

ABSTRACT

1960 marked the beginning of a profoundly violent and unstable period in southern Africa's history. Central to the fundamental socio-political changes that took place in the region and many of its countries during this period were a number of wars, the last of which only ended in 2002. While the specific reasons for each of these wars were complex and varied, according to each country, the central roles these wars have played in the creation of the countries they affected – and the region as a whole – are evident to this day. It is, therefore, important to look at the position the writing of war holds in southern Africans' attempts to represent, define and imagine southern Africa and its component countries during and after the experience of war. With this in mind, this study examines the manner in which the texts under scrutiny form a web of creative engagement in the context of a violent and unstable region. The aim of the work is to illustrate that the region's writing of war can be seen to respond to both national and regional concerns and, in doing so, form a platform for an imagining of both nation and region. Methodologically, the research presented in this study is based on a close reading, through extensive contextualisation, of the selected primary texts with a view to understanding the similarities, commonalities and differences present in the region's war writing. It is divided into six chapters which, aside from the Introduction and Conclusion, include readings of texts from Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. The study finds war to be central to the selected texts' presentation of their imaginings of nation and, importantly, to the realisation, defence or dissolution of that imagined nation. Two factors are found to be key to these imaginings: the role of the moment in which the texts are written and the depiction of the role of the hero, in various forms, in the attainment or illustration of the nation. In terms of the study's contentions relating to southern Africa as a region, the readings illustrate that war is central to the manner in which the region

is also imagined by the texts' authors. Additionally, the study reveals imaginings of region that change over time and thus map the shifting configurations of southern Africa formed as political allegiances between countries were transformed, or restructured, by the experience of war. In response to these findings, the study suggests that as a region, southern Africa owes much of its current configuration to the shared experience of war between 1960 and 2002. Paradoxically, therefore, war in southern Africa, as the primary texts show it to function, can be seen to have been socially developmental through the forced creation of a sense of region. This view has implications for the manner in which regions are viewed in other areas of the African continent because, by way of a similar use of war as a point of focus through which to read region in primary texts, the imaginings of other African regions, such as that created by wars in Somalia and Sudan, can be conceptualised and configured.

DECLARATION

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

Sean Anthony Rogers

_____ day of _____ 2011

DEDICATION

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

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