1960 marked the beginning of a profoundly violent and unstable period in southern Africa’s history. Central to the fundamental socio-political changes that took place in the region and many of its countries during this period were a number of wars, the last of which only ended in 2002. While the specific reasons for each of these wars were complex and varied, according to each country, the central roles these wars have played in the creation of the countries they affected – and the region as a whole – are evident to this day. It is, therefore, important to look at the position the writing of war holds in southern Africans’ attempts to represent, define and imagine southern Africa and its component countries during and after the experience of war. With this in mind, this study examines the manner in which the texts under scrutiny form a web of creative engagement in the context of a violent and unstable region. The aim of the work is to illustrate that the region’s writing of war can be seen to respond to both national and regional concerns and, in doing so, form a platform for an imagining of both nation and region. Methodologically, the research presented in this study is based on a close reading, through extensive contextualisation, of the selected primary texts with a view to understanding the similarities, commonalities and differences present in the region’s war writing. It is divided into six chapters which, aside from the Introduction and Conclusion, include readings of texts from Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. The study finds war to be central to the selected texts’ presentation of their imaginings of nation and, importantly, to the realisation, defence or dissolution of that imagined nation. Two factors are found to be key to these imaginings: the role of the moment in which the texts are written and the depiction of the role of the hero, in various forms, in the attainment or illustration of the nation. In terms of the study’s contentions relating to southern Africa as a region, the readings illustrate that war is central to the manner in which the region
is also imagined by the texts’ authors. Additionally, the study reveals imaginings of region that change over time and thus map the shifting configurations of southern Africa formed as political allegiances between countries were transformed, or restructured, by the experience of war. In response to these findings, the study suggests that as a region, southern Africa owes much of its current configuration to the shared experience of war between 1960 and 2002. Paradoxically, therefore, war in southern Africa, as the primary texts show it to function, can be seen to have been socially developmental through the forced creation of a sense of region. This view has implications for the manner in which regions are viewed in other areas of the African continent because, by way of a similar use of war as a point of focus through which to read region in primary texts, the imaginings of other African regions, such as that created by wars in Somalia and Sudan, can be conceptualised and configured.
DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

___________________

Sean Anthony Rogers

_____ day of __________ 2011
DEDICATION

To my parents, Mike and Pam Rogers, and to my brother, Craig Rogers, with love and profound gratitude.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Every time I think of the sea off southern Africa’s east coast I hear Sugu telling me, “Seani, it should be to start a story at the start”. And so that is where I will begin. To Sugu, the greatest storyteller I have ever had the privilege to meet, thank you for teaching me to love stories and to listen to them. It was the long hours spent working with you on your dhow that I now recognise as the place where this study began. Sugu’s stories were followed by many more which were to bring about my realisation that southern Africa, as I now know it, has a bloody and painful past from which we are slowly emerging. It is, therefore, that I feel a great debt of gratitude to Carl, John, Willie, Juma, Jurie, Morné, Augustine and the many others whose names, but not stories, I have forgotten. Thank you for showing me that the grand narratives of war are written at the expense of a web of countless wartime experiences and stories. I hope that you will find something of what you told me in the pages that follow. Alex, your stories are also there and I know you would have enjoyed finding them. I think of you, and them, every time I order a pink gin.

Throughout my experience as a postgraduate student I have been extremely fortunate to have been guided by caring and astute academics. Without such people I would not have made it beyond honours. Of those I have had the pleasure of being taught by at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I am particularly grateful to Cheryl Stobie, Jill Arnott, Stefan Helgesson, Catherine Woeber, Kai Easton and John van Wyngaard. The passion for literature that these wonderful teachers instilled in me was reinforced and deepened by James Ogude and Bhekizizwe Peterson at the University of the Witwatersrand and I therefore thank them for their advice and comments at various stages of my time at Wits. I would not, however, have thought to study African Literature at Wits had it not been for Isobel Hofmeyr’s invitation to
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# CONTENTS

Abstract......................................................................................................................................................................................... ii
Declaration...................................................................................................................................................................................... iv
Dedication....................................................................................................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgements........................................................................................................................................................................ vi

## CHAPTER ONE........................................................................................................................................................................... 1

### Introduction

1) Introduction.................................................................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1) Historical contexts............................................................................................................................................................ 2
   1.2) Aims....................................................................................................................................................................................... 8
   1.3) Nation, region and literature........................................................................................................................................... 12
   1.4) Selection of texts............................................................................................................................................................... 21
   1.5) The writing of war in southern Africa............................................................................................................................. 25
   1.6) The writing of war in Angola and Mozambique .......................................................................................................... 30
   1.7) The writing of war in Angola.......................................................................................................................................... 33
   1.8) The writing of war in Mozambique................................................................................................................................. 37
   1.9) The writing of war in Zimbabwe................................................................................................................................... 39
   1.10) The writing of war in South Africa............................................................................................................................... 43
   1.11) Rationale.......................................................................................................................................................................... 47
   1.12) Conceptual and thematic issues....................................................................................................................................... 48
      1.12.1) Texts of war.............................................................................................................................................................. 49
      1.12.2) Temporality............................................................................................................................................................... 50
      1.12.3) Heroes and nations.................................................................................................................................................... 54
   1.13) Research methodology...................................................................................................................................................... 56
   1.14) Chapter outline................................................................................................................................................................. 57

## CHAPTER TWO......................................................................................................................................................................... 60

### National imaginaries, national paradigms and the camp in Angolan war fiction

2) Introduction.................................................................................................................................................................................... 60
   2.1) Fighting for utopia............................................................................................................................................................. 63
   2.2) Still fighting for utopia....................................................................................................................................................... 76
   2.3) Not fighting for utopia......................................................................................................................................................... 88
   2.4) Conclusion.......................................................................................................................................................................... 99

## CHAPTER THREE..................................................................................................................................................................... 103

### Past and Present in the writing of Zimbabwe’s liberation war

3) Introduction.................................................................................................................................................................................... 103
   3.1) Imperfect history, imperfect war....................................................................................................................................... 108
   3.2) Imperfect war, imperfect liberation.................................................................................................................................. 123
   3.3) Imperfect liberation, imperfect future.................................................................................................................................. 135
   3.4) Conclusion.......................................................................................................................................................................... 143
CHAPTER FOUR................................................................................................................146
Heroes and the Rainbow Nation in South African post-1962 war autobiography
4) Introduction..................................................................................................................146
4.1) Becoming the hero....................................................................................................149
4.2) Not the hero............................................................................................................162
4.3) The betrayed hero..................................................................................................174
4.4) Conclusion............................................................................................................182

CHAPTER FIVE.................................................................................................................185
Tracing war in Mia Couto’s writing of Mozambique’s wars
5) Introduction...............................................................................................................185
5.1) Mia Couto.............................................................................................................187
5.2) Writing war during war........................................................................................192
5.3) Writing war after war............................................................................................204
5.4) Writing war and peace into context.......................................................................214
5.5) Conclusion............................................................................................................224

CHAPTER SIX..................................................................................................................228
Conclusion
6) Conclusion...............................................................................................................228

BIBLIOGRAPHY.............................................................................................................242