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'War is a snake that bites us with our own teeth' : reading war in Southern African literature from 1960 to 2002.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction

The arrival of the violence that marked Mozambique's Civil War in his village prompts Kindzu, a character in Mia Couto's *Sleepwalking Land*, to write in his notebook that "[w]ar is a snake that bites us with our own teeth" (2006: 9). Kindzu's observation is intriguing as it raises a number of important issues relating to the experience of war by those forced to live through its terrors. Without doubt the image of a snake indicates that war will poison and destroy its victims. This position is immediately complicated, however, through the implication that war blurs the line between victim and perpetrator. If indeed, war "bites us with our own teeth", then those who choose to start wars will, ultimately, also suffer its destruction and those who initially suffer due to war will become the perpetrators thereof. Finally, Kindzu's writing of war illustrates that it creates an "us" through the shared experience of its "bite" and in doing so, highlights one of war's most vexing paradoxes. In as much as war destroys social groupings, it creates new ones. Homes, villages, cities and entire societies are destroyed by war. This destruction, however, forces the creation of new groupings and societies. Such an understanding of the role that war plays in the destruction and formation of societies causes Christopher Cramer (2006) to conclude that

> many changes that come to be seen as progressive have their origins in social conflicts that have taken a violent turn. This is a paradox of violence and war: violence destroys but is also often associated with social creativity. (279)

Cramer's "paradox of violence and war" is indelibly inscribed in southern African history of the late twentieth century. The destruction caused by multiple wars in numerous regional countries has resulted in large scale changes not only in the countries that experienced war, but in the manner in which the region now operates and is conceived. Throughout these changes, many of the region's authors, such as the above-cited Mia Couto, have continued to

produce texts which give prominence to war and its effects on the countries within which they are set. As a result of such texts' representations of the region's war, they present important views and imaginings of the manner in which war has shaped both individual regional countries and southern Africa as a whole. Nevertheless, very little attention has been given to this body of writing and its depiction of southern Africa, its countries and people at war. It is this gap in the study of southern African literature this study seeks to fill through an extended focus on southern African war writing and its attendant imagining of nation and region at what will be shown to have been a deeply unstable and violent period. Before I am able to elaborate on the manner in which this will be done, however, it is necessary to first outline the major socio-political and historical contexts with which the texts read this study engage.

1.1 Historical contexts

In an address to the South African Parliament on the third of February 1960, Harold Macmillan, prime minister of the United Kingdom from 1957 to 1963, uttered the now famous phrase that "[t]he wind of change is blowing through" Africa (MacArthur 1993: 289). Macmillan's address, often referred to as "the wind of change" speech, has come to be seen as marking the end of British colonialism in Africa. As a result, it is viewed as a pivotal moment in the continent's history. In it, however, Harold Macmillan is not only signalling the end of a series of colonial associations and forces which thus far had been central to the continent's development; he was pointing to a whole new set of global relations that would, in large part, shape the next forty or so years of Africa's development. The world he describes "is divided into three main groups" (1993: 290). First, there are the "Western Powers" of which Britain and South Africa, along with United States of America (USA), most of Western Europe and members of the Commonwealth, are seen to be a part

(MacArthur 1993: 290). In opposition to this grouping of the "Free World", Macmillan identifies "the Communists" as the second group (1993: 290). Macmillan's third group is made up of "those parts of the world whose people are at present uncommitted either to Communism or to our Western ideas" such as those in African and Asia (1993: 290).

While the views expressed by Macmillan in the address could be viewed as those of a benevolent colonial power granting freedom to its subjects and attempting to protect them from a future of further subjugation by the "Communists" (1993: 290), such a view would be naïve. The United Kingdom (UK) was, by the late 1950s, in no position to withstand armed resistance to its colonial rule in Africa due, in large part, to the Second World War debts it was still paying off.[1] As a result of these debts, however, the UK was also not able to do without the massive economic advantage presented by having access to Africa's resources. Offering African colonies self-rule without bloody struggle would, therefore, allow the UK and its companies to continue their operations in African without the need to field an army to protect their interests. In addition, such a move would create African states that were unsympathetic to the "Communists" (1993: 290).

In southern Africa the movement towards an end to colonial British rule would see Malawi and Zambia granted independence in 1964, but such moves would be stridently opposed in South Africa and Rhodesia. The South African government's motivation for this opposition is summed up in Hendrik Verwoerd's response to Macmillan:

> We set up a country which was bare. The Bantu too came to this country and settled certain portions for themselves. It is in line with the thinking on Africa to grant them there, those fullest rights which we with you, admit all people should have. We believe in providing those rights for those people in the fullest degree in that part of Southern Africa which their forefathers found for

[1] For further analysis of Harold Macmillan's "wind of change" speech and the national imperatives that informed it see Ovendale (1995) and Watts (2006).

> themselves and settled in. But we also believe in balance. We believe in allowing exactly those same full opportunities to remain within the grasp of the white man in the areas he has settled, the white man who has made all this possible. (Pelzer 1966: 338)

Verwoerd's assertions of the need to maintain "full opportunities to remain within the grasp of the white man" was to see South Africa leave the Commonwealth in 1961 and become a republic. This move marked the beginning of what was to become an ever-increasingly isolationist and militarist stance by the apartheid South African government. Such reactions to British decolonisation were echoed by Rhodesia's prime minister Ian Smith in 1965 when he unilaterally declared the former colony independent. The British response to Smith's declaration was swift and far reaching. It stopped short of military intervention on grounds that no British Soldier would be willing to fight against "kith and kin" (Watts 2006: 251).

Rhodesia was not left entirely without support following the implementation of international trade sanctions. Portugal was strongly opposed to the decolonisation of its African "provinces" (Bender 2004: xx) and had, therefore, been fighting a series of wars to maintain control of its colonies since the early 1960s. As the two largest of these colonies, Angola and Mozambique, were in southern Africa, the Portuguese entered into agreements of mutual support with Rhodesia and South Africa in order to combat the ever-increasing nationalist threat in the territories controlled by the three governments. It is for this reason the southern African wars of the last half of the twentieth century have historically been seen to have their political roots in the violent resistance to colonial and white-minority rule in southern African states.

Two key moments often cited as the genesis of this violent resistance are the banning of the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa in 1960 and the attacks on Portuguese colonial infrastructure in Angola by the *Movimento*

Popular Libertação de Angola (MPLA) and the *Frente Nacional de Libertacão de Angola* (FNLA) in early 1961.[2] While these moments are of particular importance to the formation of the specific countries in which they took place, their significance to the region, however, lies in the webs of alliance formed between many of the region's countries and national resistance movements as a result of these and other seminal actions. These allegiances and interactions usually took the form of aid, in the form of arms, logistical support and safe training bases, from those already independent to those still fighting colonial domination or white-minority rule. In addition, links of support, both logistical and political, were also formed between colonial/white-minority ruled states such as those colonised by the Portuguese, Rhodesia and South Africa[3]. Thus, multiple networks and interactions were formed throughout the region.

Resistance to colonial oppression and colonial/white-minority rule were, however, not the only factors that saw the formation of such webs, alliances and interactions. Transnational networks were also formed between movements understood to be fighting under similar ideological banners. As a result of such ideologically-based interaction, the region's many anti-colonial and liberation wars came to be viewed as enactments of the Cold War. Consequently, an entirely new conception of southern Africa's anti-colonial and liberation wars emerged and, perhaps more importantly, a whole new set of non-regional combatants came to be involved, either directly or through the use of proxy forces. Such involvement usually hindered the movement of various countries towards fully functional nation-statehood and complicated the nature of the wars being fought in specific countries.

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[2] I am aware that there are competing accounts of the events that mark the beginning of anti-colonial struggle in Angola. For further discussion on this point see Arnold (1995), Bender (2004), Cramer (2006), Garztecki (2004) and Meredith (2006).

[3] This alliance was never committed to paper as there was no need for a formalised agreement because according to B.J. Vorster, who took over as the prime minister of South African following Verwoerd's assassination in 1966,

> we are good friends and good friends do not need an agreement or treaty. Good friends know what their duty is when their neighbour's house is on fire. (Khadiagala 1994: 19)

Further complicating the political and historical understanding of southern Africa's wars post-1960 was the extension of violent resistance to colonial oppression into violent resistance to white-minority rule in South Africa and Rhodesia. In these countries, colonisation led to the active constitution of settler populations who began, in complex ways, to define themselves as distinct from their metropole antecedents. Central to this redefinition was the colonial discourse-inspired conception, as evidenced in the above-cited speech by Hendrik Verwoerd, of the settler population as racially superior to those whose lands the settlers had forcefully taken and now called home. In both South Africa and Rhodesia, such thinking led to the formation of white-minority governments fundamentally opposed to granting majority, non-white, enfranchisement. In addition to the denial of voting rights, these governments imposed brutal economic and social laws which severely limited the development of the non-white communities under their rule, with the aim of maintaining the non-white population's dependence on the settler population for access to economic and developmental resources.

In South West Africa, which had originally been colonised by Germany in the late 1880s, the situation was made even more complex through South Africa's illegal occupation of the country. This occupation began with the League of Nations' placement of South West Africa under British mandate following Germany's loss of the First World War. In accordance with its mandate, the UK entrusted South Africa with the county's administration. Ultimately, this transference of administration resulted in South Africa ruling South West Africa as though it were an extra province. This included the imposition of the same segregationist policies that the apartheid government put into practice in South Africa. South Africa's occupation and white-minority rule, which incorporated the remaining settlers of German origin, was finally

deemed illegal under international law by the United Nations (UN) in the 1960s. South Africa, however, refused to relinquish its rule and, as happened in South Africa and Rhodesia, violent resistance began to grow in the early 1960s and only came to an end with the liberation of Namibia in 1990.

Although the conflicts that arose as a result of the defence of and violent resistance to white-minority rule might seem simple, they became extremely complicated because of the regional and global networks and webs of alliance that were their result and of which they became a part. The fight against white-minority rule thus also became inextricably involved in the politics – and violence – of the Cold War. In addition, the wars against white-minority rule were fought not only in the countries under such rule, but also in other southern African countries due to South Africa and Rhodesia's attempts to destabilise countries seen to offer support to those involved in the fight against white-minority rule. Such attempts to destabilise their neighbours not only included South Africa and Rhodesia supporting anti-government movements in and launching major offensives into South West Africa, Angola and Mozambique, they also initiated a number of smaller clandestine attacks in countries such as Lesotho, Zambia, Botswana, Swaziland and Tanzania. While these acts of violence may have ended with the end of Rhodesian and South African white-minority rule in 1980 and 1994, the impact of their and other forces' involvement in the region were to be felt into the Twenty-first Century. In fact, what has been termed the Angolan Civil War only ended in 2002 and with it came an end to the violent conflict which characterises the history of southern Africa in the late twentieth century.

1.2 Aims

As the above overview of the socio-political and historical underpinnings of southern Africa's wars from 1960 to 2002 illustrates, the period is of great importance to the region as it was marked by the movement of people and ideas across the region's national borders as a result of the very many wars being fought. It is important to note that the result of this movement of people and ideas can still be seen in the international relationships that form today's political and military interactions in the region.

The literatures of the countries involved and the writers of those literatures were deeply implicated in the movements and networks described above and as a result have been profoundly affected. In addition to war having influenced individual writers, it also played a vital role in the spread of ideas which informed much of the region's literature. This point is underscored by William Beinart (1992), when he asserts that:

> Violent conflict, though by no means unique to southern Africa, has been central in its modern history. It is [therefore] very difficult to write about the region in the twentieth century without constant reference to wars, conquest and violence. (455)

It is in this regard that it is 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 following the experience of war. Or, to put it in Kindzu's terms, to look at how the "us" created by the "bite" of war represents the shared experience of war in southern Africa (Couto 2006: 9).

This study, therefore, 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. This

aim is to be achieved through an extensive contextualisation of selected extended written texts dealing explicitly with certain temporal moments in southern African wars between 1960 and 2002 within the historical, social and political contingencies within which they are situated. Accordingly, such a reading will be done taking cognisance of the fact that the numerous wars which have plagued the region in the period from 1960 to 2002 have had a profound impact on the societies and countries involved and that thus, the writing from such societies and countries can be read as both an imaginative response to such contingencies and as a vital mediator in their later understanding. A study of the war writings of this period can therefore be seen to be responding, on the one hand, to the experience of the period's wars as regional. On the other hand, it is also crucial to consider these wars as they were experienced and understood by those affected by them. Quite often, combatants and their competing organizations saw these wars in nationalist terms, either as instruments of national defence or liberation. Moreover, the various imaginative renderings of war illustrate that many of the region's countries are still attempting to come to terms with, or have failed to come to terms with, the results of the region's wars. Thus, the many occurrences of war in the region's literature mark it as a key aspect of authors' imaginings of the region and as such, an important area of African literary study.

Given the study's primary aim of locating southern African war writing within a larger imagining of nation and region, the questions it will attempt to answer can be seen to fit into two overarching concerns.

The first is that of the texts' positioning of war in relation to a larger imagining of nation. In this regard, the study attempts to answer questions such as: in what ways can the texts be seen to actively engage with the experience of war by both combatants and non-combatants? Do

the texts' representations of war show war to be understood as central to the imagining of a future, united nation at peace? What are the barriers to nationhood that the text's show to overcome or enforce? How are different modes of representation employed in an attempt to narrate a country gripped by, or recovering from, the extreme violence of war?

The second is that of the texts' situation of national war and regional war in relation to the imagining or unimagining of the southern African region. Central to this concern are questions such as: do the texts depict national wars as enactments of larger regional and global concerns, or are they only concerned with local priorities? Can the texts be said to form a web of creative engagement with the region's wars that tracks a changing configuration of southern Africa? And finally, how does the writing of war signify a unifying focus in southern African literature?

In posing the above questions, I view my study as situated within a broadly cultural materialist understanding of the functioning of literature within society. Such an understanding is, however, defined more by my conception of the relationship between the manner in which socio-historical contingencies find their expression in the form and content of a literary work rather than by any particular cultural materialist theory. In general terms, therefore, the study will read the texts as both artistic expressions and endeavours that consciously engage with the social. If this offering of a theoretical underpinning to the study seems somewhat tentative, it is because I am consciously attempting to avoid an overly instrumentalist view of the role of literature in society, which would imply a one-to-one relationship, where literature merely attempts to mirror supposedly more significant socio-political realities. I seek, instead, a reading that nuances the important interplay between literary texts and their social referent.

Such an understanding is offered in Ato Quayson's (2000) attempt to "align literary criticism more closely to a materialist analysis of society and culture" (76). Quayson argues for a reading of African literature that is seeks to balance the demands of considering texts as aesthetic objects contained within a "commodified domain of popular consumption" which is entirely apolitical, with the need to come to terms with the view that in Africa, no "discursive network has been able to differentiate itself from the political" without conflating the literary with the political (85). In tackling this issue, Quayson is entering into terrain that has long been contested by African scholars and one which has particularly long history is South African literary circles.[4] An important aspect of that particular debate focused on some South African authors' desire to use literature as one of many weapons to be mobilised in order to highlight injustice and act against it. Authors thus "opposed through exposing" the violent brutality of the apartheid system (Bethlehem 2001: 367). This view of the possibilities literary writing offers in times of struggle is by no means particular to South Africa, this study will argue that it is a vital factor in my consideration of southern African war writing. In doing so, I see myself as aligning with the solution Quayson offers to the problem posed earlier. His solution – informed as it is by Homi K. Bhabha's description of liminality in the postcolony and Biodun Jeyifo's conception of literary "proleptic designation" (78) , argues that "each literary text has to be politically contextualised via a complex series of negotiations" which in turn "requires an understanding of literary discourse [and] its textual ramifications" (2000: 102). It is a way of reading that is underscored by Okey Ndibe and Chenjerai Hove's view, expressed in the introduction to *Writers, Writing on Conflict and Wars in Africa* (2009), that

[4] For a detailed overview and examination of the form that this discussion took see Bethlehem (2005), de Kock (2005) and Green (1997).

> [a]rt is shaped by, and shapes, all facets of experience.
> [...]
> African writers, like writers elsewhere, respond to the stimuli, provocations and challenges of their specific political and economical realities. Their art seeks to reflect as well as transform their people's immediate historical experience. (11)

Reflected in this quotation is an understanding of the relationship between writer and her or his environment that informs my selection of both the primary and the secondary texts to be read in this study. In expansion of this point, I turn now to a review of the literature, theoretical and other, that I see as central to my assertion that southern African war writing can be seen to function as a focal point for the imagining of both nation and region.

1.3 Nation, region and literature

In his now famous 1882 speech "*Que'est-ce qu'une Nation?*", or "What is a Nation?" Ernest Renan argues that a nation is not tied to definitions of an ethnic group, as had been posited by other theorists of his time, but is the coming together of people who "have common glories in the past and [...] have a common will in the present" (Renan 2009 [1882]: 19). Building on this in his tracing of the emergence of the idea of nation, Ernest Gellner (1983) states that "a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has come to appear as such" (6). Gellner elaborates by showing that the idea of nation is constructed through the "hold of a shared literate culture ('nationality') over modern man" and that this nationality "springs from the erosion of the old structures, which had once provided each man with his identity, dignity and material security, whereas he now depends on education for these things" (85). Central to this linkage of literacy to the construction of nation is Gellner's assertion that this literate culture must be a "great or high (literate, training sustained) culture" and "no longer [...] a diversified, locality-tied, illiterate little culture or tradition" (38). Paradoxically, however, Gellner emphasises that in seeking to legitimise the imposition of this "literate culture" (6), "nationalism usually conquers in the name of a putative folk culture" (57). Thus, as Homi K.

Bhabha (2009) shows through a discussion of Gellner's formulation, "the historical necessity of the idea of the nation conflicts with the contingent and arbitrary signs and symbols that signify the affective life of the national culture" (293). Bhabha's conflict is apparent in the dual understanding of nation that, as Timothy Brennan (2009) points out, "refers to both the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous – the '*natio*' – a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging" (45). In southern Africa this conflict is heightened, due to the historical process that led to the formation of the countries within which its nation-states were forced into existence by the processes of decolonisation. These processes were unlike those in the majority of Africa in which, as K. A. Appiah (1992) explains, "Europe left Africa at independence with states looking for nations" (162). In southern Africa European colonial-rule, and its settler populations, had to be fought against for liberation to become a reality.

For two theorists, literature had a very important role to play in the fight against both colonial and white-minority rule and in the formation of independent African nations. The first is Martiniquan Frantz Fanon. In his seminal *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001), first published in French in 1961, Fanon begins his discussion of the relationship between national culture and revolution with the assertion that the cultural weakening of the colonised was central to the functioning of colonial power. Accordingly, he outlined three phases of cultural evolution among the colonised (178). In the first phase, the "native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power [and] his writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country" (178-179). The "cultural nationalist" phase is the second phase and is marked by the native intellectual remembering "his" authentic identity and begins to fight against the colonial attempt to assimilate "him" (179). At this stage, however, the native intellectual is unable to do little more than

romanticise the pre-colonial past as “he” is still too far removed, by colonial assimilation, from “his people” (179). Importantly for this study, Fanon terms the third phase “the fighting phase”. It is here that the native intellectual, “after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people” (179). In addition, this stage will bring about “a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature and a national literature” that will be responsible for bringing to the colonised a clear vision of both the situation under which they suffer and the pathway to freedom from this situation (179). Fanon is not, however, unaware of the risks posed by his cultural nationalist position, posited as it is on the atavistic revival of the pre-colonial past. He therefore cautions that this stage must be abolished once the goal of liberation has been achieved. For Fanon, the creation of this “national literature” marks the author’s shift from writing for the colonial oppressor to “addressing his own people” and, in doing so, creates “a literature of combat” (193). He describes it thus because

> it moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space. (193)

Fanon’s national literature is predicated on the formation of a public that will, in turn, become authors of new literatures “of combat” and the anti-colonial message contained in these writings will be carried to an ever-increasing audience.

The second theorist to overtly address the relationship between culture and anti-colonial revolution was the Guinea-Bissaunian Amílcar Cabral, who like Fanon proposed a fundamentally materialist notion of cultural production and thus literature, in the service of national liberation. Cabral offers the view that “[a]t any moment, depending on internal and external factors determining the evolution of the society in question, cultural resistance (indestructible) may take on new forms (political, economic, armed), in order to fully contest foreign domination” (1973: 40). In this construction, the historical is coupled to the cultural

and becomes an instrument of national resistance. Cabral's deep belief in the instrumentality of culture in the process of liberation, from colonial or settler rule, results in the identification of the culture of the peasantry, with its supposed access to an unadulterated, pre-colonial authentic, as the only one that can truly represent African desires for freedom. Through this implementation of his cultural programme, Cabral argued for a radical reshaping of the native intelligentsia with "a veritable forced march along the road to cultural progress" (1974: 17).

While it has been argued that Cabral's position offers a "more effective political programme for implementing the radical transformation of the native intelligentsia" than that of Fanon (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2000: 101), it is difficult to overestimate the effect that the two theorists, in particular Fanon, have had on African writing. Having said that, however, both can be seen to fall into the category of nationalist which Timothy Brennan (2009) warns "obscure[s]" the distinction between the "modern nation-state" and the ancient "*natio*" and thus "place their own country in an 'immemorial past' where it's [sic] arbitrariness cannot be questioned" (45). In addition, Fanon and Cabral's theorising of the role of culture and writing in the creation of liberated post-colonial nation-state show themselves to actively "invent a local high (literate, specialist-transmitted) culture of its own, though admittedly one which will have some links with the earlier local folk styles and dialects" that relies on the appropriated institutions of the former colonial power for its dissemination (Gellner 1983: 57).

The debate surrounding the notion of a nation actively constructed through the writing of that nation has come to be seen to be dominated by Benedict Anderson's pioneering study presented in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). Anderson's central thesis traces "a fundamental change [...] in modes of

apprehending the world, which, more than anything else, made it possible to 'think' the nation" (1983: 28). For Anderson, it was the "coalition of Protestantism and print-capitalism" which "made the new communities imaginable" through the "interaction between a system of productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print) and the fatality of human linguistic diversity" (46). Thus, the idea that the nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (15). He adds that it is

> imagined because the members of even the smallest nation never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them. Yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (15)

Additionally, that the nation is "imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lies other nations" (16). Crucially for this study, Anderson explains that in "a world in which the national state is the overwhelming norm, all of this means that nations can now be imagined without linguistic commonalities [...], but out of general awareness of what modern history has demonstrated to be possible" (123). Authors, therefore, form a critical link in this imagining of nation through their representations of historical moments in the development of the nation.

Anderson's assertion that the nations of Europe formed the model upon which African nationalism was based has drawn criticism, particularly from Partha Chatterjee (1993) who argued that "nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on difference with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West" (5). However, as Adebayo Williams (2003) points out, those who were to become the new ruling elite due to the important role that they had played in the anti-colonial movement "took to heart the paradigm of the nation-state handed down to them" because they "took their respective countries as they were 'invented' by the imperialist overlords and

never questioned the colonial map or the national boundaries externally imposed on them" (357-358). Coupled with this is the point made by Simon Gikandi (2003) who shows that many prominent advocates of African nationalism were products of European mission schools and tertiary institutions and thus "considered literature to be important both as a weapon in the struggle against colonialism and as a vehicle for imagining a modern life" (123). Paradoxically therefore, African literature and its assertion of African nationalism came to function as point of resistance to colonial rule within the very education system with which colonial powers sought to entrench their superiority and right to rule. Having said that, however, it is important to note Ato Quayson's (2000) assertion that in Africa, writers of literary and other texts have almost "taken over the role traditionally assigned to the press" through their struggle for "absent or vanishing agents of democratic social change" which they feel obliged to take up "on behalf of their people" (78).

These theories, and others to be discussed later, will be employed as lenses through which to view the text's renderings of the relationship between war and the imagining of nation in southern African war writing and form the backbone for my discussion of nation in the study. Importantly, however, such theories of the relationship between literature and nation overlook the functioning of a text in the construction of a sense, or an imagining, of region. In this regard, I turn to the work that Michael Chapman presents in his groundbreaking *Southern African Literatures* (2003) for guidance.

Chapman's study of the region's literatures begins with the

> initial premise […] that in the countries of southern Africa the texts of politics have wanted to overwhelm the texts of art: that public events have confirmed a history of domination and resistance, in which ancient charters have felt the intrusion of harsh, modernising forces. (2003: 1)

In an expansion of this point, Chapman writes that "it is difficult, in the subcontinent, to separate literary discussion from a social referent when political events have attained the dimension of compelling public narratives" (4). The study will also use this as its point of departure in that it will use the region's wars as the "social referent" around which a workable notion of a regional writing about war can be constructed. Such an approach is necessarily based on the conception, as described in the introduction to this chapter, of the region's wars, not as disparate events affecting only the countries in which they were fought but rather as interconnected, transnational actions with reverberations that were felt across the region. It is, however, important to note that whereas Chapman uses this "social theory" (4) in furtherance of his primary aim of constructing a literary history of southern Africa and its nations, my study applies it as a framework upon which to centralise the writing of war as a fundamental point of reference within the region's literature.

Much debate surrounds the role of war in the formation of southern Africa's nation-states. It should come as no surprise therefore, that this debate has filtered into contemporary southern African literary debate. This point is well illustrated by the following statement by Isabel Hofmeyr (1996):

> Warfare is after all one of the crucial processes which lead often disparate peoples to call themselves a nation and war consequently lies at the heart of most bodies of writing that we commonly designate national literatures. (61)

In a contrast which seeks to define a notion of literature that is less inclusive than Hofmeyr's, Patrick Chabal (1996) writes of the region's Lusophone literature that,

> [t]he consequences of nationalist war on the evolution of literature were many. First and foremost, there emerged a considerable body of anti-colonial literature, growing out of the vagaries of the nationalist struggle and, implicitly or explicitly, erecting a model of 'correct' political literature. While political literature has sometimes been remarkably good (e.g. the poetry of Pablo Neruda), most anti-colonial writing has seldom been anything other than sloganising and propaganda. If it has its place in the history of the

> nationalist struggle, it contributed little to the construction of an African literature.
> […]
> In times of war, writers, particularly if they are convinced nationalists, cannot fail to feel the pressure to write 'relevant' literature. Hence the influence of war literature cannot be discounted altogether, even if it should not be exaggerated. (22)

These contrasting views illustrate that while war can be seen to have had an influence on the region's literature, the role it has played is contingent on the specifics of the wars fought in particular nations. Beyond that, however, the quotations raise two questions central to my study. The first relates to the question of the construction or imagination of nationhood, as discussed above, while the second relates to what, in fact, constitutes literature.

To answer the second question, my study again turns to Chapman's work on southern African literatures. In addressing this issue, Chapman writes that "my criterion of literary production itself as a form of social practice: as one of the many discourses that has helped create and affect the consciousness of the society in attitudes, behaviour and actions" (2003: 8). Such an approach erases the distinction that Chabal draws between an acceptable "African literature" and "sloganising and propaganda" (1996: 22) and opens the way for the study of multiple modes of representation and their depictions of war. In addition, the approach introduces the conception of literature as entering into the ongoing and multifaceted discourse surrounding questions of nationhood and region.

As Hofmeyr points out, war can be seen to bring "often disparate peoples to call themselves a nation" and while this may be true of some wars, the wars that the primary texts depict are often described as proving quite the opposite. It is precisely this contestation in the imagining of nation that the writing of war in southern Africa casts into stark focus. The ability of the writing to do so is as a result of its representation of wars in which a primary motivator for

the war can be seen to have been an attempt to claim the nation-state in the name of one ethnic, ideological or economic grouping. By writing about these wars, however, the authors can be seen to be entering into the debate surrounding questions of nationhood and region. In addition, these authors suggest both commonalities and differences in the experience of war by people of different southern African countries. It is here that Michael Chapman's work proposes a methodology.

In order to finds ways in which southern African literatures can be read with a view to their functioning in national literatures and as a responding to regional concerns, Chapman "constructs the field", as does this study, "on comparative considerations" (2003: xix). It is an approach that Duncan Brown (2001) believes corresponds with his view that to "focus on a mutual implication in a history of difference works [...] to open up the category 'Southern African literature' to its commonalities and divisions, its mutual influences, hybridisations and rejections" (768). It is precisely within the textual spaces that these "commonalities and differences" inhabit, that the imagining, or in some cases the unimagining, takes place in the texts selected to be read in this study. This is done in a manner similar to that illustrated by Anderson's work on nation because just as with nations, as this study will show, southern Africa has been and is in the process of being imagined. Southern Africa, like its nations, is plural and particular. It is for the foregoing reasons I argue in this study that in southern Africa, war was one of the primary factors that "made it possible to 'think'" the region (Anderson 1983: 28).

1.4 Selection of texts

In his introduction to *The Vintage Book of War Stories* (1999) author Sebastian Faulks[5] opines that the

> deterrent fact about war as a subject of background for fiction is that it is so disgusting. Which writer would willingly immerse himself for two or three years in this drab world of units and numbers, of industrial metal and meaningless death, without women or children or costume or domestic drama or even interesting food and drink? Laboratory of souls maybe, [writers] would reply, but what a repellent and austere one. (x)

It is, perhaps, because Faulks is commenting on a specific form of war writing which focuses only on the experience men fighting far from home, in battlefields already free from civilians, that he speaks of a world without "women or children or [...] domestic drama". This is certainly not the world of war depicted in the texts to be read in this study. These texts depict a region at war populated by many women, men, children and communities, all deeply affected and shaped by the violence that has blighted southern Africa between 1960 and 2002. On the whole, the texts to be read show war to be akin to the state of war in Africa that Achille Mbembe (2002) states should be "conceived of as a general cultural experience that shapes identities, just as the family, the school, and other social institutions do" (267). It is a "general cultural experience" that has shaped the southern Africa region and its countries to varying degrees.

There are a great number of texts that could be read in a study that intends reading war in southern African literature, as most, if not all, of the region's countries have at one time or another experienced the violence of war. However, this study is not intended to be an encyclopaedic reading of the presence of war in southern African literature. I have therefore limited my reading to works from only four of the region's countries most affected by war

[5] Sebastian Faulks is the author of, amongst others, *Birdsong* (1994) in which the events are located, primarily, in the fighting on the Western Front during the First World War.

since 1960. I realise that my selection of texts from only a four regional countries, and then only three texts from each of these countries, will result in the foregrounding of certain authors and texts at the expense of others, but wherever possible, I have made attempts to mention such texts and authors when situating the texts under discussion within the traditions of which they are a part.[6]

Of the countries most directly affected by war this study will read texts from Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. I have selected these countries because they have a substantial body of writing about the wars in which they have been involved, during the period under study, from which to work. In selecting primary texts from these countries for study, I have been guided by a number of factors.

The first of these factors relates to complicated issue of definitions of war. Definitions of war abound and range from definitions that define it by a so-called casualty threshold, the number of war-related deaths in a predetermined period, to ones in which war is defined by its relation to the state and its expression of power in defending its existence from either external or internal threat.[7] As important as such definitions are to those wishing to make sense of one of humankind's most repugnant behaviours, they make little difference to the manner in which war is experienced by those soldiers, civilians and communities caught up in its destruction and violence. I do not mean to imply, however, that the reasons for the violent conflict in which people are caught up do not matter to them. Rather, that if the texts show

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[6] See, for example, my situation of Chenjerai Hove and Stanley Nyamfukudza within the tradition of Zimbabwean war writing – including authors such as Yvonne Vera, Dambudzo Marechera and Garikai Mutasa – in Chapter Three.

[7] For a particularly accessible, thorough and thought provoking discussion of the vexed questions surrounding definitions of war see Christopher Cramer's *Civil War is Not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries* (2006).

that people experience, understand and, most importantly, describe the experience of sustained violent conflict as war, then this study will treat it as such.

Allowing the study to be led by the primary texts' definition of war is important when considering texts from all of the countries under study, particularly so when selecting texts from South Africa. There are numerous definitions of the violent conflicts which have marred South African history between 1960 and 1994. These range from definitions such as low level violent conflict to outright civil war. Such definitions, however, only account for the violence that took place within the country's borders or differentiate such fighting from the South African Defence Force (SADF) and other state apparatuses' actions in other regional countries. While the apartheid government may have argued that these were fundamentally different most other countries in the region, and many fighting against white-minority rule in South Africa, viewed the fighting inside and outside the country as deeply connected, and thus different, faces of the same war. This is not to say that the different wars fought in the region all had exactly the same underpinnings or took the same form, more that they came to form a network of wars which ultimately resulted in momentous change in southern Africa. In addition, by assuming this position regarding the definition of war I have enabled the study to read representations of the experiences of war which reflect multiple positions including those of women, men, children, combatant and non-combatant.

The second factor to play a role the selection of primary texts is the requirement that the text offer an extended representation to overtly address what it terms war. There are a large number of southern African texts that mention war in one form or another, but do not engage with it in a manner that would allow for a sustained and intensive reading. When this is considered along with the requirement that the texts selected must reference specific

moments in the wars they depict, so that changing imaginings can be tracked, I have decided to only include extended works of prose writing. Short stories and poetry have, however, played very meaningful roles in the various traditions of war writing in southern African countries. They will, therefore, be referenced in order to give context to my discussions of the selected primary texts. The primary texts selected to be read can be seen to represent a large number of differing genres, styles and narrative forms, such as autobiographical and fictionalised autobiographical texts, texts that make extensive use of the fantastic and texts that are realist in nature.

The final issue to be considered in the selection is the texts' representation of issues which will facilitate discussion on both national and regional concerns. The texts selected represent literary interventions depicting war in a manner that speaks to both the concerns of the nations represented by the text and to concerns that underpin a regional experience of war. Thus, each of the texts have been selected on the grounds that they bring into focus issues that facilitate discussion of the study's overall contention that while the region's wars were often only seen to be a concern of the specific nation within which they were fought, such wars were in fact part of a much larger regional experience of war whose effects can be seen to this day.

The study will be guided by and make use of various theoretical lenses, literary and other, through which to read the selected primary texts. The selection of such sources will, by necessity, be eclectic as it is guided by the primary texts and the understanding that the study of war writing requires one to look for answers and insights at an intersection of the disciplines of literature, history and politics amongst others. These theoretical and disciplinary approaches can be loosely divided into those seeking to illuminate and discuss

the region's literatures, those dealing with the specifics of literatures from each country represented in my study and those that will be used to provide a deeper understanding of the specific issues and themes raised by the primary texts and the national and regional situation that they represent.

In order to illustrate why texts from the above-mentioned countries have been selected for consideration, I turn now to a broad overview of the trends that have marked the non-fiction writing related to the region's wars during the period under study. This overview will be followed by a more detailed look at the writing of war in each of the countries to be discussed and then, an introduction to the authors and texts to be read in this study. The presentation of the readings within which this study situates itself will be conducted in this manner to best facilitate the comparative method referred to in the previous section.

1.5 The writing of war in southern Africa

The examination of war in southern Africa as a regional experience has thus far almost exclusively been left to historians, journalists and social scientists. Most of such writing, prior to the early 1990s, can be seen to fit into one of two groups; those opposed to the white-minority rule and those who supported it. While the reasons for such grouping are complex, they are perhaps best seen as underpinned by a binarised view of the conflicts informed by the allegiances, both formal and informal, fashioned by various regional and global actors during the years following 1960.

Two of these allegiances have come to be seen as of particular importance. The first grew out of a formalisation of those southern African countries already free of colonial rule and actively engaged in aiding nationalist movements with countries which were not. This

grouping was formalised as the Front Line States (FLS) in 1970 and by 1975 consisted of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia. At this stage, the FLS actively supported nationalist movements in Rhodesia, South Africa and South West Africa. In addition, it attempted to find negotiated settlements to the conflicts being fought in these countries. With the fall of the Rhodesian government and the birth of Zimbabwe in 1980, the FLS' focus completely turned to South Africa. In 1981, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was established using the alliances formed in the FLS. This was a constellation of the same states making up the FLS, but had the primary aim of countering the economic dependence of SADCC states on South Africa. In 1992 the SADCC was transformed into Southern African Development Community (SADC) and at the same time, newly liberated Namibia joined. The end of apartheid rule in South Africa saw the end of the FLS and, with South Africa having joined SADC, a new role for the organisation emerged as it was not solely interested in matters of economic development, but those of regional security too.

A number of studies have been done on the role that the FLS played in the fight against white-minority rule in southern Africa. Of these two stand out: *Challenge to Imperialism: The Frontline States in the Liberation of Zimbabwe* (1986) by Carol B. Thompson and *Allies in Adversity: The Frontline States in Southern African Security 1975-1993* (1994) by Gilbert M. Khadiagala. Both of these studies approach southern African wars from the perspective of the role that the FLS played in the fight against white-minority rule in Rhodesia, South Africa and South West Africa. In doing so, they underscore the magnitude of that role in the final outcomes of the liberation wars. In general terms however, these texts can be seen as representative of a body of study and writing on the functioning of the FLS in the late 1970s

and 1980s emphasising apartheid South Africa's belligerent and destabilising action that marked its involvement in illegal military actions both within and across its borders.

A text of particular prominence in this drive to expose South African destabilisation in the region is *Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War* (1986) edited by Phyllis Johnson and David Martin. The text is a collection of analyses of South African, often covert, military action in its neighbouring countries. Interestingly, *Destructive Engagement* has a foreword by Julius Nyerere (1986) which signals the collection's intention to highlight and condemn South African "aggression and terrorism" (vii). The deployment of the term "terrorism" to describe apartheid South Africa's actions is particularly important because it was ostensibly against terrorism, launched from its neighbouring states, that South Africa claimed to be fighting when entering such countries. Further negation of South African justification for military intervention in the region can be found in the titular phrase "Destructive Engagement". It is the reversal of the USA's early 1980s policy of Constructive Engagement, which sought to induce South African movement towards multiracial rule, and was proposed by the Reagan Administration as an alternative to economic sanctions[8]. Such a direct attack on this and other similar policies by non-regional governments should be seen as a response, in large part, to the type of writing on southern African wars that sought to defend South African and Rhodesian aggression and is a key feature of the writing of war to be found in proponents of the second regional allegiance.

As mentioned earlier, the late 1960s saw the governments of South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia form an unofficial allegiance in an effort to counter growing resistance to their rule.

[8] For further information regarding the USA and other non-regional countries' involvement is southern African conflicts see Gleijeses (2002).

This allegiance justified military action as a way of defending the region against a communist takeover and the accompanying purportedly terrorist actions. The writing that attempted to justify such actions generally takes the form of military histories of the actions taken by the three countries. These military histories typically attempt to situate regional conflicts within the larger context of the Cold War, thus reframing South African and Rhodesian participation as morally justified.[9] Perhaps the clearest example of such writing is Fred Bridgland's *The War for Africa: Twelve Months that Transformed a Continent* (1990). The events described in the text relate to South African involvement in Angola in the late 1980s, yet Bridgland's initial framing of the war as an enactment of the Cold War overlooks apartheid South Africa's other reasons for entering Angola. While this is only one example, there are many others. Another key feature of this form of writing is the presentation of the South African and, to a lesser extent, Rhodesian military actions as remarkable successes in the face of much larger forces with access to near unlimited support from other communist forces. Inherent in such arguments is the celebration of South African and Rhodesian ingenuity in the creation of effective arms whilst suffering international arms embargoes and sanctions.[10] Of course, such writings invariably overlook the support, usually covert, that South Africa received from numerous actors external to the region.

An important intervention that seeks to review the two positions outlined above is the inter-disciplinary collection of essays edited by Gary Baines and Peter Vale entitled *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (2008). The collection brings together studies from a number of disciplinary positions that "evidence an interest in certain common themes, especially with regard to borders/frontiers and

[9] For further information see Craig (2008).
[10] The most regularly cited examples of South Africa's ability to create such arms are the G5 and G6 155mm artillery cannon. For further information see Williams (2008).

secrets/silences" (Baines 2008: 2). Much of what is presented in the text is based on new information now available from sources both within and without the region. As such, the collection offers this study access to valuable insights on southern Africa in the late twentieth century. Crucially, this collection contains a number of essays offering new perspectives from literary scholars on the writing about these wars. Having said that however, the literary essays offered in the collection are all located within the country from which the writings under analysis originate and do not attempt to compare or contrast the texts with any from other countries involved in the conflicts under study.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, only two other studies have thus far been done on the presence of war in southern African literature. There is a fairly large body of critical work available that discusses the writings of war in relation to the specific countries' national literatures. Only two texts attempt, as this study does, to communicate any similarities or differences such writings may have with others of the region. The first is Michael Chapman's *Southern African Literatures*. As discussed above, Chapman's work is based, as is this one, on a comparative methodology in which the literatures of different countries are presented in a manner that allows for the observance of difference whilst acknowledging commonalities existing in the processes through which the region's national literatures have grown. Of particular importance to this study is Chapman's situation of each country's writings of war within a larger national literature as it will serve, along with other critical works that operate in a similar manner, to lend a context to much of my own discussion of southern African war writing's imagining of nation and region.

The second text that offers the reader a comparison of the position of war writing within a national literature is *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* (1996) by Patrick

Chabal *et al*. This text examines the national literatures of countries formerly under Portuguese colonial-rule and which, consequentially, can be seen to have had similar literary trajectories. Of the countries discussed by Chabal *et al.* two, Angola and Mozambique, are in southern Africa. Angola and Mozambique have had a similar, but significantly differing, historical trajectories since the early 1950s and it is therefore not coincidental that these countries are often paired in discussions regarding their literatures. As a result, it is difficult to comment on the critical attention that the writing of war within specific national literatures has attracted without mentioning the other. I, therefore, preface my discussions of the individual countries literary traditions with a discussion of those aspects they have in common. This is then followed by an outline of the features marking the war writing of each country whose writing is to be examined in this study.

1.6 The writing of war in Angola and Mozambique

Of Mozambique and Angola's shared history, Patrick Chabal (1996) writes that the "experience of guerrilla war, allied to the fact that for the nationalists, independence was but a prelude to a socialist revolution, has had a considerable impact" on their literature (21). Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, he asserts that while this impact "should not be exaggerated" (22), as "one cannot understand the history of post-colonial Angolan and Mozambican literature without taking these factors into account" (23). Chabal concludes this part of his introduction to the collection by asserting that "[a]lthough contemporary Angolan and Mozambican literature is rarely explicit about the conflict which has ravaged these two countries, it is the ever-present backdrop against which all writers [...] live" and thus "a careful reading of the contemporary writing shows clearly what damage [...] war has done to the national and individual psyche" (24). Having offered this overview, the discussion of each of the specifics of the two national literatures is taken over in separate chapters by other

scholars whose contributions will be discussed in my overview of each of the countries' literary traditions.

Michael Chapman (2003) opines on the presence of war in Angolan and Mozambican literature that:

> the complicated, messy histories of Angola and Mozambique could be seen to have strained the credibility of any rhetoric of liberation and, from the vantage point of the 1990s, to have caused the literature of the anti-colonial struggle with its high ideals of a socialist future to be dismissed at best as naïve, at worst untrue. This would be to do an injustice, however, to a body of literature that has retained the insight, complexity and range to provoke interpretive questions about national ideals and pragmatic realities. (282)

In detailing this "body of literature", Chapman points to three phases of writers who were to shape these countries' national literatures. The first he describes as a 1940s "revolt of assimilado[11] intellectuals" (281). 1960s "writers of combat composing poetry in guerrilla camps" make up his second phase, followed by "critical revaluations of the myths of the independence wars" in the third phase (281). Chapman illustrates that this final stage is complicated by the fact that both countries had writers, usually of the first and second phase, who came to hold important positions in the governments to be formed following liberation. In this regard, Chabal can seen to be in agreement with Chapman's assertion that this "correlation between cultural expression and political resistance signals the peculiar strengths of Angolan and Mozambican literary nationalism" (281-282). So important has this link become to Angolan and Mozambican literature that Russell Hamilton (1993) writes that "[s]ome Lusophone African intellectuals have declared that their literary movements were

[11] The term assimilado/*assimilado* was used by the Portuguese colonial authorities from 1954 until 1961 to denote non-white colonial subjects who had been acculturated in European, specifically Portuguese, cultural practises and who could demonstrate mastery of such practises. A primary requirement of acquiring *assimilado* status and, in principle but not practice, being considered a Portuguese citizen was the demonstration of a proficient command of written and spoken Portuguese. For particularly insightful explanations of the concept's functioning see Bender (2004) and Birmingham (2006).

born of struggle" and "that in the 1960s, with the outbreak of war in Angola [...] and Mozambique, cultural revindication and racial affirmation [as seen in the Negritude movement] became handmaidens to social protest and combativeness" (247). This "social protest and combativeness" is at its most apparent in these literatures in what has become known as *poesia de combate* (poetry of combat). Michael Chapman (2003) describes such poetry as

> poetry of utter clarity – a form of people's labour – [which] has a vision that is concrete and realisable in the actions of Angolans and Mozambicans' moving from defeat to a new conception of the human being: ideologically clear-sighted, committed to the workings of the emerging, victorious nation. (286)

As such, *poesia de combate*, is often framed within a conception of a Marxist-style utopia that will result from the battle against the Portuguese colonial forces and the resulting revolution.

Patrick Chabal (1996) outlines three primary and related characteristics present in *poesia de combate*. The first is that it is overtly political in its presentation of a nationalist and revolutionary position with a view to "mobilising support for the cause" (38). This drive to mobilisation informs the second characteristic in Chabal's analysis. He shows that the use of language in the poetry is always "kept at a level that does not detract from the message" of liberation from colonial oppression (38). The final characteristic of *poesia de combate* is its "direct social relevance" through the representation of issues in such a clear way that oppressed Angolans and Mozambicans would relate and respond to in a deeply emotional manner and thus, hopefully, answer its call to join the revolutionary fight (38). Importantly for this study, Chabal asserts that this form of writing "sheds light on the political and ideological concerns of the nationalist or revolutionary militants" (38) and that "[b]ecause it is explicitly political it gives the reader a good grasp of the parameters most central to the attempt to construct a modern nation-state" (39). While there are certain common "political

and ideological concerns" (38) evident in the *poesia de combate* from Mozambique and Angola, the poetry also illustrates aspect and themes that are specific to each country. In addition, the presence of this poetry can be seen to have had a differing effect on each of the country's literary trajectory. In order to elaborate on such differences, I turn now to a discussion of the particulars of the writing of war in each country to be considered in the study.

1.7 The writing of war in Angola

Angolan writing of war can be seen to have its roots in the poetic writings of a group of predominantly European-educated and urban-based black intellectuals of the 1940s and 1950s. These writings were mostly published in journals and newspapers with offices in the country's capital city of Luanda,[12] many of which were later to be banned, along with those whose poetry appeared in them, by the Portuguese colonial authorities. The importance of such poetry was that in it was seen for the first time the rejection of a Eurocentric focus and the definition of "an aesthetic and social connection with Mother Africa from which the term 'Angolanidade' (Angolan-ness) was coined" (Afolabi 2001: 11). Phyllis Peres (1997) highlights this period as important to the development of Angolan resistance writing as it marked a period in which "Angolans wanted to discover a culture that might define borders of a potential [and imagined] nation space" (7). Central to this discovery were poets and intellectuals who were later to assume important roles in the leadership of the socialist MPLA lead government. One such poet and intellectual was the MPLA leader and Angola's first president, Agostinho Neto.

[12] The role played by these and other important periodicals from southern Africa is discussed at length in Helgesson (2009).

Another important aspect of the 1950s poetic output in Angola was that for the first time white Angolans were seen to become active in the anti-colonial struggle. According to Peres, these white Angolan poets were unlike most of their black and mestizo/*mestiço*[13] contemporaries due to generally coming from the lower classes (8). She notes that these white Angolans "were politically socialist and identified themselves with the socialist liberation strategies of their African and mestizo counterparts" (9). In addition, the centrality of poetry as a space in which poets sought to assert a desire for a non-racial and liberated Angolan nation during the 1950s is a significant contributing factor to the rise of *poesia de combate* in the 1960s.

According to Ana Mafalda Leite (1996) the 1960s did not only see the emergence of *poesia de combate* as an essential bearer of the message of national liberation, it also saw the beginnings of what was to become a "body of war narratives" (117). These war narratives form a later off-shoot of the early 1960s narratives of resistance typified by José Luandino Vieira's novella *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier*, of which clandestine editions were available prior to its original publication in 1974 (Chapman 2003:514). The text was written while Vieira was in prison for anti-colonial activities and later published in English as *The Real Life of Domingos Xavier* (1978) (Chapman 2003:514). Vieira began writing poetry in the 1950s and can be seen as a proponent of a non-Eurocentric Angolan culture (Peres 1997: 11) and, along with other such poets mentioned above, was later to take up important positions within the MPLA and the Angolan government. Nevertheless, it was only following the 1964 publication of the later banned collection of short stories, *Luuanda* that he became recognised for his prose writing and its commentary on the dire circumstances suffered by

[13] Mestizo/*mestiço* is a Portuguese term which denotes people of mixed-race and is akin to the South African term coloured or *kleurling* as it is in Afrikaans. It is important to note that both terms are considered derogatory by some.

Angolans under colonial rule. With regard to this study, however, it is the influence that his prose work has had on the later work of another Angolan author, Pepetela, and, as this study comments extensively on Pepetela and his writing in Chapter 2, I only give a brief overview of his position within the Angolan literary landscape here.

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Pepetela was not a recognised poet when he began his writing career. The development of this career coincided with his becoming active as a member of the MPLA in the late 1960s and began with the publication of his first novel, *As Aventuras de Ngunga*, in 1976. It was, however, with the publication of *Mayombe* in 1980, although written in the early 1970s, that he became recognised as an outstanding literary talent and an important Angolan voice. *Mayombe*'s narrative follows a group of MPLA fighters as they battle Portuguese colonial troops in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda and, as a result of this focus on the specific issues facing anti-colonial fighters, is considered Angola's first war novel. The text is, however, not merely a fictionalisation of the trials and tribulations of the MPLA fighters. In *Mayombe* the reader is presented with an in-depth depiction of "Angolan nationness from inside the potential transformations of the revolutionary struggle" (Peres 1997:73). Pepetela has not restricted his analysis of the difficulties inherent in the construction of the Angolan nation to *Mayombe*; it is a concern that has marked his writing throughout a career which has seen him publish numerous texts over the last four decades.

While not all of Pepetela's work is explicit in its reference to the wars that have afflicted Angola, war and its role in the development of the Angolan nation have been a constant point of reference to which all of his work returns. A notable example of this is his *O Desejo de Kianda* (1995), published in English as *The return of the Water Spirit* in 2002. The text specifically references a brief moment of peace in the nearly thirty years of war following the

end of the anti-colonial war in 1974. In doing so, this study will show, *The Return of the Water Spirit* continues the dialogue about the role war has played and will continue to play in the construction of the Angolan nation begun in *Mayombe*. In a discussion of this aspect of Pepetela's work, Peres observes that "the map of the Angolan nation is tentatively drawn in blood" (1997:87). What her observation does not mention, however, is that the textual drawing of this bloody map of the Angolan nation is near-exclusively rendered by authors, such as Vieira and Pepetela, associated with the ruling MPLA.

An important non-MPLA associated view of Angola's conflicts is presented in the novel *Patriots* (1990) written by erstwhile member of UNITA, Sousa Jamba. *Patriots*' narrative includes the period leading up to Angola's independence, but is primarily located in the post-independence and war ravaged years of the mid-1980s. For the most part, the text follows a UNITA recruit, Hosi Mbueti, as he journeys across the country's physical and ideological battlefields. Interestingly, both Chapman (2003:287-288) and Leite (1996: 120) read *Patriots* as similar to *Mayombe* in its attempt to evaluate Angolan mythologies of liberation and their relation to the imagining of a future, peaceful Angola. Understandably, such views read the text to be in opposition to the MPLA assertion that they were exclusively responsible for the country's liberation from colonial rule. What such a reading overlooks is *Patriots*' attempt to give voice, through the presentation of multiple ideological and political positions, to views held by members of the MPLA, FNLA, UNITA and non-aligned people caught up in the conflict. Like *Mayombe*, however, *Patriots* references very specific moments in Angola's history and attempts to present difficulties facing the country in a manner allowing for the imagining of a peaceful future. Both texts, therefore, operate as spaces within which the possibilities of an Angola nation are imagined.

As with *Mayombe* and *The Return of the Water Spirit*, *Patriots* depicts Angola as a country deeply divided along racial, ethnic and ideological lines. In fact, when the three texts are considered together, it becomes evident that both Pepetela and Jamba endeavour to write solutions to these divisions and in doing so attempt to imagine an Angola free of the war, corruption and poverty that has marked its post-liberation history. It is, therefore, why I have chosen these three texts to read in Chapter Two which is on the writing of war and its relation to the imagining of Angola.

1.8 The writing of war in Mozambique

As with Angolan war writing, Mozambican war writing's genesis lies within poetry published in local journals and newspapers in the 1940s and 1950s. Here poets of all races formed written communities in which issues relating to the evils of colonial rule became what Niyi Afolabi terms a "collective concern" (2001:16). The themes developed in this period were, as Chapman (2003:181) points out, developed in the 1960s and became the staple of Mozambican *Poesia de combate*. In Mozambique, this trajectory was even more pronounced than in Angola because unlike Angola, Mozambique had only one major liberation movement, *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO). Like the MPLA, FRELIMO subscribed to a Marxist-Leninist ideological position and was led by an elite of, primarily, highly educated black intellectuals who had been regular poetic contributors to the country's journals and newspapers in the 1950s. They too were deeply implicated in what Patrick Chabal (1996) describes as the "literature of '*Moçambicanidade*'", or the literature of Mozambicanness, and in the development of "nationalist or revolutionary literature" (29).

These literatures were overwhelmingly dominated by poets because, as Chabal observes, "in Mozambique poetry has always been the dominant literary genre" (50). There was, however,

one prose writer of the 1960s whose work stands out. Luís Bernado Honwana's, who later became a FRELIMO government member, collection of *Matámos o Cão Tinhoso* (1964), later published in English as *We Killed Mangy Dog and Other Mozambique Stories* (1969), is notable for its exposition of the brutality and social injustices of Portuguese colonialism. The text has come to be seen as one of two, the other being João Dias' *Godido e Outros Contos* (1952), that formed the foundation of a post-independence movement in which "the short story has become the principal genre employed by Mozambican writers" (Rothwell 2004:27). Niyi Afolabi (2001: 18) notes of the writers who chose this genre during the late 1970s and 1980s that, as a result of the terror unleashed on the country by the war between the FRELIMO government and the opposition *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO), their focus moved from an exultation of the anti-colonial war, to a condemnation of the corruption, banditry and violence which became central features of the fighting.

It is from this generation of post-independence prose writers that contemporary Mozambique's most recognised writer, Mia Couto, comes. Couto began his literary life as a poet, but it was his short stories for which he initially found fame. It was in his first collection *Vozes Anoitecidas* (1986), published in English as *Voices Made Night* (1990), that the scope of Couto's creative ability became evident. Importantly, it was in this collection that readers first came into contact with two aspects of Couto's work that would remain central to his writing throughout his career. The first of these is his extended use of the fantastic and the second is his infusion of standard Portuguese with neologisms and local terminology. As much as these features have come to be central to the understanding of his work, it is the development of the themes of war, poverty and inhumanity that have come to dominate Couto's writings. Fundamental to the development of these themes is his extended discussions on the nature of the Mozambican nation-state. It is a discussion which, as I show

in Chapter Five, begins to be given specific temporal reference with the publishing of his first novel, *Terra Sonâmbula* in 1992, published in English as *Sleepwalking Land* in 2006. In this text, the height of what came to known as the Mozambican Civil War forms the backdrop for Couto's examination of a country torn apart by seemingly unending years of vicious fighting. This setting becomes a central point of reference to which all of his subsequent novels return in one way or another. In fact, in two of his later works, *A Varanda do Frangipani* (1996), published in English as *Under the Frangipani* in 2001, and *O Último Voo do Flamingo* (2000), published in English as *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* in 2004, the civil war is used as a point of inflection from which to index the country's later development along the road from the devastation of war to the creation of a lasting peace. A reading of *Sleepwalking Land*, *Under the Frangipani* and *Last Flight of the Flamingo* as a triptych, as takes place in Chapter Five, thus offers a reader, and this study, a view of an author's changing attempts to situate war in an ever-changing national imaginary.

1.9 The writing of war in Zimbabwe

Unlike Angola and Mozambique whose pre-liberation war writing illustrated a "fairly consistent Marxist-class understanding of the colonial past (Chapman 2003: 296), Zimbabwe's pre-liberation writings by white settlers show very little, if any, identification with the difficulties faced by colonised people or the priorities of those who had taken up arms against white-minority rule in what was then Rhodesia. In his exhaustive study of what is a substantial corpus of Rhodesian settler novels, Anthony Chennells (1982) shows that the "most striking feature of [the Rhodesian settler novels which focus on the liberation war] is their ignorance of who or what the settlers were actually fighting" (423). He highlights numerous myths regarding "Africans" (421) that were absorbed from Rhodesian "settler myths" (421) and propagated by such texts. These myths develop the assumptions made by

Rhodesian settlers in the very first incursions into the territory in the 1800s and, Chennells contends, "encouraged Whites to think of Blacks as incapable of initiative" and thus "made it impossible to think of Blacks as making sophisticated political choices" (423). It is precisely such myths and attendant ignorance based on racist colonial discourse that much of the post-liberation war writing of the now white Zimbabweans can be seen to call into question.

In the past decade, writing by white Zimbabweans has increasingly been dominated by autobiographies and memoirs (Chennells 2005, Preben Kaarsholm 2005) which "write directly into an era in which liberal white hopes for a reconciled and rehabilitated nation were beginning to waiver, and new forms of inscribing white identity into Zimbabwean nationhood became necessary" (Harris 2005: 107). A major feature of such writing is the re-evaluation of the settler myths, which informed settler support for the war against nationalist movements. The first of texts to overtly interrogate these myths was Bruce Moore-King's *White Man Black War* (1988). In the text, Moore-King openly attacks the "Parents and Elders" (177), and their motivation for sending their children to war, through the juxtaposition of accounts of his brutal actions during the war with statements, mostly made by Ian Smith, extolling continued settler rule as typified by Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI). In a similar vein Dan Wylie's autobiographical *Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesian War* (2002), a text considered in this study, also questions the role settler discourse has played in his conception of the two years he spent fighting against majority rule. Central to Wylie's "grasp for something positive that he can take from his two years of National Service" (Chennells 2002: xv) is his re-examination of the settler myths he had not questioned at the time of his service. Wylie's writing of the text thus enables him to contextualise and work through, using the re-reading of his diaries and texts which lionised settler rule in Rhodesia, his own involvement in the Zimbabwean War of Liberation.

In Robert Muponde's (2005) view, "[b]lack Zimbabwean literature in English was born in resistance" because "the moment of writing coincided with the moment of the black writer's and his/her people's struggle for liberty" (7). Given that the later moments of this struggle were played out in a state of war, black Zimbabwean literature in English has a large body of war writing and as with the war writing of white Zimbabweans, this writing has moved through various stages. These stages, and the themes by which they are marked, can be seen to correspond to particular moments along Zimbabwe's movement from colonial to white-minority settler rule to independence. In Flora Veit-Wild's (1992) view, pre-independence writing by black Zimbabweans was "apolitical, and did not offer any criticism or support for the liberation struggle" (263) and was, instead, marked by "general scepticism, a pessimistic approach towards society in general and a disillusionment about African politics" (7). Veit-Wild's analysis highlights the writings of Dambudzo Marechera, Charles Mungoshi and Stanley Nyamfukudza as typifying such views. Kaarsholm (1991), however, points out that Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey* (1980)[14], which is to be read in Chapter Three of this study, does indeed address issues deeply tied to the liberation war through its attempt to interrogate the different positions held by the various people involved in the conflict and its stressing of "the need for the culture of de-colonised society to aim for something radically new" (57). It is such sentiments that mark *The Non-Believer's Journey* as a direct attack upon any notion of a unified resistance fighting against white-minority rule that will ultimately result in a unified nation of Zimbabwe.

[14] *The Non-Believer's Journey* was written in the late 1970s, but could only be published in 1980 due to the severe restrictions that were placed on writing seen to be overtly critical of the Rhodesian government prior to Zimbabwean independence in 1980.

When commenting on the years that followed the war, Kaarsholm (2005) observes that, "the quiet which dominated the first years of post-independence Zimbabwe on the literary front is striking" (4). One of three possible reasons that he offers for this silence is that of self censorship of black intellectuals, due to the fear that their work would be deemed critical of the new government's "'socialist' cultural policy" (4). He adds that this and a "genuine euphoria about the 'revolution'" resulted in the war writing of the early 1980s being "bland" and displaying an overly "celebrationist character" (5). In addition to this, Irene Staunton (1997) writes that there was "a post-independence silence" (http://www.postcolonialweb.org/zimbabwe/miscauthors/staunton1.html) which was only to be broken in the late 1980s with the publication of Chenjerai Hove's novella *Bones* (1988).

Bones can be seen as a break from the war writing which preceded it for two important reasons. The first is that it is a highly poetic novella and thus marks the first movement away from the social realism characterised by its predecessors. Secondly, *Bones* is the first major work to openly question the gains made by Zimbabwean society, through the text's highlighting that very little has changed for the country's poorest citizens, following the war of liberation. Through such questioning, writes Chapman (2003), Hove and those who came after him "remind readers that the issues of socio-psychological interaction and cultural stress [that marked the war] will continue to have an important effect on the lives of people in any new Zimbabwean nation" (306). It is in this re-examination of the past in light of the present experience that *Bones* can be seen to operate in a manner markedly similar to *Dead Leaves* and *The Non-Believer's Journey*. Additionally, these texts illustrate that "[a]lthough the black and white traditions in Zimbabwean literature rarely write to each other and often write across each other, their apparent ideological and stylistic isolation masks the sharing of common concerns" (Kizito Z. Muchemwa 2005: 196). In consequence, the reading of the

three texts together in Chapter Three show the importance that understandings and reinterpretations of the past have in the imagining of the Zimbabwean nation, in relation to the Second *Chimurenga* or Rhodesian War.

1.10 The writing of war in South Africa

In South Africa, the late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed a marked increase in the publication of autobiographies and memoirs related to the violent conflicts that marked the preceding decades of apartheid rule (Roos 2008: 137). This recent growth should be seen as being enabled by two interlocking factors. The first is a strong tradition of South African autobiographical writing stretching back to the turn of the twentieth century. While some, such as Deneys Reitz's *Commando* (1929), related actions that took place during the Boer or South African War of 1899 to 1902, others such as Sol T. Plaatje's *Native life in South Africa* (1916) marked the emergence of a tradition, writes Christopher Heywood (2004), that "signalled South Africa's literary independence and the skill of its writers in recognising weakness in the segregationist 1910 constitution" (117). Authors' use of this genre as a vehicle for social protest became ever more visible as the segregationist state became increasingly belligerent in its dealings with non-white South Africans in the 1950s and 1960s. In this regards, Ezekiel, later known as Es'kia, Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue* (1959) and Bloke Modisane's *Blame Me on History* (1963) have come to be seen as particularly important landmarks in the development of the genre in South Africa. This development was to continue into the 1970s and 1980s, but was ever-increasingly marked by the publication of autobiographical works by prominent members of the anti-apartheid movement. Examples of such writings include Breyten Breytenbach's *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1984) and Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman* (1985) and are notable for the progressively more militant positions occupied by their authors.

The second factor in the post-1994 growth of autobiographical writing in South Africa is described by Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael as "the powerful informing context of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC]" (298). In this context, "personal disclosure has become part of a revisionary impulse [and] part of the pluralizing project of democracy itself" (299). Thus, South Africans were able to write/speak themselves into the revised history of the "Rainbow Nation" (307) through the disclosure of past political beliefs and attendant actions. This aspect of the TRC has particular impact on the manner in which militant action and war has come to be written in the late 1990s and 2000s as it was an important determining factor in the ways that past actions by both victims and perpetrators of violence were presented to the reader. Importantly, those who had suffered under apartheid or fought against it and those who had fought for it could all now claim victimhood. For those who had suffered the apartheid state's abuses, claiming victimhood could enable "a place in the rewriting of history" (307) and for those who had perpetrated the violence, claiming victimhood was a pathway to absolution through "claiming that they had acted on the orders of others" (307). Through the confession of the truth of their actions, therefore, people could "grieve and heal" and thus form "a community – which is nation" (307).

When combined, these two factors created a space in which the role that various people played in fighting for and against apartheid could be written in new ways. The result is the recent growth of texts related to the violence and war that marked South Africa's recent history. The majority of these texts can been seen to fit into roughly two groups: those written by prominent members of various anti-apartheid movements and those written by white soldiers who served in the SADF. Undoubtedly the most famous example of the first grouping is Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995). Thula Bopela and Daluxolo

Luthuli's *Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a Divided People* (2005),[15] however, stands out from the others in this group, as neither Bopela nor Luthuli were prominent members of the ANC or its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the nation, or MK). The authors were, however, actively involved in some of the key moments in the military fight against the apartheid government: it is the account of this involvement that is of particular interest to this study. Through the writing of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, Bopela and Luthuli can be seen to be claiming a place alongside the famous heroes, such as Mandela, of the ANC's fight against apartheid, within a revised South African liberation history.

The second grouping, mentioned above, focuses on the SADF's involvement in an area that is usually referred to by the authors as "the border" – northern Namibia and southern Angola. In his seminal examination of the writing in which this grouping has its roots, Gary Baines (2003) identifies four categories into which Border War writing, from both before and after 1994, can be seen to be divided. The first is *military history* writing (175). According to Baines, such writing "chronicles and often extols the exploits of the SADF and its individual units" (176). The style of such writing is quasi-scientific and contains detailed listings of weapons used, tactics employed and body-counts achieved. The second category includes "left-leaning *academic writing* which is critical of the apartheid regime" (176; original emphasis). Third is what is known in Afrikaans as *grensliteratuur* (border literature). Written almost entirely by Afrikaans males during the 1980s, such "writing explores not so much the war, but the breaking up of the previously monolithic Afrikaner ethnic identity in the face of the current [late 1970s and 1980s] political, military and moral crises in the country" (Koornhof 1989: 276). The final category is *cathartic literature* and includes personal

[15] The text is littered with spelling mistakes and typographic errors. The most startling and obvious is to be found on the title page of the text. On it, the title reads: *Umkhonto we Siswe: Fighting for a Divided People*. However, the text's cover records the title as *Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a Divided People*. In addition, the spine of the text records the title as *Umkhonto we Siswe: Fighting for a Divided People*.

memoirs and confessional narratives and it is this category which has become so popular since the late 1990s (Baines 2003: 178).[16] It is within this final category that the other two South African texts to be read in Chapter Four of this study, Rick Andrew's *Buried in the Sky* (2001) and Clive Holt's *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* (2004) can clearly be seen to fit. Andrew's text details his time on the Border in 1976, while Holt's text describes his involvement in the battles of the Lomba River and Cuito Cuanavale, which took place in Angola between September 1987 and April 1988. Both of these texts enter into the space opened up by the new context, defined by the linking of the long tradition of autobiographical writing with the social functioning TRC, in a manner that seeks to redefine the authors' role in supporting the apartheid government and thus, redefine the history of South Africa's history.

When considered alongside each other, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, *Buried in the Sky* and *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* illustrate that South African war writing post-1994 is engaged in the active revisioning of the past. In this process, as Chapter Four of this study will show, such writing offers a new imagining of the country in which the writers are able to resituate themselves, and their past actions, in a national and regional history through the claiming of the voice of victimhood.

[16] So popular is autobiography as a form in which to present the Border War that of very many texts that have been published since 2000, I have found only two – *The Border* (2007) by A. J. Brooks and *The Soldier Who Said No* (2010) by Chris Marnewick – which are works of fiction.

1.11 Rationale

As the above discussion on the selection of texts to be read in this study shows, the writing of the post-1960 wars in southern Africa should be viewed as integral to the understanding of the region and its nations in the early twenty-first century. This point is informed by the fundamental role war has played in the formation of most southern African states and in many of the interactions between the region's countries. My study argues, therefore, that the study of war and its role in shaping southern African nations, societies and individuals is vital to our conception of how the region is imagined. In this regard, the writing of these wars presents a study of this nature with a point of focus through which to read nation and region in ways that illustrate the important interplay between these imaginative conceptions.

With the above-mentioned positioning of war within the formation of southern African nations in mind, it seems surprising that relatively little critical attention has been given to the writing of war. Southern Africa's war literature has only ever been considered and read as part of a larger body of literature about the nation from which it is seen to have come. This is not to say that the situation and consideration of war writings as part of national literatures does not result in meaningful discussion of writings about war. As shown, the work done by Patrick Chabal *et al.* and Michael Chapman clearly demonstrate that it does. Rather it is to say that by reading southern Africa's war literature as a body of work that exists as both part of and yet free of national literatures, previously unnoticed or ignored aspects, such as differing regional imaginings, of the literature emerge. It is upon this understanding of the effect that such a resituating of southern Africa's war writings will have, that my study is premised. In addition, through such dual contextualisation one can read beyond the demarcations of nation and language so often used to separate the region's writings. As such, the study will make a substantial contribution to African literary study in that

> although various elements of literary life might find few interstices, the contribution of literature to the entire society require[s] the critic to construct necessary intervening spaces: spaces in which the readers [can] be alerted to arrangements of difference within the single map. (Chapman 2003: xv)

Another aspect of the study that makes it an important one, with regard to the field of literary studies, is the inclusion of texts that have been translated into English from their original Portuguese. Such work is of considerable importance to southern African literary studies as it is my opinion that there is a need for more research that attempts to bridge the seemingly artificial academic divisions between the study of Lusophone and Anglophone African literatures.

1.12 Conceptual and thematic issues

As has been shown, the experience of war has become a crucial constitutional factor in southern Africa and its component nations' post-1960 evolution and its sustained presence in the region's literature mark it as such. The modes of representation with which war is depicted in this literature vary greatly and, therefore, complicate the study of its presence due the very many themes into which it can be seen to permeate. Consequently, the examination of war in southern African literature presented in this study is guided by themes and conceptual categories that act as entry points into the specifics of the national and regional concerns raised by each primary text. Such an approach works to create points of thematic intersection from which a discussion of similarity and difference can be synthesised. The manner in which this synthesis is to take place highlights the understanding that the themes presented in this study relate to the texts from all of the countries discussed, but find their greatest expression in texts from the specific countries discussed in each chapter.

1.12.1 Texts of war

In seeking to understand how the texts to be read in this study form a web of creative engagement in a violent and unstable time, this study looks to the manner in which such webs are constructed by the authors of the primary texts. All of the texts make a number of overt references to either, or a combination of, oral and written texts. On the whole, these intertextual references function in two ways which are often interlinked. The first way is that they serve to connect the events depicted in the texts to those that took place either before or during wars and thus give meaning to the events depicted in the texts. In the second way, these intertextual references work to present an author, in autobiographical examples, or a character with a younger and pre-war-damaged self against which personal changes that are as a result of the experience of war can be demarcated. The forms that these texts take are linked to the way in which they function and are varied, ranging from songs, diary writings, novels, oral histories and philosophical works.

With regard to the manner in which these intertextual references operate in order to imagine a war-torn or post-war nation, it is their ability to offer the reader a sense of temporal perspective that is important. When used to link important pre-war moments in a country's history to those depicted in the primary text, their use enables the changes brought by war to be tracked and transmitted in ways that allow for the imagining of a post-war and united nation. This is similar to the manner in which they operate when viewed from the perspective of the development of an author or character as portrayed in the primary text. By means of a character or author's ability to reflect on their experience of war through the prism of song, story or diary entry, they are able to evaluate their role in the making or unmaking of the nation of which they now speak. As such, this intertextual referencing marks the time of the

texts' original publication as important because it implies that the primary text, through its writing of and into very specific and important moments in the life of the nation, is itself a marker in the ongoing imagining of a nation and any references to region contained within that text, a marker in the ongoing imagining of the region. It is, however, the manner in which these imaginings of nation and region change over time that is of interest to my study and it is, therefore, that I now turn to a discussion of how the primary texts make use of temporal moments in order to give meaning to their representation of war in relation to an imagining of nation and region.

1.12.2 Temporality

In *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Paul Fussell observes that "[e]very war is ironic because every war is worse than expected" (7). The expectation that Fussell speaks of comes about through the transmission of idealised views of war through the writings, predominantly depicting war as a heroic adventure in service of righteousness, of previous generations and while the writing of the First World War may have changed this view in the West through its general contention that war "rever[ses] the Idea of Progress" (8). Such a view was, however, reasserted following the allied writing of the Second World War which posited the war as the righteous destruction of evil. This did little to change the view of it as ironic because the large-scale death and destruction of the Second World War outstripped even that of the First World War. In the West, this view of war continued through the Korean War and into the various wars fought in colonies spread across the world due to soldiers' view of these wars as being fought for reasons not always apparent to them. Within the colonies, however, the reasons for these wars were clear to those resisting colonial rule; successful campaigns against the French in Vietnam from 1946 to 1954 and Algeria from 1954 to 1962, bolstered the understanding of war as a morally justifiable response to colonial

brutality that would result in freedom from colonial rule. For two people of interest to this study, Franz Fanon and Pepetela, the Algerian War of Liberation was of particular importance as it came to shape their understanding of the role of war in the anti-colonial struggle.

Fanon worked as a psychiatrist in Algeria during the war and his experiences are now seen as central to his conception of the role of war and violence in the anti-colonial struggle as it is presented in *The Wretched of the Earth*[17] (1961). For Fanon, liberatory violence was central to the construction of a united post-colonial nation and, thus, a central step in the anti-colonial struggle (2001: 72-73). It is a view that is present in *Mayombe* by Pepetela, who studied in Algeria in the mid-1960s. However, by the time of Pepetela's writing of *Mayombe* in the early 1970s, many of the African states liberated in the early 1960s were beginning to show the signs of major political and social instability that were to dog many of them for years to follow. For this reason, I have contended elsewhere (Rogers 2006) that Pepetela is not able to argue as trenchantly as Fanon for the ability of war to build a united post-colonial state. This sense of distrust, brought about by the southern African author's ability to draw on the post-colonial experience of other African states liberated in the early 1960s, coupled with the extension of the Angolan Liberation War into a seemingly never-ending civil war develops into an irony, similar to that mentioned above, in Sousa Jamba's *Patriots*. Published fifteen years into Angola's civil war, the novel carries at its heart the central irony that fighting for what one perceives as one's country is in fact not a patriotic act, as might be believed following the success of Angola's anti-colonial war, because war cannot unite a country; it only sows further division. It is a point picked up on by Pepetela five years later

[17] For extended discussions of the role played by Fanon's experiences in the Algerian War on his writing of *The Wretched of the Earth* see Jinadu (1986), Macey (2001), Perinbam (1982) and Wilmot (2009).

when in *The Return of the Water Spirit* he shows that war in Angola has permitted those in power to become just like the colonial power against which they originally fought.

Unlike the gradual awakening to the irony of war that is a feature of the Angolan texts read in this study, such an awareness is present right from the first of those texts from Zimbabwe. As my earlier discussion of the writing of war in Zimbabwe shows, the writing of the 1970s from that country is replete with an overt cynicism that in Staley Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey* shows itself as deep distrust of the belief that the War of Liberation will bring about the freedoms and prosperity anticipated by those participating in the fighting. Through the depiction of a character who is seen to reject the call to arms due to his distrust of the militants' presentation of the past, upon which the reasons for violent resistance are based, Nyamfukudza initiates a discussion on the notion of betrayal and positions it within the larger issue of the right of Zimbabwean liberation movements to represent those they view as "the people". It is a position that is picked up on in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* through its depiction of an extremely poor woman, whose treatment by the post-war bureaucracy mirrors that of the treatment she received under the recently removed white-minority government. In *Bones* this lack of change is shown to not only be a betrayal of the people for whom the war was purportedly fought, but also a betrayal of those who initiated the very first resistance to colonial rule in 1893. Whereas *Bones* and *The Non-Believer's Journey* highlight issues of national betrayal, Dan Wylie's *Dead Leaves* looks to the role that white Rhodesian representations of the past played in the later understanding of his actions during the war and, their later effects on his view of Zimbabwe.

The re-evaluation of a personal past in light of post-war developments is a central feature of the South African texts to be read in this study. In the South African writing, however, this

re-evaluation focuses not on the attempt to come to terms with the role one has played in the fighting, but rather it focuses on the change that has taken place in the way this role is viewed as history is remade in post-apartheid South Africa. In Thula Bopela and Daluxolo Luthuli's *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the writing of their previously unnoticed actions, during what they present as pivotal moments in the anti-apartheid struggle, seeks to claim a position alongside famous liberation heroes such as Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma. In doing so they illustrate another irony central to liberation war: that yesterday's victims will become today's heroes. This ironic reversal of the position of those who fought on the different sides of the anti-apartheid struggle is also seen in Rick Andrew's *Buried in the Sky*, when he presents his participation as a conscripted soldier in the SADF as being the result of victimisation by the apartheid government rather than the heroic action that the propaganda of the time sought to posit. Clive Holt's *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* is seemingly blind to this irony of history, and its rewriting, in his attempts to position himself as both victim of the apartheid government and hero of its war against those who fought to end its rule. Holt's both extols his and the SADF's martial qualities while at the same time seeking to highlight what he describes as the betrayal of those qualities by the government that sent them to fight in Angola.

Whereas the writings from the countries mentioned above are primarily interested in writing the past into the present, the Mozambican writings read in this study, all by Mia Couto, are concerned with the recuperation of the past, so that a peaceful and fully-functioning Mozambican future can be imagined. Couto begins this process with his writing of *Sleepwalking Land*, set during the final stages of the civil war, in which he attempts to imagine a future Mozambique free from war and its destruction through asserting that in order to move on, the people of Mozambique must be accommodating of multiple views and

voices. By setting *Under the Frangipani* very shortly after the advent of peace, Couto returns to the role that war has played in the formation of post-war Mozambique, by examining how the division and devastation caused by war can be recuperated through the coming together of the seemingly differing understandings of the world, represented by the old and the new, in an organic relationship of growth. *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* sees Mia Couto return to the years immediately following the 1992 peace accord. However, in this text he has the hindsight of ten years of post-war change. Thus the text is able to show that the post-war arrival of the UN and other non-governmental organisations (NGO) has, to a certain extent, enabled a continuation of the corruption-driven violence seen during the Civil War. His decision to return to this period can, therefore, be seen to mark a desire to resituate the Civil War within a larger historical context and, thus, rewrite the civil and anti-colonial wars in ways he was unable to in 1996 with the writing of *Sleepwalking Land*.

1.12.3 Heroes and nations

In the texts read in this study, notions of the heroic and thus the figure of the hero coalesce around ideas of national formation and defence in complex ways which change over time. They can all, however, be seen to have at their heart in the presentation of the hero as either one who, in the case of national formation and liberation, fights "for the regenerative cause of bettering his society" (Batley 2007: 5) or who, in the case of national defence, fights to "consolidate and reaffirm the existing social order" (Lifton in Batley 2007: 6). In both cases, the hero is necessarily male, but the expression of this link to masculine identity is given varying importance in the different texts. In the case of the liberation hero, he is presented as the father of the nation in the making and his role in the fighting is linked to his passage to manhood by means of the denial of victimhood through the feminisation cast upon him by colonial or apartheid discourse. The identification of such manhood is, in turn, a step in the

construction of what Elaine Unterhalter terms heroic masculinity and is "proved by locating oneself in history, identifying the significance of history and working for a vision of a better future" (2000: 173). Thus, the later claim to the heroic is determined through the assertion of a place in the writing of the history of a post-war nation by showing that the man has proved himself to have been involved in "the work of building the nation" (158).

The defining of a hero in terms of his role in the fight to create a nation is a feature of *Mayombe* and *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, but is problematised by many of the other texts. In *Patriots*, the irony that the united Angolan nation for which the anti-colonial war was fought exists in name only is highlighted in the presentation of the main character's quest to become a war hero resulting in his realisation that to fight in the name of patriotism only causes further division. Additionally, *Patriots* and *Return of the Water Spirit* show that the heroes of the anti-colonial war have become central to the corruption which is at the heart of the ongoing civil war. In doing so, such anti-colonial war heroes have, ironically, assumed the position of those against whom they fought and thus betrayed the nation and the ideals for which they were willing to die. This criticism of the betrayal by national heroes is also central to the texts by Mia Couto, but is cast into sharper focus in *The Non-believer's Journey* and *Bones* where it forms the basis for the questioning of the reasons for the war that has led to some becoming called heroes. In all of these texts, however, the focus on the link between the formation of heroes and the formation of the nation function to illustrate that it is usually those understood to be heroes of a nation who are, ironically, those who betray it.

Betrayal is also intrinsically tied to understandings of the hero in the texts written by authors who fought as part of either the Rhodesian Defence Force (RDF) or the SADF. In *Dead Leaves*, Dan Wylie portrays this betrayal in his reviewing of the colonial ideals, as they are

presented in the texts he read in his pre-war youth, and the notion of the hero as one who defends those colonial ideals of the right to rule as embodied by the post-UDI Rhodesian state. *Buried in the Sky* and *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* further complicate the presentation of the betrayed hero by their overt linkage of the betrayed hero to the construction of a masculine ideal. In these texts, as with *Mayombe* and *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, going to war in the name of one's nation is presented as both a rite of the passage to manhood and a heroic act but, in the SADF texts, there is a problematic association of the notions of betrayal by the government in support of which they fought and a later victimisation for having done so. *Buried in the Sky* posits conscripted service in the SADF and its attendant masculine ideal of a man as one who defends his nation as the basis for a sense of victimhood, akin that suffered by non-white South Africans. Unlike *Buried in the Sky*, *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* does not question that it is heroic to fight for one's nation, but rather reinforces it through the text's assertion of Holt's actions in the army as a heroic stand in the face of a powerful threat to apartheid South Africa. Importantly, however, *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* couples this sense of the hero with one of victimhood by asserting that his later Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was a result of the apartheid government's abandoning of its soldiers for reasons of political expediency.

1.13 Research Methodology

The research presented in this study is based on a close reading, through extensive contextualisation, of the primary texts in the manner outlined by Ato Quayson and discussed earlier. According to Quayson (2000), the objective of such a reading is to engage "with the literary, the political and the fraught social space between them in a process of reading literature not as an escape from the nightmare of existence but as a way of changing it" (102).

For this study, this process of reading begins with the manner in which the study is structured.

It is divided into six chapters which, aside from the Introduction and Conclusion, are country specific. The decision to structure the readings in this way is based on my view that while this study looks at the functioning of region is southern Africa, it does so through the lens of the national in southern Africa during a time of extreme regional stress. I do so because while southern Africa may well be developing as a region, it is still, in fundamental ways, dived by national borders which define much of the region's political, social and cultural life. This approach is also informed by the understanding of the primary texts as responding, on the one hand, to war-related concerns defined by each country's historical and socio-political contingencies, while on the other hand, raising issues common to the primary texts from other southern African countries to be discussed in this study. It is through such a reading of the primary texts, I argue, that an understanding of the similarities, commonalities and differences present in the region's war writing can best be reached and thus, a meaningful discussion of the presence of war in the region's literature undertaken. The order in which the chapters are presented is determined by a desire to illustrate the manner in which themes and understandings of the role played by war in national formation have developed as countries within the region and the region as a whole have dealt with the experience of war between 1960 and 2002.

1.14 Chapter outline

Chapter Two reads three Angolan texts, *Mayombe*, *Patriots* and *The Return of the Water Spirit*, with a view to tracing the ways in which war has come to be seen, by the authors, to

have played a role in the formation of the Angola represented in the texts. Through a discussion of the texts' positioning of different stages of war, in relation to those that have preceded them, I demonstrate that the authors have repeatedly had to realign their imaginings of a future Angola with the war-torn present the texts depict. Central to this realignment is, I argue, a shifting depiction of camps, both military and civilian, in the authors' attempts to imagine a new Angolan nation.

Chapter Three examines the manner in which three Zimbabwean texts, *The Non-Believer's Journey*, *Bones* and *Dead Leaves*, deploy pre-Liberation War textual references in order to evaluate the effects of the war on the people and societies represented in the different texts. An important aspect of this evaluation is shown to be the measuring of changes to the imagining of a current Zimbabwe in light of the differing presentations of a pre-war past. This, in turn, suggests a focus on the texts' tracking of changing imaginings of a nation similar to that highlighted in Chapter Two.

Chapter Four looks at three South African texts as attempts by their authors to situate their wartime actions in a larger rewriting of South African history and thus open a space for themselves in the imagining of post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter illustrates that such claims circle ideas of the heroic, masculinity and their relationship to South African wars in ways defined by the post-apartheid national situation into which the authors write. In this, the chapter continues the previous chapters' focus on the ways in which the re-evaluation of past wars is central to the manner in which southern African nations are constantly reimagined.

Chapter Five focuses on three texts, *Sleepwalking Land*, *Under the Frangipani* and *The last Flight of the Flamingo*, by the Mozambican author Mia Couto. In this chapter I argue that

Couto is constantly trying to find new ways in which Mozambique's wars can be written so the destruction they represent can be recuperated and a new Mozambique imagined. Central to this attempted recuperation is his textual return to the events of the Civil War in texts that have specific post-war settings, thus allowing for the effects of that war to be reinterpreted according to socio-historical imperatives that have only become apparent in the years after the advent of peace.

Chapter Six is the Conclusion. In this chapter, I summarise and then synthesise the findings of the preceding chapters and, thus, underscore my assertions regarding the imagining of region in southern Africa. In addition, I suggest ways in which the findings could be used to read region in other regional African literatures.

CHAPTER TWO

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

2 Introduction

The 1961 decision by various Angolan liberation movements to enter into armed resistance to almost 500 years of Portuguese colonial incursion and rule, marked the beginning of forty-one years of near-constant warfare which has characterised Angola's late twentieth century history. This warfare took the form of numerous cycles of war in which various national, regional and global participants were involved.[1] Each of these participants brought with them an ideologically-inspired national paradigm, the defence or furtherance of which usually formed the publically-stated basis for their involvement in the fighting. Angola's authors have, throughout these cycles of war, continued to interrogate these national paradigms and, in the process, created a body of literature that has "retained the insight, complexity and range to provoke interpretive questions about national ideals and pragmatic realities" (Chapman 2003:282). In addition, the imaginings of Angola and its situation within the region presented in texts in which such questionings take place, change according to the cycle of war or wars into which the specific text writes. It is this relationship between textual questionings of national paradigms, and the creation of national and regional imaginaries in selected Angolan war writing, that is examined in this chapter.

In this chapter, I read *Mayombe* (1983 [1980]) and *The Return of the Water Spirit* (2002 [1995]) by Pepetela and *Patriots* (1990) by Sousa Jamba, with a view to understanding the

[1] The conception of Angola's numerous wars as happening in "cycles" is useful to this study as it offers an analysis that allows for the identification of specific wars while still locating them in the events that preceded them and those they precipitated.

differing literary ways in which the authors of these texts present the problems facing war-torn Angola and how these representational choices are tied to the temporal moments into which the authors write. To do this, the chapter focuses on the authors' use of depictions of the civilian and military camps, created by Angola's cycles of post1961 war, as spaces in which to critique various national paradigms and as spaces of national imagining, where solutions and alternatives can be proposed. I argue that while the presentation and textual functioning of the camps differ substantially in the three texts, in all three the role of the camp in the imagining of nation is tied to notions of the hero as one who is involved in the fight "for the regenerative cause of bettering his society" (Batley 2007: 5). This link between the hero and national formation is also raised and discussed in light of regional imaginaries, as the chapter shows it to have important implications for the manner in which Angola's position within the region is imagined and accounted for by the three texts.

I begin the chapter with an examination of Pepetela's *Mayombe* and its allegorical depiction of a *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, or MPLA) guerrilla camp in the Mayombe forest during the anti-colonial war. This is followed by a discussion of Sousa Jamba's ironic writing of the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola, or UNITA) camp in Jamba, southern Angola, at the height of the fighting in the mid-1980s. The final text to be read in this chapter is another of Pepetela's allegorical texts, *The Return of the Water Spirit* and its portrayal of MPLA rule and Luanda, during the brief peace of the early 1990s. I conclude the chapter by showing how the various depictions of the camp in Angola are suggestive of a changing imagining of the southern African region. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the historical moments which the texts to be discussed in this chapter track.

Angola's history has, since 1961, been dominated by various cycles of war. The first was the anti-colonial war fought by three liberation movements – MPL, UNITA and the *Frente Nacional de Libertacão de Angola* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola, or FNLA) – which started in 1961 and ended only with the coup d'état that saw the fall of the Salazar-Caetano regime in Portugal, in April 1974. The second was a so-called civil war, started shortly after Angola was officially granted independence from Portugal on the 11th of November 1975 and ended with the Estoril Peace Agreement and its attendant cease-fire, on the 15th of May 1991. While this cycle of war, fought primarily between MPLA and UNITA forces has, therefore, often been referred to as a civil war, it is better understood as an international war, in which forces from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the United States of America (USA), Cuba, South Africa and Zaire were, to varying degrees, involved. In 1992, this cycle was followed by one more easily recognised as civil war as it was fought – still with some external involvement in the form of aid and arms sales from other countries – between the MPLA and UNITA. The period 1995 to 1998 saw the longest break in fighting that the people of Angola has thus far experienced. Peace was finally shattered in late 1998 and a cycle of civil war, described by David Birmingham as "the most cruel yet seen in Angola" (2002: 181), began. Although officially said to have "officially ended" on 30th of March 2002, the end of this final cycle was brought about by the combat death of UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, on the 22nd of February 2002.

2.1 Fighting for utopia

Pepetela,[2] born to Portuguese settler parents in the coastal town of Benguela in 1941, was the nom de guerre and, subsequently, the nom de plume of Artur Carlos Maurício Pestana dos Santos. He moved to Portugal in 1958 to study and then to France in 1962 and finally to Algeria where he graduated with a degree in sociology. Importantly, he became very interested in Marxist-Leninist liberation theory, consequently becoming a member of the MPLA (Peres 2002: 18). Pepetela's return to Angola in the late 1960s was marked by his joining the MPLA guerrilla movement in the Cabinda region of Angola, an enclave separated from the rest of Angola by what was then Zaire[3] and Republic of the Congo (Hamilton 1985: 266, Willis 1987: 205). Having already served as both a guerrilla and a teacher on the Cabinda front, he was transferred to the eastern front and then moved on to the MPLA's general staff. Following Angola's independence from Portugal in 1974, Pepetela was made the deputy minister of education, a post he held for six years. He went on to a career in sociology at various universities, while maintaining a leading role in the Angolan Writers Union (Peres 2002: 67).

Pepetela began his literary career with the writing of the novella *As Aventuras de Ngunga* (1978) in 1968. This was followed by the writing of fifteen[4] more publications which, according to Phyllis Peres (2003), "include narrative fiction, history and drama" (112). It was, however, with the publication of *Mayombe* (1980) that he became recognised as an outstanding literary talent. This recognition was reinforced when, in 1997, he was awarded the most prestigious literary award in the Lusophone world, the Camões Prize. Pepetela's extraordinary literary ability has seen him write some fourteen novels, the most recent of

[2] Pepetela is the Umbundu word for an eyelash (Willis 1987: 205).
[3] Now the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
[4] Of these only four have been translated into English. They are: *Mayombe*, *Yaka* (1996 [1984]), *The Return of the Water Spirit* and *Jamie Banda, Secret Agent: Story of Various Mysteries* (2006 [2001]).

which is *O Planalto e a Estepe* (2009), as well as numerous short stories and plays. His work has, as has been indicated, received extensive critical attention and acclaim. Clive Willis (1997) writes "the trajectory of Pepetela's work reveals a sensitive development from a concern for Angolan independence from Portugal, through an increasing disillusionment with the Marxist dream, to the quest for a middle path between capitalist excess and communist dogma, and for the restoration and, in some measure, the fashioning of an Angolan cultural heritage" (694). Niyi Afolabi's (2001) summary of the trajectory of Pepetela's work, highlights its movement from optimism to pessimism in its view of the possibilities for the Angolan nation. Afolabi is not alone in this view. Ana Mafalda Leite (1996) notes of *A Geração da Utopia* (1992), published some twenty years after *Mayombe* was written, that it is a "critical and sceptical book" and "a book of disillusionment" and far removed "from *Mayombe*'s heroic virtues" (119). While I agree that the tone of Pepetela's work has certainly changed, as his writing has tracked Angola's cycles of war and peace, I have to add that Pepetela has not given up on the belief in the possibility of a united Angolan nation, or on the prospect of a vibrant Angolan culture. In order to illustrate this point, I turn now to an examination of Pepetela's imagining of an Angolan nation in *Mayombe*.

Mayombe was written in the early 1970s while Pepetela was actively involved as both a teacher and combatant in the MPLA during its campaign in Cabinda (Hamilton 1985: 266). The novel was, however, only published in Portuguese in 1980 following the intervention of the newly-liberated Angola's first leader, Agostinho Neto, himself an author. Philip Rothwell (2002) cites a number of reasons for the initial resistance to its publication, among them, that the text "deals directly with the problem of tribalism within a movement that claimed to be based on ideology and not race" (122). According to Hamilton (1993), however, "in the security-conscious climate of a country threatened from within and from the outside,

ideological zeal and proscriptive measures, if not outright censorship, came as no surprise" (267). Surprisingly, therefore, the novel won the Angolan National Prize for Literature in 1980 (Peres 2002: 77).

In writing *Mayombe*, Pepetela uses a social realist form as he creates a narrative that follows a group of MPLA guerrillas as they live and fight against Portuguese colonial forces in the dense forest of Mayombe, from which the novel takes its name, in the Cabinda region. There are two, deeply intertwined, aspects of this historical and physical setting that require close attention. The first relates to the nature of the MPLA as a political movement in the early 1970s and the second, to the importance that the MPLA ascribed to the Mayombe forest and the Cabinda enclave at that time. Following the MPLA's initial successes in the early 1960s, they were to find it very difficult to operate within the borders of Angola and, therefore, to mount anything more than a few minor attacks on targets of limited military or strategic importance to the Portuguese. It was within this context that the Cabinda campaign began in the early 1970s. Norrie MacQueen (1997) states this campaign was "important to the MPLA as a means of validating its guerrilla identity and providing *some* arena of 'armed struggle' rather than for any tangible political or military achievements" which he continues, "were sparse" (32; original emphasis). However, undermining this primary motive of "validating its guerrilla identity" (MacQueen 1997: 32) was a logistical situation that David Birmingham (2002) describes as so "hopeless [that] by the early 1970s[,] the leadership began to fall apart, with violent rivalry breaking out along ethnic, ideological and class lines" (144). Such division ran counter to the MPLA's Marxist-Leninist derived paradigm of a nation united across race, ethnicity, class and gender, led by a "vanguard party run on the principals of 'democratic centralism'" (Chabal 2002: 61). The viability of such a project in Africa had, however, already been called into question by the failure of ruling parties to engineer similar,

large-scale nation-building exercises in countries such as Somalia and Tanzania, which had been granted independence in the early and mid-1960s. These two factors dominated the moment into which Pepetela was writing *Mayombe* and, it is in an attempt to imagine solutions to these problems that, I argue, prompts Pepetela to make extended use of an allegorical mode to represent these solutions.

In seeking to understand Pepetela's use of allegory, I am guided by James Ogude's (1999) study of the writings of the Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Ogude draws on the work of Stephen Slemon who defines allegorical writing as "doubling or reduplicating extra-textual material; since the allegorical sign refers always to a previous or anterior sign" which will, in turn, create an awareness of the historical antecedents upon which the symbolic world of the allegory is built (Slemon in Ogude 1999: 45). From this, Ogude concludes that the "allegorical text [...] is bound to the authority of the past and is often deployed in the service of ordering historical narratives" (45). The allegorical mode thus offers Pepetela a way of presenting the temporal situation, depicted in *Mayombe,* as both a result of colonial domination and part of an ongoing resistance to that colonial domination, while also gesturing towards a future, through the resolution of the historical issues raised by the narrative. On another more basic level, however, the allegorical mode also enables readers to identify with the text's characters through an allegorical push towards typicality, in which a character assumes all presumed attributes or ideological postures of a group. In this way, the allegorical mode offers Pepetela the ability to address supposed views of different racial, ethnic and ideological groups in his writing while in the same text, allowing for the proselytising called for by his adherence to Marxist-Leninist doctrine.[5] Finally, the adoption

[5] Proselytising through writing was considered an important aspect of the Marxist-Leninist inspired anti-colonial struggle fought by the MPLA, but is also central to the understanding of the role of literature in the liberatory theories of Franz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral. Such proselytisation can be clearly seen in the *poesia de combate*

of the allegorical mode enables a textual presentation and evaluation of a national paradigm and its attendant imaginary, through the symbolic depiction of the spaces in which the narrative takes place. In order to illustrate the manner in which these uses play out in *Mayombe*, I turn now to a discussion of Pepetela's depiction of the guerrillas who populate the novel.

Pepetela has numerous characters narrate *Mayombe*. This he does by having a number of the characters interrupt the narration by an omniscient narrator with internal monologues, written in italics, within which they reflect on their past and, in some instances, events in which the group of guerrillas take part. Importantly, the only major character who does not take over the narration is the group's leader and the text's hero, Fearless. He is only accessible to the reader through his actions and speech, as recounted in the primary narrative and through the reflections of him, and his actions, recounted by the characters in their monologues. The result is that Fearless remains an aloof and distant character, who, while being shown to have faults, is clearly constructed as the repository of desirable attributes others should reflect upon and, perhaps, emulate. He is, on one level, an allegorical hero of the struggle and a symbolic representation of required characteristics, in keeping with Pepetela's naming of him. On another level, Fearless functions in a manner similar to that outlined in James Ogude's (1999) description of the workings of allegory and character, in the writings of the Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o. In it Ogude writes that

> a number of Ngugi's themes also find their thematic antecedents and parallels in the pasts of his characters. To do this Ngugi explores a specific time scheme in which the narrative swings from the past time of the action to the current time of the telling or retelling. In each of the two time zones the experiences of the action are not just lived and relived, but the narrative

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(poetry of combat) of Angola and Mozambique. For outstanding examples of such poetry see Dickson (1972), for more on its functioning within southern African liberation movements see Searle (1985) and for more on Marxism and literature see Eagleton (1976).

> experiences of the past are in themselves a parallel and a commentary on the present situation. (52)

As with Ngugi, Pepetela constructs allegorical characters, and their past, who are able to offer themes for review and discussion. However, this is only one of a number of allegorical and symbolic levels at which *Mayombe*'s characters operate. Pepetela also uses many of the text's characters to present the possibilities of, and difficulties faced, in the construction of a Marxist-Leninist style utopia in Angola.

An important aspect of Pepetela's deployment of the allegorical mode is to be found in the relationship between the character's names and the views they contribute to the ideological discussions between the characters who are a central feature of the text. Within these conversations, the characters become allegorical embodiments of particular views or ideological positions – usually signalled by the character name – that surround the implementation of Marxist-Leninism in Angola in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Such use is evident in the first internal monologue which introduces the reader to the group's teacher, Theory. We read that he is of mixed race, the son of an Angolan mother and a Portuguese father, and thus, in his words, "*bear*[s] [within him] *the original sin of a white father*" (Pepetela 1983: 8). Here Pepetela can be seen to be utilising Theory to symbolise the situation in which Angola finds itself, following the "*original sin*" of colonialism.[6] Just as Theory cannot deny that he is the product of that sin, so too must the people of Angola realise the nation they are fighting to form, will also be a product of the processes of colonialism. That they, as must Theory, "*Fin*[d] *in the Manichean Universe room for maybe*"(5) in order to move on, is central to Pepetela's representation of the MPLA and its Marxist understanding of the role of war in the formation of a liberated Angola.

[6] Of the relationship between race and power in the years preceding independence, David Birmingham (2002) notes that, "[t]rue blackness became a badge that some politicians, including Savimbi, used to proclaim their superiority over the 'bastard' children of the Portuguese empire who held sway in Luanda" (162).

For Theory, the war against colonial oppression can be seen not only to be an opportunity to have a hand in the liberation of Angola: it is also a chance to carve out a space within which to be considered an Angolan and prove that he is worthy of such consideration. Ironically, Theory's concerns about his racial origins should be out of place in a political party, such as the MPLA which claims Marxist-Leninism as its core ideology, but do represent issues that the future nation will have to confront. However, it is precisely through the illustration of such ambiguities that Pepetela is able to construct a text that is a deeply-nuanced examination of the multiple disjunctures between the ideals presented by Marxist-Leninist ideology and pragmatics of its implementation by the MPLA during the anti-colonial war in Angola. This examination extends to an in-depth discussion of the role of war, in both the unification – in the face of deep racial, ethnic and class fissures – of the MPLA of the early 1970s and in the liberation of the country.

Of these fissures, the text highlights ethnicity as the major stumbling block to unification both within the MPLA and Angola. *Mayombe* is littered with references to ethnic conflict between the members of the group of fighters. One such reference is illustrated in an internal monologue by one of the guerrillas, Miracle, following a disagreement involving the discovery that one of the guerrillas, Ungrateful Tuga[7], had stolen money from a forestry worker, during an operation to destroy economic infrastructure in Portuguese-held Mayombe. As far as Miracle is concerned, the problem is not the theft, the problem relates to Fearless's apparent favouring of members of his own ethnic group, the Bakongo, to the detriment of the unity of the guerrillas (79). Fearless is aware of such thoughts within the group that he leads;

[7] The word *tuga* is "a slang abbreviation of the word for Portuguese [and] was used pejoratively to indicate the colonial settlers and soldiers"; in the guerrilla name Ungrateful Tuga, it is used in irony (Pepetela 1986: 12).

he believes that such problems cannot be solved by "Marxism [which only] serves as a guide, an inspiration to action, but does not solve one's practical problems" (63). For Fearless, Marxism makes a great deal possible, but he is also aware of the dangers which result from the kind of dogmatism that the group's primary ideologue, Political Commissar, exhibits. Recognising the inflexibility of such dogmatism is, for Fearless, the key to avoiding the disastrous consequences suffered by other African states when he argues that,

> [w]e are going to build socialism. But this will take fifty years. At the end of five years, the people will begin to say; but such socialism has not solved this and that problem. And it will be true […]. And how will you [Political Commissar] react? The people are being agitated by counter-revolutionary elements! Which will also be true, since any regime creates its opposition elements, the ringleaders must be arrested, one must pay attention to the manoeuvres of imperialism, the secret police must be strengthened, etc., etc. (79)

Such comments by Fearless foreshadow the MPLA's attempted banning of *Mayombe* and later activities that saw, in Birmingham's (2002) words, "fundamental changes in the country's management and form aspiring mass movement seeking support throughout the city, the ruling MPLA turned to becoming a self-selected elite party mendaciously calling itself 'the workers' vanguard'" (153). While Fearless may have concerns about the effects of the implementation of Marxist-Leninist ideology in a future Angola, he certainly does not doubt the need for such thinking in the prosecution of revolutionary war.

An important aspect of a Marxist-Leninist understanding of the role of revolutionary war in the formation of a future Angola to which Fearless subscribes, is that war will bring disparate ethnic groups and races together. The articulation of this view of the relationship between liberation war and the unification of the colonised, calls to mind the Martiniquan theorist Frantz Fanon's description, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001 [1961]), of this relationship. He opines that, "the mobilization of the masses, when it arises out of the war of liberation, introduces into each man's consciousness the ideas of a common cause, of a national destiny

and of a collective history" (73).[8] Ultimately, however, Fearless recognises that there are limits to the ability of revolutionary war to bring people together and that it is only one step in the process that must take place in order for a unified Angola to be formed. For him, the implementation of Marxist-Leninist ideology must be tempered through a pragmatic response to the realities, such as those facing the MPLA and Angola in *Mayombe*, faced by particular parties and nations if it is to be viable. Thus, the prosecution of anti-colonial war, as Fearless presents it, is linked to the ideology that Achille Mbembe states, "required the total surrender of the individual to a utopian future and to the hope of a collective resurrection that, in turn, required the destruction of everything that stood in its way" (Mbembe 2002; 251).

Significantly, in Fearless, Pepetela has embodied the Marxist-Leninist inspired characteristics to show how war has the ability to both unite disparate peoples and to create a post-liberation state that has found a balance between the theory and praxis. In this he is reinforcing Fanon's view that anti-colonial "[v]iolence is in action all-inclusive and national", thus "[i]t follows that it is closely involved in the liquidation of regionalism and of tribalism" (2001: 74). Pepetela has thus created an allegorical hero whose violent actions will bring a free and united Angola into being. Fearless's position is underscored by Pepetela's embodiment of all that is Fearless's antithesis in a character named Andre, the regional leader of the MPLA.

Andre is described as a "bureaucrat" who "sabotages the war" by squandering money meant for the guerrillas on "women" and "his night life" (Pepetela 1983: 92). His position, and

[8] For an extended discussion on the Fanon's "work of violence" (2001: 71) in relation to *Mayombe* see Rogers (2005) and (2006).

ability to "sabotage the war", is eventually lost when he is caught having sex[9] with Fearless's girlfriend, Ondine, and is sent back to the MPLA headquarters in Brazzaville in order to stand trial. However, as the corrupt Andre is about to arrive in Brazzaville, his true nature is revealed and with it comes another illustration of the manner in which Marxist-Leninist teachings can be used against itself. In a passage reminiscent of another in which Fearless points out to Political Commissar that "any regime creates its opposition elements" (79), Andre plans his defence and the strategy that will help him to maintain his position within the Party through the "loophole" of "self-criticism" which will result in his not being demoted, "just post[ed] elsewhere" because he has "friends to plead [his] case" (125). Here Andre is portrayed as the exact opposite of Fearless. Where Fearless is bold and prefers selfless action in the name of the struggle, Andre hides behind a manipulation of Marxist-Leninist theory in order to save his position and preserve the opportunity for self-enrichment that it affords.

The division between Fearless and Andre is also well illustrated in the difference between the two allegorical spaces occupied by the two. These spaces are the guerrillas' base camp in the forest of Mayombe and Dolisie, a town in the Republic of the Congo which functioned as the supply base for the camp in Mayombe. Ana Mafalda Leite (1996) describes the forest of Mayombe as an allegorical "uterine begetters of heroes, teach[ing] them how to overcome fear and become invincible" (118) while for Ana Maria Mão-De-Ferro Martinho (2007) it is an allegorical "space where there is a ground for war but also planning for the future" (49). In both of these analyses, the forest is conflated with the guerrilla camp. In the text, however, there is a differentiation as the guerrilla camp is described as created by "axe blows that opened up a clearing" (Pepetela 1983: 43) in the "Mayombe-god" (43) which "was choosing

[9] There is a possibility that Andre has, in fact, raped Ondine, but it is difficult to tell as the text is somewhat vague on this point.

this way of paying tribute to the courage of those who challenged him: Zeus humbled by Prometheus [who] is Ogun, the African Prometheus (44). Through the overt linking of the guerrillas and their challenge to the "Mayombe-god" to Ogun, a Yoruba *orisha* (deity) of war, and Prometheus, who stole fire from the Greek gods to give to humans, Pepetela is elevating them to the position of future liberation heroes. Wole Soyinka (1990) describes

> Ogun [as] the embodiment of challenge, the Promethean instinct in man, constantly at the service of society for its full realization. Hence his role of explorer through the primordial chaos, which he conquered, then bridged with the aid of science. (30)

Fearless and his guerrillas thus become allegorical, god-like bringers of liberation with the "science" of Marxist-Leninist theory and the strength they show in combat. Central to this representation of the guerrillas, is the tying of it to their rising to the challenges that fighting in "the primordial chaos" the Mayombe represents. Thus, the guerrilla camp in the forest is also a place in which action, signified by revolutionary war, brings redemption to individuals who have seen their families brutalised by colonialism and to those, such as Andre, who have become corrupt and decadent in Dolisie, should they choose to become meaningfully involved in the fighting. Underscoring this depiction is the presentation of Dolisie as a place in which MPLA members are corrupted by stolen Party money and inactivity, as Andre was, and as a result do nothing but damage to the anti-colonial struggle.

The presentation of Fearless and the space he occupies in this way, is illustrative of the figure of the hero described by Karen Batley (2007), in extension of the seminal work on the figure of the hero by Joseph Campbell, as "fighting for the regenerative cause of bettering society" (5) and is thus, "the champion not of things become but of becoming" (Joseph Campbell in Batley 2007: 5). In this formulation, the hero, Fearless, brings about the end of the "past" "because he turns to his own advantage the authority of his position" (Campbell in Batley 2007: 6). It is an authority and position that Fearless has attained by leading in a manner

suggested by his name. At times of battle, Fearless leads from the front and it is this which brings about his death while trying to save another fighter, during an attack on a Portuguese base very close to the guerrilla camp in Mayombe. However, Fearless's death brings into being the next generation of leaders, embodied in Political Commissar, who have learned from his example and who will lead the MPLA and Angola in a future time of unity and peace. Pepetela, therefore, highlights Fearless's attributes which are, like war, the creation of a post-colonial cohesive nation, but are unsuitable in the maintenance of that new nation.

It is also in the writing of the guerrilla camp that Pepetela gestures towards the form this nation should take. The camp is shown to be a place where the well-led debate of key problems, such as race and ethnicity, facing the movement results in solutions which, in turn, create an equality unseen in the rest of the country. Thus, the camp operates as a textual space in which the ideal functioning of a future Angola is imagined and, in doing so, offers a critique of the Marxist-Leninist national paradigm as it has been implemented in other MPLA-controlled areas and African countries. In this regard, I argue that beyond the social realist drive to reflect the functioning of the MPLA in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it is significant that Pepetela situates the allegorical counterpoint to the guerrilla camp, the MPLA base in Dolisie, in the Republic of Congo.[10] Originally granted freedom from French colonial rule in 1960, the Republic of Congo had undergone three coups and was a country that, while proclaiming to be a Marxist-Leninist style socialist state, was in fact unstable and ruled by an elite who were deeply corrupt.[11] As such, the country offers Pepetela an example of the very worst that can come about through the inconsistent implementation of Marxist-Leninist ideology and its attendant national paradigm. It is, therefore, the perfect foil for his

[10] Also known as Congo-Brazzaville.
[11] For more on the history of the Republic of the Congo see Meredith (2006), Pakenham (1991), Petringa (2007), Prunier (2009) and Shillington (2005).

imagining of a future Angola as represented by the guerrilla camp. The camp can, accordingly, be seen to offer an example not only of how a future Angola should be, but also an example of how other countries on the continent and in the region should operate if they are to move beyond the state the text so scornfully describes as having "coups d'etat[s] every year, like the other African countries" (Pepetela 1983: 46). In this conception, Pepetela's imagined nation of Angola becomes an example to the surrounding region which is in turn imagined as troubled by the very same problems faced by the MPLA. It is these problems which *Mayombe* and its attendant imagining of a future Angola raises and finds solutions.

The guerrilla camp can, therefore, be seen to operate on two allegorical levels. On the first it offers a detailed critique of the Marxist-Leninist national paradigm, as it has been implemented in parts of the MPLA and other African countries and, on the second, it is a space in which a new Angolan nation can be imagined and used as an example of the utopia to which members of the MPLA and other Africans should aspire to create in their own countries. For reasons outlined by Patrick Chabal (2002) below, however, Pepetela's imagined Angola was never to be realised.

> The first had to do with the excessive gap between the external and internal leadership. The second concerns divisions within the leadership about the nature of the armed struggle. The third was an excessive emphasis on 'correct' ideology at the expense of formulating a political strategy more appropriate to the conditions of the struggle. The result was that [...] the MPLA was never able consistently to define, develop and implement a strategy of armed action in consonance with the experience gained in the field by its guerrillas. (11)

This weakened party became a weak and unstable government, challenged both from within and without. When read in the light of the events that were to follow the historical moment within which *Mayombe* is set, Pepetela's text become more than an apparent attempt to imagine and represent solutions to the problems faced by the MPLA in its struggle to form a Marxist-Leninist utopia in Angola. It becomes a representation of some of the major reasons

for the party's failure to deliver that dream. It is important to note, however, that the global forces of the Cold War, rival liberation organisations and the MPLA's relationship with other southern African nationalist liberation movements, were to compound the problems within the MPLA and ultimately render Angola completely ungovernable. These events and the effects they had on the Angolan people are the subject of the text to be discussed in the next section.

2.2 Still fighting for utopia

In a period that has come to be known by the MPLA as the Second War of Independence, the months leading up to Angolan independence saw sporadic fighting break out between the MPLA, Holden Roberto's FNLA and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. The fighting culminated in early November 1975 with the battle of Luanda in which the Cuban-backed MPLA fought off the South African-backed UNITA and the Zaire-backed FNLA, to take power in the new Angolan government. According to Patrick Chabal (2002) this created a situation in which

> the country became prey to a superpower rivalry and [the MPLA] conflict with UNITA came increasingly to be interpreted in the light of Cold War calculations. So long as there were Cubans in Angola, the United States and South Africa would aid UNITA, overtly or covertly. So long as South Africa threatened the Luanda regime, the Cubans would remain and Soviet aid would flow. (77)

A catch-22 such as this could only result in an escalation of the violence that was to develop into a vicious civil war. Cuba, the USSR, USA and South Africa's intervention, however, also served to mask, at least to those outside Angola, the original reasons for the conflict. Ethnic and racial divisions, of the type highlighted in *Mayombe*, became hardened when the three largest nationalist liberation movements were formed. UNITA was formed in 1966 by Jonas Savimbi following his departure from the FNLA in 1965. The movement was rooted in the largest of Angola's many ethnic groups, the Ovimbundu of the south-central highlands and south-western coast. Chabal terms its ideological position as "traditionalist" (6) and

"pragmatic" (7), noting that although the party's rhetoric was originally that of the Maoist Chinese, Savimbi was quick to define it, primarily, in opposition to the MPLA's predominantly mestiço, assimilado and Mbundu, also called Kimbundu, ethnic groups from the north-western areas surrounding the capital city of Luanda, but also the FNLA whose support was rooted in the Bacongo of northern Angola, Cabinda and southern Republic of Zaire. The MPLA had, as its ideological base, the very rigid teachings of Marxist-Leninism and its universalist political vision, while the FNLA's ideology was structured along ethno-nationalist lines and had as its goal the revival of the Kingdom of the Congo (Chabal 2002: 7). These tensions eventually developed into a nationwide war that was to last, through various cycles, until 2002 and cause a great many people to flee the country. One such person was Sousa Jamba.

Sousa Jamba was born in central Angola in 1966. As a result of the violence following Angola's independence in 1975, Jamba fled to Zambia where he lived as a refugee. He returned to Angola in either 1984 or 1985[12] and took up work as a reporter and translator for the UNITA News Agency (Chapman 2003: 493, Leite 1996: 120). In 1986, Jamba went to study in Britain on a journalism scholarship and in 1987 he started writing for the London-based newspaper, *The Spectator* (Moore 2006). Here, Jamba wrote of the brutality of the Angolan Civil War and its impact on the people caught up in the fighting. Importantly, he exposed his readership to crimes committed by UNITA in its war against the MPLA (Jamba 1998). These and other journalistic writings earned him *The Spectator*'s Shiva Naipaul Memorial Prize in 1988. Jamba continues to write for various publications, based in Britain and elsewhere, and was granted British citizenship in the 1990s.

[12] The exact date of Sousa Jamba's return to Angola is in question as Michael Chapman (2003) lists him as having returned in 1985 (493) while Ana Mafalda Leite (1996) writes that he returned to Angola in 1984 (120).

In addition to Jamba's prolific journalistic writing, he has published two novels, *Patriots* (1990) and *A Lonely Devil* (1993). As a novelist, Jamba presents the reader with an unusual view of the Angolan literary landscape for two major reasons. The first relates to the fact that he is an Anglophone author in an overwhelmingly Lusophone literary tradition. This is as a result of his having been educated in Zambia, where his education took place in English, and not in Angola where he would have been educated in Portuguese. The second reason is because Jamba's writings, particularly *Patriots*, focuses mostly on the situation in UNITA-held Angola, it stands out from the "corpus of Angolan war writing which has been dominated by voices associated with the ruling MPLA" (Rogers with Hofmeyr 2005: 35). Jamba's position has, however, been seen as contentious by Philip Rothwell (2004), who writes that

> Jamba's critics point out that he hardly knows the reality of Angola, having lived as a refugee in Mobutu's Zaire for most of his youth, and later in exile in London.[13] There he is often taken as the principal popular authority on lusophone Africa, mainly through his connection to *The Times* newspaper. Effectively, he is telling a particular type of Englishman what he wants to hear. (49)

While Rothwell may seemingly have some of Jamba's biographical details wrong, his contention does highlight an important issue regarding Jamba's position within Angola's literary tradition. Ana Mafalda Leite (1996), however, sees Jamba's position as having resulted in "an indispensible book for all those who want to understand the calamitous reality of Angola's civil war" (122). She remarks that "if *Mayombe* was the emblematic novel of the anti-colonial war, Sousa Jamba's *Patriots* is that of the civil war" (120). It is an interesting comparison, given that Rothwell cites Pepetela as one of "Jamba's critics" (Rothwell 2004: 177, note number 19). However, while Leite's observation of the texts as emblematic of the

[13] Rothwell seems to have made a mistake here as all other available information points to Jamba having spent his years of childhood exile as a refugee in Zambia and not Zaire, now Democratic Republic of the Congo, as indicated in Rothwell (2004: 49).

moment of war into which they write is based largely on the text addressing "many of the questions which Pepetela raises in" (Leite 1996: 121) *Mayombe,* it is also pertinent to the form in which the narratives are presented.

As discussed earlier, Pepetela's use of a social realist form, in the deployment of an allegorical mode in *Mayombe,* allows for the texts to address issues central to the prosecution of Marxist-Leninist inspired revolutionary war and its attendant national paradigm, even as it fulfils the obligation of proselytisation. *Patriots*, however, writes into a very different moment, in which over ten years of war have rendered Angola a country in name only. The high ideals expressed in *Mayombe,* as a desire for Angola to become a stable and prosperous example to other countries in the region, had been replaced by the reality of death and destruction on a scale far exceeding that of the anti-colonial war. As a result, Angola was in a worse political, social and economic situation than most other countries surrounding it and the irony of this situation is evident in Jamba's writing of *Patriots*. To begin with, the novel "is an indictment of all who commit atrocities in the name of love for a country" and, thus, "carries its central irony in its title" (Chapman 2003: 288). This sense of irony is conveyed, I argue, through a narrative that interrogates both the notion of patriotism – as it is presented by various sides of the conflict – and the role of the hero who acts in the name of such patriotism in an attempt bring about the implementation of a national paradigm. In order to illustrate this, I turn now to a discussion of the presentation of the text's central character, Hosi, as a nomadic counter-hero and its links with the motif of the journey in *Patriots*. Following that, I show how the text critiques the national paradigm at the heart of UNITA's militarised, gerontocratic patriarchal order, through the depiction of UNITA's base camp at Jamba in south-eastern Angola. The section ends with an illustration of how Sousa Jamba's

fierce criticism of the processes and national paradigms of the warring parties functions to suggest a new imagining of Angola and the region.

Patriots (1990) focuses primarily, but not exclusively, on the experiences of Hosi Mbueti, a member of UNITA, during the so-called First Civil War of 1975 to 1991 and the events that lead up to the war. The text is divided into four books followed by a brief coda in the form of a note-book of "reflections" on life in UNITA written by Raul, a UNITA officer. In *Patriots*, Sousa Jamba describes an Angola that exists in a geographical sense only, a land whose inhabitants express loyalties not to a nation, but to ethnically-based and warring political/military organisations. Importantly, these political/military groupings each exert control over the area they have conquered through military action. It is through this landscape that Hosi journeys as he returns from exile in Zambia "to fight with UNITA", the party most associated with the Ovimbundu ethnic group, because he does not "want no mother-fucking Cubans to have Angola" (Jamba 1990: 10). Hosi's decision to join UNITA and not the "lackeys of the Kremlin" (136) as the MPLA are described, is based on an analysis of Angolan history, often posited by his father during Hosi's pre-exile childhood. In his father's view, the MPLA "is for Northerners; it is for Kimbundu" and mulattos (71). Central to this belief is one of a lost Ovimbundu (the ethnic group of which Hosi is a member) entitlement and an attendant position on war, that considers it the only defence against MPLA subjugation and it is this that drives him to return to Angola. It is the description of this journey that forms the majority of the narrative and, as a result, shows *Patriots* as contributing to a long tradition of African fiction which utilises the journey as a structuring device.

In her extensive study of the journey motif in Francophone African literature, Mildred Mortimer (1990) proposes three reasons for the motif's prominence. The first is its importance to oral literature, both African and European. Second is the motif's significance to the European novel and finally, "to the extent that the slave trade, military conscription, and work and study [...] have caused African migrations at different historical moments the journey motif [...] expresses African reality" (5). Mortimer, therefore, sees the presence of the journey motif in African novels as indicative of "cultural blending in a literary tradition that owes a great debt to the spoken word" (15). Important to my reading of *Patriots* is her assertion that journeying is usually linked to an heroic figure, male or female, who are deemed as such through by virtue of returning from their travel "wiser and [...] more mature individuals" who, upon return to their communities, will assume a new, more senior role (5). Here the journey is linked to the process of self-discovery inherent in the *Bildungsroman* or "rite-of–passage, literature focusing on the education, spiritual growth, or mythic quest of a central character (Herzog 1992: 14). In addition, the *Bildungsroman* has been shown to also have a long tradition in the writing of war in which the journey, as first defined by Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), is marked by three stages:

> First, the sinister or absurd or even farcical preparation [for battle]; second, the unmanning experience of battle; and third, the retirement from the line to a contrasting (usually pastoral) scene, where there is time and quiet for consideration, meditation, and reconstruction. The middle stage is always characterised by disenchantment and loss of innocence. (130 – 131)

As such, Fussell's tripartite structure of innocence, experience and consideration, rehearses a pattern similar to that which Mortimer shows to be in effect in the development of the journey "to lucidity or self-understanding" (1990: 15) in many African novels, except that Fussell's final stage does not necessarily imply the return central to Mortimer's formulation. When combined, however, these two approaches offer an interesting reading of Hosi's

journey which shows it to be central to Jamba's examination of war in Angola in the mid-1980s.

Hosi's belief that he would return to Angola to become a hero of the Ovimbundu is informed by, and measured against, a combination of what his father has told him and his reading of texts, by authors such as Carl von Clausewitz [14] (Jamba 1990: 149), which leave him wanting to be "a Field Marshall in the tradition of Lord Mountbatten" (211). Thus, Hosi's return from Zambia to UNITA-occupied Angola could be viewed as the hero returning to "assume [his] position within the community" (Mortimer 1990: 5), after having being forced into the international wilderness of the refugee following the start of the civil war in 1975; his return only serves to show how out of touch are his views of both the Angolan situation and of war. Importantly, however, it is his learning the intertwined truth of these two aspects of his new life that informs his real journey to becoming a "wiser and [...] more mature individual" (5), as in the *Bildungsroman* tradition.

In September 1984, Hosi arrives at "the headquarters of the Freeland of Angola Movement" (Jamba 1990: 102), or UNITA headquarters in the town of Jamba. He does not find the warm welcome to a free and democratic home he was expecting following his father's descriptions of the UNITA's functioning. Instead, he finds a camp which is described as fairly sophisticated, but ruled by draconian laws enforced by a "secret police" (135) force responsible for maintaining UNITA members' adherence to the tenets of the "Paramount thought formulated by the Elder [Jonas Savimbi]" (288). It becomes clear to the reader, following the description of a party and parade held to celebrate the Elder's birthday, there

[14] There seems to be some confusion here, as the text to which Jamba refers is in fact published as *On War* by Carl von Clausewitz. However, due to Clausewitz's work encompassing and extending the circa B.C. 500 text, *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, many have come to view their work as one and the same rather than the two distinct works that they are.

will be no questioning of the Elder's rule in UNITA-held territory, regardless of what might be said of the fight for democracy in the face of Soviet-backed socialist oppression. Such a depiction is in keeping with Chabal's (2002) record of Jonas Savimbi's pragmatic, but brutal, rule of UNITA which had only one purpose: "namely, making Savimbi the undisputed ruler of Angola" (119). In this regard, *Patriots* presents a subtly detailed representation of the manner in which Savimbi was able to conflate the supposed historical repression of the Ovimbundu people by the "northerners" (71), through his appeal to "tradition" (Chabal 2002: 6), with the overtly stated aim of creating a democratic Angola. Sousa Jamba depicts UNITA rule not as a democracy, but a militarised patriarchal gerontocracy with "the Elder" or Jonas Savimbi at its head. It is a rule that is summed up perfectly in the concept of "Papa AK47" as it is expressed in this statement made by a UNITA soldier, Raimundo: "The only God is the God that would liberate Angola – Papa AK47" (Jamba 1990: 204). It is a conception of the flow of power within UNITA that can be viewed as "neat hierarchal triangle" with men at the top and "in one bottom corner is money and in the other is women" (Rogers with Hofmeyr 2005: 43). This encapsulation of the party's rule exemplifies the patriarchal nature of the UNITA gerontocracy and serves to reinforce Sousa Jamba's depiction of UNITA as a fundamentally hypocritical organisation fighting the war to gain even greater power and wealth for its elite. UNITA's hypocrisy is also evident in their explanation of the relationship they have with Apartheid South Africa. For all of the UNITA talk about the MPLA being "lackeys of the Kremlin" (Jamba 1990: 136), there are many references to UNITA receiving support, particularly food, from South Africa. In fact, UNITA soldiers are so accustomed to South African involvement in their day-to-day lives that they call them "the cousins"(178). When Hosi questions this name, he is told:

> 'That is what we call the South Africans. They are our cousins. It is like having a rich cousin who is a thief. You hate him for his acts but like him for his money.' (178)

It would seem that even the South African army has a place in Savimbi's 'family'.

Sousa Jamba's depiction of the UNITA military camp at Jamba shows it to be unlike the place of action and exemplary behaviour Pepetela shows the guerrilla camp in Mayombe to be. Instead, the UNITA camp is similar to Pepetela's depiction of the MPLA base at Dolisie, in that it is home to hypocrisy and corruption which is disguised as being in the best interests of the junior member of the parties and their fight for a better society. Accordingly, Sousa Jamba uses his depiction of the camp at Jamba to critique the national paradigm that is at the heart of the UNITA "democratic" (12) project. Hosi's expectation of a "land akin to paradise, a land where people wandered about freely, thought freely and said what they wanted without fear of being upbraided by some party hack" (102) is replaced with the discovery of a camp where dissidents are jailed, hanged or shot for the smallest infringement or accusation that they had strayed from the paramount thought.[15] This awareness of UNITA's true functioning does not, therefore, mark Hosi's homecoming and identification as a hero in the Campbell mould, but rather it marks another step in the journey to self-realisation. In this, Hosi is different from Fearless in that his journey is not one of 'becoming' through action; it is a journey of disillusion. Hosi's journey is also not one of the heroic return from exile of Mortimer's analysis. His journey is one of continual wandering and of a nomadic counter-hero whose belief in the UNITA project and its reasons for war become diminished as he discovers more about his environment through the processes of his journey. Hosi's journey is, consequently, akin to that described by Fussell's tripartite development of the soldier, because Hosi's expectations of life under UNITA are diminished through his exposure to them. It is a journey of realisation that is mirrored by his journey to war.

[15] There are numerous examples of such punishments in the text, but some of the most interesting involve the burning of women accused of witchcraft (Jamba 1990: 200-201) and the imprisonment and killing of people, some of them senior UNITA leaders, who opposed Jonas Savimbi (Jamba 1990: 134-136 and 214-215).

To begin with, his expectations of war are also seen to be "absurd or even farcical" (Fussell 1975: 130). As mentioned earlier, Hosi's view of war was informed by various books and "kung fu films" (Jamba 1990: 17) and, when this is coupled with his training at various UNITA camps, he comes to believe that "there was nothing to war that he did not know" (211). However, as is illustrated by the following passage, the experience of his first battle radically changes that belief.

> It was as if the soil was trembling. Hosi felt that it was the end of the world. He looked around. Everyone lay still on the ground, as if they were dead. [...] He was being covered in dust and felt unable to breathe. (278)

Hosi's "unmanning experience of battle" (Fussell 1975: 130) ends with him "wet[ting] his trousers [and] sob[bing]" (Jamba 1990: 280) in a decidedly unheroic manner when he is captured by MPLA soldiers following the battle. His experience of war ends with a reflection scene following the death of one of his captors as a result of a landmine blast. This scene entails a discussion, below, between Hosi and one of his MPLA captors, Figueredo.

> Figueredo said: 'Our lives are cheap. The politicians decide; we die. I am sure that both the MPLA and UNITA leaders have a lot in common.'
> Hosi said: 'I agree. Just as there is no difference between the MPLA soldier and the Unita soldier. We are all patriots. We all love Angola and we are prepared to die for it in our way.'
> Figueredo grunted and said: 'What is good is that very soon there will be very few patriots left, so that the politicians will have no other option than finding a solution to this bloody war.'(283)

Hosi's realisation that UNITA soldiers and the MPLA soldiers are "all patriots [...] and we are prepared to die" for Angola highlights the twinning of his realisation about UNITA and war. In both cases, his journey to an awareness of the truth brings about a deep sense of irony. Neither war nor UNITA offer what Hosi was led, by his father and senior UNITA members, to believe they would. In fact, they offer the very opposite. UNITA shows itself to be a party of repression and not of democratic freedom while war only serves to entrench divisions rather than uniting the nation. These realisations, therefore, show that what Hosi

initially believed to be places and moments of homecoming and recognition are, in fact, merely steps to further dissolution. The implication is that there is no home to come to, as long as war in the name of party defined patriotism lasts. This last point is underscored by Sousa Jamba's depiction of the MPLA areas of Angola.

The picture of the "People's Republic of Angola" (268), MPLA name for territory under its control, which Sousa Jamba paints in *Patriots* is deeply reminiscent of his depiction of UNITA held territory. In both areas, Civil war has allowed for a situation in which those with power have enriched themselves at the expense of the people they have supposedly liberated, while defending their actions with references to either the "Marxist terminology" (260) of the MPLA or to UNITA's "Paramount Thought"(288). Neither side's national paradigm, therefore, offers a solution to the problems facing Hosi. It is for this reason that Hosi continues to wander, homeless, through the Angolan countryside. It is a journey that comes to be seen as emblematic of the Angolan people's search for a solution to the problems of ethnic division, corruption and exploitation which deny them peace. The tragedy of this situation is illustrated in the text's final scene.

Hosi's biological brother, Osvaldo, joined the MPLA is spite of his father's UNITA affiliation and the two have not seen each other since before Hosi went to Zambia. Having been released by his captors, Hosi eventually meets up with Osvaldo and tearfully exchanges news, but it is not long before their political differences again cause friction. Osvaldo accuses UNITA of destroying the "economy of the People's Republic", to which Hosi replies,

> 'Nonsense. This People's Republic that has to be sustained by secret police and public executions? Who are you trying to fool? This is a bloody dictatorship run by the Soviets and Cubans. The sooner it is overthrown, the better!'
> Osvaldo Shook his head and said: 'Pity, Radio Kwacha [Zambian currency, but used by the MPLA as a pejorative name for UNITA members] seems to

have broken loose some people's nerves. The MPLA is the people's party.' (286)

The brothers have been so deeply affected by the politicians' rhetoric that even now, following the experience of such loss on both sides, they are unable to come to an agreement that would bring them together in the name of Angolan unity rather see the war continue. Interestingly, this situation invites a reading of Hosi's family as a representation of the war-torn Angolan nation, as it corresponds in certain aspects with the journey motif as it is presented in *Patriots*. In such a reading, Hosi's rediscovery of his brother could be seen as the return to his home that would mark the end of his journey. Hosi, having learned the truth about war and its drivers, would embrace his brother, end the fighting and fulfil the *Bildungsroman* narrative. That he and his brother do not, indicates that their journey and that of the Angolan nation, is not finished because neither has learned from their experiences. Thus, Jamba is able to illustrate, as if in answer to *Mayombe*'s assertions that revolutionary war can unify, that the Angolan civil war merely entrenched the divisions that were its cause.

Patriots does not, however, represent an outright denial of the possibility of a unified Angola. Instead, it is a text that presents a picture of an Angola that has long been subject to divisions that are not insurmountable, but which have been used by unscrupulous parties to further their own aims, rather than those of the nation. At the heart of Sousa Jamba's imagining of Angola are the "patriots" that "all love Angola and [...] are prepared to die for it" (283). It is a tragic irony, however, that all who died in the civil war died not to create a new nation, but to keep it divided and, therefore, in the service of personal, regional and global ambitions. That the war was, in large part, fuelled by the desires of global powers is evident in the fact that the end of the Cold war was followed very shortly by the end of the first cycle of civil war in Angola in 1991. It is within this setting that the next text to be discussed, Pepetela's *The Return of the Water Spirit*, is set.

2.3 Not fighting for utopia

In 1991, the MPLA and UNITA agreed to end the hostilities that had started in 1975.[16] Of the period that followed David Birmingham writes the following:

> Burdensome though the legacies of war may have been, the eighteen months from May 1991 to September 1992 was the most spectacular period of optimism and freedom that Angola had ever witnessed. [...] International observers poured into the country to marvel at the peace process, at the new economic opportunities, at the adoption by Africa of a democratic procedure to settle differences. (171)

The optimism was ill-placed and short-lived as "[n]either the government nor the opposition was totally committed to the peace process and both remained prepared to resume war if the electoral verdict did not accord with their ambitions" (Chabal 2002: 102). UNITA and an "increasingly megalomaniac Savimbi" (MacQueen 1997:226) lost the elections by a slim margin and, within weeks, the bloodshed had returned to Angola. There are three primary reasons that mark this period in Angola's history as important. The first is a major change in the MPLA's ideological stance and economic policy. Secondly, for the first time since 1975, the fighting took place within the major cities, as UNITA members returned to the cities from their southern stronghold following the declaration of peace. Finally, the resumption of fighting saw the MPLA and UNITA move away from a reliance on support from other global and regional parties to fund their wars, as they now paid for materiel with funds generated through the sale, both legal and illegal, of Angola's vast supplies of oil and diamonds. It is this historical moment, into which Pepetela's *The Return of the Water Spirit*, writes.

The Return of the Water Spirit was originally published in Portuguese as *O Desejo de Kianda* in 1995. The text sees Pepetela move from the social realist style of *Mayombe* to one that

[16] By this stage, the FNLA was all but extinct. Its fighters had been absorbed by either UNITA or the South African Defence Force (SADF). In the SADF, they became the backbone of 32 Battalion, one of the most controversial, feared and hated battalions ever to be deployed in Namibia, Angola and South Africa. For further information see Breytenbach (2002).

includes aspects of magical realism, but which is still deeply allegorical. This change, it seems, is as a result of an attempt to come to terms with the difficulties of representing aspects of a nation that is, at best, fragmentary and, at worst, failed. The end of the Cold War, and over twenty years of war, have proven that the Marxist-Leninist utopia for which Fearless died will never become a reality. I argue, therefore, that in *The Return of the Water Spirit* Pepetela can be seen to deploy a different literary form with which to describe such an important moment in Angola's history. For Sousa Jamba, the description of Hosi's Journey, both literal and figurative, presented him with a narrative form that opens spaces in which to examine differing national paradigms and their implementation in war-torn Angola. Ultimately, Sousa Jamba's choice of narrative structuring allows him to illustrate the irony that war, in the name of patriotism, serves only to destroy the nation. Unlike in the early 1970s, the certainty that war offered solutions to the problems faced by the MPLA has been destroyed and Jamba's point proved. Pepetela must, therefore, attempt to narrate a country that is in the midst of ever-increasing disintegration. He, therefore, employs aspects of magical realism and the allegorical in an attempt to represent the ironies present in various notions of nationhood in Angola. What emerges is a strong critique of the Angolan state and those who rule it just prior to, and during, the brief quiet of 1991 and the subsequent return to war in 1992. In order to illustrate this, I turn now to a discussion of magical realism and allegory in *The Return of the Water Spirit* and then on to an illustration of how Pepetela employs these literary forms in his critique of the MPLA's new, capitalist-inspired national paradigm. I end this section with a discussion of the manner in which Pepetela makes use of the refugee camp as a place of imagining solutions to Angola's national dilemmas through the depiction of the camp as a new place of resistance to exploitation, in the name of self-enrichment.

The term magical realism is generally accepted to have first been used to describe a literary form in the late 1960s where it was applied to works by Latin American authors such as Gabriel Gracía Márquez and Julio Cortázar. It is most commonly used to denote a literary text that "incorporates realistic elements with supernatural or fantastic experiences" (Quinn 1999: 195). African authors and critics have, however, been quick to point out that such a description "suggests a denial [...] of local knowledge, beliefs, language, rhetoric [and] perpetuate[s] imperialist notions" (Cooper 2003: 460), through the implication that the incorporation of local understandings of the world, as happens in African magical realism, is somehow "supernatural or fantastic" and, therefore, magical rather than an aspect of a real, lived experience. Accordingly, such arguments prompt Gerald Gaylard (2005) to observe that in Africa,

> postcolonialism is more real than realism; it can least approach encompassing the bizarre-seeming antinomies of the world it is describing. When a narrow realism is the inherited [Western] form, then a more magical form is required as 'reality is stranger than fiction' and what appears as fantastic is in fact part of reality for magical realists. (42)

It is, therefore, that African magical realism can be said to critique and unsettle received Western ideas of how reality is to be perceived through a rational-scientific world-view. For such reasons, magical realism as it has come to be seen in Africa since the 1980s is linked to the postcolonial in its endeavour "towards incorporating indigenous knowledge on new terms" through the development of narratives that "deal with borders, change, mixing and syncretizing" (Cooper 2003: 461). It is the presence and presentation of such themes in the manner outlined by Gaylard and Cooper that, I argue, mark *The Return of the Water Spirit* as a magical realist text. Tied to this conception of the text is, however, its functioning as an allegorical one.

Pepetela's use of the allegorical mode in *The Return of the Water Spirit* is most obvious in his depiction of Luanda, Angola's capital city, as representative of the postcolony which Achille Mbembe (2001) defines as a "society recently emerging from the experience of colonization and the violence which the colonial relationship involves" (103) and describes as "a hollow pretence, a regime of unreality [and] sham" (108). It is a description that is useful in the attempt to understand Pepetela's allegorical portrayal of Angola as embodied in his depiction of Luanda and the people who populate it. This depiction reveals a Luanda run by a corrupt elite, who have turned their back on the socialist teachings of the MPLA's Marxist-Leninism, and are now involved in multiple corrupt dealings. In this, they have come to represent exactly what Pepetela can be seen to warn against, through his depiction of Dolisie and Andre in *Mayombe*. However, while the ruling elite are becoming richer and richer through the abuse of those under them, the country descends into further violence and decay in a manner reminiscent of Portuguese-colonial rule. Thus, Pepetela renders the MPLA's rule of Angola "a hollow pretence, a regime of unreality" (108) and an exercise in vulgarity.

Set in Luanda in the early 1990s, *The Return of the Water* focuses on João Evangelista and his wife Carmina or Carmina-arse-face (CAF), as she is known in the text. CAF is a young, up-and-coming politician destined for high political office in the MPLA government. As a result, she and João have access to food and luxuries "at prices that were merely symbolic" and "paid for evidently by the State" (Pepetela 2002: 6) during a time in Angola's history when twenty-five years of war had resulted in overwhelming poverty amongst the majority of the population. This draws the reader's attention to an issue that will shape a large part of the narrative. Corruption within a "government that called itself Marxist – even though many suspected that their Marxism never went beyond the level of propaganda" (5) has caused a huge gap to open up between those in power and those left outside of the self-serving

generosity of the state. In addition, the after-effects of the Cold War, and the manner in which it was played out in Angola, have destroyed the economy and resulted in a large number of refugees in Luanda. In allegorical terms, Pepetela points to the historical irony that Luanda in the early nineties is very similar to the Luanda of late-colonial rule, even the buildings on Kinaxixi Square, which once housed the colonial elite, are now filled with senior MPLA officials, including CAF and João. It is precisely such symbolic occupation of the structures of colonial rule that render the ruling MPLA's actions vulgar.[17]

The symbolic importance of the buildings surrounding Kinaxixi Square to Pepetela's allegorical critique of Angola in the early 1990s is underscored when they begin to fall to the ground. Importantly, when the buildings fall

> there was no explosion. The sound of bricks crashing against the metal just wasn't there. Instead, there was a light musical tinkling sound […]. The walls disintegrated in a leisurely way and then furniture fell on top of plaster and sanitary fittings. (3)

Remarkable too, was that no one was injured, or for that matter, even aware that anything had happened until they were lying on top of the rubble. The phenomenon comes to be called "Luanda Syndrome" (1) and, contained within it, is the coming together of magical realism and the allegorical mode. On the one hand, the falling buildings become a symbol of the disintegration of Angola due to the corruption and greed evident in the lives of CAF and João and, on the other hand, the fantastic manner in which they fall, describes, in magical realist terms, the lived experience of such disintegration. Thus, the combination of magical realist form and an allegorical mode offer Pepetela the opportunity to both represent Mbembe's "regime of unreality" (201: 108) in a form which can encompass the "bizarre-seeming antinomies of the [postcolonial] world" (Gaylard 2005: 42) and offer an analysis of the

[17] A point underscored by the vulgar names, such as Master Fart (Pepetela 2002: 13) and Carmina-arse-face, Pepetela gives to some of the MPLA elite depicted in the text.

reasons for Angola's situation. That such a combination is necessary in order to capture the complex nature of Angola in the early 1990s, is emphasised by Pepetela's writing of all manner of international scientists becoming involved in the investigation into Luanda Syndrome's cause.

Ultimately no scientist or politician has any answers, beyond vague statements regarding "American imperialism" (2001: 42), to offer the city's inhabitants. There is, however, one other explanation of Luanda Syndrome and it is described to João by two famous Angolan writers, Luandino Viera and Arnaldo Santos, in the following:

> 30 years before, they [Portuguese] cut down the tree of the Water Spirit, during the time when they built the square.
> […]
> 'Do you remember, Arnaldo, when the huge tree shed tears of blood for seven days? No one knew if it was from the pain of being felled or in sorrow because they had taken the lagoon away from the Water Spirit.' (37)

The story continues with the explanation that the buildings were falling because the Water Spirit, Kianda, was drawing the water from the cement, in order to reconstruct his lagoon in the place where it had been before the construction of the square by the colonial rulers. Scientists cannot, therefore, understand Luanda Syndrome because they do not recognise aspects of Luanda and its past, which are fundamental to its current functioning. In the same way that Gaylard highlights realism's inability to encompass an African postcolonial reality, science does not recognise the indigenous knowledge central to understanding postcolonial Luanda. Here too, Pepetela's use of form can be seen to mirror the text's content. As magical realism moves "towards incorporating indigenous knowledge on new terms" (Cooper 2003: 461) so too does *The Return of the Water Spirit*. Thus, on an allegorical level, the symbolic falling of the buildings marks the beginning of an end to a violent system, with roots stretching all the way back to colonial rule, when indigenous knowledge and its moral code were rendered retrograde and undesirable in the drive for power and self-enrichment. In this

regard, it is significant that it is José Luandino Viera and Arnaldo Santos who tell João of the Water Spirit and its place in Luanda's history.

As mentioned in Chapter One of this study, Pepetela's literary influences lie in a 1950s and 1960s literary tradition which "wanted to discover a culture that might define borders of a potential [and imagined Angolan] nation space", through the literary depiction of Luanda (Peres 1997: 7). In this move, Luandino Vieira was particularly prominent as a result of both the writing of the collection of short stories, *Luuanda: Short Stories of Angola* (1980 [1964]), which were set in the slums of Luanda and the adoption of the epithet Luandino, a hybridisation of Kimbundu and Portuguese, meaning inhabitant of Luanda (Hamilton 1985: 147). Through the allusion to these authors, I argue, Pepetela is referencing this tradition of using Luanda as a space in which to imagine an Angolan nation and, in doing so, reinforcing the central role played by literature in the creation of the "imagined community" that is nation (Anderson 1983: 15).

The Angola Pepetela writes of in *The Return of the Water* is one dominated by corruption, poverty and violence. These issues are again brought into focus when following the loss of the elections, in which CAF became a parliamentarian, the "rebels", as UNITA are called in the text, returned to the violence of war. In response to this, João withdraws into his study to play a computer game that has, as its ultimate goal, world domination through the waging of war, until one has destroyed all enemies. The differences between João's computer life and his everyday life are stark. In his real life João is a dominated husband with little control over the direction of his life and while waging war on his computer, he is a great leader and brilliant strategist. On an allegorical level, the functioning of João's fighting of virtual wars becomes a diversion that affords him the fantasy of complete control and limitless power.

Such a fantasy can be seen to mirror the reasons for which the civil war has been fought. Leaders have recklessly sent hundreds of thousands of people to their death as a result of their hunger for absolute control of the country. Beyond this point, just as CAF gave João the computer and game in order to pacify him, so too did the Cold War powers give their proxies the fantasy of ultimate control following the promised military victory. The fantasy of complete control was, however, not restricted to the proxy forces. It can be seen writ large in the actions of the of the Cold War players as they jostled for position on various battle fields, hot and cold, across the world. Nevertheless, Pepetela is quick to point out that the end of the Cold War did not bring an end to the quest for global domination.

He illustrates, through his depictions of CAF's business dealings with foreign powers following the MPLA's move to an open-market system following years of Marxist-Leninist economic control, that mechanisms of global capitalism are geared to affect the same result as the Cold War. Only now, the war will be fought with the weapons of international finance and commodity values. Access to the new order, however, requires large sums of money and that, in turn, will result in the exploitation of the same people colonialism and the civil war subjugated. In addition, the desire to access and control of the means of wealth production, will again result in a war, but this time for commodities such as diamonds and oil. It is an extremely vicious cycle that always sees the poor of Angola trampled by the elite whose position is assured by the capitalist tenets at the heart of the new national paradigm. Furthermore, it is a cycle that *The Return of the Water Spirit* seeks to imagine a way out of, through the portrayal of Luanda syndrome and its effects on the refugees that it creates.

The relationship between the war, corruption and Luanda syndrome is highlighted in the following evocative passage:

> More tents would be put up [in Kinaxixi Square] to house the homeless from the collapse of that fourth building. And in many other squares tents would be put up for all those who were fleeing from different parts of the country, for war had now spread all over. And the havoc that had begun in Kinaxixi would spread to all the cities in a whirlwind of madness. Except that in the other places the buildings didn't fall to the musical accompaniment and without wounded victims, as they did in Kinaxixi. In other places the falling was red-coloured, bloodied. (Pepetela 2002: 44 – 45)

Eventually, the tents in Kinaxixi Square become reminiscent of a refugee camp, but it is now not only those affected by the falling buildings who have come to live in it, many war refugees now reside there too. From all of this destruction, however, a remarkable situation develops. The people of the tented camp in Kinaxixi Square have stopped wearing clothes. When João asks a friend of his why this has happened, he is told that,

> the homeless in Kinaxixi are protesting against a government which does nothing for them. Nakedness is our new national garb, one that's in accordance with the standard of living of our people. We can't even walk around in a loincloth. A loincloth is a middle-class luxury. (94)

It is described to him as "a civic movement" (95) rather than a political one and is growing extremely quickly. It is within the space of this camp that Pepetela imagines a way out of the cycle discussed above.

Pepetela's use of the camp in *The Return of the Water Spirit* moves away from the military style camp, as depicted in *Mayombe* and *Patriots*, and makes use of the seemingly ubiquitous image of the African refugee camp. Unlike the usual representations of such camps as places where people are at the mercy of corruption and the strife it causes, this one is a place of freedom and implies a possible way out of the vicious circle that the search for personal power enacts. It offers people the chance to join together in a manner that is neither political nor religious and, therefore, free from the historical baggage that such systems of organisation carry. More importantly perhaps, its nonviolent method of action is, ironically, inaction. It is a coming together, not in the name of the type of revolutionary action proposed

by Fanon or in the name of patriotic war, but rather a coming together through inaction and the rejection of material trappings. It is unity through peace rather than unity through war. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the heroes of this movement are not people of remarkable bravery, such as those of *Mayombe* or such as Hosi imagined he would become. They are the people with a small "p" identified by Giorgio Agamben (1998) when he writes that "it is as if what we call 'people' were not really a unitary subject but a dialectical oscillation between two opposite poles: on the one hand, the set of the People [with a capital "p"] as a whole political body, and on the other, the subset of the people as a fragmentary multiplicity of needy and excluded bodies" (177). These people with the small "p" are the "poor, the disinherited and the excluded" who occupy the camp and who, through inaction and a rejection of the markers of wealth, are turning from the world of violence and corruption occupied by the People.

The Return of the Water Spirit's camp is thus a place in which Pepetela can imagine an Angolan nation, which is bound by the ideals signified in a syncretic coming together of the egalitarianism of Marxist ideology, with the recognition of indigenous knowledge symbolised by the stories told by the authors. It is a vision of utopia that finds its expression in the rejection of material wealth rather than in its accumulation. The civil movement at its heart marks a breaking of the cycle of corruption and war and promotes a return to balance. It is, therefore, significant that the Water Spirit breaks free just as this movement becomes great enough to cause major concern to the Government.

Kinaxixi Square is flooded as the final building, João's building, falls and water rushes from the ground to destroy the causeway that the Portuguese built and that blocked the Square from the sea. With this rush of water, Kianda is able to again swim in the sea from which he has been kept. This final image might seem like an endorsement of a return to pre-colonial,

and now, lost values, but this image is not one in which the coast is exactly as it was before the city was built. The tree is still missing; colonialism, war and greed have still done unimaginable damage to the country and its people. Nevertheless, there is the chance of a new beginning only if people pay attention to the past and do not carry on as they had been. Phyllis Peres (2002) writes of this ending that it "attempts to reclaim utopian and traditional space amid the disintegration of nation" (68). To this I would add that Pepetela is attempting to find a space in which he can reimagine an Angolan utopia which reconfigures the past and the present in a manner that allows for progression, rather than the destruction of war seen in the country's recent past. This utopia is one that no longer looks to other countries to find meaning and stability. Instead it looks inward, at the stories which make up its past and which have long been used by writers to shape their imaginings of Angola.

Inherent in such a move is, however, an isolationist one where Angola distances itself from any sense of regional integration. The desire for such distancing is not surprising given the role that other countries, both regional and global, have had in Angola's war-torn history. There is also the sense, however, that because Angola is not yet a nation, as shown by the existence of the camp within Luanda and other cities, it cannot yet enter into a world populated by other, unified nations. This view is informed by two factors. The first is that when the brief peace first comes to Luanda, Pepetela writes of German, South African, Finnish and other internationals arriving equipped with "all the usual things tourists bring when they visit a country of savages" (Pepetela 2002: 67), who flee as soon as war returns. As a result, Pepetela shows that Angola is still a considered a backwater by the international community due to its continued inability to structure a lasting peace. Reinforcing this is the second factor. It is interesting that there are South African tourists visiting Luanda. In *Mayombe*, South Africa under apartheid is presented as in a worse position than Angola

under colonial rule; in *Patriots* South Africans are shown to be deeply implicated in the continued violence troubling the country. *The Return of the Water Spirit*'s presentation of South Africans as tourists alongside other Germans, Japanese, American and others, suggests a rehabilitation of the nation Angolans have been unable to attain. Here we have an imagining of the Angolan nation that is the reverse of that presented in *Mayombe*. In *Mayombe*, the future Angola is imagined as an example to other African countries whereas, in *The Return of the Water Spirit*, Pepetela seems to be implying that it is Angola that must learn from other regional and global countries. Such an insistence is given weight by the fact that by the time of the text's publication in 1995, Namibia, South Africa and Mozambique had all come to negotiated solutions to wars that had dominated their recent histories. Sadly, Angola was still to see another seven years of war.

2.4 Conclusion

The three texts read in this chapter map the differing moments in Angola's arc from anticolonial struggle, through civil war, to brief peace, and subsequent return to war. As a result, the chapter has shown, the texts respond to their contexts in differing literary ways. In *Mayombe*, Pepetela makes use of an allegorical mode to imagine a future Angolan nation which is united across race, ethnicity and class, to form a Marxist-Leninist style utopia. Pepetela's imagining is not, however, without warnings of the possible problems faced by such a nation. *Mayombe* actively critiques the implementation of such a national paradigm in other African countries, and highlights possible problems facing its implementation in Angola, through the juxtaposition of the guerrilla camp in Mayombe with that of the MPLA base in the neighbouring Republic of Congo. The imagining of the camp is thus central to *Mayombe*'s depiction of the future nation and its place in the southern African region. In contrast, Jamba Sousa's *Patriots* presents an imagining of the UNITA camp at Jamba which

serves to critique the Angolan situation as it was during the mid 1980s. Jamba's critique of the different national paradigms enforced by the MPLA and UNITA in their areas of control is structured as a journey without end. Through the presentation of the narrative in this way, Jamba is able to show that war cannot unite the nation in the manner proposed by Pepetela's presentation of *Mayombe*'s Hero, Fearless. Instead, the journey at *Patriots*' heart serves to make real the irony at the heart of Angola's civil war – which is that war in the name of patriotism will only keep the nation divided along racial, ethnic and ideological lines. As if to suggest a way in which Angola's journey to peace and nationhood could end, Pepetela's *The Return of the Water Spirit* makes use of magical realist techniques in order to write an allegory of an Angola which has been destroyed by many years of greed, corruption and war. Pepetela's use of this literary form enables him to imagine a syncretic solution to the problems faced by the country's people. This solution sees the best of Marxist egalitarianism come together with indigenous knowledge to combat the corruption which is at the heart of Pepetela's depiction of the reasons for the continuation of the fighting.

The fact that a depiction of the camp is at the heart of all of these texts calls to mind Ananya Vajpayi's (2004) observation that:

> [t]he accepted truth is the nation-state is the paradigm and the camp is the zone of exception. But it appears that state of exception is growing and will soon engulf the space of politics altogether. Is the camp going to be the new Nation then, in the 21st century? (14)

After having looked at the repeated presence of the camp in these texts, it certainly seems as though Vajpayi's question is relevant to a discussion of the southern African region as it is depicted in *Mayombe, Patriots* and *The Return of the Water Spirit*. Indeed, the camp is presented as the "zone of exception" in war-torn Angola. Coupled with this presentation is the fact that in all three of these texts, the camp is used as a literary space in which to imagine the nation as it is or as it could or should be. This complicates Vajpayi's question because the

camp is both the “new Nation” in imagining and the exception that must be learned from and remedied, if they are to be eradicated through the building of the united nation as it is imagined within the texts. Importantly, this view and its presence in the texts is suggestive of a particular way of imagining southern Africa as a region.

In other southern African war writing, the camp does not feature as frequently, or with the focus that it does in Angola war writings. This may have a lot to do with the nature and time span of the wars in Angola, which saw the country divided for very long periods of time and therefore could not really be considered a single country between 1975 and 2002. The result of this is that life in camps, of various forms, became an experience common to the majority of Angolans. Many of these camps were in countries, such as Zambia and South Africa, surrounding Angola and these camps were linked, as is depicted in *Mayombe* and *Patriots*, to camps within Angola. Thus, an imagining of the region surrounding Angola as a series of interlinking, transborder webs of camps based on affiliations to similar ideologies comes to be rendered. The region at war is, therefore, imagined as a complex of such camps which, in turn, suggests a coming together or linking of different aspects and countries of that region, in new and changing ways due to the presence of war in one or more of its countries. This conception is, however, complicated by the functioning of the camp in *The Return of the Water Spirit*.

It is important to keep in mind that by 1995, *The Return of the Water Spirit*’s publication date, Angola was the only country in the region to be at war and, therefore, the only country in southern Africa not to be attempting, publically at least, to solve national issues in a peaceful manner. Here the role of war and those who promote it in the attainment of the national paradigm is cast into focus as is illustrated by the textual relationship between the

hero and the national imagining in the texts discussed in this chapter. In keeping with much of the revolutionary thought of the text's time, *Mayombe* presents the hero as one whose actions bring about the new, united utopia through violent struggle. Years of bloody struggle following Angola's liberation from colonial rule, however, cause *Patriots* to show such thinking about war and heroes to be dangerous lies, as fighting will not create a united Angolan nation. *The Return of the Water Spirit*'s insistence on the nonviolent citizen as heroic can, therefore, be seen to be a response to the continued presence of war. It is a sustained experience of war which has asserted the need to find new, nonviolent ways of thinking about national formation within borders set, often arbitrarily, by southern Africa's erstwhile colonial rulers.

CHAPTER THREE

Pasts and Presents in the writing of Zimbabwe's liberation war

3 Introduction

Zimbabwe's War of Liberation or second *Chimurenga* lasted from 1964 to 1980 and, as a result, is the shortest experience of war of any of the countries discussed in this study. The length of the war is, however, not the only aspect of the country's history that marks it as different from the others. Whereas Mozambique, Angola and South Africa have histories of colonial expansion of four to five hundred years, Zimbabwe's history of sustained colonial occupation, starting in 1890, covers about 90 years. For many Zimbabweans who fought on both sides of the liberation war, therefore, memories of the coming of British colonialism and the first violent resistance to it were within a couple of generations. In Zimbabwean literature, this chapter will argue, this situation reveals itself in extended textual interactions with memories of the past, especially the early days of colonial rule, the first violent resistance to it and the liberation war. As a result, the past has become central to the manner in which such texts interpret and define their present. This is of particular importance to the recurring writing of the liberation war which, T.O. McLoughlin (1991) reminds us, is usually employed in an "attempt to define or describe what stage [Zimbabweans] are at in the development of a national consciousness" (147).[1] As such, the writing of the war is central to the manner in which Zimbabwe has been imagined by its authors since before its liberation from colonial rule in 1980. This imagining of Zimbabwe as a nation has, however, changed over time and, as a result, so has the depiction of liberation war's role in the formation of a Zimbabwean

[1] T.O. Mcloughlin's novel *Karima* (1985) narrates the events that surround the massacre of villagers in a remote part of the country by members of the Rhodesia Defence Force during the war of liberation.

nation. It is these changes this chapter explores with a view to understanding how the depictions of the past are used to interpret the national and regional presents portrayed by the texts under study.

This chapter reads Stanley Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey* (1980), Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988) and Dan Wylie's *Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesian War* (2002). I argue that in order to "define or describe what stage [Zimbabweans] are at in the development of a national consciousness" (McLoughlin 1991: 147), these three Zimbabwean Liberation War texts repeatedly look not only to the pre-colonial and colonial past, but to the manner in which that past has been used to argue for a post-war Zimbabwean nation united across racial and ethnic lines. In addition, I look at the ways in which the notions of the past are constructed and vary according to the dictates of the present into which the authors of the texts write. In doing so, the chapter enters into the on-going discussion surrounding the imagining of nation as more than an ethnic or racial group that starts with Ernest Renan's now famous 1882 speech "*Que'est-ce qu'une Nation?*", or "What is a Nation?". In the speech, Renan argues that a nation is not tied to definitions of an ethnic group, as had been posited by other theorists of his time, but is the coming together of people who "have common glories in the past and [...] have a common will in the present" (Renan 2009 [1882]: 19). If one assumes that the shared glory is the fighting of a liberation war, then Renan's definition is reminiscent of Franz Fanon's assertions regarding the unifying effect of liberatory violence and implies an all-encompassing nation will follow the war if all concerned show the "common will" (19), suggested by the reconciliatory tone of Robert Mugabe's early 1980s speeches. As with the Angolan writing of war, however, early black Zimbabwean writing of the second *Chimurenga* drew on the experiences of other African countries which were liberated before Zimbabwe and, as the writing of the 1970s shows,

were marked “general scepticism, a pessimistic approach towards society in general and a disillusionment about African politics” and the possibilities of a united Zimbabwean nation (Viet-Wild 1992: 7).

Using the above as the chapter’s starting point, I examine Stanley Nyamfukudza’s *The Non-Believer’s Journey* (1980), with a view to illustrating that through his reviewing of the events of the first *Chimurenga,* Nyamfukudza is able show that the revolutionary war will not bring about the promised peace and freedom, because the tradition of resistance it is based upon has been constructed around a blemished memory of a utopian pre-colonial past. As the discussion in the previous chapter shows, Zimbabwean liberation movements were not alone in their attempt to mythologise their pasts and their presents. Through a situation of *The Non-Believer’s Journey,* within its literary and social-political context, this section will show that Nyamfukudza’s use of the figure of the non-believer makes clear the irony inherent in a belief, extolled by some of the text’s characters, of unified liberation movements fighting against white-minority rule, which will ultimately result in a unified nation of Zimbabwe.

In the second section, I turn to Chenjerai Hove’s deeply poetic novella *Bones* (1988) in order to show how Hove also uses the memory of the first *Chimurenga* as a yardstick with which to measure the commitment of those who have gained from independence to redress the inequalities of the past. Here, I detail Hove’s use of the figure of the nineteenth century prophetess, Nehanda, as an intertextual bridge to a past with which to detail a “conscience of bones” (Hove 1988: 51), to help Zimbabwe avoid the post-liberation problems which have befallen other regional countries.

Finally, I will read Dan Wylie's autobiographical *Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesian War* (2002) and its representation of both the role that he played in the violence of war and the role that war has played in his personal history. I situate Wylie's text within the recently ever-growing corpus of white-Zimbabwean autobiography, in order to illustrate its problematic denial of choice and agency in Wylie's war-time actions. Having done so, I show how the text enters into a debate on the role that the past and its attendant colonial discourse has had on Wylie's imagining of an inclusive Zimbabwean nation, of the kind gestured toward by the reconciliatory tone of President Mugabe's early independence speeches. I conclude by pointing out that the three texts read can all be seen to warn against the romanticisation of nation and what Renan terms "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories [and] the desire to live together" (Renan 2009 [1882]: 19). My conclusion also points out, however, that the desire for a united Zimbabwean nation is evident in the texts' changing positioning of the country within the southern African region.

Before beginning my analysis, a brief overview of the social and historical within which to consider the text is necessary.

Zimbabwe's colonial history began in 1890 with the formation, by the British South Africa Company (BSACo), of the colony that would come to be known as Southern Rhodesia. It was not long before this action was resisted by the people who now found themselves under colonial rule. 1893 saw the first resistance when King Lobengula led the Ndebele against the BSACo-led settlers. The uprising was, however, short-lived and it was only in 1896 that serious resistance was again mounted. In what was to become known as the First *Chimurenga*, both the Ndebele and the Shona rose up against colonial rule. Again, the uprising was put down with severe force and many of the supposed leaders were executed.

The brutality with which the uprising was ended resulted in the inability of the colonised Ndebele and Shona again mounting anything but sporadic and largely ineffective resistance until the early 1960s.

In accordance with the experience of the countries and colonies that surrounded it, the colonised peoples of the then self-governing colony of Southern Rhodesia began to campaign for freedom from their British colonial rulers in the early 1960s. While Howard Macmillan's British government was willing to grant independence, as it had to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) in 1964, the country's white settlers were unwilling to relinquish power. As a result, 1965 saw the Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith and his Rhodesia Front (RF) party unilaterally declare independence in the face of stiff resistance from the United Kingdom. Smith's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) resulted in Rhodesia, as it was now known, becoming an international pariah with only South Africa and Portugal willing to aid it in its fight against liberation organisations. At this stage, there were already two liberation organisations in operation. These were the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo and a ZAPU off-shoot called the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) which was originally led by Ndabaningi Sithole who, in 1974, was followed by Robert Mugabe. The war of liberation, called the Second *Chimurenga*, in which these two parties fought against the white-minority government began in the mid-1960s. At first, ZANU and ZAPU's military actions had little effect on the Rhodesian government's ability to enforce its rule but, with the fall of colonial rule in neighbouring Mozambique, Rhodesia was faced with both the loss of an ally and the opening of a second front as ZANU moved it bases into Mozambique. This shift in the balance of regional power, the improved tactics of ZANU and ZAPU's guerrillas and South Africa's decreasing support proved too much for the Rhodesian Defence Force (RDF) and Smith

began to look for a negotiated settlement to the war. The Second *Chimurenga* finally came to an end with the democratic elections of 1980 which saw Robert Mugabe become the first prime minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

3.1 Imperfect history, imperfect war

Stanley Nyamfukudza is a short story and novel writer who was born in Wedza, Eastern Zimbabwe, in 1951. In 1973, while studying at the University of Rhodesia, he was imprisoned by the Rhodesian Government for protesting against racism on the university campus. Following his release, he received a scholarship to read English at Lincoln College, Oxford University, and graduated in 1977 (Primorac 2005b). Nyamfukudza shared his time at Oxford with another now famous Zimbabwean author, Dambudzo Marechera, who, unlike Nyamfukudza, did not graduate. These two authors and Charles Mungoshi have, however, come to be seen as "responsible for establishing the seed-bed of independent Zimbabwe's literary canon" (a 2005: 1). In her extensive study of Zimbabwean literature, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992), Flora Veit-Wild includes in the second generation of Zimbabwean writers. Veit-Wild shows that many of newly-liberated Zimbabwe's literary critics agreed that the writers of this generation – Marechera, Nyamfukudza and Mungoshi in particular – "gained remarkable heights of artistic achievement" but were appalled by the "sceptical unpatriotic outlook which marked" their work (243). Unlike their pre-independence Angolan counterparts, like Pepetela and Luandino Viera, whose writing showed a deep commitment to one or other of the Angolan liberation movements, Nyamfukudza, Marechera and Mungoshi's writing was marked by "general scepticism, a pessimistic approach towards society in general and a disillusionment about African politics" (7). This bleak outlook on the possibilities of "African politics" is unsurprising given that, unlike those of 1960s Angola, Zimbabwe's pre-liberation writers

could look back at the example of African countries whose liberation movements had not fulfilled their promises of a better society and had in certain regional cases, such as Angola and Mozambique, descended into civil war after fighting a successful liberation war. The disillusionment and scepticism created by this and the situation within Rhodesia of the mid-1970s are certainly evident in the title of Stanley Nyamfukudza's only novel to date, *The Non-Believer's Journey*, written while he was studying at Oxford in the mid-1970s (255).

Michael Chapman (2003) describes the text as "the first [Zimbabwean] novel to cast a jaundiced eye on notions of patriotism and heroism" and the Zimbabwean liberation war (305). This is certainly true; however, it is the manner in which Nyamfukudza's narrative does so that is important. In a manner very similar to Sousa Jamba's *Patriots*, *The Non-Believer's Journey* uses a journey, both literal and figurative, in order to structure his depiction of Rhodesia at war. The narrative follows the journey of Sam, a teacher from the city of Salisbury, Rhodesia, to attend his Uncle's funeral in the rural area of Mtoko and, ultimately, his death at the hands of a resistance leader. Through the description of this literal journey, Nyamfukudza is able to present the reader with a detailed figurative journey through the political landscape, which includes the ideological posturing of those populating it, during an upsurge of violent resistance to white-minority rule in 1974. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the text is its multi-voiced presentation of, often conflicting, views and understandings of the Zimbabwean war of liberation. Ranka Primorac (2003) describes the function of this journey as a "criss-cross of a multitude of voices debating the subject of African nationalism [..] and [...] none of these voices is signalled out as the carrier of a privileged discourse" (62). Important for this study, however, is that these voices are shown to offer differing interpretations of the past and the role these pasts play in the present upon which the characters are commenting.

Unlike *Patriots,* however, the motif of the journey in *The Non-Believer's Journey* is not linked to the triumphant return, although subverted in *Patriots*, of the hero. Sam's character does not return to the family homestead as a "wiser and more mature" individual (Mortimer 1990: 5) as a result of his *Bildungsroman*-like journey through difficulty and deprivation. He does not return "to fight for the "regenerative cause of bettering society" as do Fearless in *Mayombe* or, mistakenly, Hosi in *Patriots* (Batley 2007: 5). Instead, Sam's homecoming is marked by the irony of his accidental death at the hands of a guerrilla leader. Sam thus becomes a type of anti-hero, whose death marks his journey as an ironic search for truth through non-belief in the proffered certainties, signalled by the many position occupied by those he meets on his journey, of a united resistance to white-minority rule. In order to illustrate this, I now turn to a tracing of Sam's journey and a discussion of the importance this journey and its detailing of the past in Nyamfukudza's imagining of Zimbabwe at war.

The text opens with a picture of Sam that is far from flattering as he is seen to wake up with a hangover and begins to vomit from the window of his bedroom. This introduction to the "non-believer" of the text's title is in keeping with the picture of the poor, blacks-only section of a racially segregated Salisbury that Nyamfukudza (1980) goes on to render. It is an alcohol-soaked landscape of bars, ramshackle houses and poverty through which Sam and, it would seem, most of the city's residents wander in search of "Saturday night's quota of fun" (16). While presenting an urban space as debauched and destructive is in keeping with a long tradition of African fiction, Nyamfukudza adds to it by showing that it is also a place of self-indulgent political inaction. This is illustrated in a conversation that Sam has with Thomas, a "political activist" who is part of a group of men who Sam regularly drinks with. The conversation begins with a narrative comment that Thomas was a "political activist […]

of that more reprehensible type" (20). Nyamfukudza thus implies that he is one of many who are outwardly committed to the Liberation War, but are not willing to make the sacrifice that would be entailed in leaving the city to join one of the guerrilla groups actively fighting white-minority rule. In fact, Sam views Thomas's party, which is not named, as ineffectual and "not much of an enemy for any government" (21). Thomas argues that some of the younger members of his party have joined guerrilla groups and, in addition, that as "an educated person" Sam should "see the injustice and oppression" under which black people in Rhodesia live. Sam counters by arguing that "to fight these Boers [white Rhodesians], you go north, you train, then come back and fight" (21). Anything else, he continues, is not only futile, but assists that Rhodesian government by dividing the opposition to its rule.

The points made in this conversation become central to the narrative because they illustrate that while Sam is indeed very aware of the complexities of the present political situation, he is also not interested in becoming involved in political activities. Political divisions are, however, not the only ones Nyamfukudza diagnoses. Just as Sam is to leave for the bus stop in order to travel to attend his uncle's funeral at his family's homestead in rural Mtoko, he is told of a fight which took place in a shebeen the night before. Taundi, another of Sam's drinking friends, tells him of two men "getting up people's noses with their flashy spending and constant claims that their Ndebele team would take the [football competition] cup from Mashonaland" (22). This behaviour led to the two men being beaten by Taundi and others. In addition, Taundi states that while the beating took place, the two men were asked if they "remembered what their [Ndebele] grandparents had done to ours [Shona], robbing and plundering and taking away all the beautiful women" (22). It would seem that according to Taundi, the fight had its roots and thus justification in past acts of brutality by the Ndebele. The highlighting of ethnic tensions within representations of societies at war is, as the

discussion of *Mayombe*, *Patriots* and *The Return of the Water Spirit* in the previous chapter illustrates, central to southern African war writing. Nevertheless in this example, I argue, Nyamfukudza is embarking on the development of a theme that is central to the text's construction. It is a theme which involves making a statement about the role that people's interpretations of the past have on their understanding of the role played by war in the construction of an inclusive and peaceful post-war society. In this particular example, no further explanation of the ensuing events is given, although the example does set the scene for another that takes place on the bus while Sam is travelling to Mtoko.

During the journey, Sam is seated next to an old man, identified only as a "Master Farmer" (25). They begin to discuss the implementation and resulting effects of the Land Tenure Act on the ability of non-white farmers to produce agricultural goods and thus to benefit, in the same manner as white farmers, from the land (26). It is a very important discussion as it illustrates that to many, the war being fought is primarily about the redistribution of land the colonial powers took from its original inhabitants and gave to white settlers. This point is underscored by the Master Farmer's statement that, "'The Boys' [guerrillas fighting against the RDF] are fighting hard out there where we are going [and] [v]ery soon we shall have prime land too" (26). Such statements, however, only "irritat[e]" (26) Sam and soon he finds it "unendurably boring, listening to the passengers' accounts of their individual experiences of poverty and endless, unrewarding hard work" (27). That these experiences are true and heartfelt examples of the effects colonial and later, white-minority rule, have on the non-settler population is underscored by the descriptions of the land through which the bus travels.

Regardless of Sam's feeling towards people's individual suffering, the narrative and its description of the land through which Sam travels provides a clear indication of the differing levels of development colonial and subsequent white-minority rule has forced on the land. Why Sam should feel such ambivalence to his surrounding is not clearly stated. There is some suggestion of a reason for it in a recollection Sam has; it is here too that Nyamfukudza picks up on his discussion of what I have termed peoples' interpretation of the past.

> [Sam] was reminded of the stories that his grandmother had told him when he was young and he wondered if, in those years of apparent innocence, this same land had looked so different. From the way she had spoken, they had had a certain kind of glory, too, which had been shattered with the coming of the white man from the east, trading beads, mirrors, guns and whisky and many other trinkets for gold and ivory and slaves.
> 'When we were on the road and we got hungry and weary of walking, for there were no buses then,' she would say, proud of her people's strength and resilience, 'we had to walk two, three sometimes four days without stop from dawn to dusk. […] the country was teeming with wild animals in those days, before they came with their guns and shot most of them off. (28)

The view that the country will return to a past-remembered time of plenty following the war, is very similar to that expressed by the people on the bus and one that has already been shown, through the Master Farmer's narrative, to underpin people's understanding of the role war will have in the formation of a new nation. In addition, it is also an example of the type of argument for which Sam has little time. He understands that while people may truly believe such interpretations, they are not particularly keen on making the sacrifices necessary, if the war is to be won. I argue that Sam's own lack of support for those fighting for liberation, even though he is very well aware of the need for such liberation, is as a result of his realisation that any fight that is based on such flawed understandings of the complexities of history is eventually going to lead to a flawed liberation. Ultimately, Sam is unable to believe such simplistic descriptions of the "coming of the white man" (28) as his family's history, the Mapfeka family history, is proof that the experience was far more complex than his Grandmother, and others, would have it. Sam, however, does not offer an alternative

reading of history. Instead, he offers only his cynicism and the expression of a desire to be allowed to hold such a position as, I argue, it is the only one within which he sees the possibility for personal freedom. Sam's reason for this scepticism is relayed through the description of his family history and its place within the larger, national history.

The Mapfeka family history is described as seeming to Sam "more like an apocryphal legend", which was "decidedly more interesting than what remained of the clan", as it contained "brutality, greed and cunning, primarily, with murder and a certain amount of heroics thrown in" (63). Sam's family had originally come from the Honde valley but were forced to move to Mtoko, change their name and family history following the murder of a young girl by Mapfeka, the original clan patriarch. Having settled in the new lands under the protection of a new chief, Mapfeka

> was soon serving new masters, rapidly progressing from guide to messenger and, finally, as the colonization took hold […] policeman. He played a prominent part in the suppression of the Chimurenga rebellions of 1896 and 1897, and acted as the vigorous leader of the detested African blacklegs in the revenge massacres with which the white man swept the country when the revolution was defeated. (66)

Following Mapfeka's death, the family squabbled violently over his estate and subsequently fell into poverty. Here the reader is presented with a view of the complexity of positions that were a result of the colonisation that took place in the 1890s. As Sam's familial history illustrates, the processes of colonialism in Rhodesia were not as simple as his Grandmother would have him believe. In addition, the passage illustrates the manner in which the construction of a utopian pre-colonial memory requires the suppression of such contentious positions. Perhaps the most important aspect of this history is the revelation that Mapfeka had had a hand in the suppression of the First *Chimurenga* of 1896 and 1897, an event that was later to become venerated as the inspiration for the later liberation war or second *Chimurenga*. Contained in this history are none of the easily-defined united black inhabitants

facing the unrelenting white onslaught, but rather the revelation that the colonial success was due, in part, to the assistance given them by sections of the colonised population. It is a revelation that, I argue, drives Sam's jaundiced view of those, such as Thomas, who merely pay lip-service to the liberation struggle. There is, however, another side to Sam's understanding of the effect that history has on the prosecution of revolutionary war and implicit within this other side is the irony that I will argue is contained in novel's title.

We discover that the funeral Sam is to attend is as a result of a beating his uncle received from his sons at the command of "the Boys". It is this that leads Sam to contemplate the following:

> Could it not be the main lesson, he wondered, that the decimation of a family whose promise of wealth had come from assisting in the defeat of the first Chimurenga rebellion was now, in retribution, being brought about by a more recent and successful phase of the same old war to defeat the settler white man? How else could one account for the way in which, when war came to their area, they saw it primarily as the means to settle old scores. (68)

This view of war as "primarily a means to settle old scores" further nuances the above commentary on the making of utopian memory. Sam's view, as expressed in the passage, problimatises the seamless construction of a future utopia upon the oversimplified memory of a utopian, pre-colonial past. It is a point underscored by Norma Kriger's (1992) observation that "oppressed groups in the [Zimbabwean] peasantry – women, *youth*, non-ruling clans, the very poor – used the party committees and the guerrillas themselves as resources in their own battles" (Original emphasis retained. 50). A depiction of the fighting of their "own battles" is centralised when upon arrival at the Mapfeka homestead Sam is immediately caught in the middle of a family feud that has erupted when one of the sons complains that his father was not buried properly. When Sam is asked his opinion on the matter, he is interrupted by

Mateu, a family friend who has been appointed as the *Sahwira*.[2] Mateu turns to the assembled male family members and asks them what Sam knows of the life they live as a result of the liberation war. He questions what Sam knows of the effects war has had on those in the country, who "hear footsteps out in the yard at night without knowing if it is the dogs of the white man [black RDF soldiers] come to burn you out by setting fire to the thatch, with you and your children inside" (Nyamfukudza 1980: 78). Having thus questioned Sam, he warns that:

> 'They are coming back, "the Boys",' he added from over there. 'Don't any of you forget that. If you want to start fooling about, that, I say, is the affair of the Mapfeka people. Leave me out of it.' (78)

The first aspect of the war drawn into sharp focus in this passage is that the experience of war in this area is very different from that of the experience Sam has had in the cities to which war has yet to come. This illustration of the difference between war in the city and war in the country is also illustrated in the manner in which Sam's movement through these two landscapes is described. In first chapter of the texts, Sam is seen to move easily through and to be extremely comfortable in the seemingly chaotic urban environment. Sam's movement through the rural environment is altogether different. We read that he feels out of place and finds the "bush" threatening and, while his discomfort is due to a fear of the Boys, it is evident that Sam feels ill at ease because he out of the city (70). It is an interesting dichotomy that reverses that oft repeated one in which the city, or urban space, is the place of threat and the rural space is the one of safety. This will be discussed in greater detail later, during the discussion of *Bones*.

[2] The title for a person who performs the ceremonial role of ensuring the "solemnity did not get out of hand" and the bearer of the title was, therefore, "the only man allowed to operate outside the strict conventions that govern all such ceremonies" (Nyamfukudza 1980: 75).

The second is that “the Boys” are extremely dangerous and a far cry from the ineffectual, rhetoric-spouting revolutionaries Sam has had dealings with in Salisbury. It is a point Sam’s family would do well to remember because if they do not, they will attract further attention which will ultimately lead to the rest of the family coming under scrutiny. Should that happen, the family’s past dealings would become apparent to “the Boys” and they in turn would not hesitate in “[settling] old scores” (68). Of great importance, however, is that the picture Nyamfukudza creates is one in which the people, for whom the war is being fought by the guerrillas, are just as afraid of the guerrillas as they are of those – black and white – fighting on the side of the Rhodesian Government. This, it would seem, is central to Sam’s distrust of the ideological positions various characters are seen to occupy. At no point does the narrative show Sam positing any ideological position other than one which is counter to the argument stated by the person with whom he is arguing. He is at first seen to sneer at the arguments Thomas puts forward and then to openly confront a white soldier at a roadblock during his bus trip home (36). One might, therefore, believe that Sam would have some sympathy for black soldiers who fight for the Rhodesian government and claim they do so only for the chance to feed their families, but it is not so. Sam describes them as “traitors, prancing about in their silly uniforms, fighting their own people (42).

Again, Sam’s response to the people he encounters is one of anger and derision. Of course, this raises the question about what it is that Sam despises so much about those who take sides. This is revealed in a discussion during a drinking session with a childhood friend, Raina, which takes place in a town where Sam is spending a night on his journey home.

> If you start talk about revolution, they [friends he went to university with] tell you straight, fuck the revolution! It’s quite rare, somebody committing themselves. […] you can actually see guys getting apolitical as they get closer to finals and the prospect of a good wage. We are all bastards!’(53)

Sam's disillusionment in the face of seemingly overwhelming pressure from "overseas" (52) and a distinct lack of commitment from those inside the country seems to be the reason he is forced into his position of the non-believer. This position could be viewed as one adopted either in the face of a lack of viable positions or as a moral cop-out, a moral position which affords him the space to comment on those he deems below him without actually having to act on any position. I argue, however, that to Sam, all positions, other than that of sceptic, are tainted by a disjuncture between word and action. Unlike Sousa Jamba's Hosi who learns the folly of his initial position, but never gives up hope of an Angolan utopia following exposure to other people's views, Sam's position is only hardened by his exposure to those of others. In addition, Sam is unable to commit to any political position because of his knowledge of the fact that there are no certainties. While Sam can be seen to support, if only in thought, resistance to anti-colonial and white-minority rule, he will not commit to a history that has been reinvented to suit certain parties, political and other, and he will not commit to a revolution whose participants seem to be involved for personal rather than altruistic or ideological reasons. This final point is underscored by Sam asking if an old friend of his had a "worthwhile death, did he die fighting the enemy, or was it one of those stupid deaths, our own people fighting among themselves in the training camps"? (55). He then argues that there are

> two armies fighting Smith's army, and they will sort each other out when they meet, forgetting their common enemy, bloody Ndebele, bloody Shona, bang bang. No I won't, I want to be sure I don't go that way.' (56)

Sam's unwillingness to join the revolution is not as a result of a lack of understanding about the need for liberation, but rather a belief that those doing the fighting will waste his life in petty ethnic squabbles. It is an interesting position for one who seems to eschew all binarised understandings of the world as it suggests that he would only be willing to join a group once there are clear divisions that can be easily supported. In this there is a sense of irony similar

to that illustrated in the earlier referenced commentary describing Mapfeka's role in the suppression of the First *Chimurenga* rebellion.

There is, I argue, also a deep sense of irony in the novel's title. It is, however, only with the conclusion of Sam's journey that the irony is laid bare. Sam and his family are woken in the middle of the night to attend a meeting held by "the Boys" in the bush. These *pungwe* meetings were a central feature of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. Norma Kriger (1992) reports on a study by Cliffe *et al*. which finds that grass roots organisations in support of the guerrillas "could not have been set up without 'a considerable input of political education', of which the chief vehicle was *pungwes* (meetings) between civilians and guerrillas [where] guerrillas gave political instruction, taught slogans, and used *Chimurenga* (liberation) songs and other cultural symbols such as mediums to make links between the war of national liberation that they were fighting" and the first *Chimurenga* of the 1890s (121). Kriger does, however, point out that not all civilians were there willingly and often there was an undercurrent of fear of the guerrillas underpinned civilian attendance at *pungwes*. This too is evident in the *pungwe* that is the focus of the text's final scene.

The Non-Believer's Journey narrative, and with it Sam's journey, ends with the depiction of just such a *pungwe*. It starts with the Boys invoking the "almost mythical names [Chaminuka, Nehanda, Kagubi and Monomutapa] of the spirit mediums and religious leaders, men and women, some of whom had led the first insurrection against the white man eighty years" ago. These names are then connected, in the manner outlined by Kriger, to those present at the *pungwe* with the Boys' assertion that the "spirit mediums and religious leaders started it, and they are still with us now as we carry it on" (105). There is the immediate sense of irony surrounding the invocation of the heroes that Sam's family betrayed. In fact, even Sam pays

lip-service to them by singing along with the Boys, the revolutionary songs that follow these calls to past heroes.

During these songs, Sam is called to one side by the leader of the guerrillas, Chikwepa. Chikwepa takes Sam deeper into the bush so that they can be alone. At first the discussion centres around the ineffectual city revolutionaries and the two seem to be in agreement, but as it turns on to the divisions between rival revolutionary groups, things become heated. They argue about politics for a while before Chikwepa turns to his real reason for calling Sam to one side. He wants Sam to secure and transport medical supplies for them. Sam refuses and a fight breaks out. Chikwepa eventually turns away and begins to leave, Sam then attacks him from behind and Chikwepa's gun goes off, killing Sam. After Sam's death, the text ends with the following:

> A worthwhile death – to use Sam's own words – was what he wanted. But if, as the saint asserted, cowardice in an active quality, too, how might he have described Sam's end? (113)

The ultimate irony here is that the non-believer died for what he believed in. Sam died in the first fight that he had about something that he believed in: the right to remain a non-believer. As to whether it was a worthwhile death or not, I would argue that *The Non-Believer's Journey* points out that any death is not worthwhile unless it visibly advances more than what the text shows to be ethnic petty squabbles and does not merely result in "political enslavement" in which black Zimbabweans, as they were to become, continue "working for peanuts" (53). Sam's death is, therefore, just another death that will later come to haunt the revolution just as Mapfeka's actions come to haunt his descendants. It is a death that will become just another "old score" to be settled later.

Through highlighting the divisions and fighting within the liberation movements, the text shows that, ironically, these movements reinforce the segregation forced upon them by the white-minority government and thus make it easier for them to be defeated. *The Non-Believer's Journey*, therefore, depicts a country that is not only divided along racial line, but is also segregated for ethnic and historical reasons. As a result, the picture of Rhodesia in the mid-to-late-1970s presented to the reader is one which is not unlike that portrayed by Sousa Jamba's *Patriots* and Pepetela's *The Return of the Water Spirit*, as the country is best understood as a series of warring groupings which resist any attempt at unification. *The Non-Believer's Journey* does not, however, show these groups as having formed the warring camps of *Patriots*, but it certainly does imply that such a situation is the logical conclusion to "bloody Ndebele, bloody Shona, bang bang" (56). As a result, the text does not imagine a nation. In place of nation, it presents a series of disparate voices interjecting into Sam's journey. Were his journey one of a hero, such as *Mayombe*'s Fearless, Sam would unite these voices and bring about a new, united nation. Sam is, however, no such hero and his death is, therefore, not going to become a unifying rallying point such as that of the first *Chimurenga* heroes. In addition, his death thus casts a questioning glance at the mythologising of these first *Chimurenga* deaths and their later deployment by the liberation movements of the second *Chimurenga*.

As a reflection of the southern African region during the 1970s, *The Non-Believer's Journey* presents a picture very similar to that of Pepetela's *Mayombe*, where internal operations are supported by training camps in neighbouring countries. Guerrillas "go north" to Zambia, "train, then come back and fight" (21). Mozambique is also shown to be involved in the passage of peoples over Rhodesia's borders. This time it mentions it housed white "allies" of the Rhodesians who were surprised by the liberation-movement-lead victory through "unity"

that took place there (63). As a result, the text imagines Rhodesia's position within the region as one connected to those around it by the passage of peoples from one ostensibly likeminded group to another, which also changes over time.

As an ironic text, *The Non-Believer's Journey* offers the reader a problematised depiction of aspects of the war of liberation, such as the notion of a unified resistance movement united across party and ethic lines, which were later to be used to justify actions on behalf of the ruling party that the following text, Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, shows to be a betrayal of the nation and its past. In its inability to imagine a future Zimbabwe which is united across racial and ethnic line, The *Non-Believer's Journey* expresses the views that have come to characterise what Viet-Wild terms the generation of the non-believers (1992: 7). In 1980, their sceptical and pessimistic views were, however, seemingly shown to be wrong when the war ended and the newly created Zimbabwe's first prime minister, Robert Mugabe, actively sought to create a sense of unity within the country by stating the following in a speech on the eve of independence on the 18th of April 1980:

> Death and suffering have been the prize we have been called upon to pay for the final priceless reward of freedom and national independence.
> […]
> Our people, young and old, men and women, black and white, living and dead, are, on this occasion, being brought together in a new form of national unity that makes them all Zimbabweans. (http://www.africanexecutive.com/modules/magazine/sections.php?magazine=191&sections=12)

Through this and other such addresses to his former adversaries, Mugabe came to be seen as a unifier and Zimbabwe, unlike Angola and Mozambique, an example of a successfully-waged war of liberation, resulting in the creation of a multiracial, multiethnic nation.

3.2 Imperfect war, imperfect liberation

The success of Zimbabwe's war of liberation resulted in it becoming the foundational moment of the nation of Zimbabwe. Importantly, it was a nation where all who lived in the country were actively asked to be a part. All sides of the liberation war were asked, in ways that call Ernest Renan's (1990) words to mind, to "desire to live together" and thus form a Zimbabwean nation (19). It is the second of two requirements that Renan argues are necessary if a nation is to be formed and which can be seen to fit very well with the production of nationalism in Zimbabwe in the early 1980s. Renan famously explained this in the following definition of nation:

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. [...] The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory [...], this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. (19)

In Zimbabwe, this "heroic past, great men [and] glory", upon which the nation was constructed, focused on the resisters of both the first and second *Chimurenga* and resulted in the first post-war writings of the second *Chimurenga* being largely "bland" and overly "celebrationist" (Primorac 2005b: 5). Texts such as Edmund Chipamaunga's *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983) and Garikai Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985) presented the war and those who fought in it, in "largely [...] heroic terms" and did not attempt to question the gains achieved by the war (Mpalive-Hangson Misiska 2003: 93). As a result, these and other such texts came to actively imagine Zimbabwe as founded on a struggle for freedom stretching back to Renan's "ancestors" (1990: 19) in the 1890s and argued for unity, in the name of a desire to see Zimbabwe capitalise on that history and grow in unity. This was the case for many of the texts which dealt with the second *Chimurenga* throughout the early-to-mid 1980s.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a change in the manner in which the liberation war came to be written and Zimbabwe imagined. Writers such as Chenjerai Hove, Shimmer Chinodya and Yvonne Vera, began to display what Veit-Wild (1992) describes as the "post-colonial disillusionment" (1990: 1), to define them as the initiators of a new direction in Zimbabwean literature which was alive to the tradition of resistance, signified by figures such as Nehanda, but which was critical of the repression and economic stagnation of Zimbabwean society under ZANU (PF)[3] rule. Irene Staunton (1997) credits Hove's novella *Bones* as the text that marked the beginning of this change in literary direction in Zimbabwe.

Chenjerai Hove was born in rural southern Zimbabwe in 1956. He is the author of three novels, *Bones*, *Shadows* (1991) and *Ancestors* (1996), in addition to numerous collections of poetry in both Shona and English. Of Hove's work, Ranka Primorac (2005a) writes the following:

> All of Hove's work has been guided and dominated by three key themes. He has been preoccupied with the historical struggles for emancipation from all kinds of cruelty and oppression; he has written against the misuse and corruption of language perpetuated by those in power; and he has described and celebrated African rural culture in various stages of change and modification. These themes have been a constant in Hove's work despite the fact that his political affiliation has shifted from wholehearted support for the ruling Zimbabwean nationalist party, ZANU (PF) and its leader Robert Mugabe, to outraged condemnation of the crimes and excesses perpetuated by them.

R. Zhuwarara (1996) elaborates on Primorac's three themes by highlighting them. In all of Hove's "writings, he seems to be haunted by the plight of the weak and vulnerable members of society: those who find themselves pitted against more dominant historical and social

[3] ZANU adopted the suffix PF after independence in 1980. PF stands for Patriot Front and was the title under which ZANU and ZAPU jointly negotiated during the Lancaster House negotiations that ended the liberation war. For more on this see Richard Brown (2004), Kaarlsholm (1989), Ranger (2005) and Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (2007).

forces but are powerless to define and defend their own interests" (30). It is important to note of Primorac and Zhuwarara's assertions – regarding Hove's dedication to the representation of various forms of oppression suffered by the "weak and vulnerable" members of Zimbabwean society – that, in *Bones*, such characters are usually defined by the choices they make in the attempt "to define and defend their own interests" (30). The choices that they are offered, however, are often tied to suffering and informed by Hove's attempts to represent and reconstitute past mistakes. Such recourse to the past has often led to criticism of Hove's *Bones* on grounds such as those pointed to by Flora Veit-Wild (1993) below.

> Hove's concept of collective memory and collective history presents a monolithic view of African society. It corresponds in a peculiar way to anti-pluralistic tendencies in official thinking in Zimbabwe. Hove's attempt to recreate the African image appears, at best, sentimental and naive, at worst, dangerously misleading and deceptive. (10)

Such sentiments have not gone unchallenged by other critics. Michael Chapman (2003) responds by pointing out that,

> such a view [as expressed by Veit-Wild] could be in danger of misunderstanding Hove's conventions of symbolic representation. [...] Hove's highly poetic language attempts to reclaim Shona culture as the vanished ideal – ideal is the operative word – from which war-damaged people may resuscitate their sensibilities. (306)

Dan Wylie (1991) reinforces this view by asserting that the "language of *Bones* seems to try constantly to return to the moral baseline of Shona culture, both to renew its strengths and to provoke fear of its unravelling into the future" (60). It is with such an understanding of Hove's recourse to the past, as dynamic rather than atavistic, that I will read Hove's use of the past in his constructing of the present in *Bones*, for which Hove won the prestigious Noma Award for publishing in Africa in 1989. Of particular interest is that this text can be seen to be addressing many of the questions remaining at the end of *The Non-Believer's Journey* narrative.

In a temporal sense, the narrative is rooted in post-Liberation War Zimbabwe, but moves backwards and forwards in time, encapsulating moments from both the First *Chimurenga* and the Liberation War. The narrative's ability to do this is as a result of its structuring which takes the form, with only two exceptions, of a series of chapters narrated by characters who have had interactions and conversations with the text's central character, Marita. Further complicating the temporal structuring is that Marita is dead and therefore her words and actions only appear as reported by those who are discussing her and her role in their lives. The result is a post-mortem, polyphonic reconstruction of the life and death of Marita, as she navigated both war-torn and post-independence Zimbabwe in search of her son, who left the farm on which she worked in order to join guerrillas fighting against the Ian Smith-led Rhodesian Government.

The two exceptions mentioned above are the chapters both titled "The Spirits Speak". In these chapters, the narration is taken over by voices, "the Spirits", apparently those of dead from the First *Chimurenga*. It is from these voices that the novel takes its name, *Bones*. In a passage that includes the, now famous, words the prophetess Nehanda reputedly spoke[4] before she was hanged by the British-colonial government, the Spirits sing "my bones will rise":

> sing war-songs
> with the fire of battle. They will compose new
> war-songs and fight on
> until the shrines of the land of their birth
> are respected once more. My bones will rise
> with such power
> the graves will be too small
> to contain them. (Hove 1990: 53)

Of Hove's use of what is arguably the voice of Nehanda, Liz Gunner (1991) argues that it

[4] See Zhuwarara (1996).

> is significant that the inspirational voice is that of Nehanda and that it is she who breaks down the boundaries of past and present, living and the dead. She is the Mother ancestor brooding over the nation, and this is very different from the use in other African texts of a historic, emblematic figure such as Shaka. Nehanda is seen as more of a resistor than a warrior and this represents a shift of emphasis within the broad framework of writing about resistance. (84)

Gunner's conception of Hove's use of Nehanda is important, as it offers a way of reading Hove's re-writing of Nehanda's apparent reference to bones. If Nehanda's image is able to exist in both the present and past, as Gunner suggests, then Hove's reference to "bones" must also be seen to exist in both temporalities. Here, the bones are a metaphor, I argue, for the memory of past struggles which must be resurrected, re-enacted and honoured if the damage and losses of the past are to be rectified. Of course, the use of such a metaphor is suggestive of not only the loss of a body through death, but also of the stripped-down hardness of unforgotten loss. As to why, in a time of liberation, a people need to be reminded of such memories is illustrated in the first chapters of the text.

The initial physical setting of the text is a farm on which Marita works as a manual labourer. It is a large commercial farm owned by a white man, named Manyepo by the farm workers.[5] Manyepo treats the farm workers extremely badly. So badly, in fact, that it is as if the Liberation War has brought no changes to the people for whom it supposedly fought. Black people still work in the fields of white-owned farms for very little pay and, in addition, often still suffer racist abuse when questioning their position on the farm. An example of such abuse of the workers by Manyepo is described by Marume, Marita's husband, who tells of Manyepo saying "we smell of things you do not understand, we lie, we are lazy as children and we should always have someone to make sure that we work, do you think that we are

[5] He is called this because of his repeated assertion that the farm workers always lie to him (Hove 1990: 23). *Manyepo* means "falsehood" or "web of lies" in Shona.

children with all this beard on our faces" (Hove 1990: 24). That Manyepo has no fear that there will be any retribution for his action is clearly illustrated below:

> 'There is nothing the government [post-war] in the city can do. I rule here,' says Manyepo. 'If your government wants to run this farm, let them bloody take over. Then we will see if they can run a farm,' Manyepo says in his way of speaking badly about things he does not like. (99-100)

One has to wonder how it is such attitudes and abuses of people are able to take place after the winning of a war fought in order to end these very practices. To answer this question, the text turns to the past and its relation to the present. In the "The Spirits Speak: 1897 My Bones Fall" Hove writes of the battle being against "armed strangers" who,

> have gone to fetch their wives so that they can start multiplying in preparation for the long battle, the battle of many nights and days. […] They want to wait until they can fight. Do they not know that he who fights without enough preparation is only throwing his spear to the enemy? (50)

These "strangers" are undoubtedly the white British colonials, earlier described as "a swarm of white locusts" (47). According to the Spirits, the strangers win the war, but only because not all of those who should fight against them do so. As a reason for this the Spirits speak of people who "join the strangers in singing the songs of their own doom" (50). It would seem that, according to "the Spirits", there has been a betrayal by the very people who should be defending their homeland and, in manner reminiscent of Sam's grandmother's recollections of the "coming of the white man" (Nyamfukudza 1980: 28), the reason for their lack of resistance is because they "accept[ed] gifts from the strangers" (Hove 1990: 50). In effect, they were more interested in ensuring their own wealth than they were in the welfare of their land and people. "The Spirits" are, however, not completely without sympathy for such people. They imply there is redemption, provided their children do not make the same mistake. In fact, as mention earlier, they predict a time when "my bones will rise in the spirit of war" and "the shrines of the land of their birth/ are respected once more" (53).

This time comes some eighty years later with the Liberation War, or the Second *Chimurenga*. The text makes an overt linking of the two conflicts through its association of the songs that were sung at *pungwe* meetings by the guerrillas, with the song referenced above (74- 75). However, as with those who were betrayed by greed in the First *Chimurenga*, the text tells of fighters who are betrayed. The betrayal is the result of a request that is strikingly similar to the request Chikwepa makes of Sam in *The Non-Believer's Journey*. A man, known only as the husband of The Unknown Woman, is asked by the guerrillas to obtain and smuggle medical supplies for them. He refuses to help them and informs the RDF of their whereabouts. The soldiers arrive and the guerrillas are wiped out. The traitor's response to the news that his information has caused the death of the young men who asked for help is enlightening as he shows that not only is he only interested in his own welfare, he is also seen to reject the very idea that those doing the fighting are fighting for him (55). In doing so, he is seen to betray the very thing that "the Spirits" identify as the missing element in the First *Chimurenga* when they say, "[r]ise all the children of the land and refuse to suckle from the strange breasts" (52).

This line can be seen to not only apply to the man mentioned above, but also to two men who work on the farm. Chisaga, Manyepo's cook, and Manyepo's "Baas boy"[6] both owe the power they are able to wield on the farm to their allegiance to and defence of Manyepo. Instead of using their position to change the farm worker's living conditions, they defend Manyepo's actions. Thus, the two men could be seen to reinforce the sense of immunity from government prosecution that Manyepo exhibited in his response to criticism of his treatment

[6] *Baas* is Afrikaans for boss. The term baas-boy was used in Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa to denote a black foreman on white-owned farms, businesses and mines. It is considered extremely derogative.

of his staff (99-100). They have not learned from the guerrilla's message, retold here by Marita to the Unknown Woman:

> But the fighters said that the fight was not with the white man, it was with the bad things he had in his palms. If a child has dirt in his palm, do we cut away his palm in order to get the dirt off it? No, we take the child and spank his bottom a little bit. If the child wants to eat the dirt, we take a stick to punish the child harder. If the child takes another stick to fight back, we then take a bigger stick and punish the child and overpower it. Now, the white man has refused to remove the dirt enclosed in his clenched fist. So we have to take a stick and whip the white man. One day the white man will say … Come my friends, you are not evil people. You know the difference between dirt and cleanliness. Tell us what cleanliness is all about because we have stayed with dirt for many years without knowing that it was dirt which stinks… (75)

Chisaga and the "Baas boy" have not told Manyepo that he has "bad things […] in his palms" and have therefore betrayed what the guerrillas died for and consequently "the Spirits" of their land. Nevertheless, it is Manyepo's continued ill-treatment of his staff that is the real crime. He has in no way attempted to accept the hand of unity extended to white Zimbabweans following the war and illustrated Renan's "the desire to live together" (1990: 19), which is at the heart of any attempt to construct a nation. It, therefore, becomes apparent that the revolution brought by the Liberation War is not complete, as it was betrayed at almost every step and the prediction the Spirits made has not yet come to fruition. I argue that there are another two examples that further illustrate this lack of completion to the prophecy and ultimately that the revolution, as the text presents it, is not yet complete.

The first of these examples relates to Marita's journey to find her son. In a journey that is the opposite of Sam's in *The Non-Believer's Journey*, Marita leaves the farm in order to find her son who had left to join the fighting that took place during the war. She comes to believe there is a list of the missing fighters' whereabouts in "the city" and that it is there she will obtain the help that she needs to find him. The city is depicted as a place of anonymous and sterile insensitivity in the name of progress and development. Marita's journey to it thus

renders her an heroic figure because she has remained faithful to the call of the Spirits in her search for the truth about the death of her son, in the face of an uncaring bureaucracy. In a sense, it is similar to Sam's journey to his death except that whereas Sam represents a position of intellectual non-believer, Marita is constructed as representative of the poor who have been excluded from full participation in the wealth of the new Zimbabwean nation following its active construction after the war. That Marita and the poor like her are not welcome in the new Zimbabwe, as represented by the city, is evident in the treatment she receives.

Instead of the help that she requires and expects, she is shunned by the representatives of the new government and eventually dies. When the Unknown Woman comes to collect her body so that it can be buried correctly, she too is treated badly by the faceless "men in colourless uniforms" (79). In place of the respect that the revolution should have afforded those women and children for whom it was ostensibly fought, the Unknown Woman receives only derision. Her presence in the city is described by one of the government employees in the following:

> To think that our government can just stand there and watch these people messing up the town, it is very bad. […] we are civilized people in this country. What do people from other countries say when they see all these people wearing rags in our streets? (81)

Here, I argue, we see a suggestion of the beginning of a new and uncaring elite, very similar to that which Pepetela derides in *The Return of the Water Spirit*, who will ultimately turn their back on the poor as they go in search of wealth and "civilization". Such a search would also see them forgetting the sacrifices made in the past and, therefore, not honouring "the thunderous voice of the ancestors" as the Spirits have urged them (51). They are without the "conscience" of which the novel's dedication speaks:

> For the women whose children did not return
> sons and daughters
> those who gave their bones

to make a new conscience,
a conscience of bones, blood
and footsteps
dreaming of coming home some day
in vain.

It is a "conscience of bones [and] blood" which has been passed from the Spirits to the fighters, then to Marita and ultimately Janifa and the Unknown Woman. This core of knowledge and memory, symbolised by the image of the "bones" (51), passed from one person to the next, is central to the conception of what is needed to form a united Zimbabwean nation in which all, including the poor and dispossessed, are valued. In the text, this knowledge is seen to be passed from the Spirits to the fighters in song and from there to Marita via the *pungwe* meetings she has attended. Marita then passes this "conscience of bones" to both Janifa and the Unknown Woman. Such a reading of the text, therefore, situates Marita – rather than the fighters – at the centre of the passage of memory, as it is she who represents those who have betrayed by new elite. Central to this, is the manner in which the post-war political order is playing out, betraying what the Fighters and the "children [who] did not return" fought for in the Second *Chimurenga*. In addition, the structure of the text leaves the reader in no doubt that there is still a great deal to be done if all Zimbabweans are to prosper, rather than just the new elite.

Bones ends with the same sentence, spoken by Janifa, which it begins with: "…Marita…She asked me to read the letter for her again today, every day she comes to me, all pleading" (112). In having the narrative return to where it begins, the text is, I argue, pointing to two important issues. The first has to do with the fact that the entire texts is itself composed of memories that repeat themselves over and over in the minds of those, primarily Janifa, who have been involved in the events described. The fact that Janifa is in a psychiatric hospital because of her repeated abuse at the hands of those on the farm, and that most of the

memories attributed to her come in a manner suggesting overt confusion, illustrates the point that lack of finality, due to the betrayal of the Spirits, has led Janifa and the nation into a state of damaging limbo. A state of limbo, the text suggests, which will not change unless Zimbabweans adhere to the "conscience of bones". Through his intertwining of the images of the past with the images of the present, *Bones* can be shown to represent, not an atavistic and "monolithic view of African society" (Veit-Wild 1993: 10), but rather an imaginary and intertextual template linking multiple experiences, with "which war-damaged people may resuscitate their sensibilities" (Wylie 1991: 306).

As such, it constructs an imagining of nation that functions in a manner similar to that presented by Pepetela in *The Return of the Water Spirit*. Hove's use of songs has a comparable intertextual position with the authors, Luandino Viera and Arnaldo Santos (Pepetela 2002:37), in that both function to call to mind – and make real – aspects of the past, the water spirit and the spirits represented by Nehanda, in the lives of those in the present so as to spur them on to a better future. Whereas *The Non-Believer's Journey* uses the intertextual connections to the past to actively question the ways in which pasts were used to justify or excuse presents, *Bones* uses them to imply a deep connection to that past which must be honoured. This distinction aside, both of these texts and the one to follow map the temporal development of the nation, in the same way the previous chapter showed the Angolan texts to map the physical imagining of nation and region, through a focus on the role of war in the making or, in *The Non-Believer's Journey*, the deferment, of nation in Zimbabwe. Thus, temporal moments become like time-encircled camps which are linked by the stories told and songs sung at the *Pungwes*. The use of the figure of Nehanda in order to focus such linking is evident in a number of texts written after *Bones*. Possibly the most famous of these is Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (1993) in which Vera fictionalises the

prophetess's life, death and birth, as a spirit who will come to lead her people through the coming years of struggle. Illustrated here, however, is one the most important distinctions between the imagining of nation as it takes place in the Angolan texts and as it takes place in the Zimbabwean texts.

As Ernest Gellner (1983) points out, "a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity" (6), it must be constructed through access to literate culture and in, usually, "name of a putative folk culture" (57). As a result, Timothy Brennan (2009) shows, nation refers to both the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous – the '*natio*' – a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging" (45). In the Angolan texts of the previous chapter, this distinction was less evident because of what Michael Chapman (2003) terms "a fairly consistent Marxist-class understanding of the colonial past" and the fact that a huge proportion of the Portuguese settlers returned to Portugal during and after the war (296). In Zimbabwe, however, those who had fought so viciously against each other were now expected to live together and share in the ideals of the new, multiracial Zimbabwean nation. All sides were asked to "desire to live together" (Renan 1990: 19), which is the second part of Renan's construction of nation. The first part was more problematic for Zimbabwe because, instead of possessing a "rich legacy of [common] memories" (19), Zimbabweans had memories of ninety years of conflict. In addition, the memories on which the new nation was built – those of Nehanda, her contemporaries and the new heroes of the liberation war – excluded the white-settler population rather than including them. It is this conflict the next text, Dan Wylie's *Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesian War*, examines.

3.3 Imperfect liberation, Imperfect future

Unlike their black compatriots, who have overwhelmingly chosen fiction as the preferred medium with which to engage issues related to the war and its place in nation building, white Zimbabweans have turned to autobiographical writing. Ashleigh Harris (2005) describes these autobiographies as writing "directly into an era in which liberal white hopes for a reconciled and rehabilitated nation were beginning to waver, and new forms of inscribing white identity into Zimbabwean nationhood became necessary" (107). The post-2000 era to which she refers, is defined by what was seen as an open attack on white Zimbabweans, through actions such as forced removal from farms and other white-owned land, in spite of Robert Mugabe and the ZANU (PF) government's earlier pronouncements regarding a unified Zimbabwean nation. An important feature of such writing is the re-evaluation of the certainties and myths, based on Rhodesian settler discourse, with which most white Rhodesians, who grew up prior to and during the liberation war, were raised and for which they fought. In this section I read an example of such writing with a view to illustrating that through a denial of choice, in the decisions he made during the war, Dan Wylie is unable to successfully situate himself within the Zimbabwean nation he imagines as forgiving and accepting of his wartime actions.

Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesian War covers the time that Dan Wylie spent as a conscript in the Rhodesian Army during the final years of the Zimbabwean War of Liberation, 1978 to 1980. In an act that Wylie (2002) terms an attempt "to write [the war] into meaning", *Dead Leaves* often refers to the detailed diaries that Wylie kept during his two years of service (3). Thus, *Dead Leaves* offers the reader, and this study, an important juxtaposition of the young Wylie's near blind, albeit conscripted, service to Rhodesian white-

minority rule and the older Wylie's attempt to come to terms with the actions and experience of war.

Wylie is, however, acutely aware of the difficulties inherent in such a project and this is signalled at the end of the text's prologue with the following:

> I do not know if any writing can even in a small way, redeem the absolute silence which I have inflicted on others. So much is inevitably lost, dismembered, misre-membered: perhaps nothing is fully redeemable.
> […]
> Hasn't memory become impossibly disorientated among the tricky labyrinths of the imagination and self-justification? Is there a mirror which does not distort or a story which, even in its distortions, does not tell too much? (4 - 5)

This is the voice of the older Wylie, speaking as one to whom, after many years as a literary scholar,[7] the language of both literature and history is to be problematised. Such an approach to this issue is to be seen in the text's discussion of the notion of memory as, I argue, something fluid, hiding as much as it reveals. There are, however, a number of facts that Wylie must face if his attempt "to write [the war] into meaning" is to be successful. One is that while he may not have supported the white-minority Rhodesian government, his actions during his time in their army have certainly left his personal history deeply entangled with that final, "futile phase" (3) of Rhodesian rule. Contained within this personal history is also the attempt to come to terms with the indisputable fact that, during his two years of service, he killed two people; people who he has consigned forever to an "absolute silence" that even the writing of *Dead Leaves* cannot end.

Dan Wylie is not the first to have such misgivings about the possibilities of redemption that the writing of an autobiography offers. This understanding, however, leads to an extremely

[7] Dan Wylie is currently a professor of English at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa and has taught English at numerous institutions, including both high schools and universities.

interesting inter-textual interaction within the text. To begin with, Wylie takes the "dead leaves" of the title from the writing of T. E. Lawrence, that infamous soldier of colonial-Britain also known as Lawrence of Arabia. The quotation from which the title is drawn is offered, along with one by Angus Wilson and one by William Faulkner, alongside the prologue. In part, it reads:

> As time went by our need to fight for the ideal increased to an unquestioning possession, riding with spur and rein over our doubts. Willy-nilly it became faith. […] By our own act we were drained of morality, of volition, of responsibility, like dead leaves in the wind. (xvi)

Unlike the solidity and sense of purpose that a metaphor such as bones offers Chenjerai Hove's text and its reviewing of history, Wylie's choice illustrates his sense of being helpless in the face of controlling "wind[s]" (xvi). It is a sense, I argue, that while problematically denying the choices that he had to not participate in the war, dominates the narrative in both form and substance. To begin with, the narrative is structured according to Wylie's movement from one aspect of army life to another. Such movements are often seen to be without any discernable reason as the young Wylie is repeatedly moved, by some unexplained whim of those in command, from one part of the army to another. Thus, Wylie is seen to begin his training at an army camp outside Bulawayo and end his service as a medic having moved through various parts of the country as a military tracker, an infantry soldier, a leader of a group of black soldiers and, finally, as a medic. It is this sense of being a "dead lea[f]" caught in uncontrollable winds that prompts Wylie to write that "this isn't a novel I am living, but a sequence of disjointed encounters with no obvious purpose at all" (55). With each of these positions within the army, however, comes a new set of insights into the inherent contradiction of an army fighting a war it has already lost and into the confusion that such a war has on one drafted to fight in it. As a result, the text becomes a kind of *Bildungsroman* of both young Wylie's coming of age through war, but also of the older

Wylie's realisations concerning his place in what is a disintegrating sense of Zimbabwean nation.

Wylie's description of his training, which he later describes as a "numbing separation from our younger lives"(13), is punctuated by a number of diary entries that emphasise the fitness routine and the thrill of first encounters with the weapons with which he will later kill. Also mentioned, is a lecture on the enemy given to the new recruits. It is an illuminating passage in that it captures, I argue, the conflicting tendencies of an army that has, on the one hand, for some fourteen years been the violent, bloody edge of Ian Smith's pledge to "[strike] a blow for the preservation of justice, civilisation and Christianity" through the UDI in 1965 (Smith cited in Uusihakala 2008: 35). On the other hand, the army has come to realise the folly of their attempt to maintain the rule of two hundred thousand whites over some two million blacks. Wylie states that the "lecturers seem torn between unnerving us with the vision of an organised enemy to be reckoned with, and comforting us with the image of an ill-trained rabble ready to scuttle at the first shot" (Wylie 2002: 15). It is clear that the reality of fighting against an organised guerrilla force flies in the face of the belief of an inferior enemy, which the colonial discourse of "civilisation and Christianity" has cultivated in those who run the Rhodesian army (Smith cited in Uusihakala 2008: 35).

It is, however, not only those in charge of the army who are caught in the above-mentioned conflict between a world view, constructed on colonial discourse, and the experience of fighting an enemy very obviously not the primitive savage of that same discourse. In one of the subtexts that inform *Dead Leaves*, Wylie uses his experience of the war to interrogate the veracity of the settler history with which he grew up and came to view his position within

Rhodesia. Anthony Chennells (2002) offers the following explanation of the form that Rhodesian settler history took:

> The majority [of Southern Rhodesians] 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. [...] However much they disliked the idea, Rhodesians were almost but not quite British.
> [...]
> This double consciousness of identities national and imperial was to muddle the rhetoric of the [war] years. Sometimes these conflicting demands both inside and outside Rhodesia claimed that Rhodesia, in taking command of national destiny, was realising British values [of bringing civilisation to Africa] that Britain had betrayed by, as [Ian] Smith said, its 'surrender' to 'communists in the Afro-Asian bloc'. (ix – x)

Wylie's understanding of these "sometimes conflicting demands" comes to him through his deep love of books. The reader is told that the young Wylie was a voracious reader and collector of Rhodesian historical publications. A subscription to one such collection, we read, "feels [to the young Wylie] like a mild act of patriotism" (Wylie 2002: 102) and in which he finds "unlimited justification for current attitudes" (105). It is precisely such an examination of "current attitudes", in relation to those he would later hold, that informs Wylie's later re-examination of the text, *The Rulers of Rhodesia*, which "read with relish" when he was young, but which would "come to seem rather self-deceiving, both well-meaning and naïve", following his experiences and actions during the war (24). Upon meeting its author, Dr Oliver Ransford, Wylie recalls the following section of *The Rulers of Rhodesia*:

> Rhodesia [is] a tremendous asset to the Western cause in Africa … Even though they come from different stocks, all modern Rhodesians feel great pride in their achievements; all are intensely patriotic and resentful of external pressures. They know that their primary task is to find the rapport and the compassion which will allow them to share the country for the common good. (24)

It is easy to understand why these lines "thrilled" the young Wylie. They seem, on the surface, to offer a lucid and caring argument that seems to have the "common good" of all those that live in "the country" at heart. It is, however, an argument that will not stand up to

Wylie's experience of the fighting that sprang from such seemingly "compassion[ate]" arguments for the continuation of white-minority rule in Rhodesia.

Due to the vagaries of life in the Rhodesian army, Wylie is able to survive almost a year and a half without experiencing a situation in which he is forced to fire at the enemy. When that time does come, it is described not in the heroic terms that one might expect, but rather during a patrol in which his primary job was to enforce an order that would see people removed from their homes and sent to "protected villages" where they would, according to the Rhodesian government, be safe from the guerrillas. The enforcement of this order involves the burning of homes and "kill[ing] [those that refuse] if necessary" (142). On one such patrol Wylie and his team kill a girl they have mistaken for a fleeing guerrilla. Of this experience, Wylie writes the following in his diary: "*Looking down at the still smooth, blood-torn body of the girl, should I feel joy? Should I feel remorse? In fact I feel very little of anything at all*" (146). Commenting on this entry, the older Wylie states that,

> I have said that guilt is a room we have been shut out of. But we continue to build the walls above us, a redoubt of willed and willing numbness and silence. I am imprisoned in my freedom to kill. My doubt curls up in yellow dismissal, like thatch under fire. (146)

As if to reinforce that soldiers in the RSF, such as he, had the "freedom to kill" Wylie tells of another incident in which he and his team mistakenly shoot two civilians. One is critically wounded and his senior officer tells Wylie to kill him (153). The killing of these two people during military operations, supposedly launched to help the very people who were killed, becomes the central aspect of Wylie's personal experience of the "Rhodesian War". The text does point out, however, that these actions did not happen in a vacuum.

Throughout *Dead Leaves*, there are diary inserts listing the political events that marked the final years of Rhodesia. The entries Wylie cites following the above descriptions serve only to reinforce the futility of such military actions, as they illustrate that the country is moving to the majority rule so feared by the Smith regime. This realisation serves only to strengthen Wylie's sense of confusion. As he describes it, it is yet one more wind that blows him from one senseless experience to another. No other passage in the text expresses this sense of futility and loss better than in the following:

> Elections are planned. We can be sure of only one thing: they will finally remove Ian Smith from his minority throne. We are beginning to feel like dead leaves – irrelevant, swirling in ever-diminishing circles. We are trapped in a whirlwind, caught in the centrifuge of its own purposeless. Everyone is vulnerable and threatened, everyone is fed up, tense. But no one can stop. The fighting, the pillaging, burning, destruction, go on, week after week. […] Yet we know we can only have a political solution. Till then, we have to hold the line. We have to honour our contracts, to the living and the dead. (114)

The need to "honour our contract" is all that became of Ransford's "compassion which will allow [us] to share the country for the common good" (24). Wylie's description of his entrapment within a "whirlwind" is somewhat disingenuous. We read later that following his final duties, his parents pay for him to leave the country (183). He is not expected to return and yet he does. His reasons for returning are not discussed beyond the sentence: "Like a loyal fool, I come back" (185). In this one sentence, Wylie downplays both his moral choice and his political interest. On the one hand, he is able to imply it is his loyalty to the ill-defined "everybody" and "we" which brought him back because he has a moral obligation to share with them the "pillaging, burning [and] destruction" (114). On the other hand, he is able to illustrate his allegiance to the new political order, through the expression of loyalty and commitment to the elections and the new nation they will bring about. It is an interesting balancing of his representation of a supposed past lack of agency and the possibility of a future in which he will have the freedom to act according to his own moral and political

beliefs. He is, therefore, able to downplay the role his fighting for the racist political ideology of the Rhodesian state, and its attendant awarding of privilege, has had in supporting the very system by which he claims to have been "trapped". While the importance of this realisation may seem to come only with the writing of *Dead Leaves*, an account of a meeting Wylie had six years after Zimbabwean independence shows that it was a later, and free, interaction with the very people he had fought against that was to illustrate the folly of such a condescending and racist view (125).

This moment of reconciliation marks a turning point in Wylie's conception of his place within Zimbabwe. It is an affirmation of the belief that "we know we can only have a political solution" (125), but it does not do anything to help Wylie's sense of loss and anger. This, it seems, will never pass as he knows that "these events will live alongside, inside, the rest of my life like a strange virus, here hardening and deadening certain nerves, there raking the surface of perception to an exquisite tenderness" (192). There is, however, the important highlighting of a personal history contained within what will become the grand narrative of Zimbabwean liberation, one small story within a much larger national one, which renders Wylie's text a meaningful gesture of reconciliation with his past. As with *The Non-Believer's Journey*, *Bones* and the Angolan texts in the previous chapter, *Dead Leaves* shows the importance of the individual experience of history in the evaluation of what is and what is not "[a] worthwhile death" (Nyamfukudza 1980: 113).

This point is perhaps at its most clear when considering the three texts' differing representation of Nehanda. In *The Non-Believer's Journey* she is mentioned as an illustration of the "rousing, emotional politics" that Sam's understanding of history has led him to distrust so much (Nyamfukudza 1980: 105). As if in contrast, *Bones* centralises her voice in

an attempt to show the importance of memory in the construction of a truly representational and inclusive nation. Nehanda's mention in *Dead leaves* underscores the damage that the colonial enterprise and its attendant racist discourse have wrought on both its victims and its adherents. Wylie (2002) describes remembering

> that famous photograph of Nehanda and the medium Kaguvi, before their execution in 1898, looking dusty, frightened and beaten. She will become the most potent symbol of resistance to white rule. The story of her final enraged yelling and kicking on the scaffold of Salisbury Jail will be etched into the cultural memory of just about every modern Zimbabwean. (41)

For the image of Nehanda's death and the memory to become Renan's (1990) "social capital upon which one bases a national idea", it must be used as a point of reconciliatory focus through which to unify both sides of the conflict (19). In this way, the memory would aid in closing the gap Brennan (1990) highlights between the "modern nation-state" and the "more ancient and nebulous […] '*natio*'" (45) and become a site of unification in the later imagining of a Zimbabwean nation. That the three texts offer very different imaginings of the nation and its possibilities is not surprising, given the very different moments they narrate, but their use of the past and the present in an intertextual web reinforces Kizito Z. Muchemwa (2005) argument that "[a]lthough the black and white traditions in Zimbabwean literature rarely write to each other and often write across each other, their apparent ideological and stylistic isolation masks the sharing of common concerns" (196).

3.4 Conclusion

As with their differing representations of Nehanda, the three texts discussed in this chapter offer the reader differing, but important, renderings the role that understanding the past has had on author's writing, both autobiographical and fictional, of the Zimbabwean war of liberation. In *The Non-Believer's Journey*, Sam reviews his family's role in the first *Chimurenga* so as to show that the reinvention of this struggle against colonial occupation

obscures the fact that the violence of second *Chimurenga* is not always enacted with the liberation of Rhodesia in mind. As a result, Nyamfukudza is able to illustrate that the fighters of the Second *Chimurenga* are, in fact, situating their present fight on a blemished ideal of a pre-colonial utopia. Where Nyamfukudza reads a family history, Hove looks to the voice of Nehanda as representative of past deeds, against which he can measure the commitment of the new Zimbabwean elite's promise to address the inequalities that he shows to have been at the core of the Second *Chimurenga*. Through his focus on his own experience of the war, Wylie is able to reread his actions and, to some extent, his thoughts as he attempts to write his past into a usable present. Wylie is thus able to reflect on his own personal history and the place the Rhodesian War has in that history. Together, the three texts show the importance that understandings of the past have in the manner the present nation is imagined with regards to the second *Chimurenga*, or Rhodesian War, and its preceding first *Chimurenga*.

In terms of their depiction of southern Africa, the three texts ask of the changing region questions similar to those they ask within their imaginings of a Zimbabwean nation. The first of these relates to Zimbabwe's changed position within the region that was evident following the end of the war. Subsequent to its liberation in 1980, the country moved from regional pariah – a position it held alongside South Africa – to proponent of liberation in South Africa and supporter of the government forces in the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique. As a result, the change in Zimbabwe forced a transformation of the manner in which the region was imagined and mapped according to the webs of linked camps and affiliation highlighted in Chapter One. The Zimbabwean nation had to find past moments, such as that of Nehanda's death, around which to construct a shared, regional memory. For the most part, these memories related to past moments in the camps, shared by various liberation organisation movements, during their fight against either colonial or white-minority rule. For this reason,

the region came to be imagined as constructed along temporal moments shared not by countries but by parties which rule those nations. The past, and its role in the present, therefore, becomes central to understanding the manner in which the region has been imagined over time.

The second question raised by the texts' imagining of nation focuses on the moments upon which the new region will be built. If, as is the case with Nehanda's death and the subsequent mobilisation in support of the resistance to white-minority rule, such a moment is a contested one, then how, if at all, can they come to be seen as moments around which to imagine regional unity? As the following chapter will show, the conflict over the rewriting of South African history highlights that the search for answers to such questions are deeply vexed, but central to any exploration of southern Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR

Heroes and the Rainbow Nation in South African post-1962 war autobiography

4 Introduction

Following South Africa's first multiracial elections in 1994, Archbishop Desmond Tutu termed the new nation which had been formed, the Rainbow Nation. The name detailed an imagining of the new, post-apartheid South Africa in which the races, ethnicities and cultures, which had for so many years been separated, now came to together in a form to give equal importance to all. It is an imagining that saw a place for all who lived in South Africa, provided they committed themselves to ideals set out in the country's new constitution. Central to the creation of this nation was the process of resolution through disclosure and reconciliation, laid out in the procedures Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This process saw both the victims and perpetrators of violence from all sides of the political divide come together to make declarations which would, if deemed full and honest by the commission, result in the granting of admittance to the Rainbow Nation for those who had fought against its creation. Thus, atonement, for the actions in what most considered one or another form of war, has become central to the formation of the new, post-apartheid Rainbow Nation. Through the confession of the truth of their actions, therefore, former enemies could "grieve and heal" together and thus form "a community – which is nation" (Nuttall and Michael 2000: 307). Importantly, the confluence of this facet of the TRC process and the long tradition of South African autobiographical writing, detailed in Chapter One, resulted in an upsurge in the number of autobiographies, detailing militant action and war in pre-1994 South Africa in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as former combatants jostled for "a place in the rewriting of history" (307). Central to this rewriting of history is the reinterpretation of

the actions and role played by soldiers and fighters from the various organisations involved in the fighting that marked South African history from 1960 to 1994. In this chapter, I examine texts which offer reinterpretations of such roles in light of their arguing for a place in the Rainbow Nation.

In this chapter I read three autobiographical writings of wars in which South Africa was involved prior to 1994. The texts are Thula Bopela and Daluxolo Luthuli's *Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a Divided People* (2005), Rick Andrew's *Buried in the Sky* (2001) and Clive Holt's *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* (2004). These texts are read with a view to understanding the ways in which their authors assert their claims to inclusion, or recognition, in the Rainbow Nation. To do so, I look at the relationship between the notion of the victim, as established by the TRC, and that of the hero as it was constructed within the differing discourses of the African Nation Congress (ANC) and the South African Defence Force (SADF). I argue that through the deployment of the autobiographical form, the authors of these three texts are searching to claim a role that while being tied to the past, allows for a place in the ongoing life of the new nation. In many ways, this process should be seen as the creation of a common past upon which to build the new nation, but as the chapter will show, the past is a deeply contested terrain. My focus will primarily be on the manner in which the three texts circle ideas of the heroic, masculinity and their relationship to South African wars. This will be done through a reading of the texts as reconstructions of the past which seek, in part, allow the authors to "reinvent themselves through narrative" (Njabulo Ndebele in Roos 2008: 152). In addition, this focus offers a view of the ways in which the differing versions of southern African history, as put forward by the different webs of militant organisation and government affiliations, can be seen to create a sense of region. This is best understood as

similar in function to that of nation, because it creates a sense of common purpose through the highlighting of a shared past of resistance.

I begin the chapter by reading Bopela and Luthuli's *Umkhonto we Sizwe* with a view to showing how they advance their claim to a place alongside the great heroes of the ANC's struggle against South Africa's apartheid government. My reading of the text highlights that Bopela and Luthuli define their role in key moments of the struggle as heroic, by showing that their participation in these moments marked their actions as a rejection the role of victim, thrust upon them by the discourse of apartheid and embracing what Elaine Unterhalter (2000) defines as heroic masculinity, which is "proved by locating oneself in history, identifying the significance of history and working for a vision of a better future" (173). Thus, the later claim to be heroes of the nation, in the mould of other ANC and national heroes of the struggle against apartheid, is determined through the assertion of a place in the writing of the history of a post-war nation by showing that the man has proved himself to have been involved in "the work of building the nation" (158). It was not through a call to build a nation, rather it was through a call to defend it from a perceived communist threat that the apartheid government defended its sending of troops into South West Africa and Angola between 1974 and 1989. I will show in the second section of this chapter, however, that rather than creating a sense of heroic defence of nation in Rick Andrew's *Buried in the Sky*, this action is presented as a form of victimisation akin to that suffered by non-white South Africans. Andrew presents his experience of conscripted service in the SADF in 1978 as marking him as an "institutional perpetrator" (Borer 2003: 1102) of the gross violations of human rights (GVHR)[1], which marked apartheid rule in South Africa because of his association with the

[1] In the article "A Taxonomy of Victims and Perpetrators: Human Rights and Reconciliation in South Africa", Tristan Anne Borer (2003) shows that during the TRC "only four things qualified as a GVHR: killing, torture, severe ill-treatment, and abduction" (1091).

war in South West Africa and Angola. Unlike *Buried in the Sky*, the final section will show that Holt's *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* does not question that it was heroic for white men to fight for the nation, as it was presented by the apartheid government. Instead it reinforces this view through the text's assertion that Holt's actions in the SADF during the battles of the Lomba River and Cuito Cuanavale were a heroic stand in the face of a powerful threat to apartheid South Africa. Importantly, however, *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* couples this sense of the male hero with one of victimhood, by asserting that Holt's Ensuing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was a result of the apartheid government's abandoning of its soldiers – for reasons of political expediency. I conclude the chapter by looking at the ways in which my reading of the autobiographical writing of South African wars offers an approach to the understanding of the functioning of histories of struggle, resistance and overcoming in southern Africa following its many years of war.

4.1 Becoming the hero

As the title suggests, Thula Bopela and Daluxolo Luthuli's *Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a Divided People* tells of the authors' involvement, as members of the African National Congress's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the nation, or MK), in the armed struggle against apartheid. The text takes the form of an autobiography, written by both Bopela and Luthuli, and this sense of the text is reinforced by the following lines, form a chapter titled "Boys to Men" (2005: 13), with which the text opens:

> This is our story, Daluxolo 'Ken Ken' Luthuli and Thula Osborne Bopela. We will tell it the way it was and not as we wish it had happened, or as somebody else might prefer us to tell it. It's not only our history, it's also the history of a people – the black people of Africa. (13)

The passage illustrates a number of features that position it firmly within the post-apartheid autobiographical style, outlined by Nuttall and Michael (2000: 299). Such features include its reference to the truth that a TRC form of testimony requires, which is a key to the

"revisionary impulse" (298) seen in such disclosure. This introduction also situates the individual's experience as both singular and illustrative of a larger community. In fact, the authors go beyond the claim of merely representing the experience of a single community, but lay claim to an experience representative of "the black people of Africa" (Bopela and Luthuli 2005: 13). While this may seem to be an exaggerated claim, it is one that can be seen to resonate with a central understanding MK members had of the role played by both South Africa and MK in southern African affairs. This point is borne out in the document adopted by the Morogoro Conference of the ANC, following a meeting in Morogoro, Tanzania, 25 April to 1 May 1969. In it, the ANC defines South Africa in the 1960s as the "main pillar of the unholy alliance of Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa". This emphasises, therefore, that the "strategy and tactics of [the ANC] revolution require [...] a full appreciation of the inter-locking and interweaving of International, African and Southern African developments which play on our situation" (http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/governenceprojects/organisations/MK/strategy.htm).

The positioning of South Africa as central to the regional struggle against colonial and white-minority rule is suggestive of the webs of resistance movements, uncovered in the previous chapters' discussion of the Angolan and Zimbabwean texts. In fact, Bopela defines the two largest of these webs of affiliation, when describing his late-1960s experience at the Kongwa camp in Tanzania, which was shared by various southern African liberation movements from Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and South West Africa. He tells of a "political fraternity" in which there were members of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), *Movimento Popular Libertação de Angola* (MPLA), *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO), Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) (Bopela and Luthuli 2005:45). This fraternity was largely based on the ideological tenets to which each

grouping was seen to adhere. All those mentioned were aligned with, and supported by, the Union of Social Soviet Republics (Soviet Union or USSR) while the others, mentioned below, were seen to hold Maoist positions and be supported by the People's Republic of China.[2] Bopela, therefore, maps the two largest of these webs of affiliation in the following:

> The ANC, for instance, supported FRELIMO in Mozambique and SWAPO in South West Africa, but not SWANU. They recognised MPLA in Angola, but not Jonas Savimbi's UNITA or Holden Roberto's FNLA. In Zimbabwe the PAC was fraternal with ZANU, not ZAPU. One accepted these unofficial alliances without the need to be told by the leadership. (Bopela and Luthuli 2005: 45)

By the time of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*'s publication in 2005, the groupings which defined these two webs of support, had undergone large scale change but were still very important to the manner in which the countries in the region related to each other politically. However, in addition to situating Bopela, Luthuli and the ANC's struggle history within a regional one, the text's opening lines give the impression that *Umkhonto we Sizwe* was written and narrated by both Bopela and Luthuli. This is, however, not the case. What at first seems to be an autobiography of two people, proves to be an autobiography of Thula Bopela, within which is contained a biography of Daluxolo Luthuli and, in addition, there are extensive references to, and interpretations from, the works of the text's publisher, Peter Stiff.

This change between voices is signalled very early on in the narrative with the lines, "[l]et's begin with the story of Daluxolo" (13). Importantly, the narrative is then not described, as one might expect, in the 'I' of Luthuli's autobiographical voice, but in that of a third person narrator, as shown by the "he" in the line, "[h]e was born in 1948 at Georgedale mission in Natal" (13). This narrative form is then changed when Bopela takes over the narration in the first chapter that deals with his life. The chapter opens with, "I, Thula, left south Africa on 1

[2] At this stage, UNITA's Jonas Savimbi was still claiming to be an adherent to Maoist ideology.

September 1963" (28). From this point on the narrative voice is entirely Bopela's, which results in Luthuli's voice being subsumed by that of Bopela. This usually results in Bopela becoming the hero of his own tale, even when that tale is one he is telling of Luthuli. In fact, it is Bopela who takes centre stage throughout the text. In a sense, he is conforming to what Coullie *et al.* (2006) describe as "collaborative auto/biography" (9). It is a form of writing they describe as "questioning the soundness of the distinction of the autobiography, in which the self produces his autobiographical account about himself out of himself, and biography, in which an author produces a biographical representation of another person" (9). The "collaborative auto/biography" thus reflects "the ways in which the construction of selves happens at the interface between autobiography and biography, between the intrasubjective and the intersubjective" (9). Bopela's voice is not the only one seeking to construct a "biographical representation of another" person (9). There is a third voice that can heard, if very faintly, throughout the text and it is one which complicates our understanding of how the role wartime webs of affiliation have come to be played out in a post-war southern African region.

On the "Acknowledgements" page, Bopela and Luthuli finish their list of those who they wish to thank by acknowledging "the assistance and efforts of our publisher, Peter Stiff of Galago Publishing", who "allowed us to quote large sections from his own books, *Cry Zimbabwe: Independence Twenty Years on, The Silent War: South African Recce Operations 1969 to 1994*; *Warfare by Other Means: South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s* [and] *See you in November: The Story of an SAS assassin*" (Bopela and Luthuli 2005: Acknowledgements). Peter Stiff is described by Galago Publishing's website as having

> lived in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) for 28 years, 20 of them as a regular policeman in the elite British South Africa Police [BSAP], from which he retired as a superintendent in 1972. [...] He has written extensively on the bush war in the former Rhodesia, on the collapse of Portuguese power in Angola

> and Moçambique, the ongoing conflict in Angola and the Namibian bush war and much else as well. (http://www.galago.co.za/author_pstiff.htm)

What this report fails to include is that far from being an objective and "acknowledged expert on Special Forces warfare in Africa" (http://www.galago.co.za/author_pstiff.htm), his works are mostly extremely partisan and supportive of the Rhodesian Defence Force (RDF) and of the SADF. William Minter (2007) writes of Stiff's works that they "should be read with the caveat that the information comes from those actually involved [former members of the RDF and the SADF], who may or may not be inclined to tell the truth" (150). Thus, the only source used as a reference by Bopela and Luthuli, comes from the stories of the very people against whom they were fighting and whose testimonies, at forums such as the TRC, they obviously dispute. In addition, this relationship raises questions about claims by Bopela and Luthuli (2005) that the BSAP "fought with you with their brains and their police skills – unlike many South African Police [SAP] who believe in brute force and torture [–] the BSAP types were skilled listeners and interrogators and some had law degrees" (105).

Stiff's involvement in both the BSAP and the publication of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, marks Bopela and Luthuli's claim that "[we] don't have the right to change the facts to suit us [as] we cannot hide the truth" as deeply problematic (13). On the one hand, it raises questions relating to the fact that the armed struggle did not result in the new order for which it fought. It could be said that those who were in privileged positions under apartheid are still in such positions and this underscores the point that Bopela and Luthuli's voices are still edited by those who did so before 1994. On the other hand, it reveals a truth constructed through the recitation of numerous, conflicting and jostling subject positions, all of which are calling for a "for a place in the rewriting of history" (Nuttall and Michael 2000: 307). The text can thus be seen to function in the "interface [...] between the intrasubjective and the intersubjective" (Coullie *et al.* 2006: 9). This plurality of voices is in keeping with the notion of the all-

inclusive, post-apartheid Rainbow Nation. However, it is also what sets this text apart from those post-apartheid texts Nuttall and Michael cite as representative of a change from the 1980s "heroic voice" to that of the "voice of victimhood" (Nuttall and Michael 2000: 307). Their construction of the notion of the victim, and thus victimhood, while not overtly motioned, is based on that used by the TRC. A victim of apartheid was defined by the TRC as anyone who had suffered "gross violation of human rights" which were finally defined as "killing, torture, severe ill-treatment, and abduction", but as Tristan Anne Borer (2003) shows, even this definition was problematic because it left still certain terms, such as severe ill-treatment and abduction, open to debate (1091). Its importance to this study, however, is that it offered a framework within which people appealing to the TRC for reparations could position their testimonies in order to fit into what Deborah Posel (2002: 151) calls the "'victim-centred' process" endorsed by the commission. It is this positioning of the person testifying, as one who has suffered gross violation of human rights at the hand of the apartheid government or its apparatuses, that this study understands as the victim and the textual framing of this position as the voice of the victim. However, it is this position that is actively avoided in *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.

Throughout *Umkhonto we Sizwe* Bopela, as it is his that is the predominant voice, writes in a voice that can only be described as heroic. This sense of the heroic is best described within the following framework that Karen Batley (2007) takes from the work of Joseph Campbell on the "idea of the mythical hero" (5). Batley uses as the starting point for her construction of the notion of the "socialised warrior".

> Fighting for the regenerative cause of bettering his society, he displays individual courage while serving a wider purpose – that of providing, by means of his creative acts, the link between humanity and immortality. The nature of the creative act here is transformative, particularly of his society. As a warrior he kills – but in order to regenerate. (5)

In addition, Batley describes that the hero must go "through all the obligatory rites of passage, answering the call to adventure" (6). As with Pepetela's Fearless, such a description of a hero is certainly one befitting the manner in which Bopela, and to a lesser extent Luthuli, present their actions against the apartheid government. It is important too, to note that Batley's hero is necessarily male, as this is also illustrative of the text's conception of the hero and the heroic voice. In this, it links with Elaine Unterhalter's (2000) work on what she terms heroic masculinity. Unterhalter finds that in autobiographical writings of the anti-apartheid struggle, masculinity is linked to a "particular form of work – political struggle" (163). Through this political struggle, men are able to empower themselves because it is related to a "personal sense of heroism, which entails strength and a rejection of the oppression of apartheid" (163) and its portrayal of black masculinity as "lazy, ill educated [and] politically incompetent" (162). Thus, she continues, "[h]eroic masculinity entails giving oneself to the struggle and reforming oneself in the process" (166) of what she defines as a journey of adventure, danger and male camaraderie, which begins by moving away from the "feminised portrayal of 'home'" (167). The construction of heroic masculinity, therefore, "entails that manhood is proved by locating oneself in history" or, in other words by "making their mark on historical time" (173).

I argue that there are two reasons for Bopela's adoption of this position. The first is his overt linking of both his and Luthuli's decision to join MK with a long tradition of understating war as a necessary step in the process of turning "[b]oys [in]to men" (Bopela and Luthuli 2005: 13). In this regard, Robert Morrell (2001) writes that,

> [b]oys develop a masculine gender identity that is deficient relative to the adult masculinity of men. The stages by which boys become men – manhood – are a source of anxiety and a rite of passage. There is no set of prescribed procedures but the determination to become 'a man' is a powerful feature of masculinity. (8)

In line with Morrell's assertion, Bopela and Luthuli (2005) clearly state that according to their understanding of "Zulu religion and culture" (19), becoming a warrior is a central rite of passage into Zulu manhood. This belief is clearly stated as an important feature of both authors' decision to join MK, but it is most clearly stated in the description of Luthuli's journey into MK. It is Luthuli's father, Japhta Luthuli, who makes the decision to send his sixteen year-old son for military training with MK in Tanzania.

> 'This means you are now a soldier of the [Zulu] nation. Do you know what this means, Daluxolo?'
> 'It means that I have to become a man and no longer a boy, father. I will fight in the same way as my grandfathers fought against the white people. [...]'
> Japhta looked at his son with a deep feeling of pride. This Daluxolo was a man. What more could someone of his culture ask of his son other than that he should be man enough to rise to a challenge when the time came?
> 'We Zulus know no greater calling in life than to become warriors when the nation demands it', Japhta responded with pride. (15)

That this "calling" is the exclusive province of men is reinforced when "Japhta said in a lowered tone 'you cannot mention this to anyone ... your mother especially. *Indaba yamadoda lena*' (This is a man thing)" (16). As it is presented in *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, war is most certainly a "man thing" and "particular form of work – political struggle" (Unterhalter 200: 163) which defines the mode of manhood – heroic masculinity – Luthuli will adopt through war. There are very few mentions made of female comrades and even then, women are usually only seen to be in junior, supporting roles. This runs counter to both the ANC's stated equality for all and the large amount of evidence stating that women played a very large role in MK as more than just support staff.[3] However, it is the overt connection between notions of Zulu masculinity and the role of the warrior in Zulu society which comes to be central to the construction of Bopela and Luthuli's notion of heroic struggle. This position is,

[3] For more on the role that women played in the ANC and MK see Suttner (2005) and (2008).

however, complicated by the conflicts between the ANC-allied United Democratic Front (UDF) and the predominantly Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

According to Bopela and Luthuli,

> [i]t's no exaggeration to say that between 1992 and 1994 South Africa teetered on the brink of full-out civil war. A low intensity war had already begun with the apartheid state and the surrogate armies of the homeland territories on the one side, and the liberation forces on the other. (255)

As it is portrayed by the texts, this conflict played out primarily in the then Natal province and the homeland of KwaZulu. They posit that the conflict had its roots in differences between the ANC's policy of armed struggle and the IFP's policy of peaceful resistance and was fuelled by an Afrikaans right-wing fear of an ANC-led government, which led the apartheid government to equip, train and supply with intelligence, an IFP militia under the banner of the homeland police KwaZulu. That such actions took place have been verified by a great number of sources, including the TRC. Nevertheless, it is Luthuli's involvement which illustrates how such conflicts challenge the text's earlier claims regarding the relationship between war and Zulu masculinity.

Daluxolo Luthuli was released from Robben Island in 1979 and told, he claims, by the ANC leadership on the Island to become involved in the IFP so as to become a "double agent" (186) who could supply the ANC with information regarding IFP plans. By 1986, Luthuli had become very involved in the workings of the IFP and had not heard from the ANC for a number of years. He and two-hundred other IFP men were called to Ulundi to attend a meeting that would ultimately result in them being flown to Caprivi, in the then South West Africa, to be trained by the SADF. The result of this training was that Luthuli became a leader of a group of IFP soldiers and fought against the ANC/UDF alliance soldiers and supporters until the early 1990s.

Much has been written about this stage in South Africa's history and many extremely diverse positions regarding the reasons for the violence and killing that took place have been voiced. One such opinion, presented by Thembisa Waetjen and Gerhard Maré (2001) states that,

> [t]he undermining of Zulu patriarchal order was blamed not only on 150 years of colonisation, apartheid and urbanisation, but also on the ANC. The ANC 'Mission in Exile', which was the particular way in which Buthelezi [Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the IFP] referred to the ANC from 1960 to 1990 in order to posit Inkatha's claim to being the 'true' ANC, was cast as the invention of an expatriate black elite cynically exploiting wayward youth – that is, the new 'breed' of urban radical masculinity. (203)

Such a position, built on the IFP understanding of the "Zulu patriarchal order" (203) and its centralisation of the figure of the warrior, is in keeping with that represented by Bopela and Luthuli. Interestingly, it is not one they report as having any part in the conflict. Instead, they are quick to place the blame for the hostility on longstanding ethnic tensions, deepened and exploited by the apartheid state, in furtherance of its programme of divide and rule. That the apartheid state did indeed create and exploit such tensions has, as mentioned above, been proved beyond doubt, but for Bopela and Luthuli to claim it was the only reason for the violence is, I argue, a ploy: one that allows them to maintain a claim to the heroic tradition of the "proud Zulu warrior" (Waetjen and Maré 2001: 205), as was illustrated above, while at the same time strengthening this claim through their representation of their victory over the apartheid forces – Buthelezi included – that sought to use such warriors in furtherance of their racist aims. The representation I refer to here is of the text's claim that, through the direct actions of the authors, Jacob Zuma was able to bring Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Nelson Mandela to negotiations which ended the conflict in 1994.

The sense of the hero forged in both the physical and political battle against the apartheid government, the work of political activism, is one that is implicit in the text's title. The title,

Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a Divided People, would seem to imply it was MK that was doing the "fighting for a divided people" but, as the events described in the text suggest, those in MK were as divided as the people for whom they were supposedly fighting. While this was certainly not completely debilitating in the ANCs long-term success, the text makes a strong claim towards it having subverted much of their early attempts at military destabilisation of the South African government. Bopela makes the claim that those in command of the MK cadres in Tanzania, Joe Modise in particular, were in fact actively involved in the sowing of ethnic division in the ANC forces.

These divisions are in stark contrast to the earlier focus on the allegiances between movements and the webs of support formed as a result. It is, however, with ZIPRA, the Zimbabwe African People's Union's (ZAPU) military wing, that Bopela and Luthuli have the most interaction as together, as members of the two armed wings which formed the Luthuli Detachment and entered Rhodesia. This action was to become known as the Wankie campaign after the area of Rhodesia through which they entered. Their reason for entering Rhodesia with ZIPRA was twofold. Firstly, the ANC found it extremely difficult to infiltrate South Africa from Tanzania via Mozambique due to South Africa's alliance with Portugal and the relatively undeveloped FRELIMO infrastructure in the that country. MK was, therefore, forced to attempt to move into South Africa through Rhodesia, having travelled through Zambia. Their passage was to have been made easier by the contacts the ZIPRA members, with whom they were travelling, had in Rhodesia. The second reason for the combined operation was simply that it offered the guerrillas strength in numbers, should they be discovered and have to fight against the RDF, which was in turn supported by paramilitary members of the South African Police (SAP).

It is during this campaign that Bopela and Luthuli are captured, interrogated and imprisoned, in Khami Maximum Security Prison and Robben Island respectively. This stage of the narrative illustrates two other issues which, I argue, inform Bopela and Luthuli's adoption of an heroic voice in the narration of the text. The first is that both were involved in one of the most famous MK endeavours, the Wankie campaign. Chris Hani wrote of this campaign, "I want to emphasise the question of victory because the Luthuli Detachment was never defeated in battle", as the members were only captured or killed because of betrayal by ZIPRA members (http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/wankie.html). It is this sense of victory in the face of superior military technology employed by the RDF and SAP that offers Bopela and Luthuli the opportunity to state, unequivocally, that they had found "out whether they [the combined MK and ZIPRA force] were really soldiers or just a bunch of trained and angry armed Africans" (59) and thus fulfilled their role as men. The second is that the two realise and prove the depth of their belief and faithfulness as MK cadres. Throughout the campaign they are betrayed by members of ZAPU, who either openly gave away their position to the RDF soldiers or, who through cowardice, did not fight effectively when they were discovered and forced to fight shortly after crossing the Zambian/Rhodesia border. All of Bopela and Luthuli's actions, from their fighting to their attempts to rise above the brutality of their enemies and captors, are represented as being driven and informed by strict adherence to the ideals of the ANC. They, unlike many of those with whom they fought, remained true to the ANC, even when they were tossed aside by the ANC. In response to such actions on the part of certain members Bopela writes

> I'm not blaming the ANC for my misfortunes and I'm not embittered. It would be easy to say: 'the ANC turned its back on me so stuff them', but that would not be true. [...] The ANC is an organisation of contrasts. There are rotten people in it who could drive you to the point where you denounce the organisation and leave. But there are others – and I have met many of them – who live by the cardinal principles of the ANC. The pity is that so many creeps worm their way in. (233)

It is thus apparent that rather than accepting the "framing of the self" as victim (Nuttall and Michael 2000: 307), Bopela and Luthuli construct a form of the hero that is a rejection of victimhood and the position of the victim. In doing so, however, they echo an ANC sentiment as voiced by then Deputy President of South Africa and President of the ANC, Thabo Mbeki, and explained by Borer (2003) as an "ambiguous relationship vis-à-vis its self-identification as victims" in which at times the ANC claimed they, and their supporters, were victims but then, at other times, they resisted this position because it was seen as demeaning to the "liberation heroes" (1094). Central to this ambiguous relationship was the TRC's positioning of any gross violation of human rights as worthy of censure, regardless of which side of the struggle committed the act. For Bopela and Luthuli, however, there is no question that their deeds were both moral and heroic because they affiliate themselves with the ANC position at the heart of the ambiguity, which is that any action against the apartheid government was morally justifiable regardless of any gross violation of human rights.

In a sense, this could be seen as a return to the 1980s discourse of the heroic and the triumphant. I argue that it is much more than that. The voice of the heroic, as it is represented in *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, is a complex fusion of at times differing gender-constructed subject positions and ideological perspectives. While Bopela and Luthuli were certainly victimised by the racism of the apartheid regime, it is through the fight against that very regime that they reclaim their "manhood" and become heroes. In addition, through their continued fight against the apartheid government's attempts to divide parties and peoples, they are able to see themselves as, ironically, not just as foot soldiers of the ANC, but rather as central to one of the ANC greatest coups. Thus, through a mixing of the notions of war as a masculine proving ground and the rejection of the position of the victim, Bopela and Luthuli are able to present themselves as worthy of "a place in the rewriting of history" (Nuttall and Michael 2000: 307)

or as Karen Batley (2007) would have it, brought "about the revitalisation needed by [their] society" (5). This place in the rewriting of history is, however, not confined to a South African history, it is one that situates them in the liberation of the region by playing a major role in the destruction of the "main pillar of the unholy alliance of Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa" (http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/governenceprojects/organisations/MK/strategy.htm). Their claim to the heroic is one that thus extends to those others seen to be in their web of alliance, but what of those, such as Dan Wylie, who represented or fought for the "unholy alliance"? They, I argue can be seen to occupy the position of the "socialised warrior, (Batley 2007: 6).

4.2 Not the hero

The flip side of Batley's hero is what she refers to as the "socialised warrior (6)". It is a term she borrows from Robert Jay Lifton's study of American Vietnam veterans. This conception describes a warrior who

> will be used [by his government] to perpetrate the status quo, that is, killing the enemy will 'consolidate and reaffirm the existing social order'. This is the direct opposite to the motivation of Campbell's hero, who kills 'not to destroy life but to enlarge, perpetuate, and enhance' it. (6)

Batley then uses this distinction between the hero and the socialised warrior to show that "both can kill and both can die, but for the socialised warrior there is no transcendence to a new dispensation for society [because] there is no heroic quest, only the reliance on killing and surviving" (7). This final point is an important one and one which will be used to illustrate the position in which many of those who fought on the side of the South African Defence Force (SADF) found themselves.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s "the border" was an ill-defined, yet powerful symbol of white South Africa's supposed stand in the face of a 'total onslaught' by communist forces.

The term was also one that loomed large in the lives of white males from the age of sixteen onwards. Sixteen was the age at which white South African males were required to register for National Service. This service was, for most of the decades mentioned above, a stint of two years spent in the SADF which was to be followed by a series of "camps" of up to three months scattered over the period of some three years. David Williams (2008) writes that up to six hundred thousand white South African males "experienced extended military training and 320,000 served in some way 'on the border'" (2008: 21). The border to which Williams refers runs between Namibia and Angola, but to those who served there it could mean being stationed anywhere between four hundred kilometres north of Windhoek and up to five hundred kilometres into Angola. Large scale censoring of the South African media, however, meant this area came to be called the operational area. This euphemism, usually employed when reporting the death of a member of the SADF, was also extremely flexible and could be utilised when reporting the death of a soldier in any of the townships within South Africa's borders. It is as a result of this censoring that Gary Baines (2003) asserts that "America's war in Vietnam became a point of reference for South African soldiers who served on the so-called Border" (172).

To illustrate this point, Baines begins by turning to the work of L.B. Lewis and his contention that the American media was "one of the agents by which the 'symbolic universe' borrowed exclusively from the Second World War was transmitted from one generation to the next (the other agents were the family and the military)" (174). Baines continues by pointing out that both the decision of South Africa, especially white, Afrikaans South Africa, not to go to war with Germany and its allies, and its almost complete media blackout of the Border War resulted in "the values of duty, honour and sacrifice" not finding reinforcement in film, television or by "fathers and other male relatives [that] were veterans of the 'Good War'"

(175) that ended the evil of fascism in Europe. The result, in Baines' view, is that, "[i]nstead, patriotism and conformity to the ideology of white supremacy was reinforced by a value system upheld by the family, the church, an education system which included cadets for white male school-goers, and military service itself", with less of a role being played by the media in "reinforcing a worldview than in the construction of a frame of reference which enabled soldiers who served on the border to understand their experiences" (175). He therefore contends that "South African soldiers related to American Vietnam war films and literature in order to make sense of significant episodes in their life stories" and, therefore, that the "Vietnam War provided a frame work for imagining the Border War" (175).

Baines, having thus illustrated his understanding of the link between the writing of the Vietnam War and the writing of the Border War, writes of four categories into which Border War writing can be divided. One of these are the memoirs that make up the category of "*cathartic literature*" because they "are both less than and more than confession; they are partly fiction" (178). This is certainly true of Rick Andrew's *Buried in the Sky*. The text is an autobiographical account of his experiences as they relate to his time spent on "the border" (Andrew 2001: 13) during three months of his South African national military service in 1976. The text takes the form of a collection of vignettes, literary sketches and second-hand accounts of episodes and experiences relating to, but not exclusively situated, during the three months that he was based in "the operational area" of Ovamboland in northern Namibia (15). While the text is certainly autobiographical in content, I argue that *Buried in the Sky* could be described as an artist's impression of his conscripted service in the SADF.

This sense of the artistic is signalled throughout the text by what could be seen as self-conscious references to the image of a butterfly. Symbolising, at different moments in the text, freedom, beauty or the loss of both, this image becomes central to Andrew's attempt to

write “the weight of the past” (2). It is first seen on the text’s cover on which is superimposed a photograph of an SADF army boot. This image sits uncomfortably, as the bright yellow butterfly is obviously an afterthought, an attempt to render the image of the boot, surrounded as it is by dust, less real than its worn shape would suggest. The image, however, sums up the manner in which Andrew is about to present his memories of the Border War. It is a link between the, at times, jarring episodes that make up the narrative. Andrew’s narrative, in a manner that imitates the movement of a butterfly, darts from the description of one event or reflection to another. It is, however, narrated in a voice that can only be described as plaintive. Where *Umkhonto we Sizwe*’s narrative is driven by its casting of Bopela and Luthuli as heroes who take decisive action in the face of danger, *Buried in the Sky*’s narrative casts Andrew in a position of the victim of an evil and overwhelmingly powerful system. In this, Andrew can be seen to present himself in a manner similar to that in which Dan Wylie does in *Dead Leaves*. He, like Wylie, is cast from place to place at the whim of the army in which he forced to serve. In this, *Buried in the Sky* and *Dead Leaves*, illustrate the opposite of the many forms of the hero’s purposeful journey. As if to signal their helpless victimisation, Wylie and Andrew emphasise the randomness of their forced movements through the weighting of these movements in their narratives.

On another level, however, Andrew’s choice of representation points to what he identifies as central to his experience of the SADF. While reflecting on the role of senior officers, Andrew comments that Major Mills, a base commander and Permanent Force member,

> enjoys playing soldiers. However many of us have been forced to participate in this production by guarantee of a jail sentence. We have to be on stage, in uniform, at the required time. *There you go. Life in the SADF – a prison farm for young white males*. A theatre of war? A play? *A farce, more like it*. (27)

In Andrew’s words, life in the SADF is a “farce”, lacking in reason or a central, galvanising mission. Those in command are out of touch and do not “seem to realise just how fragmented

the regiment is, or the SADF, or South Africa, for that matter" (27). This notion of war and army life as a "farce" is not unique. It is in fact an aspect of war writing that Fussell (1975) highlights as an aspect of the "evolution of the soldier" (38) and one that is, as Herzog (1992) points out, common in writing about the American war in Vietnam. In relation to the Border War, the sense of farce is underpinned by the disjunctures apparent in the government's official reasons for entering the war and, what recent studies have offered as its true reasons for the occupation of South West Africa and southern Angola.[4] According to South African government propaganda, the war was fought in answer to the supposed threat that Marxist rule in Angola and other African states presented to the "free world" and South Africa in particular (Craig 2008: 57). It was, therefore, framed as a war of defence rather than one of aggression. The irony of this position is that through the SADFs campaign of regional destabilisation, it was clear to all, except white South Africans, that the South African government was in fact fighting a war of aggression. It was doing so in order to maintain control on both South West Africa and the non-white population of South Africa who were its source of cheap labour and, thus, the backbone of the economy that was paying rich rewards to the country's white population.

The text's positioning of the Border War, as a planned response to the apartheid government's 1970s assertion that South Africa faced a "Red Peril" or "Total Onslaught" by communist forces, renders such an account illuminating (Visser 2004). As Andrew would have it, any military intervention based on such a farcical notion of threat will result, not in a combined response to that threat, but in a situation that is farcical and without any sense of purpose. This lack of purpose results not only in a fractured experience, but in an experience

[4] For examples see Baines (2008) and Williams (2008).

that can only be recalled and represented through a fractured narrative made up of episodes with only their SADF setting in common. This fracture and farce, according to Andrew, borders on madness, as is evident when he writes about "hating the schizophrenia" of "'*Defending South Africa against 'Communism'* – while back home the county took flame" (Andrew 2001: 39). Further compounding this sense of fracture and fragmentation is Andrew's illustration of the disjuncture between the SADF's justification for their occupation of the area and the manner in which that occupation was played out.

In an episode entitled "Officer's Address", Andrew recalls being told the following by Lieutenant-General Constand Viljoen, chief of the army:

> First you need to understand that you are here as diplomats, as ambassadors of South Africa – of civilisation. This war is not a full-scale conventional engagement. It's a war of terror and persuasion. Insurgency and counter-insurgency. It's a war of psychology. You have to win the hearts and minds of the people. This war will not be won by military action on the ground, but through influencing people towards non-communist ideas and Christian values. (80)

The general's words are, however, undermined by the actions of the SADF in its furtherance of "Christian values". Andrew concludes this episode with the comment that, "despite the officer's address that day, little would change (82). The soldiers would continue to be viewed as racist occupiers and, as a result, would still be treated with distrust by those whose "hearts and minds" they were supposed to "win".

Juxtaposed with this sense of fracture and farce is the coherent argument against his conscription that Andrew repeatedly presents to the reader. He writes that to avoid conscription would result in "six years' imprisonment" (7). While to go "[t]o go to the border with the SADF would be to side with the racist regime and to go against all that was moral and right" (7).

> However, it wasn't easy for me to leave the country. I had a wife and child to support and very little ready cash. Besides, I didn't want to leave my country. I wanted to live in it. (7)

Regardless of such certainty in the immorality of the SADF mission, Andrew faced the choices and difficulties many in his position had to face. In *Buried in the Sky*, he writes of two brothers, separated due to one's decision to serve, while the other has chosen to leave the country. This episode takes the form of two letters, sent by the older brother from Britain, to Neil, the brother on the border. Part of the first letter describes a "screwed up society" in which one will "have to choose sides" and "[b]eing in the SADF is the wrong side" (85). This final point is continued in the second letter in which we read that the older brother has joined SWAPO in London (176). Here is the quintessential 'brother versus brother' conflict, underscoring the complexities faced by those called-up for service in the SADF in what was essentially a civil war situation, such as that commented on by Hosi in Sousa Jamba's *Patriots*. However, such decisions not only involved avoiding a six-year prison sentence, but perhaps more importantly being separated from one's family. Critically though, Andrew, as was Wylie, was not without options and the final decision to fight on the side of the apartheid government was his. As Andrew points out, however, these are not the only fissures that are present both within the country and within the SADF.

Within the SADF there was considerable antagonism, resulting from the Anglo-Boer war, between the English and Afrikaans speakers. Of this hostility, David Williams (2008) writes that,

> [p]rejudice endured: an Afrikaner was referred to as a rock-spider or a hairy-back, an English speaker as a *rooinek* [Afrikaans: redneck](a term from the Anglo-Boer War) of a *soutpiel* or *soutie* (literally, 'salt penis', because the owner had divided loyalties – one foot in South Africa, one foot in England, with his penis dangling in the Atlantic ocean). (19-20)

This prejudice is reflected in Andrew's account, but not with the extended commentary given to the racism that prevailed in the SADF. In an episode illustrating both the racism and ethnic tensions existing in the SADF Andrew describes an argument between English and Afrikaans SADF soldiers.

> 'We Afrikaners had to fight our own battles [...]. The English tried to break us during the Boer War. They killed thousands of women and children in their prisoner of war camps. That's something you don't hear them bragging about too often, hey, Neil? [...] And where are they now? Most of them have fucken run off to England where they make lank [a lot] propaganda about how we must give everything away to the blacks.'
> [...]
> 'Bullshit. They're just trying to improve the situation so that we can live in a civilised country, and not a fucken cage that has a *Whites Only* sign on it,' said Neil. [...] I mean if the Afrikaner is such a big fucken Christian, how come he won't mix with black okes [Afrikaans: guys]. Either God's the Creator or he isn't. If he is, then he created everyone, including the Kaffirs, the Charous [Indians], the Chinks, the Yids, the Rockspiders, the Goffels [coloureds], and the Pommies ... and cunts like us.'
> [...]
> 'Ja ... that's your usual liberal bullshit.' (Andrew 2001: 165 – 166)

This passage presents two stereotypes that were a mainstay of apartheid South Africa. The first is of Afrikaners as the true supporters of apartheid and the second, is of the English South African as the anti-apartheid liberal. However, as Andrew illustrates, both groups were prone to racist behaviour and thus, ultimately, supporters and beneficiaries of apartheid.

There is another aspect to these stereotypes that, it would seem, Andrew endorses. Tied to the notion of Afrikaners as the true supporters of apartheid is the idea that they were somehow more inclined to be supporters of the SADF, the Border War and thus conscription. In a sense, this is related to Kobus du Pisani's (2001) view that "[a]uthoritarianism and militarism have been consistent features of conservative Afrikaner masculinity" (165). To this du Pisani adds that the military success of the SADF in the "bush war were publicised in such a way that the image of the South African warrior hero was revived", therefore, "A large majority of young Afrikaners were induced by government propaganda [...] to participate enthusiastically

in military service, which assumed the status of an initiation process into manhood. (165-166). While it is not unusual for participation in the military to be viewed as an "initiation process into manhood" (166), it is the manner in which this key tenet of the construction of certain types of masculinity was used to control those already in the SADF that is laid bare in *Buried in the Sky*. Andrew's portrayal of SADF firmly situates Permanent Force (PF) members as the custodians of the SADF masculine identity. In a number of episodes, he illustrates how emasculation through insult and punishment was used by PF members as an integral, if unofficial, tool of discipline. One such example is taken from the court martial of two soldiers accused of murdering their sergeant-major. Their reasons for attacking the sergeant-major are described by one in the following:

> One morning he [the sergeant-major] pull open the door of the tent and shouts on us, "Get up you fucken moffies [Afrikaans: derogatory term for a homosexual], julle gatbandiete [Afrikaans: you arse-bandits]."
> 'Nou [Afrikaans: now], my pa ... my father[...] he told me that nobody must swear me like kaffir ... and now this sergeant-major is insulting me, and my friend. Ek is nie 'n Moffie nie [Afrikaans: I'm not gay] . [...] Jan is my buddy, my army buddy. (Andrew 2001: 107)

These two are not the only conscripts to run afoul of the SADF's construction of masculinity. In *Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa* (1991), Jacklyn Cock illustrates that notions of war and gender were deeply intertwined fundamentals of apartheid ideology. In addition, Cock points out that "different gender identities – the notion of men as 'the protectors' and women as 'the protected' – were mobilised for war" (ix). The construction of white men as "protectors" had dual meaning in the SADF. On the one hand, white men were expected to protect the white women from the both the black and communist threat. On the other hand, men were also supposed to be able to provide food shelter and security for 'their women'. It is up against this last ideal of manhood that Andrew runs when he phones home to ensure that his wife has found new accommodation. For security reasons, his phone call is monitored by a PF sergeant-major, who he describes as not thinking "much of me – someone

so unprepared for the military and its demands, and to be caught off guard this way" (2001: 72). Andrew later diagnoses the sergeant-major's disgust through the lens of his own prejudice:

> The problem, though, was that since he had no knowledge outside of his own ghetto, he tended to see my cultural tastes as being semi-criminal and subversive, and I suppose they were a threat to the closed Calvinistic nationalism that gripped South Africa – that communist-hating, fag-baiting, apartheid-swallowing, self-righteous, arrogant patriotism that included only those whites that shared your tastes and fears. Brotherhoods of big biltong-eating men in short-sleeved khaki shirts. Their women, kept 'madams'. Such fear of the shadows within. Such fear of diversity. Such fear of the shadows within. Such repression. (74)

Andrew's anger is, however, ultimately useless as he is still forced to adhere to SADF rules, regulations and culture. He is victim to the "cruel myth" Jacklyn Cock (1991) describes as,

> many men seem to go to war partly in the hope of becoming heroes, but in reality war emasculates men. It does so by depriving them of their personal autonomy, responsibility, and choice. Military training involves a kind of social programming that teaches unquestioning obedience. (91)

This sense of victimhood is entrenched when he finally returns home to find that he is no longer able to reconcile his experiences on the border with everyday life in apartheid South Africa. Andrew suffers what he terms the "perennial anger of the returned soldier" and a "sense of betrayal" (2001: 191). Such a description is reminiscent of Nuttall and Michael's (2000) notion of the presentation of the perpetrators of apartheid presenting their victimhood in a manner that "was yoked to the notion of betrayal" (307). Andrew's sense of betrayal is clearly stated in the following:

> This is my Country? This petty, limping place? For this I spent three months in purgatory? (Andrew 2001: 191)

However, lurking beneath the writing, I argue, is a sustained attempt to overcome the sense of victimhood, which the lingering feelings of guilt the support of apartheid's megalomaniacal attempt to rule the region, have left behind. Andrew expresses this complex coexistence in a manner in line with Barnes's (2003) illustration of a key theme apparent in texts that fit into

the category "*cathartic literature*" as does *Buried in the Sky*. Baines states that such writing is "both less than and more than confession" in which "the guilt of (liberal) white males conscripted by the SADF [...] express the misgivings that merely donning the SADF uniform made them complicit in supporting the apartheid regime, as well as acts of terror committed in its name" (178). In Andrew's case, however, he overlooks the point that anything short of outright rebellion could be seen as support for the government he would, as a white man, unavoidably benefit from and, that even if he had not ever worn the SADF uniform, he would still have had "acts of terror committed" in his name (178). Allied to this is the notion that as a result of his service he has become what Borer (2003) terms an "institutional perpetrator" because he was a member of an institution of state that perpetrated gross violation of human rights. Andrew, however, seeks to turn this membership in the institution around and use the fact that he was forced to be a part of such gross violations of human rights, as indicative of a violation of his own rights and, therefore, that he was a victim of apartheid. I argue that it is from this that the sense of victimhood grows. Andrew presents himself as victimised by the apartheid government because he was unable to come to terms with the fact that to stay in the country was to accept that he does so at the expense of the majority of the population. He is thus forced to undergo personal suffering and it is from this that the sense of victimhood grows.

For this reason, Andrew attempts to string his memories together to form as close to a coherent narrative as is possible from the mad farce that was his experience of the SADF. In addition, I argue that *Buried in the Sky* is also an attempt to put into words the perverse logic of apartheid which resulted in the loss of many lives on the border. This final point is nowhere more apparent than in the text's final episode in which, many years after his service,

Andrew picks up a hitchhiker who is missing a hand. When asked how it happened, he replies that he was in the SADF in 1988 when he,

> ‘picked up an M-25 practice grenade ... it’s got a blue casing, with like holes in it ... but as I picked it up, the detonator went off.
> ‘It blew up in my hand.
> ‘I just stood checking what was left of my hand ... it was gone ... buried in the sky.’ (197)

Here the perverse, inverted logic of apartheid has resulted in the loss of a hand. However, this loss, like the loss of so many months, years and lives, can only be expressed in a manner in keeping with such logic. These losses are not buried in the ground, where they are static and could be revisited so that healing could easily take place. No, the losses that Andrew attributes to the Border War drift like butterflies, where they remain difficult to catch, difficult to measure and difficult to narrate. It is an image closely tied to Batley’s (2007) presentation of the socialised warrior as without “transcendence to a new dispensation for society [...] only the reliance on killing and surviving” (7). As such, his position can be seen as representative of other members of the web of alliance of which apartheid South Africa was a part. He, as did Dan Wylie in *Dead Leaves*, must look to the past for atonement and a place within to root his membership of the new, Rainbow Nation. Fundamental to this search for inclusion in the nation is the situation of himself and his deeds in the history upon which the new nation is in the process of being built. It is this attempt to situate himself in history that *Buried in the Sky* represents. However, while Andrew emphasises feelings of victimhood and loss, he does not touch on another theme that both Baines (2003: 182) and Batley (2007: 25 – 28) highlight as central to the majority of Border War writing from the cathartic category. The theme is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of the brutally disturbing experiences soldiers were subjected to during their time on the border. The fact that Andrew does not centralise PTSD maybe as a result of the fact that he is not shown to

have been exposed to battle, beyond coming into contact with the dead of such actions. In this he is unlike Clive Holt, the author of the text to be read in the next section.

4.3 The betrayed hero

Of the three texts discussed in this chapter, Clive Holt's *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* has undoubtedly garnered the most interest. In fact, 2008 saw the release of a film, of the same name, by Director Christopher Lee Dos Santos (http://www.metacafe.com/watch/1915472/at_thy_call_teaser/). This popularity may be for a number of reasons, but there are two that stand out. The first is that it deals almost exclusively with Holt's involvement as a conscripted infantry corporal, during what became known as the battles of the Lomba River and Cuito Cuanavale, which took place between September 1987 and April 1988. While both of these battles have come to be regarded as pivotal moments in South Africa's military involvement in Namibia and Angola, the events and outcome of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale have been the focus of particularly contentious debate. According to General Jannie Geldenhuis, Chief of the SADF from 1985 to 1989,

> [t]he mission of the MPLA, Cubans and Russians was to capture Jamba. They did not ... Our men gained one irrefutable success after another. They performed combat feats which will in time be recorded as unique in the art of warfare. (Williams 2008: 97)

This view represents an excellent summary of the widely-held belief that the relatively small force of approximately 3000 SADF members and a much larger UNITA force beat a force of approximately twenty-five thousand predominantly MPLA and Cuban forces (180-186). The other view is that the military might of the SADF was soundly beaten and forced back into Namibia where it was no longer a threat to the region. This view was summed up by Nelson Mandela in a speech made in the Cuban capitol of Havana in 1991.

> The defeat of the apartheid army was an inspiration to the struggling people in South Africa. Without the defeat at Cuito Cuanavale our organisation would not have been unbanned. The defeat of the racist army at Cuito Cuanavale has

> made it possible for me to be here today. Cuito Cuanavale was a milestone in the history of the struggle for southern African liberation. (97)

As these two representations of the arguments surrounding the battle illustrate, there is little middle ground and time has not done anything to bring the debate to a conclusion. If anything, more and more details of the battle are becoming available as academic and popular interest in the events grow. It is as a result of this jostling of voices that Clive Holt's recollections have become of great interest to many.

The second reason for the text's popularity is that it deals at great length with Holt's problems relating to the PTSD, the legacy of his two years in the SADF. As a result of this, *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* has come to be seen as representative of the post-war struggles that many ex-SADF members have had to live with. While certainly not confined to those South African's ex-combatants who fought for the SADF (Gear 2008: 248), the experience of PTSD among returning SADF soldiers was so common that the army slang, *bosbefok* (Afrikaans: bush-fucked) often abbreviated as *bossies*, for the disorder entered into "common currency as a term of abuse" (Conway 2008: 84). For the majority of such SADF soldiers returning from active service, there was no official psychological support or even recognition of the debilitating effects that the disorder caused, leaving soldiers to deal with the problem by themselves. Holt goes into great detail when describing his own experience of PTSD and the effect it had on his life. Thus, the text has come to be seen as shedding light on a dark chapter of many white South African men's past. Reactions such as this are not surprising given the following reason that Holt gives for writing the text:

> I will also look at some of the challenges faced by many of these young war veterans, myself included, when they tried to fit back into a normal society once the war was over and come to terms with what they had been through, done and witnessed. (Holt 2005: 7)

It is not, however, only the soldiers for whom Holt wrote *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter*. In an interesting passage directed at his readers, Holt states:

> They [the SADF conscripts] were *your* sons, brothers, colleagues and neighbours, a bunch of ordinary guys who were thrust into a life-and-death situation without knowing what they were getting into, or being afforded the freedom of choice prior to becoming involved in something that would change their lives forever and haunt many for years to come. (7; my emphasis)

Holt's above claim suggests, to me, an intended reader. I argue that the text does not intend non-white South African readers as its audience. He specifically highlights that "you" will recognise and associate with the characters he presents in his representations. Ironically, this identification of audience runs counter to his second reason for wanting to write the text.

In what seems a confused impulse, Holt writes that he "fear[s] that many people have still not been told the truth about what really happened in Angola" (6). He ascribes this to the SADF and government censoring of the events, followed by an active campaign, by the present ANC government, to re-write history in its favour. That such censoring and rewriting did and does happen is without doubt, but Holt's claim to the truth is immediately put in doubt by the following:

> It is a great relief for me to know that the truth is becoming known – it is almost like having proof that all those things we did *really happened*. I had not imagined them or been spouting bullshit on the odd occasion that I tried to tell people about what had happened in Angola. (6; original emphasis)

Given the doubt that he at times seems to have in the truth of his experience, the veracity of his claims should be in question. However, as a counter to this, Holt makes numerous references to the diary he kept during his years of service. His reference to these diaries is unlike that of Dan Wylie's use of them in *Dead Leaves*. Where Wylie used his as a measure of how much he, and his views, had changed over the years marking the time between his service in the RDF and his writing of the text, Holt uses his war diaries as reference material. His diaries thus become the static, unchanged keepers of the "truth about what really

happened" (6). In a sense, they become the weapon with which he will counter the claims, such as those made by Nelson Mandela and others, regarding the events and outcomes of the battles. It is interesting therefore, that as his audience, Holt claims not those who offer the opposite of what he claims, but rather those who are likely to agree with him, are likely to find confirmation of an already-held belief and not those whose views he might change.

As a further appeal to the truth, Holt writes that,

> [t]his is an actual account of what happened on the ground during my time in the Angolan War. I have pulled no punches and describe events the way they occurred, and in graphic detail, where necessary. This may open some painful memories for people who were directly or indirectly involved in the war, so unless you are prepared to deal with the whole truth, stop reading now or proceed with caution. (8)

The tone of the passage's ending is interesting as it gives the impression that his writing of the truth will offer those "prepared to deal with the truth" (8) a thrill akin to the thrill of battle, implied in his "intention to take you, the reader, inside the gun turret of a Ratel armoured assault vehicle and have you experience the intensity of the battles we fought and the extreme conditions we lived under for months at a time, not knowing when or even if we would ever see our families again" (7). This offer seems inappropriate given Holt's offer of help to those also suffering from PSTD. On the one hand, Holt seems to respond to an impulse that would have him purge the fear of battle. On the other hand, he relives what seems to have been an excitement created by the "intensity of the battles". In addition, there is the sense of the heroic implied by the claim to have survived an experience so terrifying that he must warn those that are to going to read about it. This sense of the heroic is also evident in the description of battle below:

> We reversed out of there rather quickly, and I remember catching a glimpse of one of the guys in the mortar Ratel next to us (I think it was Deon) holding his rifle over the side of the vehicle with one hand and firing into the bush as the Ratel rushed to get out of there. The adrenalin was pumping and we moved back just far enough to get out of danger (about 50m). Geldenhuis, the driver,

> told me to have a look at his windscreen – there were bullet marks on it. That was close. (71)

Again, there is a sense of excitement created by the proximity to danger, the survival of which results in the representation of the survivor as heroic. The consequence of these seemingly conflicting impulses for the book, highlighted above, is that is that it conveys itself as part handbook for the survival of PSDT, part "military history" (Baines 2003: 175) of the "Angolan War" (Holt 2005: 8) and part war-based adventure novel. In turn, these conflicting impulses result in the creation of a conflicted subject position. At one stage Holt presents himself as a victim in manner identified by Nuttall and Michael (2000) below:

> 'Perpetrators', too, framed themselves as victims before the TRC, arguing that they acted on the orders of others. Here, victimhood was yoked to the notion of betrayal. (307)

However, it is Holt's tying of this position of the victim to his presentation of himself as a battle-hardened hero that is of significance. In order to address this issue, I turn to Holt's description of the manner in which he came to be in southern Angola in 1987 and 1988.

Central to Holt's service in the SADF was the realisation that "[w]e just knew and accepted that, as white males living in South Africa, we had to do two years of 'army' at some stage" (2005: 1). He then adds that it "was seen as a way of achieving superior physical fitness levels and a key element in the transition from boyhood to manhood" (1). Lacking is the awareness that he, as a "white male living in South Africa", had been subject to an "increasing militarization of the white educational system [that] was an important aspect of [apartheid's] ideological coercion" (Cock 1991: 69). An important aspect of this "ideological coercion" was the alignment of military service with a construction of masculinity that extolled boys "to participate enthusiastically in military service, which assumed the status of an initiation process into manhood" (du Pisani 2001: 165 –166). Holt seems strangely unaware of this sustained process that ultimately resulted in his having to fight in Angola.

Another important aspect of Holt's "ideological coercion" relates to his belief that he had been "called upon to serve [his] country" (2005: 1).

As a reason for his having been called to serve his country, Holt offers the following:

> The banned activists [members of the ANC and PAC] sought refuge in neighbouring African states that were sympathetic to their cause and offered support to the anti-apartheid movement. The reality of the situation was that these sympathetic neighbours enjoyed the backing of the communist regimes such as Russia and Cuba – and, since the South African government was totally opposed to communism, the die had been cast for the inevitable outcome: conflict.
> [...]
> It was widely believed that the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, was intent on gaining control of the strategic Cape sea route, and in order to do this, he would need a platform from which to launch an attack on South Africa. [...] If he could get his forces across the border and into South West Africa, he would have a solid base from which to operate and launch his assault. (3)

This analysis of the 'threat' facing South Africa is unashamedly a repeat of the Apartheid government's stated reason for their involvement in South West Africa and Angola. As is illustrated by Dan Wylie's explanation of such reasons, discussed in the previous chapter, this analysis is also indicative of the discourse surrounding the stated reasons for war posited by the other members of apartheid South Africa's web of alliance. In addition, it says nothing of the SADF mission of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which was to secure the northern Namibian border, so that SWAPO was unable to cross it in furtherance of their stated aim of liberating the country from South African white-minority rule. Nevertheless, in another confusing change of tack, Holt writes that, "[t]he primary justification for conscription of white men was to protect the Afrikaner nation (and nationalist government) against the large black majority" (2). At one moment, Holt has been conscripted to "protect the Afrikaner nation", a nation of which he is not a member, and in the next moment, he is "called upon to serve [his] country" in its fight against the expansion of communism. He does not seem to be sure if he is the victim of Afrikaner domination, or the hero of the valiant struggle against communist domination. This position should, however, be distinguished from the "hero-

victim, who gains membership of the new nation by means of his confession" (Nuttall and Michael 2000: 308) as Nuttall and Coetzee (1998) show authors such as Mark Behr to be.

It is, perhaps, for this reason that Holt, unlike most other authors and historians, does not refer to the fighting he was involved in as the Border War, but as the Angolan War. As far as I am aware, he is the only author to do so. Should he have been involved in the Border War, as Rick Andrew was, then he would position himself as complicit in the Apartheid Government's oppression of the Namibian people and in the brutality that accompanied such oppression. However, should he position himself as a soldier who fought a legitimate, conventional war, he would be able to lay claim to the pride his survival instilled in him. In a sense, it is the difference between being viewed as the bully who tortured the innocent and being viewed as the brave warrior who fought 'the good fight'.

Through making this distinction, Holt is able to represent his service as an act of patriotism, while still denying complicity in the brutality that the apartheid system represented. He is able to show loyalty to the SADF without siding with the Apartheid Government. Through this, he is able to agree with

> [m]ost former regular officers [when they] deny strongly that the SADF was an upholder of apartheid. They say they were simply serving the government of the day, in the British tradition of neutrality and of subordination of the military to civilian authority – as, they argue, the SANDF [the South African National Defence Force] does today. (Williams 2008: 61)

As a result of such claims, Holt is able to answer "The call of South Africa", the former South African Anthem, which in part reads:

> At Thy Call we shall not falter,
> Firm and steadfast we shall stand,
> At Thy will to live or perish,
> Oh South Africa, dear land.

His answer to this call is offered under the chapter title “Roll of Honour” and precedes a list of the SADF members who were killed in action during his time in Angola.

> At Thy call we DID NOT falter,
> Firm and steadfast we stood.
> It was your will for some to perish,
> Yet you turned your back on those who fought.
> An army so proud of its troops...
>
> Or so we thought.
> National colours are not awarded in battle,
> Yet the soldier’s game has higher stakes.
> We played not to win but to be victorious,
> Defeating more than opposition
> And defying death itself. (Holt 2005: 189; emphasis retained)

It is obvious, from the above, that as a member of the SADF and its fight against communist expansion, Holt positions himself as a hero. However, as a result of the apartheid government’s betrayal of the army’s trust, he has become a victim of a system that does not care about him or the psychological injuries that his service in the SADF has caused. Karen Batley (2007) draws the following conclusions regarding the position of SADF soldiers, such as Holt after, 1994:

> The irony for these socialised warriors was [...] the fact that some of the enemy the South Africans had fought against in Angola entered their new government after the war, while others were integrated into the new South Africa National Defence Force (SANDF). But the warrior who returns to radical social change largely instrumented by his enemy and who finds that he cannot be called a hero because the new dispensation has reserved that title for itself occupies a marginalised position of silence. (28)

It is this silence of the marginalised that *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* attempts to pierce. Holt’s highlighting of his suffering is in turn a claim to heroism betrayed. Finally, I argue that Holt’s complex positioning of himself as simultaneously victim and hero, should not be read so much as the confession that Nuttall and Michael (2000) argue is central to the TRC project of “speak, grieve, and heal” (307), but rather as a statement of betrayed heroism that resulted in a “victimhood [that] was yoked to the notion of betrayal” (307). Importantly, the positioning of the hero in this manner argues against inclusion in the Rainbow Nation,

because it actively seeks to imagine South Africa as other than the inclusive and respectful place envisioned by Archbishop Tutu. It refuses to acknowledge that the people, such as Bopela and Luthuli, who he was trained – through the racist discourse of the "total onslaught" – to view as terrorists and criminals should now be recognised as heroes in the same mode as he desires to be regarded. Unlike *Buried in the Sky*, *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* illustrates that Holt cannot accept what Borer (2003) describes as the process through which those directly involved in the security forces "reconcile themselves with the decriminalisation of their former enemies" (1096) and thus invest himself in the TRC and its attendant offer of inclusion in the construction of a new South African nation.

4.4 Conclusion

My discussion in this chapter has focused on the manner in which the texts read can be seen to be attempting to rewrite their place in South African history. Bopela and Luthuli's use of the heroic voice in *Umkhonto we Sizwe* sees them attempt to claim a central position in the much celebrated history of the struggle and, in turn, rejecting the title of victim that apartheid practises have been viewed to have imposed on many black South Africans. The role of victim is one that Andrew actively seeks to claim in *Buried in the Sky*. In doing so, Andrew attempts to place himself alongside other victims of apartheid, whose stories have come to be lauded following the changes signalled by the 1994 elections. Andrew's position as an unwilling conscripted soldier in the apartheid government's army is, however, presented in a problematic manner as it does not address questions of responsibility for the violent actions to which being in the army made him a party. This question is also not addressed in Holt's description of his time fighting in Angola as part of an SADF incursion into that country. In fact, Holt's problematic claiming of the dual position of both victim and hero obscures such questions through its recourse to notions of enforced masculine duty. Ultimately, his

positioning of himself in the role of heroic soldier betrayed by the state for which he fought, is central to his claim to a space in the rewriting of South Africa's apartheid history. Together, however, these texts can be seen to be active in the writing and rewriting of the history upon which Archbishop Tutu and the TRC envisioned the Rainbow Nation being constructed.

The texts are also indicative of the wider processes involved in the writing and rewriting of the wars that lie at the heart of the formation of a sense of region in southern Africa. Just as these texts show their authors to be jostling for a place in the rewriting of South and southern African history, so too do the texts discussed in the previous two chapters show their authors to be jostling for a position in the rewriting of southern African history and in the imagining of the region. Contain within all of the texts discussed in the study thus far is an assertion for particular imagining of southern Africa. These assertions vary greatly, but all are tied to the moments which they represent and are, therefore, tied to a specific configuration of the region as a number of webs of allegiance and ideological affiliation. It is important, however, to note that these imaginings do not always relate to the countries which make up the region. These webs can be formed between political groups and the government of a country – such as was the case with apartheid South Africa and UNITA in the late 1970s and 1980s – or between two or more organisations who are deeded terrorist organisation by the government of the country within which they operate – as was the case with the SWAPO, MPLA, FRELIMO and the ANC web in the early 1970s and depicted in the texts discussed in this chapter. Importantly, groupings and webs of affiliation such as the SWAPO, MPLA, FRELIMO and the ANC, with others, have come to be seen as predecessors of the formal regional grouping of countries that form SADC. The formal affiliation of southern African countries that we know today as SADC can therefore be seen to have its roots in the wars that were fought in

the region between 1960s and 2004. SADC does not, however, represent the only web of affiliation with in which configurations of the region are imagined by the texts under study thus far.

As is illustrated by the texts read in this chapter, each of the groups, parties or governments offered their own particular view of how the fighting had taken place and what led to the losses suffered or victories won. In short, each offered their own version of the history of the country, nation and region. This process has continued well after the last of the wars ended in 2004. As has been made visible in the writing and publication of Bopela and Luthuli's *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, new affiliations have been formed by the drive to assert a particular view of the history and, thus, the imagining of southern Africa. For some a central component of this drive involves more than just the reviewing of personal, party or government involvement in the fighting – as takes place in the texts examined in this and the preceding chapters – but a reviewing of the role that particular wars have played in the formation of the post-war nation. Such a review takes place in the Mozambican texts written by Mia Couto and read in the next chapter of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Tracing war in Mia Couto's writing of Mozambique's wars

5 Introduction

The end of Mozambique's civil war was officially marked by the peaceful national election on the 27th and 28th of October 1994. Fighting had, however, effectively been ended by the implementation of the United Nations (UN) ratified *Acordo Genral de Paz* of October 1992. The fact that the war had been ended by a negotiated and political, rather than a military, solution was hailed throughout the world as an example of how such seemingly intractable wars should be resolved. Also lauded was the social and economic progress made by Mozambique in the years following the massive international involvement, represented by interventions such as the infrastructural reconstruction driven by bodies such as the UN and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Such developments gave the impression that Mozambique had successfully put the 30 years of anti-colonial and civil war behind it and were in the process of forming a nation from the ruins of an extremely divisive war. The country's wars have, however, remained central to Mia Couto's, the Mozambican author, developing imagining of a Mozambican nation. He has continued to question its role that war has played in shaping the Mozambique within which he sets his novels.

In this chapter, I will argue that the effects of many years of war have left Couto attempting to realign his understandings of Mozambique's wars according to the present and future he is attempting to write. I will therefore read three of his novels, *Sleepwalking Land* (2006), *Under the Frangipani* (2001) and *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* (2004), to show how they track Couto's re-examination of the role war has had in the formation of the Mozambique he

is attempting to represent. This reading will be based on the understanding that each of the texts reference distinct, yet connected, moments along Mozambique's journey from civil war to peace and reconstruction. My reading will address questions relating to Couto's depiction of Mozambique's anti-colonial and civil wars. Of particular interest in this regard is how the manner in which Couto's representations of war is contingent on the specific moments, both temporal and national, within which the narrative is set. In what ways do Couto's representations of war question the role wars have had, in the formation or destruction of a Mozambican nation, at each specific moment? The final major question that will be considered highlights the role that Couto's conclusions to the texts play in his larger project of imagining solutions to the problems that each text reveals Mozambique to be facing. In this regard, the chapter will look to his deployment of the fantastic and aspects of magic in depiction of such solutions. Before the reading, however, I now turn to a brief overview of the historical moments into which Couto writes. Following this, I offer a brief overview of the critical reception of Couto's work in order to position my reading of his work, in relation to an ongoing discussion around Couto's use of the fantastic in his work.

Mozambique was granted independence by Portugal on the 25th of June 1975 following a protracted anti-colonial war and the fall of the Salazar-Caetano *Estado Novo* (New State) in April 1974. By 1977, the country was effectively a one-party state with the Samora Machel-led FRELIMO being described as a "Marxist-Leninist vanguard party" (Cravinho 2004: 741). However, FRELIMO's control was not to be unchallenged. At this time, Mozambique was also allowing resistance fighters from Rhodesia and South Africa to train and equip themselves within its borders, before returning to their countries to fight against their respective racist governments. As a result and in addition to openly attacking camps within Mozambique, Rhodesia began to fund, train and equip the dissident, nominally capitalist

Movimento Nacional de Resistência de Moçambique (MNR) in an attempt to destabilise the country to render it unable to offer aid to Robert Mugabe's ZANU. Following Zimbabwe's independence, however, the South African apartheid government took over the role of supporter of the MNR, now renamed *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO), in an attempt to stop FRELIMO's support of the African National Congress (ANC). By the mid 1980s the situation in Mozambique had deteriorated into a full-scale and extremely vicious civil war in which hundreds of thousands were killed and millions displaced both within the country and to neighbouring states.[1] This situation continued until a United Nations (UN)-ratified peace agreement, known as the *Acordo Geral de Paz*, was signed on the 4th of October 1992. The Mozambican Civil War was, however, not officially recognised as having ended until the successful completion of the country's first multi-party elections on the 27th and 28th of October 1994.

5.1 Mia Couto

Born on the seventh of July 1955 to Portuguese settler parents in Beira, António Emílio Leite Couto has come to be seen as Mozambique's foremost prose writer. According to Couto, it was in the streets of the country's second largest city that his love of Africa and its cultures began (Banks 110: 1998). He moved to Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, to study medicine at university in 1971. His studies were, however, eclipsed by his militant support of *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Liberation Front of Mozambique, or FRELIMO) and its armed struggle against Portuguese colonial rule. The depth of this support was proven when, in 1974, Couto left his studies to assist FRELIMO with its attempts to disseminate its message of Marxist-Leninist liberation for Mozambique. Following Mozambican independence in

[1] For testimony to the brutality and viciousness of the Mozambican Civil War, see Alao (1994), Finnegan (1992), Newitt (2002), Ottaway (1998) and Wilson (1992).

1975, Couto went on to work as a journalist for numerous publications until his acceptance of the position of director of the *Agência de Informação Nacional* (National Information Agency, or AIM) in 1977. This was followed by various stints at a number of news publications until, twelve years after having left his studies, Mia Couto returned to Eduardo Mondlane University and graduated with a degree in ecology in 1989. Although such publications have certainly garnered Couto a great deal of attention, it is for his fiction that he is most often lauded.

In addition, Couto's fictional work has generated a great deal of critical interest and debate.[2] Such debate usually focuses on the use of the fantastic in his writing, on his "inventive use of language" (Banks 1998: 116) and on his position as Mozambique's leading author. In this regard there is one quotation that has become widely circulated in discussions of Couto's work.

> The fantastic in Mia Couto's stories is also a response to what he perceives as the death of the imagination brought about by the violence of life in contemporary Mozambique. He [Couto] writes: 'what is most painful in misery is the ignorance it has of itself. Faced with the absence of everything, man stops dreaming, giving up the desire to be others. There is in nothingness this illusion of plenitude which stops life and obscures man's voices.' Literature, as practised by Mia Couto, is clearly an attempt to rekindle the pleasure of the dream. (Patrick Chabal 1996: 81)

This "attempt to rekindle the pleasure of the dream" has resulted in what David Brookshaw (1997) describes as Couto having

> turned his back on the pamphleteering tendencies of the early years of independence, preferring instead to derive his art from the stories of popular culture that form the mythical underbelly of Mozambican contemporary experience and that are the stuff of an emergent literary identity. (196)

According to Isabel Hofmeyr (2007), Couto's stories are also

[2] Mia Couto has won numerous literary awards, of which two stand out. In 2002, his first novel, *Terra Sonâmbula* (1992), was voted among the top twelve best African books of the twentieth century by an international panel at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair and in 2007 he became the first African recipient of the Latin Union Award for Romantic Literature.

> memorable for their unusual blend of violence, whimsy and humour. [They] are not the acrid disavowals of the nation-state which have become so fashionable. Couto remains deeply committed to the idea of Mozambiqueness (*Moçambicanidade*) and captures the motivating force of this desire in complex ways. (388)

Mia Couto's position within Mozambique's literary tradition and his expression of his conception of Mozambiqueness is not, however, without controversy. Philip Rothwell (2004), one of Couto's most active Anglophone scholars, captures the core of such contentions in the following:

> Now the most famous contemporary Mozambican writer, whose work has been translated into eight European languages, he has become the representative of an incipient African national culture for a predominately Western audience. [...] There are clearly problems associated with this status, not least of which is the reduction of a complex culture to the voice of a single man. [...] Furthermore, [Couto's] potential readership and thus his intended audience are predominately external to Mozambique. (17)

Not all commentators are as forgiving of what they view as Couto's faults. The Angolan author, Sousa Jamba (1997), writes that Couto's novels

> combine Mozambican traditional beliefs with subtle word-play which has delighted Lisbon critics. Although Couto often invokes the horrors of the war which gripped his country from 1975 to 1992 [...] he ignores the complex reasons behind the atrocities. (29)

Interestingly, this criticism of Couto's work and thus his position within Mozambican literature are very similar to the criticisms, as shown in Chapter Two, that Pepetela has made of Jamba's work. Both authors are seen to respond only to a relatively small circle of readers who are external to the nation they write about. João Cosme (2007) responds to this view of Couto's work by highlighting the fact that the majority of the publishing infrastructure is in Portugal which "has created problems for Mia Couto in Mozambique and he has been accused of having a Portuguese audience in mind when he writes (something which he vehemently denies) [and] Couto's defence has been quite straightforward and pragmatic, claiming that it is better to be published this way than not being published at all" (438). In addition, Cosme shows that Couto's popularity in Europe has resulted in other Mozambican

authors finding it easier to have their work published. Cosme thus illustrates that rather than eclipsing other authors, Couto's work is opening a space within which other voices can be heard (437). Finally, Cosme points out that the Western focus on the linguistic and stylistic features of Couto's work are not shared by all readers:

> Couto asserts that Mozambican readers and critics value the content of his writings more than the language and he regrets that sometimes the Portuguese tend to be too overwhelmed by the language itself to be able to see what lies behind it. One obvious reason for this is that although Couto's writing is very idiosyncratic and original to anyone who understands the Portuguese language, he gets his inspiration from Mozambican Portuguese and therefore it sounds more familiar to his Mozambican readership than to their Portuguese counterparts. (440)

The focus on Couto's "inventive use of language" (Banks 1998: 116) and deployment of the fantastic are not, however, limited to Lusophone critics. As is illustrated in the comment by Banks, many Anglophone critics have also seemed to valorise form over content in Couto's work. Cosme's answer to this is that regardless of the language in which it appears,

> one important consequence of the privilege given to language is that […] there is now a bulk of critical material on Couto's literature which focuses primarily on his linguistic strategies. This constitutes a remarkable flaw since the richness of Couto's work reaches far beyond superficial language games. One fact that proves this is the way translations of his books have consistently received extremely positive criticism, though most of the language games get lost in translation. (446)

In this chapter, I will assert that Couto's writing sees him form a deep connection between the "language games" and the writing of war. He, therefore, offers "a slithery continuum" (Hofmeyr 2007: 338) in which the manner of rendering is deeply tied to the aspect of war that is being represented. Such a view allows me to situate Couto's work as more than just a response to a deeply troubled Mozambican history. It is a response to the manner in which that history has previously been written. He is thus situating himself within a tradition of Mozambican writing, discussed in Chapter One of this study, that has war as one of its central themes.

As my discussion of the position of war within Angolan literature in Chapter One shows, the development of Mozambican and Angolan literary traditions have a number of features in common. Once such feature is the presentation, during the liberation struggle phase, of war as an heroic endeavour through which the nation must move in order to become united. Such a view is common to the *poesa de combate* of both nations. In Mozambique, however, this view came to be given greater weight due to FRELIMO's unchallenged hold on power at the moment of liberation. As a result of this hold, FRELIMO were better able to implement their "programme for 'social modernization'" (West 2005: xvii). This implementation saw the rigorous banning of

> chieftaincy altogether, establishing local organs of state to supplant chiefs authority on matters such as land distribution and the settlement of intra- and interfamily disputes. FRELIMO also banned rites of initiation and ancestral supplication and the control of sorcery/witchcraft, ritual practices through which the authority of chiefs had been consolidated. (xvii)

This move by FRELIMO was not entirely effective in its attempts. While major changes were made, and large numbers of people moved from one area to another, West notes that people's views were not entirely changed. Many rural Mozambicans continued to resort to such practices regardless of the move to ban them. If fact, West points out that the relationship between the chief and the "invisible realm" was the basis for his power in the visible realm. He notes of the Muedans of northern Mozambique that in "precolonial days, as in the present, powerful individuals in possession of exotic substances and knowledge of how to use them were said to gain access to an invisible realm wherein they not only developed unique perspectives on the visible realm they left behind but also derived from their extraordinary vision capacity to alter the visible" (20). Such a view on the nature of functioning of the world is in stark contrast to that of the scientific socialism that was presented by the majority of the writers of *poesia de combate*. In addition, it suggests a manner of understanding the

world which is illuminating when considering Couto's use of the fantastic in his writing. It suggests, I argue, a view within which Couto's deployment of the fantastic becomes more than the assertion of "the mythical underbelly of Mozambican society" with which he "[turns] his back on the pamphleteering tendencies of the early years of independence" (Brookshaw 1997: 196). It is, in fact, a writing of the world that illustrates the interaction of West's visible and invisible realms and, importantly, reclaims that which FRELIMO actively attempted to erase. While this is apparent in all of Couto's fictional writing, it is at its most obvious in the novels. In such examples, after a long account of the problems faced by Mozambique, he shows that the interaction of visible and invisible is central to understanding what is so often only thought of as existing in the visible.

5.2 Writing war during war

Sleepwalking Land was originally published in Portuguese as *Terra Sonâmbula* in 1992 and is Mia Couto's first novel. The novel's positioning within the top twelve best African books of the twentieth century by an international panel at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair in 2002, is illustrative of the kind of critical acclaim that the text has received. Furthermore, Patrick Chabal (1996) writes of *Sleepwalking Land* that its

> publication in 1992 [...] marks a turning point in the development of Mozambican literature. Not only is Terra Sonâmbula one of the very first Mozambican novels but both its subject matter and its literary quality are eminently innovative. (77)

So impressed is Chabal by *Sleepwalking Land*, that he follows these comments by using a discussion of the text as a template with which "to trace the genesis of Mozambican prose writing" (77). It is, however, not only literary commentators that have been deeply moved by the text. The Nigerian author, Uzodinma Iweala (2006), finishes a review of the novel for the *New York Times* with the following:

> Many great novels have shown a world torn to shreds by the brutality of war. To do so, their authors ground their texts in the details of destruction and

> decay. But Couto's novel stands apart: it shows the world that war creates, a dreamscape of uncertainty where characters and readers alike marvel not at the abnormal becoming normal but at the way we come to accept the impossible as reality. (http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/30/books/review/30iweala.html?_r=1)

As these reviews show, *Sleepwalking Land* has been lauded for both its innovative form and for its thematic concerns. That different critics have chosen to focus on disparate aspects of the texts is, I argue, to be expected from a text that offers the reader a multifaceted view of one of Mozambique's most difficult times.

Sleepwalking Land is set during the height of the Mozambican Civil War that took place between 1975 and 1992. It is a novel that is particularly difficult to summarise as it is, on the one hand, an account of two different and yet deeply intertwined journeys, while on the other hand, it is a collection of numerous stories detailing various characters' experiences of war-torn Mozambique. In accordance with this multifaceted perspective of Mozambique at war, Couto's text interweaves two narratives. The first narrative describes the journey of an old man, Tuahir, and a young boy, Muidinga, as they seek to escape the war and its violence by travelling to remote areas of Mozambique. During their journey, they seek shelter in a bus that has been attacked by unknown assailants, burnt and left alongside a forsaken road. It is within this bus that they find, along with numerous corpses, a suitcase containing eleven exercise books that recount the story of a man, Kindzu, and his quest to become a *naparama*, described by Couto as "traditional warriors, blessed by witch doctors, who fought against warmongers" (2006: 20). It is Kindzu's story and the travels it describes that form the second narrative.

Structurally, *Sleepwalking Land* is of great interest as the two narratives are recounted in separate parts of each chapter, with Tuahir and Muidinga's story always preceding Kindzu's.

The text is structured in this way as it is Muidinga's reading of the notebooks to Tuahir that gives voice to Kindzu's story. Of this complicated interaction of the written and the oral, Philip Rothwell (2004) writes that

> Kindzu's notebooks represent the written world, for they are very consciously presented as written texts, whereas the alternate chapters, which are primarily constituted by dialogue between Muidinga and Tuahir, represent the oral universe.
> [...]
> The notebooks transfer memory from the written world to the oral world, from Kindzu to Muidinga. But they also transfer memory from the oral world to the written world since they are, first and foremost, Kindzu's memories inscribed on a page. (80 – 81)

The illustration of this complicated representation of the interaction between the written and the oral in the text serves to underscore the many strategies the people who populate the novel have had to adopt in order to survive the brutality of the war. In this regard, *Sleepwalking Land* is also unusual because while Mozambique's Civil War forms the backdrop to the novel, as does the Zimbabwean liberation war in *Bones*, it is not overtly discussed. Indeed, Rothwell (2004) points out that even Couto's presentation of the written and the oral as deeply intermingled is a function of his desire to "offer a new reality in which clear demarcations are no longer acceptable because the Manichean order which they imply has been at the heart of a failure to resolve the national conflict for so many years" (78). *Sleepwalking Land* is, however, not the only time that Couto's work attempts to break down the binaries which are so often used to construct understandings of the world. In fact, it is a project that has come to be seen by most critics as a defining feature of his work, one which prompts Isabel Hofmeyr (2007) to write that "[i]stead of a Manichean world of good and evil, we [are] presented with a slithery continuum" (388). In opposition to this view, however, I will argue in the following that while Couto certainly presents the consequence of war as "a slithery continuum", in *Sleepwalking Land* he is unable to construct a representation of it that does not depend on an understanding of war as an aberration, opaque and only

comprehensible through the changes that it makes to societies. In order to do so, I will now turn to a reading of war as Couto presents it in *Sleepwalking Land*.

Mia Couto begins *Sleepwalking Land* with the following, extraordinary introductory paragraph:

> War had killed the road thereabouts. Hyenas slunk along the tracks, snuffling among ashes and dust. The landscape had blended sadness the likes of which had never been seen before, in colours that clung to the inside of the mouth. They were dirty colours, so dirty that they had lost all their freshness, no longer daring to rise into the blue on the wing. Here the sky had become unimaginable. And creatures had got used to the ground, in resigned apprenticeship of death. (2006: 1)

It is an arrestingly miserable picture, but one that very effectively introduces war as one of the text's primary themes. In addition, it is an introduction to war that is without any historical underpinning and thus serves to render it as a near mythical experience that has come to disfigure all that comes into contact with it. This sense of war is underpinned by Kindzu's description of its arrival at his home village. He records in his First Notebook, "A time when the world was as young as we were", that

> [t]ime was ambling along at a leisurely pace when war broke out. My father said it was some confusion that had come from abroad, brought by those that had lost their privileges. At first, all we heard were vague bits of news and our fears were filled with blood. War is a snake that bites us with our own teeth. Its poison flowed through all the rivers of our soul. We no longer ventured outside during the day, and at night we no longer dreamed. Dreams are the eyes of life and we were blind. (9)

Unlike the overwhelming majority of war writing, Couto never depicts any of the fighting that is the cause of the misery that stalks Mozambique. Importantly, however, Couto does draw an interesting comparison between "war" as Mozambique is seen to experience it in *Sleepwalking Land* and the many years of war that preceded the country's independence. Kindzu writes that his father "said it was some confusion that had come from abroad, brought by those that had lost their privileges" (9). The reference to "those that had lost their

privileges" is undoubtedly a reference to the Portuguese settlers who left Mozambique following independence in 1975. Kindzu's father has, however, also highlighted that the civil war was, in large part, caused by regional issues, related to the connected positions of those in webs of alliance, rather than national issues and that those who "had lost their privileges" were still actively involved in the politics that were "filled with blood" (9).

This is not the only reference that Couto makes to the link between the war that marked the end of Portuguese colonisation and the civil War that followed independence. Much later in Kindzu's narrative, he writes of Carolinda, a local FRELIMO administrator's wife, paying "homage to the heroes of the independence struggle" (179), one of whom was her dead husband. Kindzu writes that

> [h]e had died in the war of independence, when Carolinda was still a young girl of almost no age at all. Folk said he was ambushed not by the Portuguese enemy, but by elements of the guerrilla army itself. (179)

The above account of a "Portuguese enemy" and a "guerrilla army" involved in "the war of independence" is in stark contrast to Couto's description of the current violence being perpetrated by "armed bandits" (159). In the above quotation relating to "the war of independence", Couto seems to imply that the war, while it may have had an explanation, was somehow legitimate and recognisable as such. Due to there being a "Portuguese enemy" on one side and a "guerrilla army" on the other, the effect is the same as the current war. People are still killed by both sides, regardless of which side they were seen to support. In a sense, this depiction of the War of Independence underscores that of Couto's depiction of the civil war. If indeed, "[t]ime was ambling along at a leisurely pace when war broke out" (9) then it would seem that the previous war had either brought that "leisurely pace" about, or the War of Independence had never really assumed the heights of violence that the Civil war was to reach. I argue that Couto's depiction lends itself to the former explanation. There are

numerous descriptions in *Sleepwalking Land* of colonial Mozambique being filled with a violence specific to colonialism and that, at least until the beginning of the Civil War, such violence had ended. Nevertheless, as is also clear from the father's interpretation of "those from overseas" (9), the violence that has arrived can also be seen to be linked to the violence of colonialism. That link aside, however, a new kind of violence has arrived and it is this violence that Couto describes as "war". In this, if nothing else, he is very specific. The term war, as it is used in *Sleepwalking Land*, relates directly to what came after independence and is without any legitimacy.

Another important aspect of Couto's depiction of Mozambique's Civil War is his representation of those perpetrating the violence. As mentioned above, Couto refers to the majority of the violence and destruction as being perpetrated by "armed bandits" (159). It is an interesting reference as the FRELIMO "government and many Mozambicans called RENAMO *bandidos armados*, 'armed bandits,'" (Finnegan 1992: 4). In this respect, it is important to remember that Mia Couto has a long history with FRELIMO. Moreover, as Rothwell (2004) points out, "[t]he FRELIMO public relations machine had always been extremely effective, and for several years, Couto himself belonged to it, as the director of the Mozambican Information Agency (AIM) from 1978" (77). While it is impossible to know whether Couto (2006) is merely following the FRELIMO party line when he refers to "bandits", I argue that to some extent he is when, in the text, he writes that "the bandits' job is to kill [and] the soldiers' job is to avoid dying" (23). Referring to those involved in the fighting on the government side as "soldiers" and those in opposition as "bandits" would seem to confer legitimacy to one side but not the other. In other references to these "bandits", the text makes it clear that they are the cause of the destruction that Couto so brilliantly describes in the novel's opening paragraph. This is certainly in keeping with the FRELIMO

line that RENAMO was nothing more than a collection of bandits who were only interested in war as a means to access wealth and that they were, therefore, responsible both for starting and for continuing the war. However, nothing in Couto's world is that simple and he turns this argument on its head.

The war which is depicted in *Sleepwalking Land* is certainly unlike the one which preceded it and in as much as the "bandits" may have been its initial cause, Couto points out that they were not the only ones actively involved in the Civil War's propagation. He describes a situation in which, following the initial attacks, all members of society use the situation to make money. In confirmation of this, Kindzu offers the following as

> the reason for the endless funeral procession. I recalled Surendra's words: if there had to be war, there had to be death. And what was it all for? To licence robbery. For nowadays, no wealth could be born from work. Only pillage gave people property rights. Death was necessary so that laws could be forgotten. Now that there was total chaos, anything was permitted. The finger would always be pointed elsewhere.
> 'It may finish in the country. But inside us, the war will never end." (105)

In this depiction, war is lawless chaos, a time to make money through robbery and death. It is unusual for Couto to offer such a straightforward definition of anything, especially considering it is a definition given through an explanation of its effect on the people affected by it. This, it would seem, runs counter to Couto's alleged "desire to overcome boundaries and to subvert demarcations" (Rothwell 2004: 171), but when considered alongside other definitions of war which he offers, it becomes clear that Couto is often unable to penetrate what I described above as war's opaque nature. It is an opaqueness which obscures the causes of the war so successfully that war itself becomes seen as a cause rather than as an effect of larger problems. In this instance, Couto is only able to describe the war through its creation of death and chaos. This strategy is again illustrated in the quotation below.

> 'Nowadays, the war here in Mozambique is like a plantation.'

> And he explained himself: the war was generating a lot of cash, everyone was sowing his own private war. Each made money out of others people's lives.
> [...]
> 'That's the reason why this war will never end. That's exactly why.' (2006: 134)

The notion of an unending war is repeated a number of times in the text, however, even in this case there two reasons for the continuation of the violence. First is the reason stated above, which is that war will not end while people profit from it and the second is that the war has irreversibly changed the people whose lives it has touched. Here too, Couto offers the reader with an understanding of war that defines it in a manner which can only be depicted through reflection. Significantly, the reflection Couto directs the reader towards is Mozambique and its inhabitants. However, in a way true to Couto's world view, even this reflection is multifaceted. Its most obvious facet is the physical damage that the war has done to the land, as is illustrated in the opening paragraph quoted above. An example of the physical damage the war has done to people is to be seen in the image of Assane, who is wheelchair-bound, comparing himself to a battle-damaged tank.

> Hidden among the bushes was a huge military tank. The lump of armoured plating was half destroyed, and had no wheels. With its sides on the sand, it was like a warrior in a state of convalescence.
> 'This tank is my brother, for neither of us has functioning legs.' (2006: 115)

Beyond the physical scars the war has left on the land and its people, Couto points out there is another form of devastation that will, in the long term, be far more problematic.

Such damage is signalled by the line; "[i]t may finish in the country[, b]ut inside us, the war will never end" (2006: 105). It is the internalisation of the war that is central to *Sleepwalking Land*'s narrative and is mirrored in the text's inward-looking narrative. As an attempt to propose an explanation as to what becomes of those who have the war "inside us", the text offers the following:

> ‘That’s because you’re alone. That’s what war has done: now, all of us are alone, the dead and the living. There’s no nation any more.’ (2006: 158)

The internalisation of war has left people isolated from themselves, each other, their traditions and their history. Importantly, to Couto it is all of these that make up a nation rather than the lines on a map and their loss. The sense of aloneness brought about by war, marks the ultimate destruction of Mozambique. It is an understanding of nation which echoes Timothy Brennan (2009), who asserts that “[a]s for a term, it refers to both the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous – the ‘*natio*’ – a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging” (45). War has destroyed all levels of Mozambican society, culture and human existence and to Couto, this is the true tragedy that arrived in 1975. Crucially, both the land and its people are suffering the same sense of dislocation as is indicated in the quotation below.

> I [Kindzu] would never fulfil any of my dreams as long as his [Kindzu’s father] shadow hung over me. The same thing was happening to our country, which had divorced itself from its ancestors. The country and I were suffering the same punishment. (2006: 40)

The abandoning of the ancestors reflects West’s assertion that FRELIMO “banned rites of initiation and ancestral supplication” and thus illustrates Couto’s attempt to show that what was done to the country in the name of progression has, in fact, caused a dislocation. As a result of this dislocation, both are to wander aimlessly, as if in sleep. It is from this that the novel takes its title, *Sleepwalking Land*. All of the main characters are seen to be in a dislocated space which results in their having to keep moving in order for them to survive and those that stop, die. This is unlike of the journey, as depicted in *Mayombe* and *Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a Divided People*, of the hero whose travel is given purpose and direction by the necessity of saving their people or bettering their society. It is also not akin to the being sent from one area to another at the seeming whim of the government, as is central to the narratives of *Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesian War* and *Buried in the Sky*. In

Sleepwalking Land people move to stay alive, no more and no less. The ultimate demonstration of this comes in a description of a refugee camp set up to take in those whom the war has displaced as "crowded to together, starving, waiting for disaster [and in,] most cases, what they were awaiting was death. (Couto 2006: 190)

It is not only the people that are forced to keep moving. As I have mentioned above, Couto shows the people and the land to be deeply tied. The following are two descriptions of the land which surrounds the bus that Muidinga and Tuahir have sheltered in.

> Muidinga hardly recognises anything in the vicinity of the bus. The landscape continues to change untiringly. Can it be that the land is meandering along by itself? Of one thing Muidinga is certain: it's not the wrecked bus which is moving. (100)

And later Tuahir explains to Muidinga that even though it had seemed to him as though they had moved far from the bus when they left it, they had in fact stayed near to it as the bus had been moved along with them by the land. Tuahir concludes this explanation by pointing out that:

> Everything had happened in the vicinity of the bus. It was the country which was parading past like a sleepwalker.
> [...]
> 'That's it boy, we are travelling. In this stopped bus, we haven't stopped travelling. (141)

I argue that this conception of a land that has kept its people moving in order for them to survive signals an understanding of nations that recalls Brennan's (2009) notion of nation as a "condition of belonging" (45) and implies a construct of nation that precedes the colonially defined borders. It is older than the nation the colonial borders identified and yet just as much a product of the events currently unfolding on it. Ultimately, it is the land itself that is combating the human war being waged on it. Therefore, in Couto's words, if war had resulted in the people "no longer dream[ing and d]reams are the eyes of life" (9), then "the land seeks

deep inside each person so as to gather together all their dreams [and] we could say that life is the seamstress of dreams" (190). In a manner most fitting for Couto the ecologist, the land is to become what will save the people through its attempts to get them to dream again and, thus, put an end to "that illusion of plenitude which causes life to stop" (Couto 1990; "Author's Foreword"). While discussing a different topic within *Sleepwalking Land*, but one that I argue has very similar characteristics, Rothwell records Couto (2004) as saying,

> while being careful not to glamorise or defend the bloodshed [...], 'the war helped to bring to the surface dimensions of Mozambique which would probably have remained hidden if the process of constructing the nation had proceeded 'normally''. In Couto's opinion, the war revealed something about the cultural essence of Mozambique that would have remained unknown had the nation followed the usual developmental paradigm imposed on other African nations, which 'implies a profound lack of respect for cultural values'. (79)

For Couto then, war has forced Mozambicans to see that they are living in a dislocated state in which important aspects of life have been forcibly forgotten. One such aspect or "cultural value" is an understanding of the role of the land in the construction of the nation. It is an extremely interesting idea as it presents one with another important understanding of the role the civil war has had in the construction of Mozambique. From one aspect, the war forced people to realise that they are deeply tied to the land and thus brought to the "surface dimensions of Mozambique which would probably remained hidden" were it not for the war (79). Alternatively, the mutual experience of suffering that the people went through also brought all of them closer to a mutual understanding of the country. Thus the writing of the question: "what war has done, [is leave] all of us [...] alone, the dead and the living" (2006: 158) is simultaneously destroying and creating the nation. It is typically Couto to both highlight and destroy binaries in one representation. However, this again illustrates the difficulty that Couto has when attempting to represent war and the manner in which it is linked to the formation of nation. He is highlighting the problems the socialist rejection of ritual practices has caused and yet is seen to subscribe to one of its central tenets regarding

war, that of war as central to the formation of a unified nation. War, in this example, can only be shown in the role the experience of it will have on a future nation, if indeed there should ever be one.

As implied by the doubt in the possibility of a post-war nation mentioned above, Couto seems unable to present the reader with a conclusion to the narratives which make up the novel. *Sleepwalking Land* ends with a coming together, in a dream, of the written and spoken narratives. During his travels, Kindzu's quest changes and he finds himself trying to find a lost child named Gaspar. During the dream, as well as realising that he has become a *naparama*, Kindzu comes across the bus containing his notebooks. He, therefore, realises that he is to die; he also realises that Muidinga is, in fact, Gaspar. Muidinga is simultaneously reading this and thus discovers that he is Gaspar, whose search he has been reading about. The implication is that in the Muidinga/Gaspar figure Couto brings together the oral world and the written world, thus the past and the present, the pre-war with the war-torn. In addition, Muidinga/Gaspar is the product of a rape of his black-African mother by a white-Portuguese settler and he is, thus, the representation of the life that could come of violence and the physical embodiment of the end of a racial binary. Through the use of this coming together of Mozambique's history in the figure of Muidinga/Gaspar, Couto is suggesting that past actions are integral to the Mozambique the war has created. In accordance, all views have a place in the construction of the nation. It is, I argue, an assertion that in order to move on, the people of Mozambique must be accommodating of multiple views and voices. There is also the implication that it is precisely the rejection of such a standpoint that has led to the wars. In short, Muidinga/Gaspar represents the only possibility of a future that Mozambique has. Couto does not describe anything of his life beyond that he "quivers as if he were being born a second time" (2006: 213). As a consequence, the reader is still not offered a unified

understanding of war's role in the making or unmaking of a Mozambican nation, but this I argue, is because Couto cannot see beyond the war itself as it had, at the time of publication in the original Portuguese, still not undeniably ended. I will argue in the next section, however, that the advent of peace, in 1992, brought Couto a new opportunity to examine war and its role in Mozambique's construction which is what I will argue he does in *Under the Frangipani*.

5.3 Writing war after war

Mozambique's civil war ended when a United Nations (UN)-ratified peace agreement, known as the *Acordo Geral de Paz* (General Peace Accord), was signed on the 4th of October 1992 (Cravinho 2004: 743). Mia Couto's second novel, *Under the Frangipani*, was published in Portuguese as *A Varanda do Frangipani* four years later in 1996. As is the case in *Sleepwalking Land*, *Under the Frangipani* is constructed through the telling of two, intertwined narratives that come together at the end. The first narrative relates a police inspector from the capital city of Maputo, Izidine Naíta's, search for the murderer of the director, Vastsome Excellency, of an old-age refuge located in the fort of São Nicolau. If, however, the detective thinks that this investigation is to be like any other he has undertaken, he is mistaken because, unlike in any other investigation, everybody at the fort who he interviews claim to be the murderer. The difficulty that he, therefore, faces is not the sorting of the guilty from those who claim innocence, but rather sorting the innocent from those who claim guilt.

The second narrative follows a dead man, Ermelindo Mucanga, and his attempt to "die again" (Couto 2001: 6) in order to avoid being dug up by the Mozambican government and paraded as a hero of the anti-colonial struggle, which he was certainly not. He worked in the colonial-

era fort as a carpenter, during the time when it was being transformed into a prison for resistance fighters captured by the Portuguese during the country's Independence War. Ermelindo, however, died a week before the completion of the work and was buried on the fort's terrace under the frangipani tree from which the novel takes its title. Unfortunately for the dead man, he was not buried according to tradition and is, as a result, unable to become an ancestor. Instead Ermelindo has become "one of those dead men who are still attached to life by their umbilical cords" (2). According to his *halakavuma*, an anteater that lives with him in his grave, the only way he can avoid being dug up and become an ancestor is by re-inserting himself into the world of the living through entering Izidine's body and dying when he does.

The two most comprehensive studies made of the novel, highlight it as one that illustrates Couto's attempt to understand the functioning of various notions of truth and the subsequent effects that these understandings have for modern Mozambique. Of this attempt, Gerald Gaylard (2005) writes that, "Couto's *Under the Frangipani* suggests that the tools of rationality and empiricism are inadequate for a Mozambican context" (170). In a very similar vein, Philip Rothwell (2004) explains Couto's mission to understand truth.

> The search for truth […] hinges on the recognition and immediate banishment of falsehood, thus depending for its meaning, exclusively and excludingly, on the concept of what is not. But this very concept of falsehood, feeding as it does into what is established to be its opposite, is never erased and always impinges on the domain of the truth, through reference and reversals. Today's truth is believed to be false tomorrow. [...] So, while death is associated with the location of an inflexible truth and a fantasized god, life is linked to lies, which is precisely the lesson that Couto offers in *A Varanda do Frangipani* [*Under the Frangipani*]. (31)

The link between truth and the Mozambican Civil War is an important one as it was supposedly the truth of each party's ideological position that FRELIMO and RENAMO were fighting for. However and in keeping with the views offered in *Patriots*, *Return of the Water*

Spirit and *The Non-Believer's Journey*, *Sleepwalking Land* illustrates that the war was fought for personal gain rather than for ideological truths. As Gaylard and Rothwell point out though, Couto is still deeply interested in the implementation of non-Mozambican ideologies and their "truths" even after the terror of the war is over. Unlike Gaylard and Rothwell, I do not subscribe to the view that Couto seeks to banish all versions of such ideologies. Instead, I argue that Couto is attempting to write a Mozambique in which aspects of all understandings can come together in the manner signalled by the figure of *Sleepwalking Land*'s Muidinga/Gaspar. Accordingly, no position has the right to deny the presence of the other such as was the case in FRELIMO's denial of the "invisible world" highlighted by West. In addition, Couto's reviewing of the war from the position of a post-war Mozambique continues to illustrate the difficulties he has when attempting write the war and its consequence.

The first aspect of Couto's post-war examination I consider is the war's place in Mozambique's development. Couto's descriptions of the fort in which the novel's events take place are interesting in that they represent a space that existed from the very beginnings of what was to become the nation-state of Mozambique. São Nicolau has played a role in all aspects of colonial rule. It has seen the violence of the slave trade, the fighting between colonial powers as they sought control of the coast and finally, the war that was to end its builder's rule (Couto 2001: 3). Intriguingly, from that point on, the fort became a place not of powerful rule, but one of refuge for the aged. In accordance with this new role, the fort stops being actively involved in the events that are to shape post-independence Mozambique. It slips into obscurity, as the war that rages in the land effectively pushes it further out of the way through the laying of the mines. It thus becomes apparent that for the fort, a long

continuum has been broken. Civil war has removed it from any further role in the shaping of the country.

> [d]uring the long years of the war, the refuge had been cut off from the rest of the country. The place had severed its links with the world. The rocky beach hindered access from the sea. Inland, minefields [laid during the civil war] completed the siege. São Nicolau could only be reached by air. All supplies and visitors arrived by helicopter.
> Recently, peace had been established throughout the country. But [...] the fort was still surrounded by mines and no one dared to leave or enter it. (14)

It would seem that for the fort, time had stopped until the murder of its director, Vastsome Excellency.

Marta, the refuge's nurse and Vastsome's wife, describes the effect of the war on the experience of time.

> War creates another cycle of time. Our lives are no longer measured by years or seasons. Or by harvests, famine or floods. War establishes the cycle of blood. We start saying 'before the war, after the war'. War swallows up the dead and devours its survivors. I didn't want to be a relic of such violence. At least, here in the fort, the old ones tried to provide another kind of order in my life. (2001: 123)

The implication is that the civil war has changed the experience of time, in a way that enforces the break brought about by colonial occupation and, therefore, results in an examination of "after the war" (123). It is such a break, as I argued in Chapter Three, that *Bones* and *The Non-Believer's Journey* work towards bridging and one that Couto seems unable to voice. The picture that Couto renders of post-war Mozambique is not an encouraging one. It is a place which "is alive thanks to its own sickness [and] survives on crime and feeds on immorality" (124). Within this new world order,

> [n]o one respected the old anymore. It was all the same whether you were living in a refuge or outside. In other homes for the elderly, the situation was even worse than in São Nicolau. Relatives and soldiers came in from outside to help themselves to food. The old folk who before had yearned for company, no longer looked forward to their visits. (108)

In order to contrast this view of the present, the text goes on to offer this glimpse into the past:

> [H]e said that in villages out in the country, the elderly led a far happier life. The family protected them, and they were listened to and respected. The elders had the last word in the gravest matters. Salufo recalled the old days and his face took on a boyish expression. Then, once he had finished, he shut himself away in his melancholy. (105)

As I describe in my discussion of *Sleepwalking Land*, the old traditions have been discarded and, therefore, the elderly are no longer valued for their wisdom. War can clearly be seen to have caused a rupture in the fabric of Mozambican society. The cycle is not complete; even though the nurse speaks of "after the war", it is clear that the aspects of the war have worked their way through to post-war society. This calls to mind the quotation from *Sleepwalking Land* in which Couto (2006) writes that, "inside us, the war will never end" (105). As an example of this lingering damage, the text goes on to show why, even though the war has ended, its effects are still to be felt.

Of all the war-damaged people that litter the text's pages, it is within the figure of Vastsome Excellency that the effects of the war are the clearest. The director is described by Marta as having

> served in the war. He had taken part in campaigns I would rather not know about. He saw many people die. Who knows whether it wasn't during such experiences that his last trace of kindness was extinguished? What was strange was that most people had been rendered homeless by the armed conflict. In Vastsome's case, the opposite occurred: it was war that had been made homeless and so it lodged inside him, a refugee in his heart. (2001: 103 –104)

Vastsome is the reason that the war had not been contained in "the cycle of blood" (123). The acts of brutality that he had been a part of are still alive in him and, therefore, he continues to live as he had in the war. This continuation is marked by corruption and greed. We read that he has been selling the refuge's provisions instead of giving them to the old people and even

worse, that he has become involved in the illegal arms trade. Indeed such transgressions, reminiscent of the arms dealing depicted in *The Return of the Water Spirit*, are the kind of things that would have happened in the war and were supposed to have stopped with the advent of peace.

Only Salufo, Vastsome's servant and wartime companion, is aware of the way the elderly are being treated, of the corruption and of the arms dealing. He, therefore, launches "an extraordinary plan" to

> plant mines again round the fort. He would bury the same mines that were being dug up along the road.
> They're clearing the mines, I'm going to start unclearing them again.
> [...]
> Salufo Tuco wanted to shut off the road to the future. And he didn't just talk about it. He devoted himself to this strange mission with heart and soul. (2001; 109 – 110)

This is no solution, as all it does is re-enforce the "cycle of blood" (123). Isolation will not protect the fort because the effects of the war have already come to the fort in a manner that it did not when the war was being fought. Ironically, "shut[ting] the road to the future" would not help those in the fort as the future, a future of uncaring corruption, has already arrived. In addition, Salufo Tuco's solution is one that would only work if averting the arrival of the change that an open road would bring was enough, but the problems that the old people face are caused by the aspects of the war that were "a refugee in [Vastsome's] heart" (103 –104). War's long reach is shown when Salufo is killed by Vastsome because he suspects Salufo of trying to steal from him. In this example, there is the implication that the war would never be over and that Mozambique is forever bound to suffer its consequences. Such an understanding is strikingly similar to that put forward in *Sleepwalking Land* and, therefore, deeply unsettling as it would imply that Mozambique is still at the mercy of the imported ideological dogmas that have resulted in so much bloodshed. *Under the Frangipani* is,

however, different to *Sleepwalking Land* in that it offers its reader a solution to the problems facing Mozambique.

The solution mentioned above lies with the elderly who occupy the fort, the dead man and the influence they will be shown to have on the police inspector, Izidine Naíta. Of Izidine we read that,

> [h]e had studied in Europe, had returned to Mozambique some years after independence. Separation had curtailed his knowledge of the culture, of the languages, of the little things that shape a people's soul. Back in Mozambique he had gone straight into an office job in the capital. His day-to-day experience was limited to a tiny corner of Maputo. Little more than that. In the countryside [the refuge], he was no more than an outsider. (38)

According to Rothwell, "Izidine personifies the search for truth" (36) and is, therefore, the embodiment of external ways of ordering the world interfering with the construction of a whole Mozambique. He embodies the ways of thinking that caused that war and as a result he will never be able to find the killer because he cannot comprehend the Mozambique the elderly inhabit. Marta attempts to make him understand by telling him that the old are "*the bedrock of this same world you walk on over there in the city*" (72).

Izidine is, however, unable to recognise the old people's importance to the future as he is unable to look beyond his investigation. The manner in which he has been taught to search for truth has narrowed his ability to understand and Marta is again forced to explain.

> The culprit you seek, my dear Izidine, isn't a person. It's war. The war is to blame for everything. The war killed Vastsome. The war tore to shreds the world in which elderly folk could shine and had a role to play. These old timers who are rotting away here, were loved before the conflict. There was a world to welcome them, and families who put themselves out to care for the aged. Then violence brought other priorities. And the old were banished from the world, banished from we ourselves. (123)

The old people and the dead man are the link to a time before the war and they are, therefore, the only ones who have the knowledge that can help both Izidine and Mozambique. One of

the “other priorities” that the war brought and that was left over is to be seen in the arms that Vastsome was dealing in. Now that he is dead, his partners are going to come to collect them under the pretence that they were arriving to collect the inspector following his work at the fort. In addition to collecting the arms, Little Miss No, one of the fort’s inhabitants who is blessed with magical powers, makes the inspector aware that the people in the helicopter plan to kill him as they “*hate you* [as y]*ou studied in the white man’s country, you’ve got the skills to face the manias of the new way of life that have come since the war*” (139). Little Miss No’s assertion that the inspector has “*got the skills*”, as a result of his having studied in Europe, seems out of place considering that Couto has highlighted that the war was, in large part, caused by the introduction of unsuitable, foreign, political and ideological positions to the exclusion of others. However, as the text shows, Izidine will not be able to save himself, for he does not believe Marta when she tells him that,

> - You’ll never understand. What’s happening here is a coup d’état.
> -A coup d’état?
> -Yes, that’s what you should be worrying about, mister policeman.
> -But here in the fort, a coup? Izidine laughed in disbelief.
> -Honestly, Marta…
> -It’s not here in the fort. It’s throughout the country. Oh yes, it’s a coup against the past.
> […]
> -We must preserve the past. Otherwise, the country will be left without its bedrock. (99)

In this understanding of the results of the war, the present has staged a “*coup against the past*”, the young have usurped the elders’ position in society. As a result, the country cannot move beyond the war until it has rebuilt itself on the “bedrock” that the elderly represent or else another war is likely. The fact that there is the possibility of another war is signalled through Couto’s description of the arms as “the seeds of a new war” through which Vastsome was “tending the burning coals of hell which had already burnt everyone’s feet” (140). It is clear that the arms must be destroyed and Izidine saved if the war’s resurrection is to be stopped.

Couto illustrates his assertion that the elderly are still of great use to the nation through the scene in which the world is rid of the arms which Vastsome Excellency has been storing at the refuge. Little Miss No takes over and performs the following task:

> Before their very eyes, they beheld something fantastic happen: there, where the ground had been, was a bottomless hole, the entrance to emptiness itself, a hollow within a void.
> They immediately got to work, and threw the arms into the depths. They emptied the weapons into the abyss and remained, for an infinity, listening to the noise of metals clashing with each other. To this day, arms can be heard echoing through the void, emptying beyond the world. (141 – 142)

The arms, like the war that relied on them for its propagation, can never be entirely erased, but they must be consigned to the void. The void is an interesting image as it illustrates, I argue, Couto's final acceptance that he cannot narrate the war. For all the elasticity that his attempts to write the war in *Sleepwalking Land* show, it would seem that what was opaque has now become a "void", the time between "before the war, after the war" (123). Importantly, Couto does acknowledge that war, as embodied by the arms, cannot ever be forgotten or entirely wiped from the Mozambican psyche. It will forever, "[echo] through the void", but the country and its people can move on if they reunite the past with the present. As Rothwell (2004) explains it,

> Couto's recourse to ancestral authenticity is a critique of the damage foreign systems dumped on the nation caused. More than a desire to recapture a lost past, through his work, Couto is concerned with imagining a different future. […] Couto uses a coming to terms with the past as a way of projecting a better reality into the future. (131)

And as I have argued elsewhere,

> When read in light of [Rothwells'] assertion, Couto's writing of Little Miss No using traditional magic to consign the arms to the void shows the possibilities that the incorporation of alternate systems of knowledge have for the creation of a better future. Perhaps more important though, is the 'different future'; the 'new world' that incorporates both Izidine and the old people's understandings of the world that Couto imagines as the end of the novel. (Rogers 2010: 120)

It could be said that Couto's recourse to a magical destruction of the arms constitutes an escape from reality, but such a view does not take into account West's (2005) highlighting of the function of the "invisible world" within the context of the "visible world" in Mozambique. Of this, West writes that some "sorcerers inverted or reversed the invisible acts of their predecessors and thereby remade the world" (20). West's observation does not directly relate to the actions performed, but rather the ability of such people to "rema[ke] the world" through being thought to have power within the invisible realm. They do, however, point to a relationship between the realms within which, I argue, Couto situates the solution to *Under the Frangipani*'s narrative.

The end of the novel sees Vastsome's cohorts return from Maputo by helicopter, supposedly to return Izidine to Maputo. They are actually planning to kill him because of the information that he has gathered about their corrupt dealings. In order to save him, the dead man and the *halakavuma* "assemble the forces of this world and other worlds, and would unleash a storm to beat all storms" (Couto 2001: 146) which causes the helicopter to crash into the storeroom that contains the void and disappear. Significantly, the fall of the helicopter and the world of corruption those inside it represent, are carried out by the "forces of this world and other worlds" (146). Couto thus signals an interaction between the differing worlds which has been denied by many Mozambicans through colonial and FRELIMO rule. It is fitting, therefore, that the solution to the narrative focuses on the dead man and the Frangipani tree.

Though saving Izidine the dead man has moved beyond the "life of lies" in which he

> crowned myself with cowardice. When it was time to fight for my country I had refused. I had nailed planks of wood when some were building a nation. I was loved by a shadow when others were multiplying themselves with living bodies. While alive, I hid from life. When I was dead, I hid myself in the body of a living person. And when my life was genuine, it was a lie. Death hit me with such truth that I couldn't believe it. Now was my last chance to move in

> concert with time. And to help to deliver a world in which a man could be respected just for living his life. (147)

Having thus acted and "mov[ed] in concert with time" Ermelindo Mucanga can now continue his journey to becoming an ancestor by re-entering the earth by moving through the frangipani tree and into the earth. This journey is capped by the following description:

> Just as my [the dead man's] body was in the final stages of disappearance, I looked back and noticed the other old people were going down with us, bound for the depths of the frangipani tree. […] On the other side, bathed in light, stood Marta Gimo and Izidine Naíta. Their image was fading, all that remained of them was a double crystalline halo, a brief glint of dawn. (150)

Here the tree forms a link between the world of the dead and the world of the living. As such a link, Couto's choice of a frangipani tree, originally from the Americas, is significant. Having the old and the new, the living and the dead, linked by a tree which is not native to Mozambique, suggest to me the successful remaking of the world in a way that is inclusive of both the old and the new. It is an image which shows an organic link between the past and the present that the war has been shown to separate. Couto is able to illustrate the successful integration of different views in an image that roots multiple understanding of the world to Mozambican soil. It can, therefore, be seen to be the antitheses of Couto's representation of war which is shown to divide through the exclusion of multiple views of the world and can therefore be seen as similar to the image of Muidinga/Gaspar in whom the possibilities of a united nation is imagined. In *Under the Frangipani*, however, the final image conveys the absence of doubt for a future without war expressed in *Sleepwalking Land*. As the following discussion of *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* will show, however, is that the optimism shown in *Under the Frangipani*'s conclusion is short-lived.

5.4 Writing war and peace into context

The Last Flight of the Flamingo, originally published as *O Último Voo do Flamingo* in 2000, sees Mia Couto return to the same period of Mozambican history, the years immediately

following the 1992 peace accord, within which he set *Under the Frangipani*. I argue in this section that Couto's decision to return to this period marks a desire to reposition the Civil War within a larger historical context and, thus, rewrite the war in ways he was unable to in 1996. In addition, I argue that in *Under the Frangipani* Couto's examination of the war was done largely without looking at the effect the manner in which its end was brought about would have on Mozambique and its people.

Malyn Newitt (2002) writes of the Mozambican peace process that, "successful as it was in many respects, [it] was nevertheless flawed and Mozambique might easily have returned to war" (226). He highlights international intervention as the primary reason that the *Acordo Geral de Paz,* and the democratic election following it, was successful in establishing a lasting peace. Central to the international intervention was the United Nations Mission for Mozambique (OUNMOZ), as it was through this structure that the international community was able to bring sufficient weight, both military and financial, to bear on the FRELIMO government and its RENAMO foe. This mission and the massive amounts of financial aid that came with it brought added, unforeseen, problems that were to stay with the country to this day. In describing this progression, Newitt argues that

> [f]rom the time of the signing of the General Peace Accord [1992] to the declaration of the election results two years later, Mozambique had effectively been ruled by the UN. Most of the important functions of government, ranging from demobilisation and disarmament to the resettlement of refugees and soldiers and the administration of emergency aid, had all been carried out by UN agencies or NGOs [non-government organisations]. Huge sums of money and personnel had been poured into Mozambique and the UN had set up a parallel government which largely pushed the Mozambican authorities to the side lines. (226)

This influx of huge sums of money and the sidelining of the FRELIMO government resulted, according to Newitt, in

> [t]he six years between the elections and the end of century [seeing] profound economic change brought about by the wholesale adoption of the free-market

> measures prescribed by the World Bank and the IMF [International Monetary Fund]. However, the experience of these years raised fundamental questions about both the long- and short-term consequences of the IMF/World Bank prescriptions. [Questions such as] the extent to which structural adjustment undermined the responsibility and independence of the government [...] and whether free-market economies and liberal democratic structures lead inexorably to rampant corruption and the destruction of the idea of public service. (227)

It is precisely with the hindsight, I argue, of the "[t]he six years between the elections and the end of century" that Couto writes *The Last Flight of the Flamingo*.

The novel in set in the fictional Tizangara, described by Philip Rothwell (2004) as "an allegorical zone encapsulating the experiences of Mozambique in the 1990s" (161). It portrays, "*the first few years after the end of the war and all seemed to be going well, contrary to general expectation that acts of violence would never cease*" (Couto 2004: Introduction). The view that "*all seemed to be going well*" would be shattered by the inexplicable, and almost complete, disappearance of UN soldiers who had been stationed in the region to observe and enforce aspects of the peace process. These soldiers, five at the beginning of the text, are described as having "*exploded*" (Introduction) leaving only their blue helmets and their penises, no blood, flesh or any other body parts. As a result of these strange occurrences, the UN has sent an investigator, Massimo Risi, to Tizangara in order to scrutinise the soldiers' deaths. The text is, in this fashion, similar to *Under the Frangipani*, in that it follows an outsider's attempts to look for truth in a world he does not relate to nor understand. Risi is, therefore, assigned a translator, whose name we never learn, and by whom the novel is narrated. Richard Bartlett (2004) highlights the interaction between Risi and the translator as unusual "because it is the only one [of Couto novels] to have the two main protagonists talking to each other face to face" and not, as before, through different temporalities (http://www.africanreviewofbooks.com/Review.asp?book_id=103). Another interesting aspect of the relationship between Risi and the narrator is that while Risi does not

speak any of the local languages, he is able to speak Portuguese and is therefore able to speak directly to all of the text's characters. The translator's role is, accordingly, not only to translate language but also to act as a translator of local culture.

Couto marks *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* as different from *Under the Frangipani* through his description of the changes that peace has brought to Mozambican society. In the latter, change has come to the world "outside" the fort, but has not affected the fort in which all of the action takes place. In *The Last Flight of the Flamingo*, peace is not the only change to be shown to have taken place. There is also the repeated depiction of the "change brought about by the wholesale adoption of the free-market measures prescribed by the World Bank and the IMF" (Newitt 2002: 227). In one such example, Couto describes a welcome prepared for Risi's arrival in Tizangara.

> The crowd displayed a prominent banner with huge letters on it: '*Welcome to our Soviet comrades! Long live the internationalism of the proletariat*' The administrator [His Excellency, Estêvão Jonas] immediately ordered the banner to be withdrawn. And there'd be no long living to anyone. The people were somewhat confused with regard to current times. (2004: 9)

Tizangara's movement from Marxist scientific socialism to open-market capitalism has happened, it would appear, without any consultation with the people the new form of governance is supposed to uplift. To the majority of the people living in Tizangara, nothing has changed except the name of the local guesthouse which has changed from the "Hammer and Sickle" and was now called the "Jonas Hammer Guesthouse" after the local administrator who has claimed it as his own, now that free market policies have ensured the private ownership of land (2004: 21). Beyond the name change, however, nothing has changed as "[o]n its front, there were still signs of shooting [because t]he mark of a bullet is like rust: it never grows old" (21). It is clear that Couto is describing a Mozambique in which political change has once again been imposed by forces that do not understand the local experience.

Even those in positions of government power are shown only to be paying lip service to the changes, as is evident in the manner in which Estêvão Jonas closes a letter to his superior:

> I shall sign off by sending you my most sincere revolutionary greetings. Or more properly: I remain most fiducially yours.
> Estêvão Jonas
> District Administrator (75)

The language may have changed, but those in control of the government are still seen, as in *Under the Frangipani*, *Bones* and *The Return of the Water Spirit*, to only be interested in generating personal wealth. Access to wealth is only granted to the powerful and their families, and then only through the corrupt dealing to which their position or connections gives them access. In this regard, Couto uses Estêvão Jonas and his family to embody such practises. In a striking passage detailing the family's dealings, Couto writes that

> [h]is stepson had killed people and sold drugs. That young fellow was the man who sucked blood from a vampire. Everyone knew. The boy was taking after his mother [Dona Ermelinda or The First Lady].The First Lady had got herself powers that no power could agree to. She expelled the peasant farmers from the valley. The land belonging to the poorest had been turned over to her. It was common knowledge. But no one could do anything about what they knew. (100 – 101)

Corruption of this nature is not, however, unlike the kind practised before the country's ideological shift. By stealing from the poor and diverting state resources, Jonas, his wife and stepson were doing what had been done since the fall of colonialism, but with the advent of UN and NGO money comes a whole new, and more insidious, form of corruption.

The arrival of the UN and its attendant NGOs brought with it a new economy in which suffering, or the appearance of suffering, could bring wealth. As a result, instead of hiding the poor and starving as they had under a Marxist dispensation, the ruling elite

> needed to show the population off in all its hunger and with all its contagious diseases. [...]Our destitution was turning a good profit. To live in a country of beggars, it is necessary to uncover our sores, expose the protruding ribs of our children. [...] This is the current order of the day: gather your remains, make it

> easier for the disaster to be seen. The foreigner from outside, or from the capital, should be able to appreciate all the wretchedness without sweating it too much. (56)

As well as being an indictment on the UN, its polices and the way in which its representatives put those policies into practice, the passage also illustrates how those in state control manipulate the UN for financial gain – at the expense of the poor and wretched. Couto takes this form of corruption to its ultimate, and extremely brutal, conclusion with the depiction of a scheme that is at the heart of the narrative.

One of the greatest and enduring tragedies of the Mozambican's civil and colonial wars relates to the number of landmines that were planted which have continued to kill and maim well into the twenty-first century.[3] Portugal, Rhodesia, RENAMO and FRELIMO planted millions of mines on roads, paths and farmland to deny the local population the ability to produce food that could, in turn, be used to support one of the warring factions. Having secured peace, the UN and various NGOs prioritised landmine removal as a way to revitalise farming to enable people to leave refugee camps, return to their villages and support themselves. However, to the unscrupulous characters in *The Last Flight of the Flamingo*, this intervention renders the landmines and their removal a commodity that can be used to make money.

The scheme, run by Estêvão Jonas, his family and various helpers, or "the war of business and the business of war" involves a scheme in which landmines were "planted and unplanted" so that money could be "siphoned off from [mine removal] programmes" (154). The callousness of this action is explained away as

[3] For more on the number, cost and effects of landmines in Mozambique and other regional countries see Human Rights Watch (1994), Mamdani (2005) and Vines (1998).

> a few deaths here and there were even convenient, to give the plan more credibility. But they were nameless people, in the interior of an African country that could hardly sustain its name in the world. Who would worry about that? (154 – 155)

As demonstrated in the section discussing *Under the Frangipani*, this is not the only time one of Couto's characters has planted and unplanted mines. However, when Salufo Tuco replaced mines he "wanted to shut off the road to the future" so that the vulnerable would be protected from the changes taking place in the outside world (2001: 110). Quite the opposite is true of the scheme that Jonas and company have running. Their plan enriches them at the expense of the vulnerable. It is the logical conclusion to the form of corruption that sees Tizangara's elite milk their people's suffering for more donor funds. Thus, have war and its resulting death become commodified. This aspect of the plan calls to mind Couto's image, in *Sleepwalking Land*, of war being "like a plantation" in which, everyone "was generating a lot of cash, everyone was sowing his own private war [and e]ach made money out of other people's lives" (2006: 134). It would seem that Quintino, in *Sleepwalking Land*, was right when he says that in Mozambique, "war will never end" (134). The war has continued, but not for the reasons that Little Miss No, in *Under the Frangipani*, believes when she says "the arms are the seeds of a new war" (2001: 140). In fact, the landmines are not the "seeds of a new war", but of a new peace. A peace that would turn out to be just as destructive as the war was. In this manner, Couto is placing the Civil War in a context in which he no longer views it as a nebulous, opaque experience, impossible to narrate, but rather as part of a continuum that stretches all the way back to the beginning of colonial occupation and which, for the first time, will include the anti-colonial war.

The linking of the Civil War and its ensuing peace to the events that preceded it is signalled in the life stories of two of *The Last Flight of the Flamingo*'s characters. The first is Estêvão Jonas who repeatedly refers to his "status as a hero of the armed struggle" (2004: 58) against

Portuguese colonial occupation, in which he claims to have "freed the fatherland" (95). Accordingly he is, his argument continues, entitled to the wealth he is corruptly accumulating. However, he is not like *Under the Frangipani*'s Vastsome. He is not without feeling for his people because of the trauma the war caused. War is not "lodged inside him, a refugee in his heart" (2001; 103 –104). Quite the opposite has happened to Jonas, he has forgotten what the war was fought for. When Estêvão Jonas

> arrived in Tizangara, [h]e wore a guerrilla fighter's uniform and people looked at him as if he were a little god. He had left his homeland to take up arms and fight the colonialists. [...] At that time, so folks say, he wasn't like he is today. He was a man capable of generosities. [...] He had set off carrying his pain with him and returned bearing a dream. And he dreamed of embellishing futures, banishing poverty from home.
> – This country will be great.
> [...] And Estêvão Jonas had stopped dreaming of great futures. What was it that had died inside him? With Estêvão the following happened: his life forgot his promise. Today gobbled up yesterday. (129)

Jonas's greed has obliterated the beliefs he used to hold and it is not because of outside interference, it is his own fault.

The second character who signals Couto's recontextualisation of the country's wars is the translator's father, Sulplício. He had been a game guard for the Portuguese and was fearful of the end of colonial rule because had served "with the white forces" (111). Sulplício was right to be fearful of the revolutionaries, as they would treat him just as badly, if not worse, than the colonialists had. Sulplício recalls capturing Jonas's stepson poaching elephants after the war and instead of punishing the stepson, Jonas and his wife had Sulplício tortured so badly that he forever lost full use of his hands. Interestingly, this scene calls to mind Sam from *The Non-Believer's Journey* and his assertion that "when war came to their area, [people] saw it primarily as the means to settle old scores" (Nyamfukudza 1980: 68). Sulplício, like Sam, understands that events do not just end when people proclaim them finished and that the past will always be played out in the present if doing so will bring people some advantage. In

addition, this scene marks a change in Couto's representation of the colonial period and its effect of the following years of Mozambican history. He does not, as he did before, merely represent colonialism as an overwhelming force that rendered its subjects helpless before it. Instead, according to Rothwell, Couto "laid in the internal sphere; interference from outside is no longer an excuse for the state of the nation, although continued desire of forces outside Mozambique to meddle in the country's affairs has not helped to overcome that mentality" (2004: 165) This conception of Mozambique/Tizangara's fundamental problem is given voice by an old witch doctor, Zeca Andorinho, in the following conversation with Risi:

> What those whites did to us was to occupy us. It wasn't just the land: they occupied our very selves, they set up camp right inside our heads. We're timber that's been left out in the rain. Now we're no good for firewood or for providing shade. We've got to dry out in a sun that can only be born within us. (124)

That the day when "*a sun that can only be born within us*" has not yet come, because people have not "overcome the mentality of the colonized" (Rothwell 2004: 165) is evident in Couto's depiction of the UN's actions in Tizangara.

The translator describes the UN soldier's arrival as "demonstrating the same insolence as any military force" because "they believed they were the masters of frontiers, able to manufacture concord" (Couto 2004: Introduction). With this attitude, they demonstrate the same arrogance and resulting lack of understanding of the people who live in the country as the Portuguese colonialists did. Due to his experience of colonial rule, Sulplício recognises the similarities between the UN and the colonialists and when his son tries to tell him that Risi is there to help them, he responds by saying:

> –That's where you're mistaken. It's not peace they're interested in. What they're concerned with is order, the regime of this world.
> –Now father ...
> –Their problem is to keep the order that enables them to be boss. The type of order has been our county's sickness.

> According to him, the division of existences had been reborn within us as a result of that sickness: some were lackeys of the bosses and others lackeys of the lackeys. The powerful – those outside and those within – had only one aim: to show that the only way we could be governed was if we were colonised. (150)

Two very important views of the UN's involvement in Mozambique are highlighted in this passage. The "order" the UN have brought seems to Sulplício to be much the same as war in that people are still forcefully subjected to rule that does not have their best interests at heart. Couto underscores the self-interested nature of the UN project by having Anna Godwilling, Tizangara's most accomplished prostitute, tell Risi that

> –Thousands of Mozambicans died, and we never got a visit from you then. Now, five foreigners have disappeared and is that the end of the world? (18)

It is clear that the UN mission is not interested in doing anything other than create an "order" that will ultimately result in Mozambique being subject to a world power that will function as colonialism did.

The narrative's solution to this problem sees the old men, Sulplício and Zeca Andorinho, lead a few of Tizangara's people into action against the trouble that Jonas and company have caused with the statement that, "[w]*e've had enough of asking others to resolve our problems*" (157). In the end, however, the people's actions are not enough and Tizangara is "completely swallowed up" by the earth" (173). The reason for this is described by Sulplício as:

> The same thing had happened in other lands in Africa. The fate of nations had been entrusted to the ambitious, who governed like hyenas, only thinking about getting fat fast. Against these failures in governance, the unthinkable had been tried: little magic bones, goat's blood, fortune-telling, incense. Stones had been kissed and saints prayed to. All had been to no avail: there had been no improvements in these countries. People were needed who loved the land. Men were needed to make other men show some respect. (174)

Unless such people came, the land and its people would remain in "the depths of the earth"

> awaiting a favourable time when they would be able to return to their own ground. At that point, those territories could be nations, with yearned-for flags stuck in them" (175).

It is remarkable that Couto shows that no amount of magic or rituals can create or save the nation, as it is precisely this kind of intervention that sees the fort and its people saved in *Under the Frangipani*. However, the fact that Couto has the villager's response to Jonas's corrupt dealings lead by two old men argues for an intervention similar to that of *Under the Frangipani,* in that it is the old who have the knowledge and experience to deal with the situation. Unfortunately, even this knowledge is not enough because the damage done to the country is too great and the intervention too late. More people must have the courage to stand up for the country and themselves if they are to change the way Mozambique is being run, both from within and without. In short, Couto is calling for Mozambicans to take responsibility for their actions in the past and, thus, for the future. This he does, I argue, through illustrating that all aspects of the county's history, including the civil war, which he had until now been unable to represent as anything more than an anomaly caused by outside interference, are linked and must be seen as such if the country is to "*dry out in a sun that can only be born within us*" (124).

5.5 Conclusion

In an article, "Enemies, demons and dignity", written for *The Guardian* Mia Couto (2005) writes that through the fighting of wars,

> [t]he nation had won what was seen as an epic struggle against monstrous outside forces. Hell was always outside. The enemy was on the other side of the frontier. It was Ian Smith, apartheid, imperialism. Our country did what we all do in our daily lives: we invented monsters which came to haunt us. But the monsters also calmed us down. It was reassuring to know that they lived far from us. Suddenly the world changed and we have been forced to

> look for the demons in our own homes. The enemy, the worst of enemies, has always been inside us. (http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/feb/02/hearafrica05.development6)

This speech represents an important tracking of Mozambique's wars and their relationship with "outside forces". It is a tracking that is also apparent in the examples of Couto's fictional writing that I discuss in this chapter. In *Sleepwalking Land*, Mozambique and its people are shown to be at the mercy of destructive forces they cannot control, but to which many of their actions contribute. However, by representing a possible future in the figure of a mixed-race character Couto is suggesting that such forces and their effect on the country cannot be denied and must, therefore, be incorporated into Mozambique's future. Couto builds on this vision of an inclusive future for Mozambique in *Under the Frangipani* when he concludes the narrative with an image of a non-native tree that bridges the worlds of the living and the dead, the past and the future. It is not just a picture of a future that includes all races and their violent history; it is an image that re-voices the past in a manner that rebuilds the continuity of time that the violence of war has ruptured. The optimism, although limited in *Sleepwalking Land*, present in these narrative conclusions is somewhat diminished in the conclusion to *The Last Flight of the Flamingo*. Couto comments on this in a speech of acceptance of the Maris Antonio Prize presented by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon for *O Último Voo do Flamingo*. In it, Couto (2001) says that his writing

> is a limited response to the makers of war and builders of misery. But it is that which I know and which I am capable of, that in which I lay out my life and the time in which I live. (2001: http://www.deza.admin.ch/pictures//Temp_docs/couto.pdf)

Writing, for Couto, is not the kind of magic that involves "little magic bones, goat's blood, fortune-telling [and] incense" (2004: 174). For Couto, writing is a form of magic that is closely tied to his notion of the dream. He, therefore, shows it to be actively involved in the attempted building of a better Mozambique. Perhaps it is "a limited response" to the demons

and the enemies that Couto describes as "inside" Mozambicans, but I argue, that he shows all constructive responses to be vital to the construction of a peaceful and united Mozambique.

Couto's stressing of the importance of writing to the understanding of the role that war has played in the formation of the Mozambique of today shows the importance of written and other texts in the imagining of war-torn and post-war southern Africa. His depiction of written and oral texts – such as Kindzu and Izidine notebooks or Little Miss No and Sulplício stories of the past – within his novels centralises the fundamental role written and oral texts play in the turning of war's destruction into meaning. It is a process that also takes place in the nine other texts discussed in this study.

In *Mayombe*, *The Non-Believer's Journey* and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* it is the personal history in oral form which is used to give the actions and experiences of those in the larger narrative meaning as do songs in *Bones* and *Buried in the Sky*. Writing is centralised in *Patriots*, *Dead Leaves* and *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* through the textual use of notebooks and diaries, however, aside from in the Couto texts, it is in *The Return of the Water Spirit* that the importance of such interactions is most visible. Pepetela's use of the authors Luandino Vieira and Arnaldo Santos as keepers of the oral history in story form shows the important role the interplay between written and oral texts has in the imagining of nation and region in southern Africa. Their explanation of the role of the water spirit in Luanda's history leads to an understanding of the problems the city faces and the imagining of a solution to those problems is thus offered. Similarly, the writings of war discussed in this study enunciate and position the experience of war in ways that give it meaning in relation to the formation of the nation and region as they are today. These writings, and the histories they represent, highlight and situate the different configurations of nation and region in time and space. Therefore,

they enable seemingly disparate people to imagine, in a manner similar to that explained by Benedict Anderson (1983), themselves part of a larger region which has a shared experience of war in southern Africa. In consequence, the texts read in this study can be seen to form a web of creative engagement with southern Africa's experience of war between 1960 and 2004 which, in turn, forms the basis for the imagining of the region as we know it today.

CHAPTER SIX

6 Conclusion

In this study I have sought to understand the multiple ways in which the writings of southern Africa's post-1960 wars respond to both national and regional concerns and, consequently, form a base for the imagining of both nation and region. To achieve this aim, I analysed texts from four southern African countries, with a view to highlighting the position war writing holds within southern Africans' endeavours to depict, define and imagine the region and its constituent countries. In doing so, I argued that the texts read in this study form a web of artistic and critical engagement which identifies, tracks and maps the changing configurations of southern Africa which are the result of the region's many wars.

My study found 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 were found to be key to the imagining of nation in the war writing read in the study: the role of the historical moment – with its specific obsessions, visions and insights – in which the texts were written and the depiction of the role of the hero, in various forms, in the attainment or illustration of the nation. My work reveals that by focusing on war, the texts read are actively involved in the formation of what Benedict Anderson (1983) terms the "imagined political community" that is nation (15) through the creation of an awareness of a shared experience of war, within the previously disparate groups forced to coexist following the end of colonial or white-minority rule.

In terms of the study's contentions relating to southern Africa as a region, the readings demonstrate war to be central to the manner in which the region is also imagined by the texts'

authors. This imagining of a southern African region is similar in functioning to the way Anderson shows the imagining of nation to take place, in that both are reliant on the spread of shared experience through writing. In the southern African case post-1960, this shared experience is that of war. War is thus demonstrated to be an important point of focus through which to read region in many of the literatures from southern Africa. Additionally, the study revealed imaginings of region to change over time, thus mapping the shifting configurations of southern Africa, formed as political allegiances between countries were transformed, or restructured, by the experience of war. Thus, southern Africa is sketched as an "imagined community" (15), shaped by the experience of war and given shape and texture through the writing of war.

I began the study with an introduction and demarcation of the area of study in Chapter One. In this chapter, I also offered histories – social-political and literary – of the four countries at the heart of this study, from which I utilise war writing to formulate my argument relating to the imagining of nation and region in southern Africa. The discussion began, in Chapter Two, with an examination of three Angolan texts – *Mayombe*, *Patriots* and *The Return of the Water Spirit* – and the different literary ways in which their authors interrogate the different national paradigms, presented by Angola's various warring factions at different moments during forty one-years of war. I demonstrated that depictions of camps, in various forms, are at the heart of all three texts' imagining of nation. These depictions suggest a way of imagining southern Africa as a series of interlinked camps, which highlight the webs of affiliation and support that dominated regional politics at different stages, or cycles, of Angola's anti-colonial and civil wars.

I expanded on this notion of the region as imagined as a series of webs of affiliation, marked by shared camps, in Chapter Three, by showing that examinations and re-examinations of both the first and second *Chimurenga* are central to the construction and imagining of a post-war Zimbabwe. When read together, *The Non-Believer's Journey*, *Bones* and *Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesian War*, illustrate the importance understandings of the past have, in the manner the present nation is imagined, with regards to the second *Chimurenga*, or Rhodesian War, and the preceding first *Chimurenga*. This reading is, in turn, suggestive of an imagining of region which delineates its changing configurations in a manner similar to that shown in Chapter Two. In this case, however, it is a temporal rather than a physical charting that is highlighted, as the webs of affiliation are reconfigured to articulate the politics of the region as they changed. It therefore becomes apparent, when chapters Two and Three are considered together, that the region is imagined with both physical and temporal characteristics. Such an understanding highlights the importance of the rewritings of history which have taken place in regional countries and thus, the region as a whole, following the cessation of violent conflicts.

Whose experience of war is included and whose is written out, of the new nation and region's history, is cast into stark focus in Chapter Four. In it I read three texts – *Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a Divided People*, *Buried in the Sky* and *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* – from South Africa. This chapter evinced how South African war autobiographies became textual spaces in which claims are made for inclusion and recognition in the professed Rainbow Nation. The manner in which these claims are made echoes the forms detailed in the TRC. This resulted, I argued, in a drive by the authors of the war autobiographies to position themselves as either heroes who fought for the nation, past and present, or as victims of the apartheid government. Authors are, therefore, able to stake a claim in the region, as it has

come to be imagined following the end of apartheid rule in South Africa, through claims to have had a role in the shared history upon which the new region is constructed.

In Chapter Five, I continued the examination of the role of war, in the imagining and current configuration of southern Africa, through the lens of the Mozambican author, Mia Couto. His attempts to write the trauma of his country's wars into meaning in three novels – *Sleepwalking Land, Under the Frangipani* and *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* – reference specific moments in Mozambique's arc from war-torn to post-war and reconstruction. On a national level, the study found that Couto writes a Mozambican nation that rejects the racial, ideological and cultural binarisations that informed the country's wars. In order to do so, Couto repeatedly returns to writing the anti-colonial and civil wars to measure the Mozambican nation's post-war development. In terms of region, the chapter pointed out that Couto's symbolic removal of the country from those surrounding it, implies a focus on the national which, paradoxically, reinforces the conceptualisation of the region as a series of interlinked and ever-shifting webs of political, cultural and ideological affiliation. Finally, it is Couto's illustration of the role of writing in the imagining of solutions to his and other African nations' problems which demonstrates the important role writing plays in both the imagining of region and the recovery – on personal, national and regional levels – from the destruction of war. That such written intervention is necessary, becomes even more apparent when one considers the texts read in this study's depiction of the role war is understood to have played in the formation of the region, and the nations it comprises.

As discussed in the introduction to the study, southern Africa's post-1960 wars have been deeply implicated in the formation of regional bodies such as the FLS and SADC. As evidenced in my study, the webs of affiliation upon which such formations were based are

repeatedly represented in many of the texts. Bopela and Luthuli's account of their training in Tanzania and subsequent infiltration into Rhodesia are perhaps the best examples of the allegiances then at the heart of the FLS, although other alignments are also depicted. These groupings and alignments are often those that were seen to be on the losing side and therefore no longer exist. Here I was thinking primarily of those within which South Africa was involved. Sousa Jamba's depiction of the involvement of the South African "cousins" (1990: 178) in *Patriots* is one such example and in Stanley Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey* the narrator makes reference to the "Portuguese and their white Rhodesian allies" (1980: 63). These and other examples illustrate the important point that, through their involvement in their neighbour's wars, southern African nations have become deeply implicated in each other's history in ways not always formally recognised through the formation of official organisations or bodies. It is such webs and groupings which are now seen to be actively contesting the rewriting of history, such as that taking place in South Africa and other regional countries. Through the texts' depiction of South Africa's changing position within the region, however, they do reinforce the conception of the country as central to the formation of the region, as is presented by texts such as those discussed during my outline of the writing of war in southern Africa in Chapter One.[1]

It is not only the roles that South Africa has played in other's wars that the texts relate. There are also examples of other countries' involvement in wars outside their borders and the manner in which such involvements changed. In this, two examples stand out. The first relates to the changed role Mozambique played in the Zimbabwean liberation war. As mentioned above, Nyamfukudza comments on the allegiance between white Rhodesians and

[1] Here I am thinking of texts such as Bridgland (1990**),** Johnson and Martin (1986), Khadiagala (1994) and Thompson (1986).

the colonial Portuguese. However, in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, written some years later, it is to a guerrilla training camp, presumably ZANU, in post-independence Mozambique that Marita's son has gone for training (1990: 30). The other example is the most striking and involves the representation of South Africa's involvement in the region prior to 1960. *Bones*' mentioning of a character who has gone to work "in the mines in Jo'burg" (1990: 35) is a reference to the large-scale movement of southern Africans to Johannesburg to work in the gold mines. Pepetela's *Mayombe* and Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey* note a change in this image through their description of South Africa as the home of racists who represent the very firmest example of what they are fighting against in their own countries. In *Patriots*, South Africans are seen as invaders and occupiers of Angola. *The Return of the Water Spirit*'s reference to South African tourists visiting Luanda, during the brief peace of 1995, marks a complete change in the image of South Africa's involvement in Angola (Pepetela 2002: 67). Interestingly, it is a change that many, including Nelson Mandela, assert is the direct result of the apartheid government's military involvement in Angola as the apparent loss of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale was a major stepping stone to the end of apartheid. The changes South Africa experienced in 1994 initiated its reintegration into the region's economic activities, as depicted in Mia Couto's reference to South African buying land in Mozambique in *The Last Flight of the Flamingo* (2004: 73). These examples demonstrated that war has had a major role in the manner southern Africa's nations have interacted and thus, formed the region. Crucially, however, the primary texts also illustrated that the other countries' "entanglement with South Africa" was "a two-way process" in which there was a "recognition of a regional cohesion", brought about by the fight against colonial and white minority rule (Mwikisa, Lederer and Molema 2010: VI).

The texts' representation of war's role in the formation of the specific nation referenced varies markedly. In two, *Mayombe* and *Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a divided People*, war is largely presented as central to the creating of a free nation and, therefore, active participation in it confers the status of hero on the participant. This is certainly not a view presented by the rest of the texts. These texts show war to have only a negative effect on the nations embroiled. Where all of the texts can be seen to agree, however, is in their depiction of war as a seminal moment in the lives of individuals, nations and the region that must be revisited, reviewed and enunciated – through writing – if war's role in the present is to be understood. As my discussion has shown, this reviewing is done in various ways. In some examples, a present war is understood through its relationship to past wars, or conflicts fought in the country. Other examples stress the need for individuals to return to the actions and memories which relate to their time as a combatant, in order to resituate these memories and actions within a larger life.

An important aspect of war in southern Africa which all of the texts cast light on is the militarisation of current-day political culture in the countries discussed in this study. The existence of a military dimension to political life in South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique is not unexpected given that it was through war that the nation-states as they appear today were formed. It is a point most notably expressed through the presence of that most infamous symbol of war in Africa, the AK47, on the Mozambican flag. The fact that the political organisations most associated with the liberation struggles of the various countries are still in power has resulted in a reinforcing of the legacy of militarism through the repeated reference, at times of challenge, to the symbols associated with the liberation wars fought and

won. Such is certainly the case in South Africa and Zimbabwe where the songs and symbols of the liberation struggles are very much a part of current political discourse.[2]

Another aspect of the fact that many of southern Africa's nation-states were formed through what has become presented as a binarised fight of good versus evil, revolutionary organisation versus colonial/imperialist power is that this binary has continually been rehearsed, as is the case in Zimbabwe, to represent current situations and thus justify actions that would usually only be considered acceptable in time of national threat. This is also what happened, as the texts read in this study show, in Mozambique and Angola when these countries returned to war following the successful overthrow of the Portuguese. In both of these cases, however, the view that what was often referred to as civil wars were, in fact, informed and perpetuated by outside forces opposed to the rule of the MPLA of FRELIMO strengthened these parties' assertions that they were the only ones able to save the nation-state from a return to colonial-style oppression. This, in turn, reinforced the ruling parties' presentation of themselves as heroic defenders of a nation under threat from external, imperialist forces. The presence of depictions of southern African war as heroic in a great deal of southern Africa's war writing is therefore not surprising. It is also, I argue, one of the aspects of the region's war writing that mark it as different from, for example, a great deal of the war writing from West Africa as presented in the writing of the Nigerian Civil War – also known as the Biafran War – which took place from 1967 to 1970.

Unlike in the countries discussed in this study, the majority of West African countries' transition from colony to independent state was, with some very notable exceptions, relatively peaceful. As a result, the parties which took over in these countries were not able to

[2] For an example of the functioning of such symbols in South Africa see Gunner (2009).

make as effective use of the revolutionary versus imperialist binary through the monopoly of a liberation narrative as their southern African counterparts could. This is evident in the Nigerian Civil War in that even though there was substantial external involvement – some of it by South Africa and Rhodesia – the conflict was largely framed in the war writing it produced as a tragic conflict where brother killed brother rather than as an heroic battle of good versus evil that the ruling parties of Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique were, and still are, able to portray their post-independence wars and conflicts as.[3]

Regardless of the manner in which the texts read in this study look at war, all of them can be seen to be actively involved in an ongoing discussion on the role that war has played in the formation and imagining – through the writing of war – of their nations and, by extension, the region. It is a discussion which is mirrored in Christopher Cramer's (2006) contention that war "often produces change, in social relations and institutions; at most, those changes may be 'developmental'" (280). It is a paradox that is extremely apparent in the texts' representations of the wars fought in southern Africa between 1960 and 2002. Most of the wars were fought to claim a right to the rule of a specific territory and thus delineate precise areas of control. The paradox is that in seeking to affirm boundaries and borders through war, many of the boundaries were proved porous and thereby subsumed by regional affiliations. This is clearly visible in some of southern Africa's regional institutions such as SADC. It is also conspicuous in the texts' depiction of a shared experience of the violence of war in southern Africa. As such, they call to mind an observation on the nature of war made by Kindzu in *Sleepwalking Land*. When describing the beginning of the civil war in Mozambique, he writes in one of his notebooks that "[w]ar is a snake that bites us with our

[3] For extended discussions of the literary depictions of the Nigerian Civil/Biafran war see Ezeigbo (1991), McLuckie (1990), Nwahunanya (1997) and Pape (2005).

own teeth" (Couto 2006: 9). While Kindzu may be implying that war harms all Mozambicans through his use of "our", I contend that the texts read in this study show the "our" to be all southern African countries and nations that have been caught up in war. All of these nations have either, directly or indirectly been subject to and shaped by the experience of war and, therefore, so has the southern African region and its people.

As such, the study forces us to review our understandings of the role literature has played in the revising of the historiographical models and narratives central to much of the historical writing discussed in the introduction to this thesis. On one level, the webs of affiliation the study highlighted illustrate the paradox that while war forced an imagining of region through the nominative fight for nation, the formation of region imagined was one which confirmed the role and borders of nation within region. On another level, the war writing read in this study militates against the privileging of one version of history over another and thus, interrogates what the author and critic J.M. Coetzee (1988) refers to as the "master-form of discourse" (4) which is history. In other words, the literary writing read in this study can be seen to be in conversation with the mainstream historical accounts of war in southern African post-1960. In addition to those examples related to militarism in present day southern African political life discussed earlier, an important part of this conversation is the highlighting of the voice of those whose roles in the wars have come to be seen as insignificant when considered alongside those of famous figures of southern African war such as Nelson Mandela and Samora Machel. The texts' imaginative tracking of the lives and movements of such people play an important role in illustrating that southern Africa is made of more than just the formal regional bodies discussed earlier.

This finding has important implications for the manner in which southern African literature is considered. The genuinely wide area of regional influence the experience of war has had in southern African since 1960, justifies it as one of the only points of focus which can be used to view the regions literary similarities, differences and divergences. As such it offers a way of reading, when applied to an even wider selection of texts than appear in this study. For example, the work begun in this study could be expanded through the inclusion of writing from other southern African countries, most notably Namibia, which also played important roles in the region's post-1960 wars. Another possibility that this approach offers is the ability to focus on historical moments, such as the events which followed Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, not included in this study. This could be done with the inclusion of texts such as Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* (2002) and Chenjerai Hove's *Shadows* (1991) which, through their focus on the violence that followed independence, would open up new depictions of the role war has played in the imagining of nation in Zimbabwe. A similar addition of texts, such as Lilia Momplé's *Neighbours: The Story of a Murder* (2001 [1995]) and Licínio de Azevedo's *The Train of Salt and Sugar* (2007 [1997]), would enable a sharper focus on the Mozambican Civil War than was possible in this study. In addition, the selection of these specific texts would offer the advantage, to a future study, of adding works by women to a corpus of writing overwhelmingly dominated by men.

The use of the experience of war in southern Africa as a literary point of focus could also offer a solution to Peter Mwikisa, Mary S. Lederer and Leloba Molema's unsuccessful search for a "sense of thinking and feeling beyond the nation, in which societies are fluid and constantly in dialogue across shifting boundaries and histories", represented in their commissioning of a special edition on Southern African literature in *Research in African Literatures* (2010: IX). Certainly the study's conception of region as imagined as a series of

temporal and physical webs that have the experience of war at their heart, has implications for the manner in which region is imagined and read in other parts of Africa. One could apply the approach to reading the ways in which wars in areas, such as central and northeast Africa, have influenced the interactions of the countries involved. Similar use of war as a point of focus, through which to read region in primary texts, confirms that the imaginings of other African regions, such as those created by wars in Somalia and Sudan, can be conceptualised and configured. In addition, an approach similar to the one adopted in this study, with its inclusion of texts from differing linguistic literary traditions, would be of particular interest to those seeking to understand configurations of region in areas of western Africa affected by wars in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. In this area, as with southern Africa, two distinct linguistic literary traditions – Francophone and Anglophone – are present which, as a result "require[s] the critic to construct necessary intervening spaces: spaces in which the readers [can] be alerted to arrangements of difference within the single map" (Chapman 2003: xv). It is such an "intervening space" (xv) that a literary focus on war and its role in the formation of region creates.

In setting out my aims for this study, I stated that I would examine the nature of the imaginative, literary response to post-1960 war in southern Africa and it is with a discussion on the study's findings in this regard that I conclude. All of the texts read in this study make extensive use of intertextual references in order to situate the actions and experiences they relate within a larger experience or conception of war. It is through such referencing that the texts, when read together, form a web that documents the region's movement from war-torn to post-war. Together, they render a map of region's literary response to the wars that have resulted in so much death and destruction. On this literary map, each group of texts can be seen as a constellation of nodes within which each texts is not only linked to those in its

constellation, but is also linked to texts outside its constellation through webs formed between the various constellations. The most obvious of the links that forms the constellations are country and nation based. Here, as I have done in this study, texts are grouped by the author's country or by the national issues that the texts respond to. These country based concerns are, however, not the only ones that can be used to group the texts. As my study has shown, there are also issues of form and theme which delineate new, non-national or country-based groupings which, in turn, render a new and more nuanced map of the imaginative responses to the violence and instability of post-1960 southern Africa.

The forms these imaginative responses take are many and cover various modes of representation from autobiography and memoir to realist fiction and those that make extensive use of the fantastic. In terms of these, the study shows that while certain modes of representation are deployed by authors for reasons related to the literary traditions within which they write, there are many that extend across such traditions. Perhaps the two most obvious of these is the use of autobiography and memoir by writers who fought for white-minority governments – such as *Dead Leaves* and *Buried in the Sky* – and forms – such as *Bones*, *The Return of the Water Spirit* and *Under the Frangipani* – which write local systems of belief into their narratives. Even between these, however, there are points of intersection which are created by the texts' focus on common thematic issues. In this regard, my study has focused on the textual representation of role of the hero, in multiple forms, in the defence or creation of the nation. Through this focus, the study has revealed that the writing of the hero within the context of war writing exhibit tensions, inconsistencies and conflicts of the kind that Duncan Brown (2001) asserts "open[s] up the category 'Southern African literature'" to new "commonalities and differences" (768) which, in turn, offer new ways of conceptualising the region's writings.

Whether it is through the webs formed by country-based concern, representational mode or theme, the primary texts read in this study highlight the important role that imaginings of nation and region play in southern Africa as it is known today. In this they illustrate that it is only through deep reflection on the violence, destruction and death caused by war – in this case through writing – that people, communities, nations and regions can recover from the trauma of war. Importantly, however, the southern African texts read in my study do not offer the vehement opposition to war that one might expect, given the extremely devastating nature of the wars that have been fought in the region post-1960, or that are present in the Western traditions of war writing studied by scholars such as Paul Fussell (1975) and Tobey Herzog (1992). Instead, the texts show a profoundly nuanced understanding of the role war has played in the formation of southern Africa and its component countries. For all, and this includes those written by former soldiers who fought for white-minority governments, there is the depiction of an understanding that war and violent conflict was an inevitable and justifiable response to the violent oppression inherent in colonial and white-minority rule. In these texts, however, there is also the recognition that there is a time when the fighting must stop and nonviolent processes of reconciliation take over. It is when such peaceful procedures have not been successfully implemented and the violence and corruption of war have continued, that the texts show war to be the greatest threat to the southern Africa which it has had an indelible role in creating. As a result, I argue, the primary texts should be seen as both an imaginative response to a seminal, violent and unstable period of the region's history, but also as a strong warning against southern African countries turning their backs on the cruel teachings of over forty years of war.

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