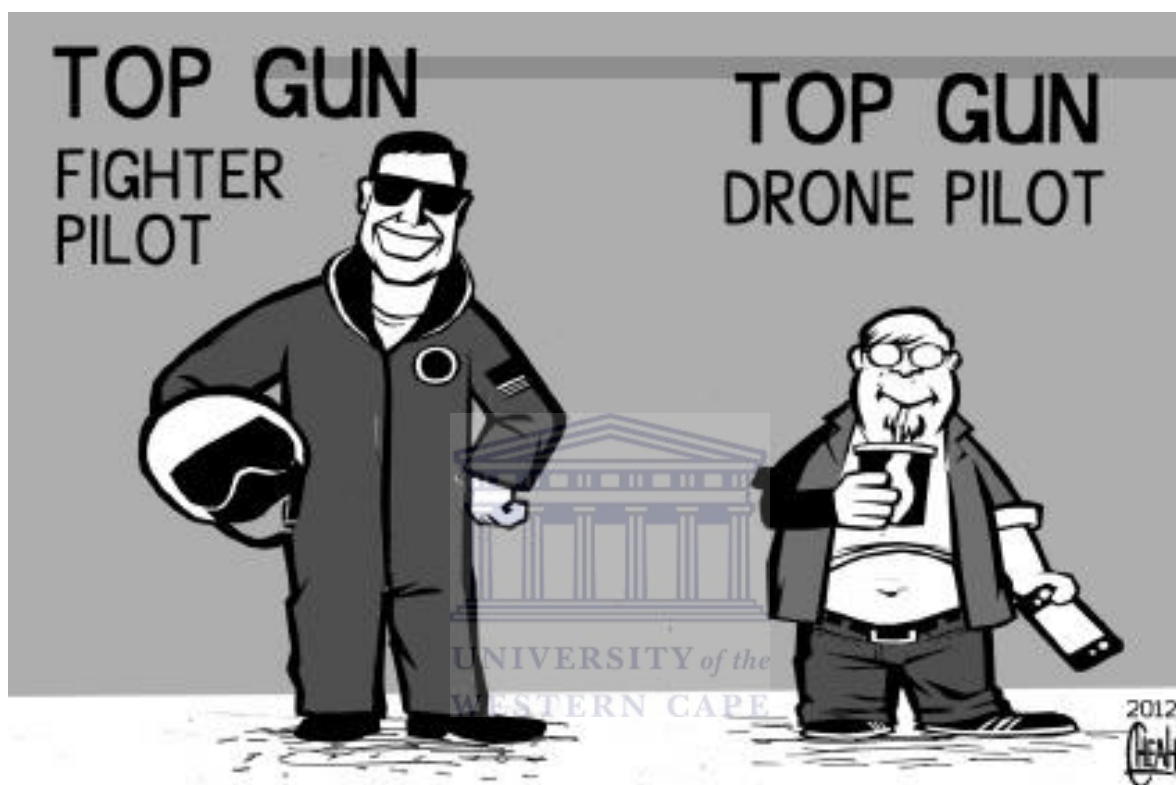


Fig. 1. “Top gun(s)” (Source: http://www.toonpool.com/cartoons/Drone%20pilot_171950).

It is probably significant to point out, too, that war poetry is not confined to the larger “more visible” conflicts. As much as we might care to look for war poetry from the NATO involvement in Afghanistan, it is worthwhile investigating, too, the asymmetric, “smaller” conflicts such as occur in occupied Palestine. Indeed, students of comparative literature will likely find interesting parallels between examples of Palestinian resistance art and South African apartheid-era struggle poetry. The refugee experience and the cases of African child soldiers have also rendered their own “literatures” and these peripheral positions may well need to be included in larger discussions of war literature in future.

I have suggested that poetry faces increased competition from new and alternative media. This is likely to continue, reflecting the changes in publishing that effect traditional print forms. Marr's observation that "there has neither yet been a concerted effort to collect and collate the works of today's service personnel and nor has there yet been a comprehensive anthology drawing on the best representations of today's soldier poets" (21) is true, but perhaps now, with the centenary of the Armistice approaching, the market is poised, worldwide, for a renewed effort to collect and anthologize contemporary war poetry to complement the work of the "greats". Such an effort, around such a significant global anniversary, may serve as the necessary catalyst to poets working in current theatres of war and also demonstrate to readers that war poetry does not begin and end with the experience of WWI and that the tropes are not confined to "the pity of war".

In closing this discussion and the thesis, and noting my ideas about the likely changes in literary responses to war in the future, I am deeply aware that Lotter's poetry and his cultural record of a very particular kind of war would have been impossible without his "analogue" style approach of diary keeping, a writing mode that is now probably obsolete thanks to social media. His diaries are in themselves fascinating and detailed accounts of one man's experience of war, and I have urged Lotter to bequeath them (and his poetry manuscripts) to NELM¹⁰ for the benefit of future researchers. Very rarely do his diaries lapse into sentimentality or hyperbole, his prose is usually frank (often brutally and obscenely so), introspective and packed with nuanced detail. He captures the particularly earthy language of soldiers, shows an interest in Rhodesian soldier patois and he dissects, with surgical precision, the private doubts, fears and dilemmas his service occasioned. Indeed, this is where his diaries make for most gripping reading. The various histories and political monographs provide all the contextual detail any student of the war might require, but in Lotter's fluid prose we have a unique perspective of one man's war; a near complete chronological record that runs counter, on many occasions to the Rhodesian myths and propaganda so many whites accepted unquestioningly. Reading the diaries is harrowing, but it is also a particularly humbling experience, as

¹⁰ The National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown, South Africa – an important archiver of literary manuscripts. See NELM web site at http://www.dac.gov.za/national_english_literary_museum.

one is permitted a front row view of the action without suffering any of the risks Lotter encountered in creating this record.

I have noted that Lotter's diary voice is often caustic in his assessment of Rhodesia's political leaders and the Rhodesian military's strategies and operations, but if, in starting this study, I thought I might trace a progression of ideas from diary detail to finished poem as a sort of cause and effect relationship, then I was wrong in that assumption. Perhaps this expectation was rooted in my own initial naivety when I framed these research questions and I may have subconsciously projected my own attitudes about the war I experienced into this initial expectation. What quickly became apparent in my readings of these diaries is that my subject is a fascinatingly complex and often contradictory character whose participation in the war plunged him into an enduring period of psychic stress and turmoil. Whilst I initially struggled to resolve these contradictions I encountered, I realised that the "fault" was mine, not Lotter's. It was me trying to organise my living subject into neat categories, I was looking for binaried answers to deep and complex questions. Once I accepted the contradictions in my poet's character, thoughts and actions, his diaries and poems fell into place. There is no easy cause-effect relationship between the two sets of writing, for they are complementary but separate texts. The poems are not simply the public expression of selected diary entries. So, if at times it felt like I was trying to find Lotter in a hall of mirrors, the reflections and contradictions I was discovering were strong evidence of the horrible stresses and traumas participation in war inflicts upon combatants. Such an experience is always damaging, it has the effect of tipping over one's comfortable assumptions about life. Some combatants are defeated, mentally, by the experience and never escape this trauma. The diaries record the details, but Lotter used the poetry as a cathartic tool to work through his emotional experience of the Rhodesian war, and he does so in a fundamentally honest way too. That is the point of separation between these important texts. Strangely Lotter has never abandoned the neo-chivalric code he inherited from his parents, and speaking "truth" to himself is a process he does relentlessly, thus exposing his contradictions and his shifting moral and ethical positions both in the diaries and in the poems.

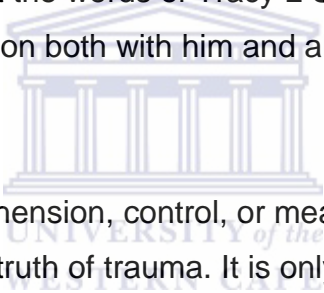
Furthermore, although I expected that Lotter's poetry would range widely in subject matter and thematic treatment, I was quite unprepared to discover that he wrote a number of poems (particularly some created late in the war) that he had no intention, whatsoever, of publishing. This was not because of any doubt he might have about their quality. Far from it. Some of them like "Brothers" (unpublished and discussed in a previous chapter) are tightly composed, well-crafted pieces, worthy of publication. In fact, what becomes apparent in looking at Lotter's total work (it is all meticulously dated with dates of creation and last revision recorded) is that his writing involves a careful process. He begins with an idea, shapes it and then takes his drafts through multiple revisions. He is assiduous about his poetic language, agonising, at times about the use of particular words in the correct place (according to his assessment), and always seeking to overlay each poem with a strongly metrical element. This feature continues to this day and is reflected in his aggressive defence of the artistic integrity of his cast work. Stung by Peter Stiff's unauthorised editorial changes in *Rhodesian Soldier*, Lotter rarely, if ever, permits editorial changes and has walked away from publishing opportunities when an editor insists on changing his work in any way.¹¹ He does, however, circulate his drafts amongst a small circle of literary-minded friends for comment and is open to suggestions that might improve his work, but once he feels a poem is settled, he resists any change of any kind. It is a trait one can respect and accept. The reason why these poems were cordoned off though, has everything to do with their content and Lotter's concern about his potential readership's reactions to them.

I have detailed Lotter's complex character extensively, and one of the benefits of his outsider, non-conformist attitude is that some of his pieces are critical of Rhodesia or undermine the myths that Rhodesians held dear. This thesis has explored these poems extensively, but Lotter was well aware that ex-Rhodesians (particularly in the immediate post-war 1980s) would reject his work in total if these poems came to light, and so he chose not to publish them. This may seem a somewhat mercenary

¹¹ Most recently (2014), Lotter turned down an opportunity to be published in *Heart of Africa! Poems of Love, Loss and Longing*, edited by Patricia Schonstein. He refused Schonstein's request to edit his submissions.

attitude, but it made economic and reputational sense at the time and Lotter did not destroy or hide them away completely. My study has effectively brought these pieces into the public domain and perhaps now, with the passage of time and the amelioration of hardened attitudes, these poems may find a more receptive audience. Certainly, I hope that they might come to the attention of students of Chimurenga literature and prompt some kind of artistic dialogue.

Finally, this thesis has been underwritten by trauma. I am deeply cognizant of the terrible cost the Rhodesian war exacted upon civilians and the lasting trauma that was inflicted on all caught up in it. I was not initially aware, however, of Lotter's own trauma or the degree to which it informed so much of his work. That fact only emerged during this study and in my meetings with him. Therefore, I must record how grateful I am to him for his assistance and candour during the years we have worked together, and hope that the words of Tracy L Strauss (224) resonate through this study of mine, finding traction both with him and all who suffered grief and loss in that war:



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What is beyond comprehension, control, or meaning, and the unfathomable chaos, *is* the realism or truth of trauma. It is only through closely examining these various parts of trauma's wounds—the emotional and the happening reality, the unspeakable events, the contradictions and missing segments—that one can work to put the pieces together in order to become whole again.

I began my thesis with a reference to Said's seminal work *Beginnings, Intention and Method*. To paraphrase myself, this thesis may have the longest of endings too. If there is an outcome beyond securing Lotter's reputation as the soldier poet of the Rhodesian war, then I would hope that this thesis becomes part of a healing discourse, the sort of dialogue David Coltart envisages:

Tied to the debate about whether our war was avoidable is the question about whether greater liberty and economic development might have been achieved had the war been avoided. Tragically, this question itself is anathema to many; but until we learn that lesson about our past, Zimbabweans will not fully understand why our nation continues to flounder (597-8).

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