TITLE:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL VISION OF POST-INDEPENDENCE ZIMBABWEAN WRITERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SHONA AND NDEBELE POETRY

A dissertation presented to the Department of African Languages and Literatures at the University of Cape Town in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 1998

by

ZIFIKILE GAMBAHAYA

Supervisor: PROFESSOR S.C. SATYO
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ABSTRACT

NAME: ZIFIKILE GAMBAHAYA

ADDRESS: DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE
BOX MP 167
MOUNT PLEASANT
HARARE
ZIMBABWE

THESIS TITLE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL VISION OF POST-INDEPENDENCE ZIMBABWEAN WRITERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SHONA AND NDEBELE POETRY

This dissertation analyses creative trends in Shona and Ndebele poetry published after the attainment of political independence in 1980. The research tries to establish the close link between poems in the two national languages and post-independence Zimbabwean history. In order to examine the link between creative writing and nationalism, which is the context in which creativity takes place, an attempt is made to outline major trends in nationalist history vis-a-vis colonialism. Having set the background for analysis, the research focuses on texts that are published in the context of the apparent cultural renaissance that is ushered by the apparent victory of African nationalism over colonialism. The texts are analysed in the context of the dialectic of nationalism and colonialism. Interviews with publishers as well as questionnaires for writers are brought in to elucidate the vision of the writers. Secondary texts are also used to critique the claims of nationalist victory. Comparative and contrastive analysis of history and art is adopted. The findings reveal that the poetry tends to reflect narrow elitist nationalist concerns more than the concerns of other classes and groups that comprise the greater part of the population. This results in the idealisation of the state and its institutions rather than the critical engagement of reality. A break with this trend comes through the poetry of avant garde writing which takes advantage of the relative independence of post-colonial publishers from state control to break with trends set by the state's editorial institution, the Literature Bureau which hitherto acts as the mother body of literature in indigenous languages. Experimentation by the avant garde enspans form and content. It blends creativity with research into social history in an attempt to arrive at the truth through art. This trend underscores the importance of unravelling aspects of social history that underpin artistic truth. It also brings to surface the fact that there is not one truth for people living in a modern nation state. The marginal trend brings into published poetry a critical voice that has been visibly absent in published poetry in poetry before and after independence.
SUMMARY

No major study has attempted to establish cross-cultural dialogue among ethnic literatures in Zimbabwe. Most of the major works on Zimbabwean literature discuss the different literatures in isolation. The only major studies on poetry in African languages have been carried out by Themba Nkabinde and Emmanuel Chiwome who have researched into Ndebele and Shona poetry respectively. The major colonial trends of writing poetry have been dealt with by these researchers. However, both scholars discuss these literatures separately in relation to colonialism and independence. The focus on both studies is on poetry published before and at the time of study. In the studies, independence poetry is dealt with only in concluding chapters. Nkabinde’s dissertation alludes to a lot of issues which need further analysis. Apart from making a follow-up on some of these issues, the present study evaluates attempts made at breaking with creative trends set during the colonial period in order to determine the direction of the growth of the poems published in indigenous languages.

The research is a comparative study of Ndebele and Shona poems published after Zimbabwe’s national democratic war which culminated in political independence in 1980. The study critically explores the literature through comparison and contrast of the images of self-determination and self-realisation. The similarities and differences in the two national languages in which Zimbabwean published poetry is developing are evaluated against the background of the history
that inspires those images. The analysis is based on the hypothesis that history is the single most important factor that determines the direction of the growth of poetry after independence.

The foregoing observations are important insofar as Shona and Ndebele writing takes place within a given historical framework within specific geographical boundaries. In keeping with the quest for intellectual activities that are relevant to their communities, it is important to create dialogue among language literatures which are shaped by the same socio-historical and political forces. Indigenous cultures which now exist under one modern nation state cannot be studied in isolation without provincialising the visions of the literatures to the point of underplaying the wider historico-economic forces that greatly impact on artistic creativity. The maintenance of geographical and ethnic differences in the study of Zimbabwean indigenous literatures does not enhance the understanding of Zimbabwean peoples as it creates an inaccurate impression that the communities from which the writers arise are isolated from social changes that have external origin.

The field of indigenous published literature is studied through poetry which acts as a case study. The selection of Shona and Ndebele literatures for study has also been determined by the fact that Shona and Ndebele are Zimbabwe's national languages and their literatures are available in written form. The two language literatures present a wide enough scope for research at the level
in question.

The poems represent major literary trends in indigenous languages after independence. Most of the poems are published in the Literature Bureau tradition of soliciting poems on specified themes. The publishing policy is that for every Shona anthology of poems that is recommended for publication, there is a Ndebele equivalent and vice versa. However, there are more Shona than Ndebele poems and books largely because Shona has more readers and writers than Ndebele. The Shona comprise about 80% of the Zimbabwean population while the Ndebele comprise about 13%. As poetry is largely published for schools, it is more economically viable for publishers to publish more Shona than Ndebele books. Further to that, it is argued in this research that the paucity of Ndebele celebratory poems soon after independence may be due to the fact that the civil war that was raging in Matebeleland starting from the early 1980s to the mid 1980s did not inspire Ndebele writers to celebrate the nationalist government that then was perceived by the Ndebele populace as having marginalised their political party.

The dissertation examines whether or not the artists truthfully articulate and respond to the central concerns of the communities for whom they purport to write. Connected to this is the examination of the poet's understanding and interpretation of, and attitude towards these concerns. Some of the post-war problems include war trauma, the hopes and frustrations of the people arising from the conflict between appearance and reality.
High hopes have been largely followed by disillusionment and apathy. The creative challenges arising from the conflict between established trends and innovation during the cultural renaissance ushered in by independence are also critiqued.

The methodology is determined by the fact that poetry uses words to create images of reality. The different images are appreciated on the basis of their capacity to capture selected aspects of reality. Artistic excellence is measured in terms of the appropriateness of techniques in building images that highlight aspects of life that inspire writers. The approach therefore looks at how history feeds into art and vice versa.

The approach adopted requires constant references to historical texts, including those that focus on the economic history and the political economy of the country during the period under discussion. It also entails making constant reference to other disciplines like economics and the social sciences in order to critique reality profoundly as it is envisioned in art.

Unique aspects of these poems are related to the general social conditions out of which they arise, and evaluated in terms of the perceived goals of the writers. Writers and publishers are interviewed in order to establish the main concerns of their creative activities. Questionnaires are used to collect information to augment the same data. The writers’ perceived goals are measured against the backdrop of the role of the artist in society after independence. This leads to an attempt to
establish the position of the artist in the mainstream nationalist culture.

The data in the form of literary texts, socio-historical accounts and literary critiques is quantified in order to establish the quality of the art vis-a-vis history. The tentative conclusions arrived at are used to determine the direction of the art after independence, as well as pointing at new areas for further investigation. The whole exercise is broken down into eight chapters covering the following areas: introduction, historical background of the poetry, celebratory poems, elegies from the war of liberation, poems on the Unity Accord signed in 1987, images of betrayal, avant garde writing, and the conclusion.

The general conclusion arrived at in this research is that Zimbabwean art in indigenous languages exists in a historical context. It has particular functions that can only be understood in the broad context of wider nationalist political and economic activities in the country. It is not as socially progressive as it is often made to appear by writers, publishers and readers. This research establishes that the studied poetry, and through generalisation, indeed most published art in indigenous languages, does not always concern itself with the wishes, aspirations and problems of the majority of the people. It is part of the wider nationalist attempt to influence the readers' minds as part of managing them. It is hoped that the findings of this research can be extended to other areas of art in the region which are written in similar historical conditions.
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Field of Study

The broad field of study is Comparative Literature, with special focus on Ndebele and Shona post-independence poetry. The dissertation seeks to explore and critically appreciate, by way of comparing and contrasting, the self-representation and self-expression of the Zimbabwean people in post-independence Ndebele and Shona poetry. It attempts to establish whether or not different languages lead to different representations and visions of the major concerns of the people of Zimbabwe after independence. This is an important research, taking into consideration that artists writing in Shona and Ndebele do not only share historical experiences, but also operate within the same geographical framework. It is important to create dialogue among ethnic literatures which, although they have been shaped by the same agency, the Literature Bureau, have however hitherto been studied separately. In addition, cultures need to shun isolation in case they wither away. Further, the maintenance of geographical and ethnic differences in the study of Zimbabwean indigenous literatures and cultures does not enhance the understanding of Zimbabwean peoples in the contemporary historical context.

The whole field of literature can best be studied by focusing
on poetry as a case study. The selection of Shona and Ndebele literatures for study has been determined by the fact that Shona and Ndebele are Zimbabwe's national languages and their literatures are available in written form. Even in the field of orature, Shona and Ndebele songs dominate the mass media, although folklore exists within the minority languages communities of Zimbabwe, for instance, Chewa and Tonga. Further, the two language literatures represent the indigenous language literatures in Zimbabwean schools, colleges and tertiary institutions. For that reason, they present a researcher with a wide enough scope for research.

The poems selected are a representative sample of the major poetic trends after independence. Most of the poems are published in the Literature Bureau tradition of soliciting poetry with given themes. Although the major colonial trends of writing social poetry are carried into the post-independence era, they are not dealt with in the current research since these have been adequately researched into by Nkabinde and Chiwome (See Literature Review). The mentioned tradition has a policy of recommending a Ndebele equivalent for every Shona anthology of poems that is recommended for publication. Although this is the case, there are more Shona than Ndebele poems and books. This is largely explained by the fact that in terms of population figures, the Shona comprise about 80% of the Zimbabwean population while the Ndebele comprise about 13%. Secondly, the fewer Ndebele celebratory poems soon after independence may be due to the fact that while the civil war was raging in
Matebeleland, the then Shona-dominated ZANU PF government was consolidating its power through literature and history books. Thirdly, as poetry is largely published for schools, it is more economically viable for publishers to publish more Shona than Ndebele books. Fourthly, Shona, unlike Ndebele, has produced two single-poet collections by Chirikure Chirikure, not in association with the Literature Bureau. Since this poet is also a publisher, he is better positioned to promote his own poetry. The fact that he performs some of his poems before publication makes them more accessible to the intended readers.

1.2 Issues to be Examined

The dissertation examines whether or not the artists truthfully and creatively articulate and respond to the central concerns of the post-independence Zimbabwean community. Connected to this is the critical examination of the poet's understanding and interpretation of, and attitude towards these concerns.

The post-independence era presents the artist with specific challenges. In relation to content, war and independence provide new themes because of their fundamental impact on the condition of many people. Some of the post-war problems include war trauma, the hopes and frustrations of the people arising from the conflict between appearance and reality. High hopes have been largely followed by disillusionment and apathy. In the area of form, there are also creative challenges arising from the conflict between continuing with established trends or creating
new ways of using oral traditions from the celebration as part of the cultural renaissance that comes with independence. Other questions to bear in mind are: (a) How do writers relate to the trends set by the Literature Bureau before independence? (b) What are the new directions of creativity?

1.3 Methodology

It is important to observe that poetry uses words, and words act as images of reality in its complexity. The different images ideally are determined by their capacity to capture certain aspects of reality. Artistic excellence is measured in terms of the appropriateness of techniques in building an image, in this case in building a clear image of life after independence, the very life that inspires writers to write. The approach is therefore historical, that is, it looks at how history feeds into art and in turn how art reflects and also tries to shape history. The art that is being researched into arises out of a given historical epoch to perform specific functions in the epoch, that is, to be the channel for values that advance the causes of colonial modernity. The approach adopted requires constant references to historical texts, including those that focus on the economic history and the political economy of the country during the period under discussion. Examples of such texts are Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger's *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War: Volume One*, (1995) and *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War: Volume Two*, (1995), Colin Stoneman's *Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class, State and Capital in Southern Africa*, (1988) and M.F.C. Bourdillon's *The Shona People*, (1991ed.).
Since the literature arises from one era and continues into another, there is need to check continuities and breaks with tradition in the two languages. Since it is no longer imperative for writers to go through the Literature Bureau, there is need to ascertain to what extent this liberalisation of the editorial process has helped to promote creative latitude. Because of the tradition, certain themes were taboo. An important point to consider is whether artists can now write freely around such themes, and if so, to establish the extent of their creativity.

The point of analytical focus is the poem. The research analyses texts which are representative of given trends, for instance, celebration of independence, national unity, reconciliation, and disillusionment with independence. The unique aspect of these poems are related to the general social conditions out of which they arise, and evaluated in terms of the perceived goals of the writers. It was therefore necessary to interview writers to establish their perceived roles in artistic history. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect relevant information. Flora Veit-Wild's interviews in her research entitled 'Survey of Zimbabwean Writers - Educational and Literary Careers' were also used. The writers' perceived goals are measured against the backdrop of the role of the artist in society after independence. There is therefore need to establish the nature of the relationship between artists and the government of the day and the people under that government for whom the art is written. Interviews and questionnaires were used to establish the relationship between the artist, the target audience and
agencies of government and industry that are involved in the production of the literature in question, for the instance, the Literature Bureau and the publishing companies.

The data was quantified and the outstanding impressions used to establish the quality of the art vis-a-vis perceived objectives and objective reality. The tentative conclusions arrived at are used to determine the direction of the art after independence, as well as pointing at new areas for further investigation. The whole exercise is broken down as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: A Historical Background to Zimbabwean Literature
Chapter 3: Celebratory poems
Chapter 4: Elegies on the War
Chapter 5: Poems on the Unity Accord
Chapter 6: Images of Betrayal: Break with Nationalist Trends
Chapter 7: Disillusionment with Independence: Chirikure's Vision in Chamupupuri
Chapter 8: Conclusion

1.4 Literature Review

No major study has attempted to establish cross cultural dialogue among ethnic literatures in Zimbabwe. Most of the major works on Zimbabwean literature discuss the different literatures in isolation. Ngara, in his book Ideology and Form in African Poetry, (1990) discusses Zimbabwean poetry in English together
with African poetry in English in relation to historical development in Zimbabwe and Africa. He focuses on Zimbabwean literature in passing. His discussion of Zimbabwean poetry does not include poetry in African languages. As a specialist of African literature in English, Ngara does not discuss literature in indigenous languages which is known to many people in the country. This literature does offer a unique comparison with its counterpart in English. Ngara’s work nevertheless gives a good panorama of form and ideology in post-independence poetry in southern Africa.

The only major studies on poetry in African languages have been carried out by Nkabinde in his MPhil dissertation entitled 'Ndebele Modern Poetry: Characteristics and Orientation', and Chiwome also in his MPhil dissertation entitled 'The Poetics of Shona Song and Verse' who have researched into Ndebele and Shona poetry respectively. However, both scholars discuss these literatures separately in relation to colonialism and independence. The focus on both studies is on poetry published before and at the time of study. In the studies, independence poetry is dealt with only in concluding chapters. Because of its limited scope, Nkabinde’s dissertation alludes to a lot of issues which need further analysis. The current study intends to make a follow-up on some of these issues. It lays its emphasis on issues that were raised in the concluding chapters of previous researches, for instance, the problem of breaking with creative trends set during the colonial period.
Flora Veit-Wild in *Teachers, Preachers and Non-believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature*, (1993) shows the importance of an artist's background and historical situation in analysing works of art. Unlike Ngara, Wild focuses on Zimbabwean literature and how the same literature is conditioned by colonial history. However, she heavily inclines towards Zimbabwean literature in English, although she has very useful demographic data on Shona and Ndebele writers. The data is important in contributing some insight to the sociology of Zimbabwean literature. Wild is interested in studying Zimbabwean literature on the basis of the post-modernist theory that she considers fashionable, and therefore exciting. While this research uses observations from her findings using that approach, it inclines towards the historical approach which accords with the philosophical foundations of art in the traditional Zimbabwean society as well as art in the colonial and post-independence period. Zimbabwean art exists in a historical context. It has particular functions at different historical points and can best be understood in relation to its strengths and weaknesses in performing intended functions. The sociological and/or Marxist approaches are not employed in this study.
References


CHAPTER 2

FROM RHODESIA TO ZIMBABWE: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the historical arena out of which Shona and Ndebele poetry arises. History is the reality that artists grapple with. In order to understand the literature to be discussed, which in one way or another is linked to history, there is need to set an historical landscape for the poetry. This landscape is the constant factor around which artistic creativity will be measured.

2.2 The Creation of Rhodesia

Rhodesia came into being as a result of conquest. The colonisation of the land between the Zambezi and the Limpopo rivers by Britain was initiated by Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company. This colonisation was part of a larger process of dividing Africa into European colonies, popularly known as the scramble for Africa. The common objective of these European powers was to extend their spheres of influence and thus consolidate their powers and authority in their home countries. The conclusion of the Berlin Conference in 1884 which laid rules for the partition of Africa saw the formal division of the hitherto independent
traditional states into a number of European-ruled colonies. Rhodesia, named after Cecil John Rhodes, was one such colony.

Having failed to fulfil their dreams of finding abundant mineral resources, as had been found on the Rand in South Africa, the wealth-seekers turned to land as an alternative source of wealth. This ambition to own the land and all its resources was fully realised with the defeat of the Ndebele by the settlers in the 1893 Matebele War, and the subsequent vanquishing of the Ndebele and Shona resistance of 1896. Following this defeat, the indigenous people were relocated to unproductive reserves in order to give way to the new owners of the land, who at once set up new political and social structures which, with the support of the mother countries, were meant to prop up the new profit-making ventures. The new structures were not meant to give the indigenous people the right to directly and meaningfully participate in the political system under which they operated. The indigenous subsistence farmers could participate in the new economic order only as low-level wage-earners. The new economic order which was meant to benefit settler business concerns, undermined the self-sufficiency of the subsistence farmers.

Through the introduction of the compulsory tax system and various other forms of monetary demands, the indigenous people were forced to seek employment in European-owned farms and mines, and also in the urban industrial centres. In these new establishments, the Africans faced hardships of harsh treatment and meagre wages. Such treatment was aimed at breaking their
resolve and resistance to forced labour.

This treatment of labourers was perpetuated by successive colonial governments through discriminatory policies and laws. The infamous pass laws initiated in 1896 were meant to control and monitor the movements of black men who were forced by the settler government’s demand for taxes to seek employment in towns. The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 which resettled the indigenous people in arid, infertile and therefore unproductive reserves contributed significantly to the economic marginalisation of the Africans. Henceforth, the African people found it more and more difficult to feed themselves from the land. Moreover, between 1969 and 1976, the rural population increased by 50%. The resultant over crowding, overstocking and over grazing led to further impoverishment of the indigenous people and this in turn forced part of this population to flock to the towns in search of new alternatives. Successive colonial government policies led to the systematic impoverishment of the indigenous people and the continued prosperity of the settlers, which was ‘a direct result of African poverty’. The settler government policies led to the development of a dual economy on racial lines. One was the subsistence economy for the indigenous people in the Tribal Trust Lands and the low-salaried indigenous people working in farms, mines and cities. The other was the formal economy for the settler community in urban industrial and commercial working areas. The latter was characterised by high incomes and a well-developed infrastructure. Peter Balleis makes the following comments about the two economies:
Both sectors were linked together and the development of the modern and white sector was dependent in some respect on the underdevelopment of the rural and black sector. The racial and economic inequalities were translated into social inequalities, including unequal access to health and education for the black population.

2.3 Impact of Colonisation on Indigenous Cultures

The resettlement of the indigenous population had a severe impact in the sphere of culture. Colonialism needed a culture which promoted its acceptability in order to entrench itself. The challenge, therefore, was to create a culture that would keep Africans in subservient positions to ensure that there was an abundant supply of cheap labour in the farming, mining and urban industrial settlements. However, the forced removal of the indigenous people from their ancestral homes alienated them from their roots. Effectively, this meant that they were being alienated from their beliefs and customs. However, the settlers were not satisfied with this kind of alienation. They realised that complete control of the minds of the indigenous people would ensure optimum support for the new system and, therefore, complete domination of the Africans. Frantz Fanon writes:

When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangements so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realise that nothing has been left to chance, and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the native that colonialism came to lighten their burden.
2.4 The Role of the Church and Missionary Education

The role played by the missionaries in the conversion of the Africans from their traditional religion to the new Christian religion was decisive in the colonisation of the African mind. Schools were in fact centres of missionary activity where young African boys and girls came for re-orientation. The missionaries did not limit their activities to matters of religious belief only, but extended their sphere of influence to the whole spectrum of culture. To achieve its objective, the new system realised the importance of distorting the pupil's history, demeaning their ancestors, despising their culture, their language and their philosophy. Commenting on the role of Christianity in converting Africans to a new culture in the name of enlightenment, E. Chiwome writes:

The new faith afforded them (new converts) new material benefits whose novelty, and not necessarily use value, enhanced their status in the new dispensation. The material aspects of the new faith introduced new concepts of smartness, good diet and eating habits many of which found root in the hearts of members of the society. They were now part of the home culture of the African elite.

In the field of formal education, the settlers formed a strong alliance with missionaries which further entrenched the superiority of the white culture. The first educational institutions in this country were established by white missionaries. The classrooms became platforms for inculcating western moral and ethical values. Chiwome observes how such core aspects of the African way of life like ancestor worship,
traditional rain-making ceremonies, various African dances and the consumption of liquor were not only banned in mission schools and other centres of western culture like farms, but were made to give way to Christian moral and ethical values. The school syllabus was deliberately designed in such a way as to further remove the indigenous child from his own people in order to make him efficiently promote and effectively serve the new system.

Prescribed books of literature in the indigenous languages served as a main vehicle for the transmission of European values and ideas to the young African students. While subtly elevating the new culture and the economic base that it supported, this literature systematically made the African child be ashamed of his own culture and his own people. Literature was realised as useful in controlling, diverting and moulding the minds of the young. But this was done subtly in the name of inculcating values of a superior culture. As in other parts of Africa, missionary owned presses worked in association with the Literature Bureau, a Government Department, to disseminate didactic literature that had a clear bias towards a Western way of life. Such ethnocentric literature was prescribed for use in schools. To the Literature Bureau editors whose main business was to please their masters, the role of literature was to stabilise the status-quo by making new ideas more acceptable to their fellowmen. They organised literary competitions through which they encouraged prospective writers to focus on aspects of their culture which were not considered to be a threat to the new dispensation. This kind of training helped to remove both the writers and school children,
who were the intended consumers of the literature, psychologically from their own people, thus making it difficult for them to identify with their fellowmen. In the words of Charles van Onselen, 'education and religion produced a disciplined and acquiescent workforce'.

However, contrary to what the educated African expected, education and acquisition of the new culture did not yield the expected social and economic privileges. After realising that they could no longer rely on subsistence farming, African parents sent their children to school in order to 'narrow the gap between the old and the new economic systems'. It did not take long for the educated African to realise that in fact, the settler government worked tirelessly to create and maintain a social and economic gap between the indigenous and the white citizens of this country wholly to the advantage of the latter.

2.5 The Liberation War

The desire to recover lost wealth in the form of land, and to achieve equal participation and recognition in the new political, economic and social order, led to the mobilisation of the African people to participate in the war of liberation, henceforth called the war. As the change spearheaded by the nationalist movements gathered momentum, the expectations of the African people transcended the mere recovery of wealth to its equal distribution. The socialist policy of 'growth with equity' articulated by the political leaders was 'intended to redress the
grave economic, racial and social imbalances of the colonial economy'\textsuperscript{10}. This ideology of socialism was used by the intellectual leadership to mobilise people against the settler government during the war. However, as Chiwome observes:

The intellectuals at the helm of leadership for a long time believed that negotiations rather than conflict could radically transform Rhodesia from a system that caters for the interests of a few to one that caters for the interests of the majority\textsuperscript{11}.

It was this firm belief in the crucial role of negotiations that, after a protracted armed resistance by Africans, led to the Lancaster House Talks in 1979, and the subsequent agreement entered into by the leadership on behalf of the people. The African leaders at the negotiating table were forced to make significant concessions in order to bring about the cessation of violence. The most significant was on the land issue which was the major reason for going to war. The signing of the agreement meant that independence would not bring any immediate solution to the land issue. It merely facilitated a smooth transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism.

2.6 Independence

2.6.1 The Counter-insurgency War

The lowering of the British flag after the victory of the African nationalists in the 1980 general elections and the hoisting of the Zimbabwean flag was greeted with euphoria by the party that
The war was fought by two separate guerrilla armies - ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) and ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army). These armies were sponsored by two rival political parties - ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) and ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) respectively. Although these parties formed an uneasy political alliance during the war, they contested the first general elections in 1980 separately. ZAPU, under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo, drew its support largely from the Ndebele-speaking areas, that is, Matebeleland and parts of the Midlands, while ZANU, under the leadership of Robert Mugabe, drew its support from the rest of the country where the Shona-speaking population resides. The landslide victory of ZANU in the 1980 general elections therefore reflected that voting was along ethnic and regional lines. The outcome of the elections heightened ethnic tension and the general atmosphere of suspicion gave birth to the dissident problem in Matebeleland and parts of the Midlands:

Ethnic tensions were very high from the beginning of Independence, as many in Matebeleland perceived that the new government did not represent them. Gangs of armed insurgents were reported to be roving around in the rural areas in Matebeleland. A major exercise involved integrating the two guerrilla forces and the Rhodesian forces into a single army, and then reducing the size of the army by demobilising thousands of ex-guerrillas with a Z$185 per month stipend for two years. In late 1981 and again in early 1982, fighting broke out between ZIPRA (the military wing of ZAPU) and ZANLA (ZANU's military wing) ex-guerrillas in a camp in Bulawayo where they were awaiting reintegration into the Zimbabwe National Army. This incident provoked the first major defection of ex-ZIPRA soldiers from the army and strengthened the fledgling 'dissident' movement. In early 1982 Mugabe sacked Nkomo from the cabinet ostensibly because armed cashes had been discovered on ZAPU properties. The most senior ex-ZIPRA officers in the army were detained and charged with treason. These events precipitated large-scale defections of ex-ZIPRA soldiers from the army and the dissident movement grew.
The government responded to the destabilising activities of the insurgents by deploying the North Korean-trained, ZANLA dominated Fifth Brigade which used the same guerrilla tactics that it had used before independence in order to coerce the people of Matebeleland, who perceived themselves as being discriminated against and excluded from power, to accept the new government. The Fifth Brigade used the war nickname 'Gukurahundi' - a Shona term for the heavy rains that sweep away the husks after threshing. The term therefore has connotations of getting rid of the unwanted - a mopping up exercise. R.P. Werbner has this to say about the Fifth Brigade reign of terror:

The unleashed army, if of the National Army in name, was quasi-national in intent and practice. It was a punitive army which, along with the police, behaved like an occupying force come down upon an alien people to strangle them into submission, even if need be by starving women, children and the old indiscriminately. The terror brought back the most brutal methods of the Rhodesians but were more ruthless and far more devastating.

The widely publicised gruesome murders and torture of the civilians have recently been brought to the attention of the nation by the report of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Legal Resources Foundation. As expected, the image of the Zimbabwe National Army, and that of the newly-independent state of Zimbabwe suffered in the eyes of the international community. The new government could ill-afford this kind of negative publicity. Negotiations between the two rival parties led to the signing of the National Unity Accord in December, 1987. This saw a cessation of violence and the merging of the two political parties under the umbrella name of the
dominant party - ZANU PF. This brought the end of the building of an ethnic-based political elite.

2.6.2 Zimbabwe: A Semblance of a Socialist State

As soon as the British flag was lowered, the people of the newly-independent state of Zimbabwe expected to benefit from the socialist economy supposedly launched by their leaders.

The national war of liberation had been branded a Socialist Revolutionary war by the ZANU PF Party which won most of the seats in the first general election in 1980. In other words, the challenge of independence was to destroy the existing infrastructure and thinking which were the basis of imperialism, and replace them with new structures which would become the basis of meeting the needs of the landless and poorly-paid masses. Lenin writes:

for it was Marx who taught that the proletariat cannot simply conquer state power, in the sense that the old apparatus passes into new hands, but must smash, break this apparatus and replace it with a new one\textsuperscript{16}.

On the ground, independence was celebrated in socialist rhetoric, which in itself was a reflection of the aspirations of the ruling elite. However, one does not judge the achievements of an era by the consciousness of the ruling class but by the discrepancy between the ideal and the real, hence Marx observes:
Just as one does not judge an individual by the way he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production17.

Besides inheriting a set of constraints designed to prevent it from making fundamental changes to the economic situation, Zimbabwe inherited one of the most unequal economies in the world18. On its accession to power, the government declared its intention to transform the economy of the country to a socialist one. The purpose of transition was to capture state power and lay the foundation of what society should be in the future. The question that was not addressed in Zimbabwe was at what point in the history of the country the inherited structures would work to the advantage of the majority of its people, that is, the realisation of a new dispensation "founded on socialist, democratic and egalitarian principles" bringing to end "imperialist exploitation through more equitable Zimbabwean ownership of the means of production"19. The direction of transformation can be seen by looking at the character of the ruling party. This character determines what the ruling class does with its power. In other words, it enables us to see whether the ruling class uses its power to intervene on behalf of the masses or to consolidate its privileged position.

Soon after independence, during the period of the supposed transition to socialism, various state interventions on the side of the masses were cited by government as being indicators of its commitment to a socialist programme. These include social
services, particularly in the educational, health and production sectors, wage policies, industrial relations and nationalisation of industry. The ruling party used its power to intervene on behalf of the poor within the limits of the existing capitalist economy. This means that the ruling party has had its hands tied in as far as developing the poor into a class that champions its own causes is concerned. Referring to the indicators of a transition to socialism, Rob Davies writes:

Such actions must, however, be distinguished from those of a social-democratic party in a welfare capitalist economy. In this case the intervention is designed to improve the welfare of the oppressed within the confines of a capitalist economy. In a transitional economy the intervention must go further, to promote development of the oppressed into a self-conscious revolutionary class.

The government's expansion of educational and health services and their extension to the whole population cannot be said to be indicators of a socialist programme since these same programmes also obtain in most advanced capitalist societies. In the field of education, the focus has been on quantity at the expense of quality. This field has also seen the expansion of the elitist private schools, which, because of their ability to attract more experienced and better qualified staff, enjoyed more direct government support and subsidy at the expense of state schools. The post-war period did not see any significant revision of the school syllabi, and new forms of education like education with production, meant to promote the socialist principle of self-reliance, have died a natural death.
In the health sector, in line with other development programmes, the government adopted a primary health care programme aimed at a preventive rather than a curative health system. This move by the government cannot be said to be symptomatic of socialism since it 'is consonant with any welfarist developing country supported by UNICEF and WHO'.

In the area of production, not much effort has been made to strengthen cooperative ventures. Most cooperatives thrived on aid from capitalist countries. This could also be interpreted as the government’s way of promoting self-reliance in return for the people’s inadvertent support for capitalism. On the question of government’s commitment to the issue of cooperatives and collectives, Rob Davies notes:

As with other "socialist" experiments in Zimbabwe, efforts in this direction have been marginal. Many cooperative ventures survive only because of inputs of external aid; few if any can be cited as models with which to demonstrate the superiority of socialism over capitalism, of the future over the present. Government support of these ventures has been weak.

The introduction of the minimum wage cannot be said to be an indicator of a transitional state since wage policies also obtain in capitalist countries. Moreover, the minima are unenforceable since firms can apply for exemptions in times of financial constraints. The introduction of collective bargaining in 1991, which is typical of capitalist economies is an indication of government’s withdrawal of its intervention on behalf of the workers.
In the sphere of industrial relations, the Labour Relations Act has been cited as giving the minister of a related ministry, and therefore the government, the power to intervene on behalf of the workers. Its effectiveness will therefore depend on the character of the ruling class. Its ambiguity is evident from the fact that although it is supposed to protect the interests of the workers, the same Act actually limits the rights of the workers to strike. The Act further gives the government power to take over the responsibilities of Trade Unions, thereby undermining and disempowering them.

Finally, in the field of nationalisation of industry, the government's limited investment in industry cannot be said to have been an indicator of its transitional nature to socialism, since its motive appears to have been to rescue weak state enterprises whose collapse would cripple other capitalist ventures.

The discussion so far indicates that the socialist programme never really took off the ground. In fact, as early as 1983, the then Prime Minister of the newly independent Zimbabwe, commenting on the Transitional National Development Plan, declared:

My Government, committed as it is to socialism... presents the ... Plan as its first endeavour at socialist transformation. The plan, however, recognises the existing phenomenon of capitalism as an historical reality, which because it cannot be avoided has to be purposefully harnessed, regulated and transformed as a partner in the overall national endeavour to achieve set national goals.
This was an open admission of the government's failure to dismantle imperialism and, further, a declaration of its intention to partner with a system that it had promised to destroy and replace. The result is marginalisation of the people in whose name the socialist agenda was designed. Land, which was a major source of empowering the majority, largely remained in the hands of a few. Land redistribution, which had been promised during the war, did not take place on a significant scale, for this would have meant contravening the Lancaster House agreement - a 'UK-funded resettlement based on a willing-seller, willing-buyer basis'²⁸.

Of the 162 000 families identified by the government at independence as needing resettlement, only 52 000 had been resettled by the end of the decade²⁹. Most of these were resettled in already overused and overcrowded communal lands. The promises made at the negotiating table by the British and the American governments to help in funding the resettlement programme remained empty. This meant that whites, who comprise about 4% of the Zimbabwean population, and foreign investors, in Stoneman's words, 'continue owning a half or more of the economy-most of the productive land, nearly all the mines, and nearly all the manufacturing industry and other businesses'³⁰. The communal areas, 'whose population growth rate adds about 140 000 people a year'³¹, are now more overcrowded than they were before independence. The government has also failed to restore wealth to the indigenous people in the form of cattle. The household survey carried out after independence in 1982 showed that 'half
the rural households had no cattle". This state of affairs has been exacerbated by repeated and successive years of drought which have not only decimated the native herd, but have also resulted in poor harvests.

2.7 Post-independence Era

Due to sanctions that prevented it from borrowing, Zimbabwe had a very low foreign debt at independence, with the IMF describing it as 'underborrowed by Third World standards'. However, this scenario has drastically changed for the worse since independence. Foreign debt has not only risen, but Zimbabwe has also registered a decline in its economy. Besides the high economic growth rates of the first two years of independence and a temporary recovery in 1985, Zimbabwe’s economy after independence has been characterised by a negative growth rate. The high growth rate was brought about by, among other things, the advent of peace, the policy of reconciliation and a good harvest. However, Zimbabwe, like other African countries that got their independence earlier, has not had any meaningful economic development. The moderate gains of the first decade after independence were lost in the 1990s with the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP).

Economists have cited both external and internal factors as being responsible for the decline in the economies of Third World countries. While external factors range from 'declining markets, deteriorating terms of trade...' and 'natural calamities like
droughts', internal causes range from,

sheer incompetence and gross mismanagement of the economy by the ruling elites, embezzlements of funds, misallocation of resources ... conspicuous consumption patterns by the ruling classes and the pursuit by the elite of a development strategy unsuited to the capacity and needs of the nation.

In Zimbabwe, a certain percentage of the ruling elite has used national wealth for personal gain at the expense of the more needy members of the society. Corruption has been exposed at very high places, and the openly lavish lifestyles of the ruling elite and those that it has elevated to positions of economic power contrast very strongly with its socialist rhetoric which has adversely affected the economy by discouraging investors and encouraging capital flight. The 'unusually large and unproductive bureaucracy' which has been absorbing a great amount of public funds, and the 'Government's populist theories' of 'emphasising redistribution and consumption rather than the creation of new wealth' have had a negative effect on economic development. Further to that, the rapid expansion of social services and their extension to the rural areas, the high defence budget and subsidies for parastatals increased government expenditure. In order to finance the growing expenditure, government was forced to resort to borrowing as early as 1985. Moreover, what Zimbabwe was earning through exports was much less than what it was spending on imports and repayment of debts. This led to further borrowing and therefore a deepening of dependency on foreign aid.
2.8 The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: Phase 1

In order to revive its economy and reduce its dependency on borrowed funds, Zimbabwe, like most African countries, embarked on the International Monetary Fund\World Bank sponsored economic structural adjustment programme in 1990. In principle, this meant that the government had agreed to abandon socialism and to be supervised by the IMF and the World Bank in return for the privilege to borrow. This political and economic decision, implemented by the government on behalf of the people of Zimbabwe, were facilitated by the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. Since the people of Zimbabwe were neither informed nor consulted about ESAP, its introduction was, therefore, an undemocratic imposition by the government, IMF and the World Bank on the people. The leadership in Zimbabwe did not extend participatory democracy beyond the political right of casting votes, to the right to participate in the economy.

The role of the IMF in developing countries has increasingly become a subject for debate, with some experts alleging that the austerity measures that accompany IMF packages 'have resulted in reduced incomes, increased poverty, deteriorating social conditions reduced growth potential and the deepening of dependency'.

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In Zimbabwe, in line with the IMF's usual package of conditions, the government was required to drastically cut down on expenditure. In practical terms this resulted in the reduction and even the removal of government subsidies and price controls on basic consumer goods and social services like health and education. Since ESAP is aimed at reforming the formal sector of the economy, it has no formula for the rural people and small farmers who survive on subsistence economy. These people, who comprise 70% of Zimbabwe's population, and are among the poorest in society, form the bulk of the informal economy which has always been marginalised. The poor, whose interests the government has claimed to champion, have borne 'the brunt of the austerity regime'. They are paying the highest in prices for their basic needs. Women, who are in the majority in the rural areas, are the most hard hit. Sometimes they migrate to the urban areas and join their equally disadvantaged counterparts. With little education, it is impossible for these women to secure well-paying jobs. Because of their low income which is often insufficient to bring up children, they become desperate, and in Peter Balleis' words: 'are driven into temporary or permanent prostitution for their own and the children's survival'. This state of affairs will have serious consequences for the state of Zimbabwe, as has been the case in many African countries. Women, particularly in Africa, form the backbone of the economy and therefore contribute significantly to the well-being of the society. By letting women bear the brunt of ESAP's austerity measures, Zimbabwe is therefore 'undermining the basic conditions of women for bringing up their children' and by so doing
'undercutting its own future'. The reduction in the standards of living and real incomes of the poor has, in turn, had a negative impact on their health. This negative impact of ESAP on the health of the poor is well captured by Peter Balleis:

Nowhere are 'the killing effects' of ESAP more obvious than in the health status of the people. Low or no income at all and high prices lower the nutritional standards of the people. Often people have only one meal a day. Malnutrition weakens the body and increases diseases. Poor people just die earlier. Life expectancy of people in sub-Saharan Africa is 51.8 years, in Zimbabwe 56 years and in the industrial countries 74.5 years (Figures from 1990).

In Zimbabwe, maternal deaths recorded in hospitals and clinics have increased due to the high maternity fees now charged, forcing a number of expectant mothers to deliver at home, without the necessary medical care and assistance. In January 1994, a massive increase in hospital fees ranging from 200% to 1000% was introduced for people with a monthly income of above Z$400. The result was a doubling of deaths of women at childbirth.

The health sector was not the only social service that was adversely affected by ESAP. In the field of education, school fees for primary schools, which had been scrapped at independence, were re-introduced in 1991 as a step towards the reduction of government expenditure. At the same time higher fees were introduced for secondary schools. The result was a drop in attendance at primary and secondary schools, mostly in the rural areas. The low incomes and high inflation rate made it difficult for the poor to send their children to school. In rural secondary schools, a 17% drop was recorded in several cases in 1993.
Therefore the gains made in social services like health and education were eroded by ESAP.

These problems are compounded by the fact that unemployment has been on the rise since independence. Fay Chung (1988) indicates that between 1982 and 1990, the prediction was that only 24.1% of the school leavers would be able to find jobs then under the government development plans\(^4\). The almost 100,000 school-leavers, mostly with secondary school qualifications, who join the job market each year compete for an average of about 10,000 new jobs\(^7\). Recent figures point to the worsening of the situation. According to the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, over 30,000 workers have been retrenched since the beginning of ESAP\(^8\). Even the government's statistics in 1994 put the unemployment figure at over 20,000\(^9\). Thousands of young and qualified school leavers enter the ever-congested job market each year to join thousands of job-seekers who either have been unable to find employment or have been retrenched from the public and private sectors through either a trimming of the civil service in response to IMF demands, or closure of businesses or curtailment of their operations due to negative economic growth partly induced by IMF prescriptions\(^60\). Over 300,000 job-seekers are churned out by schools and colleges each year, to compete for 16,000 jobs that the national economy is creating annually\(^51\). Zimbabwe has therefore embarked on an inhuman system that has left a great percentage of its population unemployed. In Peter Bailles' words 'ESAP is neither social nor economic'\(^52\). The IMF'S 'trickle-down-theory' of distributing wealth has not translated
itself into reality in Zimbabwe, as has been the case elsewhere in Africa. The benefits from the rich have not trickled down to the poor. Multinational corporations have benefitted most from the reform programme. The biggest losers have been the majority. In reality ESAP has meant the trickling down of poverty. Lessons should have been learnt from a similar economic reform programme which was introduced in the USA in 1980. This programme, known as Reaganomics, has shown that since 1980, '20% of the top income class have increased their income by 29 per cent, whereas the 29 per cent at the bottom of the income scale have suffered a serious loss in income by 9%'.

The introduction of ESAP means that policy in Zimbabwe now comes from the West via the IMF and World Bank. National reform now depends largely on the release of loans and grants that support national projects. For Zimbabwe to continue to deserve loans and donations, its economy has to be adjusted to suit the donors. The economy therefore cannot transform independently of donor concerns and interests. The objectives of the IMF and the World Bank are to draw all countries into a single world market. This is to the detriment of Third World countries which cannot compete favourably with developed countries in terms of production and market strategies. Industrialisation is the base of 'any long-term development strategy of a poor country'. This type of development cannot be enhanced through affiliation with the World Bank.
Instead of strengthening rural economies, the government is focusing on donor type of help, for instance, donating seeds and fertilisers to rural communities, thus creating dependency in order to make political mileage. There is need to work towards reversing the situation whereby industry is based on providing luxury goods for a small minority, which comprises 4% of the population. There is also need to move away from the heavy dependence of industry on the skills of these same consumers. For the 96% of the population to benefit, particularly the 70% in the communal areas, would require a move away from this pattern of consumption to investment. This cannot be achieved through conservative reform of the existing structures, which is the path that the government has chosen to follow. Nothing short of a radical transformation is needed to transform the economy for the benefit of the majority.

2.9 Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: Phase 2

The first phase of ESAP came to an end in 1995. By the end of this phase, the ruling party and the government had lost their social democratic character which they had used as an aspect of socialism to appease the masses. Despite the fact that Zimbabwe had overborrowed in Phase 1, its performance, according to IMF/World Bank expectations left a lot to be desired. Not much was done by government to liberalise or open up the economy. In spite of the trimming of the civil service and the reduction and even removal of subsidies on basic consumer goods and social services like health and education, not much was achieved by the
government's effort to reduce its expenditure. Budget deficit and the resultant inflation remained high. As a result, the IMF refused to release funds for Phase 2 of ESAP. In April, 1998, the government belatedly launched the second phase of the reform programme known as the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST). The IMF then released a fraction of the required amount to partly fund the reform programme and promised to release the balance quarterly, depending on the government's performance. The IMF's reluctance to fund this programme would lead to further demise of the economy, thus exacerbating poverty. On the other hand, the release of more loans would plunge the government deeper into debt. One recalls to mind OXFAM's observation of the need by the industrialised nations to 'face up to the fact that the IMF has failed in Africa', and that what is required is 'either fundamentally to reform the IMF, or to extricate it from Africa'. In Zimbabwe, ESAP has so far failed to deliver the expected results to the generality of the people.

It has become clear that the government is reluctant to make too many concessions for fear of losing the electorate. The new elite does not want to lose its newly-acquired status and power to either the IMF or the people. Pitted against the giants of capitalism, government appeals to the people for sympathy. Yet it continues to entrench its position on the international markets by creating an indigenous elite which does not benefit the majority in real terms. It is now clear that the war was fought by two groups of people: the majority, who were fighting
to recover lost lands, and the nationalist leaders, whose ambition was to join the capitalist world. Equitable distribution of wealth would have destroyed the latter's vision of being the new elite.

2.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to note that contemporary history emanates primarily from a war that was fought to redistribute wealth. The attainment of peace in 1980 and the introduction of conservative reform on the basis of existing structures to pacify the masses gave a semblance of stability and peace. However, thereafter there was a gradual turn towards the creation of an economy which is geared towards servicing the country's debt. These are the debts that sponsored independence. The government soon realised that the masses could not be appeased with borrowed funds. This coincided with a move by the creditors of the nation to control and restructure the economy in order to safeguard their interests. Since then the country has been torn between debt-servicing that goes with opening up the economy to the vagaries of the world economy, and rural development which benefits the masses. The latter cannot take place without further borrowing. On the other hand, further borrowing frustrates the objectives of the masses. Therefore the country finds itself in a 'Catch 22' situation where it is not performing well on either side. It would appear the way out of the dilemma is to ignore both sides and go towards self-interest, hence the creation of
a new elite in the guise of the much-debated indigenisation policy - a small group of rich Africans alongside the traditional wealth-holders to work alongside multinational companies. The state has agreed to implement capitalism, and at the same time give it a tinge that makes it appear to work to the advantage of the underclass.

The literature in question arises out of this 'melting pot' situation. The role of the poet has always been to record history and pass it on to posterity in poetic form. To that extent the writer is a teacher and a visionary. He/she is necessarily therefore a philosopher, historian, sociologist and an economist - an individual who helps his people to understand the link between the past, present and future, so that they can participate more fully in their own development. Leading critics of Zimbabwean literature like Kahari, Ngara, and Chiweme have demonstrated that the writer is perceived by his society to be a teacher. The title of Flora Veit-Wild's critical work on black Zimbabwean literature: Teachers, Preachers and Non-believers (1992) speaks for itself about the character, and therefore the role, of the African writer. Similarly, African writers in the North like Ngugi and Achebe see literature as a developmental tool. Literature is therefore seen as playing a key role in the betterment of the lives of a people. Zimbabwe has an agency in the Ministry of Education that prescribes literature for use in schools. It is evident in their handling of literature texts in the indigenous languages and the setting of examination questions, that teachers in schools see the writer's task as
transmitting societal values and therefore shaping the behaviour of the young. Similarly, writers themselves see their role as that of teaching and therefore moulding the minds of the young. In our oral traditions, the elders are teachers of the young. It is through them that the philosophy of life of the society is transmitted to the young. Writers are an extension of that ancient role. It therefore goes without saying that literature is pedagogical, and the writer is a teacher.

The literature in question therefore has a role to play in the given historical context, and subsequent chapters will examine the role of the literature on the basis of themes that writers decide to write on. The assumption is that writers will be concerned with some aspects of history, and attempts are made to link the art with this reality. Where writers appear silent, the silence will be interpreted as meaningful in the historical context. The relative paucity of Ndebele celebratory poems, for instance, is related to the post-independence disturbances in Matebeleland. Again, the absence of poems that celebrate the Unity Accord in Shona is due to the fact that the mainstream Shona society did not host the civil war in the same sense that they hosted the liberation war.
Endnotes


7. Ibid, (7-8).


11. Ibid, (9).


newspaper, Zimbabwe Independent.


23. Rob Davies in Stoneman, (23).


31. Ibid, (50).


35. A. S. Mlambo, ‘The Rich Shall Inherit the Earth’, in 


37. Ibid, (57)

38. Ibid, (53).


41. Ibid, (29).

42. Ibid, (69-70)

43. Ibid, (27).


45. Ibid, (23).


49. Ibid, (91).


53. Ibid, (31).


56. Ibid, (44).

CHAPTER 3

CELEBRATORY POETRY

3.1 Introduction

The war historian Norma J. Kriger makes the following observation which is relevant to this chapter:

In common with other newly created nations, Zimbabwe has had to confront the international challenges of establishing a national identity and political legitimacy. It is difficult to imagine a nation and a state that could enjoy legitimacy and a shared national identity without access to national symbols. In this chapter I examine how Zimbabwe’s ruling elite sought to enhance their political legitimacy and to foster a national identity through the discarding of colonial symbols. In its quest for heroes, the governing elite turned to the recent guerrilla war that led to Zimbabwe’s political Independence in April 1980.

The poetry analysed in this chapter, to a large extent, reflects the process of creating symbols of independence for use by the newly-born nation. Poems in this chapter articulate people’s feelings about the war as well as independence. Since poetry in the indigenous languages was published in association with the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, such poems could not be published before independence. The Literature Bureau, whose responsibility was to edit Shona and Ndebele manuscripts for publication, was headed by white people. Commenting on what he calls the unofficial day to day role of the Literature Bureau in the context of the Shona novel, Chiwome observes that it directed the novel along 'the path of least ideological resistance to the
Rhodesian government. This observation applies to all genres of literature in the indigenous languages. Although blacks were employed as editors, their role was reduced to that of translators by their white masters. Most of the poems to be discussed therefore are assumed to have been written after independence or when independence was in sight. The poetry in question emanates from the history of colonialism and colonial resistance. It is an artistic depiction of historical events. Depending on the writers, some experiences are understated, others overstated. This chapter seeks to analyse this poetry in the context of the events that it purports to reflect. It is therefore going to examine the extent to which the artistic responses of the poets to the war experience and to post-independence reality in Zimbabwe is appropriate.

First to be celebrated by the masses are the freedom fighters and their weapons which are an exciting and new spectacle to peasants in the country. The war was largely waged in the countryside, not in towns. The celebration did not wholly arise out of the actual prowess of the fighters. Celebration was part of the propaganda of the time. During the war, the nationalist leaders were only mentioned in passing and quite often sung in songs also in passing, since they never appeared in the war front. They were directing operations from the rear in Maputo and Lusaka. So very little was known about them till independence. They are omnipresent in poetry, yet they were not part of the war scene. This reflects the transfer of victory from the soldiers and the masses to the nationalists.
The romanticisation of the freedom fighter is part of the oral traditions that arose in villages during the war. That of the nationalist leaders is part of the rhetoric that comes with nationalists foregrounding themselves in liberation war history at independence. What we get in poetry either arises in activities and the resultant oral traditions at the grassroots, or high political offices in the cities. Just after the independence celebrations in April 1980, there was massive mobilisation of the masses by the ruling party. Politicians spent a lot of their working time in the villages trying to spread a few of their socialist ideas and laying the foundation for one partyism. Poets seem also to get inspiration out of speeches prepared for rallies. So the writer appears to be caught in the middle of voices from the top and those from the grassroots, at a time politicians argue idealistically that there is no top and no bottom. However, in circulation are terms derived from Portuguese that designate new classes, for instance chef for bosses and povo for masses.

3.2 Background to War Poems

A striking feature about war poems is that the majority of the writers seem to have responded to the war experience from a distance. There are two ways in which the poems are distanced from the war. First, most poets write retrospectively, as most poems are recollections of the war experience. Secondly, this artistic response is remote from the war experience and war effort since most of the poems are written by people who were
physically and therefore psychologically distanced from the war zone. For instance, Solomon Mutswairo composed from America before and after independence. Mathema supposedly wrote from Moscow during the liberation war. What then this means is that the poetry can only be understood against the background of the fact that these poems are not part of the war effort. Rather, they were part of independence celebrations. What this means is that the poems could either be based on hearsay, or reminiscences, or on both. The poems could also be an expression of one class of people's vision of the future, that is, they are based on what people thought independence would be like when it eventually came.

Poems come from the educated, who are not usually found at the grassroots, but who nevertheless theorise a lot about war and independence on the basis of what they learnt at school and the little they know. While the poets may appear to be intellectually armed to interpret history through poetry, it should also be noted that as has been mentioned in Chapter 2, these poets are also recipients of an educational system that did not encourage learners to question the world in which they lived. Although poets appear to be writing during the war, very few of them are freedom fighters. Most were in the exile of Western schools when the liberation war was fought. They chose the pen when others chose the gun.

There are a number of reasons why the celebration is belated. Firstly, the war had an unforgettable impact on the people.
Secondly, the war could have been a fashionable source of creative writing. Following the Literature Bureau tradition, publishers routinely solicit manuscripts on various themes, and after independence new themes like the war, independence and reconciliation became fashionable. Thirdly, poets could be searching for patronage where they see the possibility of gaining materially or otherwise. Finally, a therapeutic value could be attached to such writings that could have arisen as a means of venting out emotions about the war.

There is a more authentic poetry about the war and independence, in the form of folk songs and popular songs. A few of these have been compiled and interpreted by Pongweni. This in fact was combat poetry. The same combat songs composed in camps in Zambia and Mozambique as well as different parts of Zimbabwe, and sung by masses and freedom fighters as they fought side by side became the celebratory songs at independence.

3.3 Images of Celebration in Ndebele Poetry

Images of celebration largely take the form of direct excitement about independence which takes the form of idealisation of the country, the war experience, freedom fighters, independence and violence.
3.3.1 Idealisation of the Country and Independence

These poems paint an idealistic picture of Zimbabwe as a land of peace and plenty, inhabited by egalitarian citizens. Mathema’s poem *Kuzinsuku Ezizayo* (In the Days to Come) is inspired by socialist realism. The poem depicts the future in idealised images, making it look better than what it actually is:

Phambili
Sohlala kungelampi lokucucwa
Sohlala kungelankethabetshabi lenkethazikhumba
Sohlala sisidla sisutha sonke.

Phambili
Kobe kungalazinothi;
Kobe kungelabayanga futhi.

Singafika empilweni ezayo
Izisebenzi zizathath’ umbuso,
Zithathe wonk’ umnotho wezinothi
Ziwenz’ owabantu bonke.

Phambili
Sohlala kamnandi impela,
Wonk’ umunt’ esebenzela
Njai’ efundel’ uzulu wonke
Kungelabacucci labacindezeli (*Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi*, 33).

In the future
There will be no war and exploitation
There will be no tribalism and racism
Everyone will have plenty to eat.

In the future
There will be no rich people;
The poor will not even be there.

If we get to the future
The workers will take-over the government,
And take all the riches from the wealthy
And distribute them to everyone.

In the future
We will lead a good life,
Everyone will be working
And learning for everyone else
There will be no exploiters and oppressors.

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The images in this poem add up to a romance of the future. The workers will have complete power to run the country. There will be equality of all races and ethnic groups. The oppression of man by man will be a thing of the past. There will be education for all for the benefit of everyone.

This vision of the future which almost creates a paradise on earth is a counterpoint to colonial experience from the viewpoint of the underprivileged Africans. Socialism has been depicted as a romance of the future. Whatever goes into building this vision is not abundant in contemporary life. Ironically, this collection of poems is published after independence, yet the poet is still concerned about the future. If we assume that after independence much of this world has not begun to become a reality, we begin to realise the possibility of this being escapist poetry in the sense that the poet is holding onto his vision of a good life in spite of observations to the contrary. By 1984, the poet’s sensibility was being overtaken by reality, for instance, drought and disease. Further, this prophecy comes against the background of civil war when the two major factions—premising their fight on ethnic lines, are fighting for control of the country.

The images about the future have a basis in the rhetoric of the politics of the 1980s which often runs contrary to events on the ground, for instance, the poet’s declaration that oppression was to become a thing of the past runs contrary to the fact that there was no consensus about the representative nature of the ruling party then. The division of the people along ethnic lines...
and the now widely publicised Fifth Brigade atrocities in Matebeleland mean that one group was already being oppressed, using the fascist means that belong to the world that the writer wants to get rid of. The image on education may be the only one that is remotely linked to the reality of the new government's policy of free education for all at Primary school level.

Mathema's *Izithelo zeZimbabwe* (The fruits of Zimbabwe) seems to originate in the subsistence culture when people lived on farming and gathering fruits from forests. The poem therefore takes Zimbabwe as a forest of fruit that grow in the wild. Superficially, there is a picture of the land of plenty from the viewpoint of the villagers who would subsist on these even today:

![Image of text](image)

Zimbabwe is seen as a land of prosperity in terms of fruits - a rustic sensibility, which reminds one of the Biblical myth of the Garden of Eden, or Paradise where the virtuous dead go. The image however leans more on Eden - a primitive paradise. This myth is premised on ignorance or childhood rural experience. It celebrates the ignorance and innocence of childhood, thereby underplaying and even rejecting the challenges that come with maturity. It is not clear whether the writer is referring to the pre-colonial or the post-colonial type of paradise. However, the writer's nostalgia indicates that the image is not futuristic.
The fruits mentioned - umtshwankela, umviyo, uxakuxaku, umqokolo, and so on, are enjoyed in childhood when one is herding cattle. This is before the stage of maturity. As soon as one stops herding cattle, one naturally outgrows this enjoyment. Thereafter one starts missing them with the tastebuds of a child.

The poet is therefore yearning for pre-colonial African glory for enjoyment after independence. This is a reflection of innocence, bordering on limited nostalgia. In other words, there is a rejection of modernisation as a process, and an allusion that the past was better, which is essentially not true. If we think the past was better, it is because we now know the present which is worse in many ways. But the present is capable of being improved and celebrated in its own terms if injustice is removed. So the fact that people are not benefiting from a system does not make that system inherently backward. At any rate, the past is irretrievably gone. In other words, the poet’s vision marks the Hobbesian philosophy of the noble savage who is at one with nature, oblivious of the stress and the strain of industrialisation. This philosophy is ahistorical in the sense that whatever its merit, a lower level of existence remains low and irretrievable.

Mathema’s Yanhle iZimbabwe (How Beautiful Zimbabwe is) is a reflection of official truth and therefore part of the rhetoric of the time. It is historical in the sense of its reflection of the rhetoric of the time. The dominant images are those of the beauty of the country, reckoned in organic terms like the sky.
(isibhakabhaka), the green (uhlaza), the grass (utshani), birds (izinyoni) and animals (izinyamazana). The same sensibility as in the previous poem is expressed here. Yanhle izimbabwe could be a celebration of a land that does not have environmental degradation, for instance, large-scale commercial farms, or it could easily be a celebration of a season or, of one of Zimbabwe’s popular holiday resorts, for instance, the Eastern Highlands. This is not the Zimbabwe that everyone experiences. It belongs to the privileged class. If it is a season, it is a passing phase which does not come often, because of droughts. It is again the Hobbesian image of Africa the jungle, Africa teeming with animals and tall grass. We do not know how this terrain translates itself into benefits for its inhabitants. The poem is reminiscent of late eighteenth century European accounts of Africa in which ‘the imperative of observing flora and fauna obscures the fact that the land is inhabited by societies’.

In M.L. Pratt’s words:

The activity of describing geography and identifying flora and fauna structures an asocial narrative in which the human presence ... is absolutely marginal ...

This touristic vision is derived from the view that one gets as one drives along the country’s highways or flies above.

The diction is lyrical, that is, typically romantic. It is characterised by simple words suggesting lack of perception from the viewpoint of the writer. Its nostalgic nature makes emotions flow smoothly, while the fascinating images have a hypnotising effect on the reader. This is typical of the language used for
children. This is a result of the influence of the pastoral. Celebration of pastoral life is common among colonial writers. This celebration has the unfortunate effect of romanticising challenges of the past.

The poem is patriotic in a naïve way. It shows sheer attachment to the land, a common feeling at independence. The poet writes like a tourist or someone who has been away from home for a long time and has a lot of money to spend. This is a bourgeois sensibility as opposed to the village or peasant sensibility.

3.3.2 Idealisation of the Freedom Fighter and the War Experience

The freedom fighter is presented as a larger than life figure. He is celebrated for his invincibility and resilience. L. Moyo's umwelinkululeko (the freedom fighter) is celebrated for his courage to operate from the relative discomfort of the jungle (emaguswin' amnyama). He has braved all the dangers of marauding lions and others that would befall anyone who dares to operate from the dark forests. Because of his awe-inspiring characteristics, he operates with relative ease when he comes face to face with the enemy:

Wen' owabhek' izidlova zalomhedehehe (Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi, 62).

You who looked at the destroyers and they shivered.
The result is victory, happiness, peace and prosperity for the benefit of all Zimbabweans. This was the mood soon after independence.

The celebration is conducted in terms of the diction of traditional bravery by using phrases from traditional heroic poetry of former militant Ndebele kings. We get an image of people who sacrificed themselves for the good of all, in other words Christ-like figures. This is a romanticisation of the heroes as well as their achievements. It is known, for instance, that they did not always sleep in the bush. The fact that their expectations for rewards were built into the country’s political constitution in the form of the War Victims Compensation Act and other benefits, and that even now, years after the conclusion of the war of independence they are still clamouring for compensation is ample evidence that their contribution is not purely sacrificial as we are made to believe by the writer. The material gain remains unsaid to create a good basis for a romance.

At the time of publishing, people were living in the bliss of an illusion. They were enjoying the windfalls of money which was borrowed in order to give a semblance of a socialist state, as was seen in Chapter 2. The state which the poet celebrates was short-lived and the victory celebrated is exaggerated. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Lancaster House Agreement was not defeat but an agreement to stop fighting and not dispossess whites of land. The ‘fire of freedom’ that the poet refers to
could easily apply to the new elite that has always enjoyed freedom, and continues to do so while most of the people face economic hardships. The romanticised freedom fighters are known to have been fallible. There are times when their behaviour left a lot to be desired, for instance, brutal murders, forced relationships with girls, demand for expensive food and involvement in corrupt practices as is reflected in the press in the mid 1990s.

Bernard Ndlovu’s Amaghawe Ethu (Our Heroes) focuses on nationalist politicians and guerrilla leaders. The former mobilised the youth to go and fight, while the latter fought and were demobilised after independence. The bias is towards those who died and are therefore not part of the controversy of the post-independence era. These are people who have not been compromised by corruption as evidenced by various commissions of enquiry that have been set up to dig into allegations of corruption. Again these are people over whom there is no controversy about heroism. The writer’s canonised heroes are drawn from the two major ethnic groups in order to give the art a nationalist profile. The writer therefore bases his inspiration on nationalist history. He uses the strategy of drawing from both sides for the purpose of nation-building. Nehanda, a local Zezuru leader near Salisbury, becomes a national leader.

What is interesting about this poem is the romanticisation in the fourth stanza:
Lafulathel’ imizi yen’ emikhulu.
Lalizele, lifuyile, lisidla lisutha (Ezivusa Usinga, 59).

You turned your backs on your big homes.
Yet you had children, livestock and you were eating well.

This stanza might betray the fact that these people were not suffering when they went to war. They had wealth and were living well. This cannot be said to be true of the generality of the people who went to war, although it could be partly true of educated people whose aim of being accepted as equals in the white community was never realised. The writer is therefore thinking of the black middle class group which went to war to realise its middle class ambitions, and continues to do so after independence. The romanticisation also comes in the form of depicting the heroes as people who had nothing personally to gain by going to war. The truth about those who went to war when they were in relative comfort is that they harboured ambitions of gaining material wealth. Obviously, those who died during the war did not realise these ambitions.

The writer democratises the character of the heroes by making reference to mass graves at Nyadzonya, Chimoio and Mkushi, and to those heroes who did not come from affluent families:

Emaqaqen’ akud’ aseNyazonya,
Khonal’ kwamnyama aseMkushi,
Laphakathi kwezinanga zaseChimo,
Amathamb’ en’ alele elekana (Ezivusa Usinga, 59).

In the far-away hills of Nyazonya,
There in the dark ones at Mkushi,
And in middle of the jungle of Chimo,
Your bones are piled up.
Some of the people described above were innocent economic and political refugees. Others were criminals of the system that was there then. The bulk of the people were school children who had gone to war for adventurous reasons. They did not, as the writer suggests, know the dangers that lay ahead. In fact, this ignorance was used as a basis for recruiting them. Even the possibility of dying was remote to most of them. To the majority, the hazardous nature of the journey to their place of recruitment, as well as the subhuman camps in terms of the standards they were used to, came as a shock. The romantic aspect comes from the fact that the writer turns and subverts the limitations of the fighters, in terms of knowledge of the challenges that lay ahead, into knowledge:

Lalizazi izikhubekiso eziphambili,
Imithambalala yezinyoka yayizoba yimiqamelo.
Ukubhodlelwa yizilwane emaguswini,
Imiqand' ebulal' izinyamazana,
Konke lokho kwakungcono 'kakhulu,
Kulokuncindezel' ezweni labokhokho (Ezivusa Usinga, 59).

You knew the dangers that lay ahead,
Huge snakes would be your pillows.
The belching of lions in the jungle,
The cold weather that kills animals,
All this was much better
Than being oppressed in the land of your ancestors.

This process of creating myths around the true nature of history and the true characters of the freedom fighters only serves to elevate the heroes concerned to a level that makes them hard to understand by ordinary people. If they fought when they were comfortable, then they are superhuman, and the survivors of this superhuman species can use this myth to exploit other people.
Such images might have led to the delayed understanding of politicians as ordinary people with ordinary weaknesses, and who therefore need to be checked. The creation of such nationalist myths led to the underdevelopment of the country.

E.J.M. Nhliziyo in *Bayethe Zimbabwe Qhawe* (Hail Zimbabwe Hero) describes the destructiveness of the war in a matter-of-fact way without attempting to show how this came about. The artist is not sensitive to the historical process that brought about independence. What he describes is an autonomous almost God-given process.

The over-exaggeration as seen in the frequent repetition of the royal salute *Bayethe!* shows that the writer does not appreciate that soldiers won the battle but lost the war in the agreement in Lancaster to the leaders and their allies. The writer is celebrating flag and nationalist claims to independence rather than the surrender value of independence. He celebrates the stubbornness and resilience of Zimbabwe which is only restricted to fighting. We know that this does not extend to the creation of wealth. Although the celebration is a statement of...
anticipation, this kind of anticipation seems to be blind to what has already been lost. He celebrates black people coming to power but fails to anticipate the challenges that lie ahead. The artist relies on political rhetoric which has many limitations in historical terms. What is celebrated is not tangible.

In conclusion, it should be noted that celebration is not untraditional in being anticipatory. Rather, it is untraditional in failing to be critical and taking note of the dangers of the current rite of passage. The absence of admonition means that it is not easy to take note of the losses, for instance, the viciousness of the war and the surrender value of the sacrifice.

3.3.3 Celebration of Violence

These poems celebrate the weapons that were used during the war of liberation. The gun is a symbol of the revolutions to overthrow colonialism that took place in many countries in the Third World in the mid and late twentieth century. Having failed to negotiate, people believed that positive change could be brought about only through violent means. Examples of this are the armed struggles of the peoples of Namibia, Cuba, Bolivia, Algeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola. This belief in violence as a means of getting positive change can also be seen in Ngugi’s fiction about confrontation in works like Matigari, A Grain of Wheat and Petals of Blood. In Zimbabwe, the legendary Nehanda’s statement, ‘Tora gidi uzvitonge’ (Take the gun and rule yourself) coincided well with some of the
pronouncements by the Chinese revolutionary leader, Mao. This is in contradistinction to the Civil Rights Movement in the USA that advocated non-violent paths to democracy.

Isibhamu (The Gun) by L. Moyo is a celebration of the gun as a symbol or an instrument of freedom, that is, a weapon used to combat colonial violence. The gun is celebrated after an initial defeat of the Ndebele by the settlers in the 1993 war and subsequent rebellions in 1996:

We sigwagwagwa wen' olezihlobo
Zageda amadol' abobabamkhulu! (Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi, 61).

Hey machine gun, you whose relatives
Finished the knees of our grandfathers!

This time round, they are shown to be a match to their adversaries because of the type of weapon used. The weapon is now a source of the black people's victory. The gun is being put in its historical context. The freedom fighters had forged an alliance with China, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and other countries of the Eastern Bloc through which to fight colonialism. Moyo now hails the weapon as a person, a decisive factor in winning or losing the battle. The whole poem is an extended metaphor of the gun.

The gun is given various attributes. It is generally said to be lethal. It does not discriminate in that it has no regard for people's status, ethnicity or skin colour. Because of its classless nature, it fought people who were considered to be
politically invincible. This means that anyone who has it can use it to their advantage. It instils fear and terror, and yet it obeys man. In other words, it cannot be blamed for its destructive nature:

Futhi lingcino ngiyayithanda njani,
Ngob' iyisiphof' esingelankethabetshabi,
Iqethul' osiyazi, omafutha labocakeleni.
Ayilakuthi ngimbalamuni,
Kumbe ngindlebe zikhany' ilanga;
Loba ngimakhala made.
Abalwelinkululeko bagiya ngawe (Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi, 62).

And I really love this wax, (the gun)
Because it is like a blind person who has no regard for ethnic origin,
It can overturn the wise, the fat and the thin.
It has no regard for skin colour,
Or whether or not one's ears are transparent;
Or one's nose is long.
The freedom fighters boasted because they had you.

The poet observes the potential destructive nature of the gun in the war and in history in general. This perception of the gun arising from the war experience may be due to the fact that during the war, people for the first time had first hand experience of modern weapons like the AK, machine guns, rocket launchers, and so on. To the people, this was a novel and awe-inspiring experience. Secondly, villagers were mobilised using propaganda about weapons used by freedom fighters like the AK, assault rifle and light machine guns.

The poem is part of the oral traditions of the war, that is the myths and reality about weapons. It is part of the propaganda that gave people courage to fight. The poem is a eulogy,
ironically of the very same weapons that made villagers suffer during and after the war. It is a celebration of violence that is meant to counter violence. But the danger of such celebration is the creation of a culture of violence that leaves behind a trail of suffering. The culture of violence brought freedom and at the same time denied it:


You murderer who is also a liberator. Liberator who bewitches in broad daylight, You who takes the soul of a child; Yet at the same time free it from slavery. You who can be trusted like a child, Because you agree to everything. O, my! I fear your eye, Wherever it looks; I hear children say O, my! No we do not blame you spitter-of-death. We blame your creator.

There is a reluctant acknowledgement of the dangers of a culture of violence. The state itself carried on with the culture of violence on the people who were believed to be a threat to it. At the time of publication, there were rebels fighting the state. Besides attacking white farmers who still owned vast areas of prime land even after the war and targets within the civilian population10, these so-called dissidents would also look for regular forces and also target institutions of the new state, and
people in positions of power and authority. There was therefore violence and counter-violence. During the Fifth Brigade era, the very same people in whose name freedom was fought were killed, maimed or intimidated by the same gun. Therefore the same gun was used to dominate certain groups where there was no voluntary acceptance of the new government. This means that the government used the gun to impose itself on the people. It was used to sponsor tribalism and was therefore a form of ethnic identity. This ushered a new era in Zimbabwe, whereby like the rest of Africa, independent states fail to develop because of violence, whether generated from within or motivated by outside forces. Examples of this phenomenon can be seen from what happened in Mozambique, Angola, Zaire, Rwanda and South Africa. The culture of violence infiltrates crime like armed robbery, theft and personal clashes. It reduces crime to a much more inhuman and dangerous practice, resulting in loss of many lives. The culture of violence has a propensity to sustain itself through means that may look legitimate when it is used by the state, or illegitimate when it is used by the ordinary people. The origin of this culture to some extent comes through the heroic culture of the African people, for instance, the Zulu and the Ndebele military tradition which originates in the Zulu culture of the days of Shakà. Like Shaka who built the Zulu empire, Mzilikazi used this culture to build the Ndebele nation. Violence was part of nation-building then. In modern warfare, it spurs the fighters into acts of valour and heroism, and also supports self-determination. Beyond colonialism it appears to create a self-destructive culture, when the enemy is not immediately identifiable and the
majority of the people are unarmed and poor.

In Izinyoni Zempi (Birds of War) L. Moyo romanticises one of the most harrowing experiences of the war - an air raid. The writer uses the peasant image of a bird to depict war planes in action. He is a detached observer who marvels at the speed and the accuracy of the bombings. The fact that we do not see the suffering people means that the writer admires the scientific invention without putting much consideration into the carnage that its use creates:

Zathi cwiliyane sahelwane ludobh' ungogo, Zaya phezulu sangqungqul' enqobileyo.

Ngasemsileni zawabekela amaqanda - Bhu! bhu! achamisela amaqanda. Wavubek' umhlabathi, Kwaze kwancibilika amathamb' endoda (Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi, 63).

They (the planes) dived like a hawk catching a quail, They soared like an eagle.

At the tail they laid eggs - The eggs hatched as they fell. The ground was all topsy- turvy. Until the bones of a man melted.

This detached romantic account of the bomb as it causes havoc seems to have been obtained through hearsay or myths of the same experience. It contrasts strongly with first hand accounts of battle raids and gun fire. First hand experiences seem to give images that are subjective, concrete, closer to life and show the impact of the war on the mind. From such a perspective, recounting the war experience is a process of healing which is part of the aftermath of the war. On the other hand, detached
accounts are a recreation of propaganda which does not serve a useful purpose after the war. While it could be celebration, poetry written after the war should, at the same time, be informative. Belated celebrations and romanticisation should not be at the expense of taking good account of the losses and gains of the war. When this romanticisation is done out of the context of history, it is like celebrating violence for its own sake. One of the legacies of the revolution is institutionalised violence and rampant crime.

3.4 Images of Celebration in Shona Poetry

As in Ndebele poetry this also takes the form of idealisation of the country, war experience, independence, the freedom fighters and a celebration of violence.

3.4.1 Idealisation of the Country and Independence

Like Ndebele poems in this category, these poems also depict Zimbabwe in the image of the Biblical land of milk and honey - Canaan. Independence is seen to be a reality which is to the benefit of the majority. J.C. Kumbirai's *Mhururu yeZimbabwe* (Ululation for Zimbabwe) was written for the actual independence celebrations and read at the Rufaro Stadium in Harare on April 18, 1980, and probably later polished up for publication. The poem is an adaptation from a children's game song about the new moon, which, according to the writer, symbolises the coming of a new era - independence. The writer portrays the hopes and
aspirations of independence. History has been inverted in that the oppressors are no longer masters, they have given way to the oppressed:

Chinyakare zvino chasunama,  
Nemadziva ave mazambuko  
Mazambuko achiva madziva (Nduri dzeZimbabwe, 37).

The status quo of the past is now inverted,  
And rivers have become shallow crossings  
Shallow crossings are now rivers.

This is true to the extent that black people are now in political office. Economically however, the generality of the population is still oppressed as was seen in Chapter 2. Of note is the cyclical conception of time which reflects how fortune changes. The images of the rooster and the rising sun in the third stanza are other examples of images that govern time in the African world. When the sun rises, people wake up, evil disappears and business starts. However what is tragic about the image is that as sure as the sun rises, it will set. The writer attempts to counter this fact by temporarily suspending the movement of time:

Zuva jena rorusununguko;  
Hero vhai! Rava panhongonya  
Harichafi zvino rakadoka (Nduri, 37).

"The bright (white) sun of freedom;  
There it beams! Right overhead  
Now it will never set again.

There is a sense in which this stanza is true, for we cannot go back to colonialism in the form in which it was. However, such idealistic images reflect the euphoria of the time. They show that the racist oppression is replaced by self-determination. The
The irony is that the poet does not see the oppression of blacks by blacks, in spite of the fact that he realises that nothing is permanent. By implication then, the celebration will be short-lived.

The images of harvest time in stanza 2 come from the peasant agricultural life of the Shona people, thus giving the impression that the celebration is coming from the grassroots level. Yet the writer suggests that freedom is spreading from Rufaro Stadium into the rural areas:

Sununguko yofararira
Farararara yatekeshera,
Yerererere yoterera
Nenyika yose yeZimbabwe (Nduri DzeZimbabwe, 37).

Freedom is spreading
It is spreading and settling,
It is flowing on and on
All over the country of Zimbabwe.

The irony lies in the fact that freedom is being taken from the metropolis into the rural areas, where in fact the war was fought. This is the tragic aspect of this image. The question to be asked is how freedom got to the cities first, when the war was fought in the country. It has become apparent to Zimbabweans that the city has dominated the enjoyment of independence.

What is striking about this poem is the use of euphoric images that reflect the euphoria that grips children when they see the new moon. The writer uses these to reflect the euphoria that gripped Zimbabwe at independence. There is a lot of sing-song.
The poet describes the fireworks that symbolise joy and create a frenzy among the people who are entering a new era. The description of the neon lights captures the festive mood at Rufaro Stadium. The total brightness reflects the excitement of the beginning of the new era. The indulgent and innocent laughter in stanza 3 suggests naivety on the part of the people. From the point of view of the majority, the abundant food in the fifth stanza is anticipatory. In fact, it is a dream that has not yet come true. It has, however, become realisable for the new elite. The abundant meat that the poet refers to might have been a reality only on the day of the celebrations. The metaphor brings in the tragic aspect of looting, since besides the fact that the meat could not have been fairly distributed among the participants, not everyone ate it. This concept of indulgence brings in the materialistic dimension of independence, as seen in the nationalist leaders' emphasis on consumption and redistribution, as opposed to production\textsuperscript{12}.

The writer makes reference to Guruuswa, the country of origin of the Shona people\textsuperscript{13}. Guruuswa (tall grass) symbolises the golden age in the history of the Shona people. Of note is the fact that this is the first time in literature that this mythical reference to the origins of the indigenous people has been made. There is also reference to the first freedom fighter Kaguvi, one of the first two spirit mediums to be killed by the whites for their role in the first Chimurenga. The Mwari cult at Matonjeni is also referred to. All this enables the poet to capture the jubilant mood at independence. To the people, it was an unbelievable
experience, a time that they were happy to have lived to see. It is an arrival, rather than a beginning. Even children born after this time were referred to as 'born-frees'. It is ironical, however, that these same children are likely to be victims of the economic hardships experienced by many in this era, as shall be seen in subsequent chapters.

The poet’s reference to the removal of all traps that enable all people to have the freedom of walking freely is meant to euphorise independence:

Maziriva aidzvanyirira
Nhasi uno azokuduburwa;
Zvimindya zvasiti warakata,
Hapana achada kuzvinonga (Nduri DzeZimbabwe, 39).

The stone traps that repressed us
Have today been tripped;
The props of the traps have all fallen,
No-one wants to pick them up.

This is wishful recital. It is a reflection of African optimism at its best. Since this poem was recited on the day of celebrations, it is not surprising that to the poet, the removal of the whites from visible positions of power meant total independence and freedom of blacks.

In the last stanza, however, praise is mingled with warning in line with traditional praise. The warning comes right at the end to make sure that what is said is remembered long after it has been said:
The poet tones down the celebration by warning against foreign domination and neo-colonialism. The Zimbabwe that is being addressed refers to the masses of the people, and not the leaders. The writer's foresight enables him to see the danger that lies in nationalism. Zimbabwe is depicted in the image of a house that is supposed to shelter its people from marauding animals and natural elements. This is a warning against lapses in history that are bound to be costly to the country. Every country has a duty to defend itself from outside threats which will take different forms at different times. At the time Kumbirai wrote, the threat to the security of the country could have been the intrusion of the Soviet Union or Britain or America. All the countries that had supported Zimbabwe against colonialism expected to influence the course of events, and Zimbabwe was therefore in danger of losing its independence soon after gaining it.

The poem *Pemberai* (Rejoice) by Simon E. Kalizi encourages people to celebrate independence across ethnic boundaries. Independence is perceived as having brought about a fulfilment of the desires of the people which is depicted in the biblical image of the
opening of the heavens. Like the coming of Jesus, the coming of independence has wiped the people's tears away. Independence is also depicted in the image of the summer sun that thaws the sad faces of the people. In other words, independence is said to have had a magical effect on the people. The poet says the Shona and the Ndebele fought side by side:

Machinda makave tsvakaukama sungawirirano
Hamuna kuita kuda kwemuShona kana muNdevere
Asi kuda kwedi (Chakarira Chindunduma, 58).

Noble men, you forged relationships and solidarity
You were not guided by the wishes of the Shona or the Ndebele
But by the truth.

This is an idealisation of history. When the war of liberation was fought, the major political parties had split on tribal grounds forming ZANU, ZAPU, ZANU Ndonga, and so on. Although they were facing a common enemy, they were not fighting at the same front all the time. The emphasis in the poem on reconciliation and unity among ethnic groups and races is a reflection of the ruling party's pronouncements then about the importance of reconciliation in the country.

Gore Ramasimba Avanhu (The Year of the People's Power) by Nimrod Kugutakwamabwe Vushe is a narrative poem on independence. The poet says this was the year of the empowerment of a people, who prior to this had been subjects of other people. The title of the poem is a socialist slogan which was common in the Third world revolutionary jargon. What is striking however is the fact that the saviour of the people of Zimbabwe is coming from outside the
Shako richibva rashambadzirwa mitunhu yose yeZimbabwe, Kuti vaNyakutumidza Gore Ramasimba Avanhu vave kuuya; Kuuya kuzosunungura ruzhinji rwavanhu muudzvinyiriri (Chakarira Chindunduma, 65).

The word was spread all over the districts of Zimbabwe That The-Proclaimers-of-The-Year-of-the-People’s-Power were coming, To liberate the masses from oppression.

A mystic leader who was only commanding the war from outside the borders in order to keep out of the reach of the enemy now comes home to join soldiers who had been fighting in the country for years. The masses are therefore made passive. They are liberated from outside, although, to use the jargon of the time, they are in Mao’s words, ‘the water that covered the fish’. This Biblical Jesus-like mysticism is informed by the philosophy that people cannot liberate themselves from sin. In other words, they are passive in terms of improving their own social condition, hence the need for a stronger outside person with supernatural powers.

This is a reflection of how the masses handed the gains of the war to the freedom fighters, who in turn handed victory to the nationalist leaders. It is again an idealisation of the painful experience of fighting for liberation.

The poet romanticises the ruling party’s entrenchment into power in the name of the party:
Chitaurirwa, pataitwa mashura nezviratidzo, pasarudzo; Kwakarigwa zwu nemasvingo, hunde dzemiti dzichisara, Zvigaro zvikavivitwa makumi mashanu nezvinomwe, hutu. Nyika yose ndiye wee wee unjiriri nemhururu yerufaro, Kufarira Zimbabwe itsva yazvarwa pasina kana kudura, Yakapfumbatirwa naivo VaMugabe gono rakarwa semvumba (Chakarira Chindunduma, 66).

The events of the elections are indescribable, wonders were performed; Anthills and boulders were fallen, while trees were reduced to stumps As many as fifty seven seats were collected. And the country went wild with excitement, Over Zimbabwe which was born without labour complication, The country that was clasped by Mr Mugabe, the bull that fought like a wildebeest.

To a large extent this is a reflection of what happened in the predominantly Shona speaking areas of Zimbabwe. There is a sense in which the number of seats reflects the population distribution in racial and ethnic terms. The poet assumes that because the Shona speaking people are numerically superior to any other ethnic group in Zimbabwe, then the interests of the latter are not an issue. This attitude was to be the source of conflict between the majority and the minority. The poet’s allegation that the whole country celebrated and went into a frenzy after the general elections is a tragic statement about the flaws of the majority-rule type of democracy. At this point the party that won most of the seats in parliament tried to use the confidence the majority had expressed in electing it to entrench itself through the one-party system. Mugabe, the leader of the party that won the elections is said to be ‘clasping’ the country. This metaphor is probably used to denote the idea of the leader safe-guarding the country for the benefit of the majority. However, the same image has connotations of control, greed, selfishness and dominance. What one sees then is the potential problem of a
leadership which dominates in the name of the people. The same idea is expressed in stanza 7:

Jongwe richibva ratanga kukuridza nhivi dzose dzenyika, Mumaguta, mumaruwa, mumakomo, masango nemupani; Vanhu, mbudzi, n’ombe, hwai, imbwa, shiri dzongokukuridza, Hapachisina zvichaera mhondoro dzose kwasere dzabvuma, Ngoma yeZimbabwe ichibva yangotindimurwa pachinyakare, Kutindimurira magamba akarova hondo yechimurenga; Sezvo Masimba Avanhu ariwo atove kukungurutsa Gore (Chakarira Chindunduma, 66).

The rooster then started crowing in the four corners of the country, In the cities, villages, mountains, forests and plains; People, goats, cattle, sheep, birds are all crowing, There is no taboo now because all the guardian spirits have sanctioned the event, The dance of Zimbabwe was then performed the traditional way, Dancing for the heroes who fought for liberation; As the People’s Power was now in charge of the movement of time.

The glorified account shows that success in the war was attributed to one party. This plays down the part played by another party, and the decisive part that was played by the civilians who were strong party members. It also plays down the fact that the victory that is being celebrated was not celebrated by all Zimbabweans. Other people had no reason to celebrate because independence had not come the way that they had envisaged. The last stanza transfers the whole glory to the nationalist leaders in a manner which is typical of the rallies of the time:

Gusvi ngarirobwe kune vatungamiriri veChimurenga; Tichitizve, pamberi nekusakanganwa chezuro nehope! Tibve tati kwatanu upofu hwokuti, "Zimbabwe ichandiitirei?" Tishande senyuchi dzinoshingaira pasina watuma chokuita. Nokuti kana zvako ukagara maoko Zimbabwe inobva yakugara (Chakarira Chindunduma, 66).
Clap hands for the leaders of Chimurenga;  
And remember not to forget the past in sleep!  
Let's remove the blindness which could make us ask, "What shall Zimbabwe do for us?"  
Let's work like bees that labour without supervision.  
Because if you sit and relax, Zimbabwe will sit on you.

The kind of advice that comes in the name of self-reliance seems to be concerned with development. There is nothing wrong with this as long as it arises from the people themselves. However, the persona speaks like the nationalist leaders of the period. The statement about self-reliance forebodes the betrayal of the masses, that is, they should not look up to government for support. Independence to them will take the form of merely working hard. In other words, hard work, even in unchanged circumstances, is supposed to give them independence. This means that the vanguard of the revolution do no want to be very accountable to the people for social transformation. Their patronising nature is reflected by the writer who says their task is merely to urge the people to work hard. By saying people should not ask Zimbabwe what it will do for them, the poet is identifying the country with the nationalist leaders and therefore establishing a symbiotic relationship between the two. What he calls the country is in fact one class - the elite in the making, that is, the nationalists. The writer therefore inadvertently dramatically satirises what happened at independence, that is, independence from the point of view of the vanguard. The writer ends with a statement about the thrust of the year:
Saka 'zwi guru rakatinhira richiti, "Pamberi neGore Ramasimba Avanhu!"
Pamberi nokusimudzira nyika yechizvarwa chedu cheZimbabwe!
(Chakarira Chindunduma, 66).

That's why a loud voice thundered, "Forward with the Year of the People's Power!"
Forward with the development of our native land of Zimbabwe!

Even after vividly depicting the thrust of the year, anyone who reads this against history will know that power did not go to the people because the majority does not incorporate the minority. Even the majority that is said to have won was only voting for a one-man-rule type of democracy, and not socialism, as they were made to believe. The ZANU PF slogan, Pamberi neGore Ramasimba Avanhu (Forward with Year of the People's Power) actually meant Pamberi reGore Ramasimba Evatongi. (Forward with the Year of the Ruler's Power.) What is important is that in the first five years of independence, there was strategic planning reflecting people's aspirations. After 1990, there arose the ESAP strategic planning reflecting IMF priorities, but using popular jargon.

What is apparent in the poem are the negative things that will be done in the name of the people. It is true that people celebrated what they were told had come, an illusion that the writer seems to share with the people. People could not distinguish between rhetoric and reality, and the poem is very close to the rhetoric of the time. This is implied in the title and the several quotations in the poem. The writer therefore has a naive faith in the pronouncements of politicians. The illusion of independence makes the writer reflect the perceptions of the new elite. If the writer belongs to the class of the new elite,
then what he says is a reality to him and an illusion to his readers who arise from the masses.

Zvasanduka (There is a Reversal) by Nimrod Kugutakwamabwe Vushe welcomes a new order which is captured in images depicting a reversal of fortune:

Aive madziva nhasi ave mazambuko,
Dzaive nhungo nhasi dzave mbariro,
Rwaive rukweza nhasi ave mashawi,
Dzaive hurudza nhasi dzabata hosho yerombe;
Vaive vadyi vepfudapfuda hezvo nhasi vonanzva banga,
Vaive muChindunduma hezvo nhasi ndivo vave vatongi;
Chokwadi zvasanduka, pasi rapinduka rikave idzva (Chakarira Chindunduma, 56).

What used to be rivers are now shallow crossings,
What used to be rafters are now laths,
What used to be finger millet is now wild grass,
What used to be flourishing farmers are now dancing beggars,
Those who used to eat delicacies now live on scarcities,
Those who were in the Chindunduma are now the rulers;
It’s true, things have changed, the world has turned new.

Those who were formerly powerless are said to be powerful, and the formerly powerful are now powerless. The writer is obviously referring to the replacement of the whites by blacks in visible positions of power. There is, however, a naive assumption that the whites have been relieved of all forms of power, including the economic one.

In order to drive home the idea of the existence of a new world, there is a profusion of proverbial expressions in stanza 2. The new era is depicted in the image of the rooster (jongwe). The assumption therefore is that the people are moving from darkness
to light. It is interesting to note that colonialism used the same image of moving Africans from darkness to light in order to disempower the African people. Of note also is the writer's allusion to opposition:

Rumwe ndirwo rwunorambwa norugare,
Ruchingofemera mudenga sendere ragumhwa mumutondo;
Ruchinzi imwe Zimbabwe ichati youya zvakare (Chakarira Chindunduma, 56).

Some species refuses to accept comfort,
Breathing high like a beetle that has been shaken in the mutondo tree;
Being made to believe that their Zimbabwe will come.

The extract points to some disgruntled elements of the population - possibly opposition leaders and their supporters. This could also be an allusion to the dissident activities in Matebeleland and Midlands at the time of publication of the poem. There is also reference to betrayal by those who are being used by the enemy to frustrate independence. However, there is a strong warning about the viciousness of state retribution:

Vamwe ndivo vachakanzi dhuma nevakuru,
Vachitinhwa semombe dzepadhibha nevapambipfumi,
Vachipoteswa nerweseri semukombe wayiwa uroyi;
Riri zano regwikwinindi mhnzamusha maparadze,
Manyonganise muroyi anoroyera vose vanatongo,
Akatsika mukaran'anga kuti vobwo vabve vapumhana;
'Kusaona kuti zvasanduka, kupedza misi kurwa nemvumba (Chakarira Chindunduma, 56).

Some are still covered by the placenta,
Being driven like cattle at the dip-tank by the oppressors,
Being hidden away from the others like a poisoned cup;
As a destructive strategy of the destructive snake
The cause of confusion like a witch who operates in the neighbourhood
Who used a charm that makes villagers blame each other;
They do not see that times have changed, it's a waste of time to fight a wildebeest.
Besides the dissident problem, the writer may also be alluding to whites and other opposition parties. This is obvious betrayal from the point of view of the ruling party and its supporters. The writer is obviously not aware of the subtle betrayal of the people by the leaders, for instance, the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement that ushered in independence. In stanza 4, the writer celebrates the end of racial discrimination in hotels that has come with the new era. However, he makes it clear that this freedom is for only those who can afford. Of note is the fact that a decade after independence, there are few patrons in these places because lack of money has curtailed their freedom. There is also celebration of multi-racial education that came with independence when former schools for white children were flooded by black children from former schools for blacks. The writer celebrates the fact that black children are now group leaders in these multi-racial schools. Beds are prepared, plates collected and laundry done for them:

Muvikoro yangove mvengemvenge, bvumbwi nevukuru, 
Vatema, vachena, makura mabhusumani hero gundamusaira; 
Chidhanga chidhanga chichingotambwa nepwere dzose, 
Ainzi ndiye pikanini, pidiguwe watove mukuru weboka; 
Wotobvuma, hapachina marambiro saambuya vabereka muzukuru 
Zvakaperwa sesipo kuwacha, ndiye museve waenda novumva; 
Masandukiro acho ndiwo anotovhundutsa chero nekashiye 
(Chakarira Chindunduma, 57).

The schools have become an admixture, 
Blacks, whites, Indians, Greeks, all in one place, 
Dramatic lyrics are played by these children together, 
The one-time pikanini is now a group leader; 
You have to agree, there is no choice like a grandmother who is carrying a grandchild. 
It is finished like a tablet of soap used for laundry, it is gone without trace, 
The change will even frighten a baby.
The multi-racial education that the writer is celebrating occurs only in the former white schools. The writer is also inadvertently celebrating the disparities in facilities and therefore in cost between the former white and the former black schools. The majority of school-going children who are in the former black schools and in the rural areas are excluded from the writer's celebration. Commenting on the desegregation of education at independence, Fay Chung writes:

The racially-divided schools were rapidly integrated within the first two years after independence by a policy of re-zoning. The colonial regime practised a form of racial and class discrimination through a strict zoning system which prevented children from enrolling in schools outside their residential zones. However, by the simple procedure of placing a black township within the same zone as the former white-only areas, and by double-sessioning all urban secondary schools, racial integration was achieved.

Moreover the writer does not comment on the curriculum of the schools, for instance, what role it plays in liberating the child. He does not seem to appreciate that the structure of the education system has not changed. Despite the introduction of new syllabuses at primary and secondary school levels, the curriculum is basically the same as before independence. Moreover, white children are not going to former black schools for obvious reasons. The values that are inculcated in the young who attend these schools leave a lot to be desired. The writer appears to be blindly celebrating some of these values. Depending on the age of the children, that they have everything done for them like laundry and so on is actually training them for self-destruction and goes against African traditional values of industry and
diligence. This practice is also condemned by Aeneas Chigwedere, a veteran educationist.

In stanza 7, we see rural people reflecting on the war. While they drink, they reflect on the chaos that occurred in the mountains. At the same time they are seen to be celebrating peace. They can now drink, perform their traditional dances and walk freely. Spirit mediums are also said to be free to conduct their business without interference. People are also said to be competing freely. The irony about the competition that the writer is celebrating is that in issues of development, the rural people are being left behind as they continue to dance their traditional dances, drink beer for free and get possessed by spirits. In fact, the fact that they are preoccupied by these activities is a sign of economic marginality, poverty and disillusionment. To them, the surrender value of independence is drinking and walking freely. Independence to them is synonymous with peace. This goes a long way in explaining the widening gap between the rural and the urban, and the increasing poverty of the rural poor after independence.

The final stanza applauds people who sacrificed their comfort in order to bring about transformation. In order to depict the comfort and the general well-being of the people after independence, those who sacrificed their comfort are said to have exposed themselves to the sting of bees in order to bring their children honey. The writer also says that a lot of ululation should go to those who supported the war with food, weapons and
clothes as this enabled the country to be counted among other African countries. This poem looks at change on the basis of the rhetoric of the time coupled with social reform undertaken at that time in spheres such as education. Although the writer attempts to cover the entire field of activity after independence, he shows a superficial interpretation of history and the bombardment of the masses with political rhetoric through media and rallies.

3.4.2 Idealisation of the Freedom Fighter

These poems, like Ndebele poems in the same category, are characterised by images that depict sacrifice, selflessness, the supernatural and invincibility on the part of the freedom fighters. Mutswairo’s poem Mauto Ehondo (Soldiers of the War) is a close adaptation of a Salvation Army song - ‘Soldiers of the Cross’. The hero is depicted through biblical images. This reflection of the writer's religious beliefs distances the poem from the war experience. As a Salvation Army Christian, he is inspired by 'the church’s militaristic hierarchy' and 'transposes the language of Christian crusades into the language of liberation poetry'\(^9\). His physical and psychological distance from the war makes him resort to biblical images to portray the war experience:

Mauto ehondo, endai kundorwa
Nemhandu dzevanhu dzauya munyika,
Mhuri yeZimbabwe, mose sunganai
Sejecha regungwa, pamwe unganai (Nduri dzeZimbabwe, 29).

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Soldiers of war, go and fight
The enemies who have come into the country,
The whole family of Zimbabwe, unite
Like the sand of the sea, gather together.

The writer encourages people to go and fight, yet the poem was published after independence. If the poem was not in cold storage, then it was written retrospectively after independence. The writer adopts the typical nationalist educated stance and urges other people to go and fight from a detached position. There is an element of potential betrayal of the masses by the nationalist leaders as seen in the poet’s urging of others to fight without any indication of his intention to join them.

Of note is the attention that the writer pays to the formal aspects of the poem. His determined effort to achieve rhyme and his love of word-play betray his concern. The tension between rhyme and content in his poem is common in hymns of many Christian denominations. The syntax is English and distanced from the rhetoric dynamic style of writers with experience of the war:

Yambukai nzwizi pindai mapinga;
Paradzai mhandu imi dzinovinga
Kuti dziparadze rusungano rwedu
Pasi pemureza wenyika yedu (Nduri DzeZimbabwe, 29).

Cross the rivers enter the jungle;
Destroy the enemy that approaches you
To destroy our freedom
Under the flag of our country.

This is evidence of the fact that the writer was thinking of the war via the church. The poem therefore is a recreation of the mobilisation of the fighters using an idiom that cannot easily be linked with the war experience.
In Alois I. Muchabaiwa's *Mubati Wechombo* (Carrier of the Weapon), we see images of sacrifice that depict the suffering of the freedom fighter who is said to be a reincarnation of the spirit of the one of the heroes of the first Chimurenga - Nehanda. The point that the writer wants to drive home is that the freedom fighters are not ordinary people. They are the bones of the ancestors, after the popular legendary statement of the spirit medium Nehanda that her bones would rise against the white settlers. The celebrated soldier is an unhappy man. He left his home to fight the enemy who later destroyed his home. His life in the bush did not give him an opportunity to wash himself and comb his hair. He had no identity. He lived at a level lower than human dignity. He had nowhere to sleep and nothing to eat. He was uncertain of the future. Further, freedom fighters would be buried anywhere without any ritual. Up to now many shallow graves are still unknown. The writer's concept of freedom fighters is therefore that of an individual who made history in the villages. Collectively, they constitute the liberation war heroes, but at individual level, they are unknown:

Kuti woda kuziva kwakabviwa, waitocherechedza kuuso
Kuona nyora hurura, dzinopa mupatsa pachidawo nemutupo.
Pokufira hapana aiziva
Kana mai kana baba nyakutumbura.
Pawafira wongochererwa,
Kana kupararira musango pasina wechizvarwa
Watemera rukarwa (Chakarira Chindunduma, 34).

If you want to know where he came from, you would scrutinise the face
The cicatrices on the face gives one a hint on the clan and totem.
No-one knew where one was going to die
Not even the mother or the father.
You would be buried wherever you died,
Or even perish in the bush with no relative
To mark the burial site.
The grassroots concept of a hero, the maker of history, is one who fights and dies for the people, and is remembered by the people who bury him. This contrasts with the semi-divine image of a hero seen earlier.

In *Tichikuchingamidzei Mhare* (Welcome, Brave Warrior) J.M. Zvarevashe extends a welcome to the fighters who survived the war. He attributes this to their bravery. By implication therefore, all those that died were cowards - an observation that we know is not true, in as much as we know those who survived did so not because they excelled at the battle front. Although the celebrated soldiers faced all kinds of trials and tribulations, they never lost sight of their goal.

Makashinga kubura nyuchi dzinoruma,
Kuronga rongora monga nyuchi hurongerana,
Kutomomoterwa nadzo makaramba makashinga,
Kuziya nenzara makaramba makatsunga
Kuchekwa misoro makaramba makaomarara
Kueredzwa nenziyi makaramba makashinga
Kutoedzwa namazakwata emari makaramba tana.
Kunanzviswa twunonaka kunanzva muchipfira
Kukwenyerwa nehwenyeri ndokuramba makatsunga
Kufutwa nokupondwa Mozambique neZambia makaomarara:
vapoteri, vana madzimai kuitwa murakatira
Rambei maruma chirebvu varume vampindauko
Kushishivara neshungu shasha dzembravira
Kuvavarira kusunungura vazvarwa veZimbabwe (*Chakarira Chindunduma*, 59).

You took courage to extract honey from hostile bees,
You can only easily extract underground honey, honey from bees is fought for.
When they stung you hard you remained courageous,
When you were starving you did not give up,
When you were executed you did not surrender,
When you were swept by flooded rivers you did not surrender
When you were tempted with huge amounts of money you refused.
When you were made to taste delicacies you spit them
When you were betrayed by traitors you remained steadfast
When you were ambushed and murdered in Mozambique and Zambia you got hardened:
Refugees and women were massacred
And you remained courageous you cunning men
You got hardened by resoluteness you persevering men
Struggling to liberate the country.

The soldiers who are depicted here are a superhuman species devoid of human attributes, as can be seen from their refusal to succumb to all forms of temptation. As has been observed earlier, this species is difficult to understand by human standards. This idealises their contributions to the success of the war.

The writer also celebrates the masses by acknowledging the role played by men, women and girls (vanachimbwido) in the liberation war. Men are also celebrated, so are the governments of Zambia and Mozambique. The poet also considers the spirit mediums of the First Chimurenga - Nehanda and Kaguvi, as heroes to be celebrated. As a gesture for national reconciliation and unity, the writer also celebrates Mzilikazi, the founder of the Ndebele nation. It is worth noting that this comes even before the signing of the historic Unity Accord. The fact that the poet criticises the violence that was perpetrated by both sides shows his balanced view of the war. In line with the rhetoric of the time, the gospel of working hard is espoused. Rich people are urged to give to the poor:

Imi vapfumi chiregai rutsuta sechapungu
Mupewo varombo twumadhora. vawane chendiro (Chakarira Chindunduma, 61).
You rich people don’t be as stingy as the bateleur eagle
Give the poor some dollars so that they can afford to eat.

The writer injects an element of creativity when he ends the poem with his own slogan:

Toti pamberi nokuzevibata! (Chakarira Chindunduma, 61).
We say forward with self-discipline!

It is important to note that the absence of self discipline, because of selfishness particularly among the political leadership, led to a state of underdevelopment in the country. The poem is therefore less partisan than the others. It celebrates everyone who contributed to the war. This is a democratised concept of a hero. The thrust of the poem is that liberation war heroes are many and varied. They cut across ethnic and geographical boundaries.

3.4.3 Celebration of Violence

As in Ndebele poetry, the celebration of violence in Shona poetry takes the form of celebrating the weapons that were used by both the freedom fighters and the Rhodesian security forces during the war. The poem Bazooka by Amos Karemba takes the form of a boast. The weapon is personified and animated. The bazooka was one of the most formidable weapons used by the freedom fighters during the war. In the oral traditions, particularly among the Shona speaking areas, this was the most lethal weapon because each guerrilla unit was supposed to carry one in order to hit armoured
cars, tanks, buildings, and so on. It was also used as an anti-aircraft weapon. Because of its size, it was obviously more intimidatory than the light machine gun. A lot of propaganda arose surrounding the weapon. It was celebrated in the sense that each time it was used, the noise was used to mobilise the masses. It was therefore part of the war propaganda. The villagers used to marvel at this advanced military technology, whose use was always followed by their ululation. Chiwome makes the following observation about the poetry that celebrates weapons that were used during the war:

Part of the poetry celebrates the superiority of weapons used in the second chimurenga as opposed to those which were used unsuccessfully in the first chimurenga of 1896. The peasants were not familiar with the weapons. In such cases novelty inspired myth-making.

In the poem under discussion, this weapon is said to be one of the miracles of Chaminuka, an eighteenth century religio-political figure well-known for performing miracles, rain-making and healing:

(Ini) mugari wenhaka yegona rAvaChaminuka
Ini murume weduri raMbuya Nehanda
Muzukuru-komana wechombo chaMwari (Chakarira Chindunduma, 36).

I the inheritor of Chaminuka’s magic horn
I the carrier of Mbuya Nehanda’s mortar
The grandson of God’s weapon.

The writer believes that the gun will take away all the problems of the country and it is therefore taken as a healer. The gun is also said to be the grandson of God’s weapon. This male image is an apt depiction of something masculine and military in
conquest. The boasts about the damage that the bazooka can cause in the second stanza are part of the war propaganda:

Handisvike pane vane buka
Munhu ndinotsokota
Bhunu rinondiziva
Ndinotinhira semunun'una wangu Mheni
Muvengi ndichibvuraudza sendinobvuraudza nzungu (*Chakarira Chindunduma*, 36).

I do not visit people with hysteria
I crush human beings
The boer knows me
I thunder like my young brother lightning
I roast the enemy like groundnuts.

What is striking about stanza 3 of this short poem is the writer’s admission of failure to describe the bazooka in action:

Ini handina zvakawanda zvandinotaura
Asi kuti zvandataura zwakwana
Vasingandizivi huyai muzondiona (*Chakarira Chindunduma*, 36).

I cannot say much
What I have said is enough
Those who do not know me come and see me.

This is a detached observation from either a city dweller or a villager who has not seen the bazooka in use. The prosaic style emphasises the writer’s detachment from the subject of his poem, which must have been written on the basis of hear-say and guerrilla propaganda. It is superficial although it is written in the traditional style of boasts, which are meant to create awe in the audience. This is propaganda that is meant to mystify a weapon that the writer obviously is not familiar with. The writer underplays the mental traumas experienced by those who operate
the weapon as can be seen from the need by the government to create a War Victims Compensation Fund to compensate those who were psychologically traumatised and physically disabled by their participation in the war. The same weapons were also used by their disillusioned operators to commit suicides in the face of imminent defeat or death.

Ndini Chimbambaira (I am the Landmine) by Nhamo Mukacha recounts the destructiveness of the landmine during the war of liberation. As the previous poem, it is in the form of a personal boast. Chiwome makes the following comment about such poems:

These are influenced by Shona heroic poetry and revolutionary propaganda which dominated guerrilla warfare. They transformed fighters into legends, weapons into mysterious lethal phenomena and battles into mythical events. Part of the mysticism derived from guerrillas' exaggerated accounts of their prowess to the peasants - a mass mobilisation strategy².

The Shona term chimbambaira (small sweet potato) is an epithetic euphemism for a very deadly weapon - the landmine. During the war, it was planted in highways as part of ambushes aimed at destroying army lorries and their occupants. It was therefore meant for sabotage. It could cause temporary deafness and was well-known for dismembering the bodies of its victims. It was relatively safe for the guerrillas because once planted, it did not require their presence.²² This fact fits in well with the writer's style of personification because in a sense, the landmine stands alone as a fighter.
Mukacha describes it as a traumatising, heart-rendering weapon (chaparura hana). Stanza 4 describes how the explosion caused by the landmine mutilated the bodies of Rhodesian soldiers:

Mazana asingaverengeki ndatibukira  
Ndakavaita kabanzu kabanzu  
Sezvinonzi ndaidyavo nyama (Chakarira Chimbambaira, 37).

I mutilated countless of hundreds  
I reduced them to shreds  
As if I like meat.

In the final stanza, the writer justifies this damage as befitting traitors and exploiters of wealth. By drawing comparison between the effect of the landmine and the heavy rains (gukurahundi) that herald the beginning of a new season, the writer implies that the war was in fact a mopping up or cleaning up exercise whose conclusion would usher a new era. The poem is, however, idealised because the actual pain caused by the landmine is understated. What we have in place of the horror is part of the intimidation tactics in guerrilla warfare represented by a weapon. What the writer seems to overlook is the fact that this is one single weapon that caused the maiming and deaths of innocent people that it purported to defend. This heroic poem idealises the weapon and removes it from the actual carnage that has remained horrific in the minds of the survivors. Since it was not easy to aim it at the enemy, the weapon therefore did not discriminate. Whoever used the mined road could become the victim. The guerrillas could not keep civilians away from these weapons. Road communication, which is the life-blood of people in the rural areas almost got completely cut. Buses carrying civilians were destroyed on gravel roads in remote areas. Cargo
lorries carrying material for use by ordinary people were also destroyed. Moreover after the war, many of the buried mines had not been excavated and these created further damage. Even after trying to unearth them using special equipment, many still remained in the ground. With two to three million landmines estimated to have been planted in Zimbabwe during the war, it is further estimated that one million hectares of land remain unfarmed and out of reach because of the threat of these landmines. The menace caused by landmines has been such a nuisance that Zimbabwe has now legislated against the manufacture of this weapon. In other countries in Africa landmines have claimed the lives of many. Angola, which has been the scene of protracted armed conflicts between government and guerrilla forces, has the greatest number of amputees in the world as a result of landmine explosions.

Poetry as part of the process of creating symbols for nation-building, has been a contested arena for two opposing forces - the masses and the ruling elite. Part of the poetry under discussion was solicited by the Literature Bureau. What we see then is government machinery in the form of the Literature Bureau encouraging writers to be creative around the then topical subject of the war. In their various contributions some poets write what they feel is in line with the sensibilities of the rank and file. Others write what they think is in line with the ruling elite’s desire for symbols of national identity and political legitimacy. Most of the symbols analysed justify the accession by the nationalist elite into the ruling class.
However, this process has not been without problems as has been observed by Kriger:

Contrary to the ruling elite's expectations, their project of removing colonial symbols and replacing them with Zimbabwean ones has generated acute political controversy. For example, who should be heroes - the dead or the living, the actual fighters or the politicians who orchestrated the war, the military leaders or the rank and file? Who should choose the heroes - the ruling party or the government? Should the living ex-combatants participate in the decision-making process and the commemoration of heroes? Should some heroes be more important than others or should all heroes enjoy the same status? The politics of choosing heroes has exposed the gap between the political rhetoric of equality, participation, and unity on the one hand, and the realities of an enormous disparity between party and government leaders and the masses, ... 25

However, this controversy got watered down after the signing of the Unity Accord, and as a result of this, the ruling elite's creation of national symbols emanating from the war has remained its biggest weapon in entrenching itself as the new privileged class.

3.5 Conclusion

It is evident from the discussion that celebratory poetry in both Shona and Ndebele was written by poets, regardless of whether or not they had participated in the war. Some of the images of the war are idealised. What confronts the reader are statements based on stereotypes of liberation, independence, freedom and oppression. This romanticism is justified when it is either a preparation for action or part of action. In the former case, it is symbolic and serves as a psychological preparation for action
which is similar to preparatory dances that enact success or victory before a hunting expedition or a war. It is therefore meant to galvanise the minds of people from dangers that are imminent in the tasks that lie ahead. In it are also enshrined the values of the people. As part of action, romantic poetry comes as part of the war propaganda. It performs the same role as in the former case by celebrating the soldier, the gun and victory - real or imagined. At its best it is supposed to be poetry of the battle field. It can also play an important role before the battle. Yet when it is written and published, it is argued to be a record of history - a record of the celebration or action. For this reason, the poetry may therefore be interpreted literally, yet it is symbolic and ritualistic. If taken literally in a historical continuum, then there is danger of it being used to prop up elitist interests. It immortalises individuals, thereby laying a foundation for dictatorship. This is basically the problem with belated celebrations. Like all oral traditions, war poetry is best understood in its historical context in the oral mode. When read out of the context of celebration, it changes meaning and serves different political functions. In such a changed situation, it reflects the history that it originated from to a limited extent. For that reason, its meaning has to be carefully negotiated by the readers of different generations.

In contrast, the war poetry on suffering, which is the subject of the next chapter, is both convincing and idealised depending on the experience of the writer. This is a reflection of the
manner in which the war was experienced in the Shona and the Ndebele speaking areas.
Endnotes


2. Ibid, (139).


4. Ibid, (23).


9. Matigari, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* are some of Ngugi's most prominent and most incisive works on the problems of neo-colonialism in post-independence Kenya.


11. Accounts of war battles collected through extensive research with the help of ex-combatants and civilians are described by Martinus Daneel in *Guerrilla Snuff*, Harare, Baobab Books, 1995, (83-111).


4.1 Introduction

Elegiac poems emanate from the experiences of the masses as well as those of the freedom fighters during the war. As Bhebe and Ranger point out in their two books on the war, the war can be looked at from the point of view of three social groups: society, which is the masses; soldiers comprising freedom fighters particularly, and to a lesser extent, the Rhodesian army; and nationalist politicians in Zambia, Mozambique and further afield in countries like Tanzania, Libya, China and the Soviet Union. The elegies arise from the people who directly bore the brunt of the war. These are the soldiers at the battle-front and masses among whom the soldiers operated. The experience of the masses and the soldiers is often one and the same in the sense that since the Zimbabwean War of Liberation was fought in the rural areas, mass mobilisation was an important part of the war. It would not have been possible to wage this war without the masses who clothed, fed, reconnoitred and provided moral support and other social services that arose from pressures that do not get suspended because there is a war. Moreover, after independence the experiences of the freedom fighters and the masses converge because most of the freedom fighters got demobilised and then joined the masses from whom they had originated before joining the war. Also there is a sense in which during the war, the
guerrillas behaved as sons and daughters of the rural society as seen in the way they were referred to as the youth of the society - vakomana (boys) in Shona and abafana in Ndebele. Again, the guerrilla strategy made it imperative that they respect the rural people with whom they worked and from whom they got support. Finally, the guerrillas were none other than school leavers, school drop-outs and unemployed village dwellers who had crossed the borders to join the war. Because of the solidarity that arose as a result of suffering together, many poets arising from the same ranks have fond memories about individual fighters that they considered as patriotic or celebrities in terms of the war values that they upheld in particular villages.

Although nationalist politicians do not record the plight of the masses, which in fact is also the measure of the sacrifices that the latter made to regain lost lands, the poets make an artistic record of these experiences and place the masses and fighters at the centre of this social history. Depending on the perspective of the writer, which in this case largely depends on the poet's distance from the experience in question, the poets reflect different sensibilities that can be placed between two opposite poles of the same continuum, that is, romance and trauma. While Chapter 3 dealt with the romantic side, this chapter focuses on the traumatic side. These are two sides of the same coin.
4.2 Elegies from Ndebele poetry

The depiction of the war experience from the viewpoint of the masses and the soldiers varies, depending on the writer's physical and psychological distance from the war.

*Izinsuku Zobuphepheli* (The Days of Being a Refugee) by Ferdinard Namate Ndlovu deals with the plight of refugees, one of the rarely covered experiences of the war. This is because most of the people who lived as refugees in camps beyond Zimbabwe's borders came back as freedom fighters at independence, in order to benefit politically and otherwise. The war drove thousands of people out of their homes in the rural areas, into areas that they considered to be safe, for instance, cities. By 1980, approximately 400,000 peasants had abandoned their rural homes for the safety of the cities. To the young who had no relatives in the cities, it was safer to cross into countries that supported the liberation movement and where there was no war, for instance, Zambia and Mozambique. By 1980, over 200,000 displaced Zimbabweans were living in refugee camps in Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana. Ironically, the same refugees swelled the ranks of potential freedom fighters in these neighbouring countries. They were politicised and trained to be fighters and then returned home to fight, when in fact they had crossed the borders in order to seek safety.

Oral history has it that those that crossed the borders discovered that they had escaped the ravages of war to be
threatened with new problems like diseases and starvation. It was not unusual for refugees to look forward to the day that they would be trained as soldiers and be in the war-front among the people, where they would be provided with food and clothes.

Ndlovu employs a simple, smooth-flowing and narrative style to depict details of life in refugee camps. The writer exposes the excruciating pain, the confusion and the psychological trauma caused by the bombings of the camps by the enemy:

Kwakusiba nzima kusidalwa sinyawombili
Nxa isinuka impuphu yenhlamvu
Ulikhangel' ilambazi lenapalm litshisa amahlamvu
Litshise lenyama yomuntu.
Kolelishw' elimnyama bhuqa
Atshaywe kabili kumbe kanengi:
Ubon' indod' engelakhandla
Igijim' izikhubeke, iw' ife
Madoda, kwakunzima! (Ezivusa Usinga, 23).

It would become difficult for a human being
When he smelled gun-powder
You would see the porridge-like napalm burning leaves
And also burning human flesh.
The unfortunate one
Would be hit two or more times.
You would see a decapitated man
Running until he fell and died
Men, it was tough!

The persona shows that unlike what is generally believed, it was not only the bombings that were responsible for the sufferings of the refugees. The problems of starvation, lack of facilities for personal hygiene together with the psychological torture of home-sickness rendered life meaningless:
It was tough for us refugees
Out there in the bush counting our ribs,
Scratching our heads and the hair falling off;
Black lice also falling off:
Men, it was tough!
It was tough when you were sleeping in the camp at night
Thinking of your parents and relatives;
And your own country of birth,
Then the tough question would come: Why am I alive?

This is a voice of dejection, recounting the sub-human conditions in which the refugees lived, while they eagerly waited for an opportunity to be trained and deployed. To the majority, these expectations were never fulfilled.

A similar experience is recounted in Ignatius Ncube’s Kwakunzima Enkambeni (It was Tough in the Camp). Although the camp that is referred to is made to look like a guerrilla training camp, the experience fits refugee camps that were targets of enemy attacks since the enemy knew that the occupants were unarmed and weapons were not normally kept in such camps. This argument is reinforced by the helplessness of the people on the ground who are made to look like helpless observers during the attack. The claim by the writer in stanza 1 that tons and tons of weapons were brought from other countries might have emanated from hearsay, especially since there is half-hearted admission in a later stanza that the occupants of the camp were not suitably armed:
There were no anti-aircraft weapons;  
I felt the ground shaking;  
I became completely deaf.  
I saw a person running in full speed;  
I am afraid because he had been decapitated.  
Another one also ran,  
He was in terrifying flames;  
He was burnt to nothing.  
The enemy’s planes continued to fly overhead,  
The brave young men  
Drove them away using smaller ones,  
They then disappeared from sight.

This account from a detached observer, who most likely is a refugee, is a sanitised version of the first poem. In fact the two poems are so remarkably similar that one cannot help concluding that the poets share very similar experiences. Further, the similarity even in phraseology suggests that the poets may have used the same source. War records show that most of the points attacked by the Rhodesian security forces in neighbouring countries were refugee camps. However, as said earlier, at independence the refugees sought acceptance in the political playing-field by posing as liberators. Moreover, the excitement of actively looking for the enemy as recounted in stanza 1 could only have been a reality before deployment, that is, before the guerrillas were fully aware of the dangers of the war. Further, this is a contradiction of the ZIPRA military
strategy of waging a conventional war during the second phase of the armed struggle. The poem can only be referring to the earlier years of infiltration, that is before the second phase of 1976-1979.

Similarly, Sigogo's *Impi Yako Maqanda* (The War of Maqanda) is a detached account of a gun attack at a *pungwe*. *Pungwe* is a Shona term used to refer to night-long political seminars that were used by ZANLA as a strategy for political education of the masses and raising their levels of consciousness in the struggle for independence. This strategy was rarely, if at all used by ZIPRA. This therefore is a remote experience to the writer, obtained through hearsay. The details of the attack further confirm this. For instance, in stanza 4, one wonders why the villagers and freedom fighters gathered at the meeting are attacked before escaping yet they have been warned in advance of the enemy by informers. The massacre that follows is therefore not convincing. This is the problem created by solicited poems. Writers try to be part of a historical process that is remote to them. The fact that such meetings were social occasions for the guerrillas is also underplayed. The demand for blankets by freedom fighters that is mentioned in passing in stanza 2 points to the role played by women in the villages during the war that remains unsaid, that is, serving the biological needs of the fighters.

Similarly, *Kumnandi Njalo Kuligugu Ukufela Ilizwe Lakho* (It is Sweet and Glorious to Die for one's Country) by Busiso Mdlawuzo
represents an attempt by writers to relate what they read to what they heard. The title of the poem is an English conception of patriotism, and reminds one of Wilfred Owen’s poem on his First World War experiences - *Dulce Et Decorum Est*. This Latin phrase which was entrenched in the Victorian culture was meant to impress educated women of the Victorian period. The fact that Mdlawuzo’s soldier is seen to be driven to join the war by the desire to impress his lover shows a foreign sensibility:

Wakhumbul’ uSibongile wazidl’ izibindi ngobuhle bakhe Wahle wayalwel’ ilizwe.
Kazange anakane ngelizwe Wakhangwa yikuzibukisa sabutho (Giya Mthwakazi, 132).
He thought of Sibongile and her beauty unsettled him
Immediately, he went to fight for the country.
He never thought about the country
What attracted him was the glory of being a soldier.

Patriotism in Africa is reflected in sacrifice and suffering, and not in glory as reflected in the above stanzas. Many who joined the war did so because of the mythicisation of war weapons. For others the war was a welcome escape from unemployment and responsibilities.

The details of the whole poem reflect a foreign sensibility and an experience that is remote to the intended readers. For instance, the guerrilla warfare by its nature, would not have soldiers walking in single file and being bombed en-masse as is described in stanza 1. The description fits a conventional warfare. The gumboots that the fighters are wearing, presumably
to protect themselves from the mud mentioned in stanza 1, were not part of guerrilla attire. The wagons that are mentioned in stanza 3 were not used in the war under discussion. In terms of content and sensibility, the writer draws heavily from Wilfred Owen’s experiences of the First World War, a fact which reflects the writer’s familiarity with English poetry of the Victorian period. This plagiarised experience is reflective of the writer’s distance from the Zimbabwean war experience.

*Ngithule Ngithini? (How can I not Say?)* is an attempt by Dumisani J. Tshuma to recount the horrors of the war as part of the process of healing the wounds of the war. In an angry, aggressive and defiant tone, he keeps on saying it is important to say, but apart from recounting the obvious atrocities of the war, he does not say much:

*Ngizathula ngithini?*

Omama behinwahinwa bengunulwa yilaba
Obaba bethi bavul’ imilonyana yabo
Kube sebengen’ emlindini wemamba
Baqunyw’ amakhanda awele le -
Izidumbu lezi izathukuzw’ ezixukwini.
Omama kabazili lakuzila
Bazadunyelwa benuka benjalo
Kube sengan’ iphungu lokufa leli
Kalisiphunga lanto yalutho (*Giya Mthwakazi*, 140).

How can I not say?
When our mothers are abused and undressed by these
And when our fathers try to open their small mouths
Then they get into serious trouble
They are decapitated and their heads fall over there -
Their corpses are then hidden in the bush.
Our mothers are not allowed time to moan
They are grabbed and raped in that state
As if the smell of death
Signifies nothing.
The writer does not go beyond the protest against the wanton murders and rape. He is operating against the backdrop of a culture of fear. The poem should have prefaced a lot of poems dealing with the kind of suffering that people were afraid to write about. The writer fails to break this silence. Ironically, this is the last poem on the section on war poetry in the book.

*Impi (War)* by S.N.S. Moyo is an extended metaphor of the war which is depicted in the image of a tree that is responsible for producing both good and bad. The technique of personification that the writer has selected enables him to reflect that different groups of people who make the war actually represent one historical process which has two sides to it. Secondly, this technique is important, since because of the collective nature of the war, it subsumes the importance of individuals who wage it. It is therefore autonomous, and represents the energy that is both creative and destructive.

The poem is one of the few that narrate some of the problems at the height of the war, that is, the victimisation of the nationalist leaders, the harassment of the civilians by both sides of the war, the divide and rule tactics of the government of the day, the closure of schools and shops and the disruption of the communication system during the war:
Because of this paralysis of the infrastructure, the rural economy ground to a halt. Normal life was suspended, bringing about unprecedented suffering among the people. However, the writer’s concern about the closure of schools and shops reflects the people’s dependency on Western goods and other non-material commodities like education, and not the suffering that resulted from this closure. The following observation by A.S. Mlambo gives a glimpse of the effects of the war on the country’s economic infrastructure:

By 1979, over 2,000 schools had been damaged, while 155 out of the country’s total of 450 rural hospitals had been closed. Furthermore, approximately 6,500 cattle dips had been destroyed, while one-third of the cattle herds in the communal areas had died as a result of various diseases which now could not be controlled because of the breakdown of veterinary services due to the war. Four thousand kilometres of gravel roads were in a state of severe disrepair, while 64 causeway and bridges were also in need of rehabilitation. Approximately 1,800 boreholes had broken down, 400 dams and weirs had been damaged...

The poet’s account, however, is narrated in a matter-of-fact way, and even the carnage that is described in stanza 6 does not evoke any emotion:
Izenzo zakho zahlasimulis' umzimba
Izindumbu zabantu zabukw' ezimoteni lehlathini. (Isidlodlo SikaMthwakazi, 74).

Your deeds were shocking
Corpses were displayed in cars and in the bush.

The last three stanzas of the poem show that in the end people wanted peace. However, the poet does not show why the war was waged in the first place. The last stanza is a celebration of peace as if the attainment of peace was the reason for going to war. The writer does not see the sacrifice of the people in their attempt to establish a just society. In the absence of a profound vision, the war can deteriorate into meaningless massacre and anarchy. The writer does not show what it is that the people tried to achieve.

Abazali Ekhaya (Parents at Home) by Mathema depicts colonial violence that led to the war. As shown in Chapter 2, this violence took the form of forced removal of the indigenous people from their homes and dispossessing them of their wealth in the form of cattle:

Inhliziyo yami ibuhlungu
Ingikhumbuza abazal' ekhaya
Abaxotshwa bethathelw' izinkomo
Betshiselwa lay' imizi. (Isidlodlo sikaMthwakazi, 27)

My heart bleeds
When I think of my parents at home
Who were chased away while their cattle were taken
And their villages burnt.

The writer goes on to incite boys and girls to rise against this inhuman system whose perpetrators are referred to as robbers
and man-eaters (amadlabantu). However, the writer's vision of an independent nation in stanza 3 is idealised. Independence is envisaged to bring about abundance of food, happiness, laughter and song. This ideal image of independence was used by the nationalists to mobilise boys and girls in the villages to join the war. The writer also uses images of violence to refer to the process of dismantling colonialism. In stanza 5, the attack on the colonialists is depicted in the image of the deadly sting of a wasp, while in stanza 6 the colonialists are depicted in the image of a black snake, which must receive a killing blow before it uses its deadly venom. The writer's ability to link the African people's poverty during the colonial period with the plundering of Africa's resources by the West in stanza 5 shows his awareness of the cause of the plight of the African people.

In Bayatsha Ekhaya (They are in Trouble at Home), Mathema protests against colonial violence which penetrated every aspect of the African people's life, as can be seen from unemployment, meagre salaries, resettlement in unproductive and crowded areas, lack of social services like health and education, various forms of taxation and the imprisonment of nationalists. As in the previous poem, the use of images of violence to refer to the colonialists like amakhanka (jackals) shows that the writer believes that the injustices of the colonial system could only be redressed through violence.
4.3 Elegies from Shona Poetry

As is the case with Ndebele poetry, the depiction of the experiences of the soldiers and the masses depends on the writer’s physical and psychological distance from the war. *Pungwe*, by L.J. Mutuka is a depiction of a *pungwe* in its ideal form, that is, what it was intended to be during the war. Unlike Sigogo’s gathering that ended in a loss of many lives, Mutuka’s *pungwe* is safe, a fact that made these gatherings popular during the war. The poem shows that *pungwes* were used as platforms to introduce freedom fighters to local people in order to enlist the support of the latter. They were also morale-boosting occasions, as can be deduced from the mood of jubilation induced by the singing of liberation songs accompanied by traditional dance. These were also meant to build consciousness of resistance through conscientisation of the masses, summarising the objectives and the events of the war as well as the resultant suffering:

Wochinzwa nhoroondo dzehondo.
Matambudziko, zvinangwa nezviitiko
Zvose zvinoonekwa muhondo. (Chakarira Chindunduma, 32).

Now you listen to the accounts of the war.
Problems, objectives and events
All these are part of the war.

However, there are exaggerations in line with the propaganda of the time. For instance, in the same stanza, freedom fighters are said to have been united. We know that in real life, there would be squabbles that even led to killings. The villagers were however moved by the plight of the freedom fighters and also got
uplifted by the whole occasion. As a result they gave the best that they could in the form of food and water:

Uyayi zvenyu vana varo ivhu  
Mhandara torai mvura inopisa  
Inodziya nemwe inotonhona  
Mugotora namafuta anonhuhwira  
Vana vageze guruva neziya  
Vakore vambopfumbirawo chapameso  
Vanababa zarurai matanga  
Mugotora zvinzombe zvakakora  
Mubaire vana zviropa neminyefu  
Vambopodza nzara  
Vanamai bikai hwahwa hutsvuku  
Hunotonhorera semvura yechitubu  
Mugadzike mumumvuri wemuhacha  
Vana vanyaye pahuro panyorove (Chakarira Chindunduma, 32-33).

Come children of the soil  
Maidens, bring some warm water  
Some warm and also cold water  
And take perfumed oil  
So that the children may wash off dust and sweat  
So that they may brighten their faces  
Fathers, open the cattle pens  
Take fat young oxen  
Slaughter them so that the youth may enjoy the liver and the steak  
And assuage hunger  
Mothers, brew rapoko beer  
Cool as spring water  
Place it under the shade of the muhacha tree  
So that the children may wet their dry throats.

This is a veneration of the fighters from the peasant’s viewpoint. This idealisation of the peasant’s perception of the fighters fails to take into consideration the fact that not everyone was happy with pungwes. The masses sacrificed their food and other assets in order to meet the demands of the fighters.

_Hondo_ (War) by Godwin Chitate is a supplication to God and the ancestors which focuses on the meaninglessness of life because
of the destructiveness of the war. The writer appeals to the guardian spirits to give order and meaning to life:

Nhandi imi munogara kumatenga
Munoona zvose zvinoitika
Munogara nomwedzi, zuva nenyenyedzi
Munotikanganwireiko isu vana venyu kudai? (Chakarira Chindunduma, 39).

Hey you who dwell in the skies
Who see everything happening on earth
Who live besides the moon, sun and stars
Why do you neglect us, your children?

The ravages caused by the war are depicted in the expression *chakapedza mbudzi* in stanza 3. This is borrowed from a traditional folktale which depicts endless dying. In the poem under study, people of all ages are dying. Villages are said to be stinking of rotting human flesh. Vultures are feeding on unburied corpses. Domestic animals are free-ranging without care:

Misha yagezwa angove matongo
Rave gutukutu negasakasa
Zvitunha kunhuwa zvashaya warasa
Magora kudoti pano napano wanei, aiwe,
Yangove nhamburiko
Nyama yemusoro isingarumike.
Nezvipfuyo zvose zvangove mhuka dzesango. (Chakarira Chindunduma, 39).

The villages have been reduced to deserted places
There is stench and smell of burnt things
Corpses rot because no-one is there to bury them
Vultures soar over in vain in search of carrion
Domestic animals have turned wild.

This is the price that the people in the villages paid for hosting the war. Their lives became totally subverted - a result of being trapped between two fighting forces. The poem must be reflecting the feeling of the villagers in the late 1970s, when
it was not unusual for people to completely forget the objectives
of the war, and be totally overwhelmed by the trauma and
suffering that it had brought about. The poem shows that as far
as the peasants were concerned, the road to independence was
rough, and was taken as a last resort.

Adonia Nkomo's Yakauya Nemisodzi (It was Achieved in Agony) is
a summary of the suffering that preceded independence. The poem
ends at independence. It recounts the daily experiences of the
peasants during the war which include the carnage in the
villages, the discomfort and the dangers of sleeping in caves,
living on wild fruits, burning of villages, free-ranging of
domestic animals and their destruction. No one was spared from
this anguish, including children. The poem therefore laments the
destruction of the rural economy and the resultant suffering.
However, in stanza 4, the writer seems to think that this is a
sacrifice that the villagers made willingly, yet, as has been
seen already, they had no choice.

Maxwell Thukuzo Mlambo's Musi Wachakarira KwaMutare (The Mutare
Battle) is a dramatisation of the traumatising experience of the
war as was experienced by the people of the city of Mutare. It
shows that the violence and destruction of the war was not
confined to the rural areas. What could have been considered safe
places like cities, were no longer safe. Having had his supper,
the persona relaxes by playing his set of traditional mbira
instruments when the sound of gunfire erupts:
Ndange ndatopinza maoko mudende
Ndave kuda kuimba chimbo "kuenda Mbire"
Ndangariro dzangu dzatove zvadzo kwaSeke.
Ndichangoti chibhwandakata garei:
Chakati charira! (Chakarira Chindunduma, 35).

I had put my hands into the resonator
Ready to play the song "Going to Mbireland"
My thoughts were already in the Seke land.
Just after sitting in a cross-legged manner
There was a loud report!

The poem shows how the persona, who was lounging in the fallacy of traditional music to ignore history, is forced into the war. His thoughts that have temporarily transported him to Seke, the home of mbira, are forced to bring him back to mainstream history by the violence outside, which brings to an end the temporary refuge that he had sought in a traditional song Kuenda Mbire (Going to Mbireland), which is normally sung in traditional religious rituals. According to Mutswairo, Mbireland is the original home of the Shona people. From that name he postulates that the original name of the Shona is therefore VaMbire®. The persona therefore had been temporarily transported to his roots. The difference between the city and the rural areas is that the city people could remain detached observers, while their rural counterparts were directly involved in the war.

Mutswairo's Mukurumbira Wokufira Nyika (The Glory of Dying for One's Country) was composed in 1966, when the poet was in self-imposed exile in Toronto. The poem was 'a result of reflections of the travails and tribulations precipitated by the split of James Chikerema, George Nyandoro and others from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) to form the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI)9. The focus therefore is on
inter factional fighting - a struggle within a struggle, and is in favour of FROLIZI.

The poem uses Christian images to celebrate nationalist leaders, freedom fighters and refugees who suffered during the liberation struggle. The writer's concept of suffering or exile is three-fold. First are detention camps like Gonakudzingwa mentioned in stanza 5, where nationalists were detained without trial. This camp was situated in a game reserve to achieve total isolation from other people. Secondly, there were prisons like Hwahwa which is mentioned in stanza 6 in which a number of nationalists were held in the early 1960s during the period of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence which succeeded the Federation. Lastly, the refugee camps of Chimoio and Nyadzonia in Mozambique which are mentioned in the same stanza also depict some kind of restriction in the sense that their occupants have sought refugee status outside their country, waiting for the war to end so that they can go back home. These, together with the freedom fighters, perished in Mozambique when the Rhodesian security forces bombed the camps. This concept of suffering in isolation shows that the writer, who was in self-imposed exile when this poem was composed, was sympathising with those in similar circumstances at home and in neighbouring countries.

The poem is, however, spoiled by the writer's pre-occupation with rhyme. The syntax, which is derived from that of the church hymns, is dislocated and the poem does not flow smoothly.
Most of the poems dealt with so far appear to be catalogues rather than pictures of selected images of the war. Chirikure's poems in his anthology *Rukuvhute* (Umbilical Cord), (1990) are inspired by the writer's first-hand experience of the war. The poems that are written from the viewpoint of the masses offer a welcome break from solicited poems that idealise the war experience and eulogise the fighters. Further, as an intellectual who received university education, the writer's critical awareness is high. His undergraduate studies in courses that relate to poetry and drama must have sensitised him to a form of communication that could be used effectively to articulate the vision of the ordinary people. As a person who grew up when the debate about socialism and capitalism was raging, he is aware of class-based divisions in his society, and the shift by the government, at the time of publication, to economic reform policies dictated by the IMF and the World Bank, whose interests, as has been shown in Chapter 2, were not the well-being of the majority.

Chirikure uses satire to depict his concern about the need for social reform. In his poem *Ndihwo Upenyu Hwacho* (That is the Life), the writer characterises, in very few words, the lives of the people who fought to liberate the country. He uses the usual metaphors of suffering and death: blood (*ropa*), sweat (*dikita*) and tears (*misodzi*) to show the bitter experiences of those who participated in the war. Some of the metaphors like *manyoka* (diarrhoea) and *mafemo* (uneasy breathing) are derived from diseases that afflicted the fighters. This metaphor could also
be descriptive of the psychological trauma experienced by the fighters. His experiment with form enables him to foreground every word:

umhutu

manda

dziwa

musoro

nzara

nyota

shungu

hasha

Ndihwo hupenyu wemasango,
Ndihwo hupenyu hwangu,
Ndiyo nyika yababa. (Rukuvhute, 8).

mosquitoes

lice

ticks

flu'

headache

diarrhoea

hunger

thirst

desire

determination

anger

impatience

That's our life in the bush,
That's my life,
That's fatherland.

Besides diseases, the fighter's lives were characterised by exposure to malnutrition, lack of basic necessities like food and water, and the frustration and impatience generated by the constant vigilance demanded of them by the war. This picture is the opposite of the superhuman species of the earlier poems. The
The final line of the poem paints a picture of the country before and after the war. The life of the people of Zimbabwe before independence is a result of the way the country was governed then. This condition still prevails after independence due to failure to redress historical errors.

*Kuneni Vana vemuAfrica* (To You, Children of Africa) is an obituary to the dead and the living children of Africa. These are children who have been deprived of a life of innocence and peace, that characterised pre-colonial and pre-war Africa. They do not know any happiness and the joys of having a home:

> Pwere hadzichaziva chinonzi rufaro,  
> Vana havachaziva chinonzi musha (*Rukuvhute*, 10).  
> Children do not know happiness any longer  
> Children do not have homes any more

Stanza 2 captures the plight of children, who are some of the unsaid victims of the war. They have been denied normal childhood experiences. The village is no longer safe. The sound of the gun is a terrifying experience which makes them cry. Even at this tender age, the children have to duck in order to avoid a hail of bullets. They play house with their own blood instead of mud. Some are traumatised by watching their parents crying hopelessly. The meaninglessness of life as a result of suffering is captured in the last stanza in which even the unborn are said to have no rights due to the greed which has caused the war:
Even those in the womb have no rights
Because of the person
Who puts money before human life.

This goes against the African concept of life which regards life as the supreme value. As discussed in Chapter 2, the people who colonised Africa were wealth-seekers. The last line of the poem shows that the writer is aware of this historical fact. The wealth seekers are said to have made life not worth living. The plight of the children is echoed by stereotypes in the Western press that Africa is characterised by starving children. The writer shows that this was brought about by greed when the land was taken after the failure by white settlers to find large deposits of gold, as was the case on the Rand in South Africa. The writer therefore understands that the cause of poverty and the resultant suffering is greed.

Ndipo Patakamiviga Pano (This is Where we Buried Him) is a poem dedicated to all the freedom fighters who died in the war-front and were given a pauper’s burial in the forest, that is, away from the villages, with hardly any funeral rites as per African custom. In the African culture, a grave should be close to a village except in the case of a king, whose burial site is among other kings in a sacred area.

Stanza 1 shows that from the point of view of the villagers who buried him, the selection of the grave site was unsuitable - a stony place around thorny trees. The place was obviously
difficult to dig:

Pano parukangarabwe, muchivavani,
Pakati pezvimatombo nemiunga (Rukuvhute, 12).

Right in this stoney thicket,
Between this small pile of stones and the miunga trees.

The fighter’s burial in this wasteland contrasts strongly with the sacrifice that he made. He died trying to clear the path for the masses to flee from an ambush by the enemy set for a pungwe gathering. Stanza 3 defines a hero from the viewpoint of villagers. The stanza paints a depressing scene of a fatally wounded man: a chest that has been shattered resulting in excessive bleeding, which, together with the tears of the villagers, has soaked the soil:

Chake chifuva changova mamvemve,
Iro ivhu ramedza ropa, razvimbirwa,
Yeduwo isu misodzi ramwa, raguta (Rukuvhute, 12).

His chest was shredded,
The soil had swallowed his blood and was soaked,
It had also drunk to satisfaction our tears.

It is this self-sacrifice for the cause of the majority and the resultant suffering that set heroes apart from others. The fighter in question agonised for three days before finally succumbing to death, the cause of which was hunger and excessive bleeding. Rather than incapacitate everyone, the fighter had even asked the villagers to leave him to die so that they would carry on with the war to liberate the people, for which he had sacrificed his life. This self-sacrifice is similar to Martinus Daneel’s account of the sentiments of selflessness expressed by
a freedom fighter who almost died of food-poisoning in the Gutu area during the war\textsuperscript{11}. In the poem under discussion, contrary to African tradition, the dead man’s name, clan and totem are not known to the villagers who buried him. This is in line with the strategy by both ZANLA and ZIPRA of not deploying fighters in their home areas\textsuperscript{12}. The writer is acknowledging the importance of African traditional religion, which was very prominent during the war\textsuperscript{13}. There was need to know the dead man’s identity so as to reunite him with dead relatives in the spirit world. However, what matters from the villagers’ point of view was that he was buried as a patriot. For a moment, the villagers are prepared to suspend their beliefs as a way of demonstrating their gratitude to the dead fighter. The war, which was fought to recover lost lands, also acted as a unifying force. For a while, people forgot their differences that had been cultivated and promoted by colonialism. What became of paramount importance was the people’s identification with the land:

\textit{Tose tisingazivi kana chimwe chake:
Zita, mhuri, mutupo, kana dzinza,

.................................
Taingoziva: Uyu mwana wevhu! (Rukuvhute, 13).}

All of us knew nothing about him:
From the name, family, totem, and clan,

\textit{.................................
We knew: This was a child of the soil!}

For the dead fighter this is a lonely journey. It can hardly be called a funeral because of the absence of funeral rites. There is no ululation which marks the rite of passage, signifying a send-off by daughters-in-law in the Shona culture. The hurried
and secretive nature of conducting such activities due to fear of retribution by the state makes even a prayer for the dead man’s soul not possible. Because the man is a stranger to the villagers, there is no supplication to the ancestors and the dead. The soul is therefore not catered for, and this makes its retrieval for the purposes of post-funeral rites difficult. The villagers have used a bayonet to dig his grave and a butt to bury him. Neither his parents nor his clan know where he is buried and who buried him. His war name Komuredhi Kunozvarwa Vamwe (Comrade Other Fighters Will be Born [If I Die] suggests that fighters were not expected to survive the war. This spirit of resistance cannot be said to be the philosophy of the nationalists. The war names were pseudonyms which reflected the combatant’s ‘new political awareness and their role in the armed struggle’.14 This would also ensure that combatants would not use their original names which would endanger the safety of their families who might have been victimised by the Rhodesian security forces15. The gravesite and the funeral of the fighter in question, who is perceived as a hero by the villagers, contrasts strongly with the grand occasions of the burial of national heroes in the National Heroes Acre in Harare.

*PaKamùngoma (Gutu) (At Kamungoma in Gutu)* relates a true historical account of a *pungwe* gathering in the Gutu area which ended in the massacre of many young and old people by the Rhodesian forces. The writer recounts the singing and dancing which accompanied these morale-boosting occasions. As shown in stanza 2, the villagers took this opportunity to also pray to the
ancestors for bravery to sustain them during the war. The carnage that follows the attack of those who have gathered for this occasion as reflected in the blood that was spilled and the smell of roasting human flesh as is reflected in stanzas 4 and 3 respectively, is a true reflection of the fact that, as the war progressed, these punwe gatherings became targets of attack by the Rhodesian security forces. The writer has once more shown his ability to take episodes during the war and place them in a historical context.

Like Mathema, Chirikure is one of the few poets who depicts the suffering of the Africans in the period preceding the war. Hadzisi Nhema (It is not a Lie) takes the form of reminiscences of an old African man about colonial violence. In order to reduce violence and its impact on him, the colonised African would humble himself and smile even when abused:

Asi mazino ndakachenama, kuedza kusekerera. (Rukuvhute, 21).
I exposed my teeth trying to smile.

The writer goes on to depict colonial violence using images of dehumanisation. Further, he shows how the African men's potential for resistance was reduced by calling them boys:

Kukuudza nhasi uno haungazvinzisisi,
Kuti ini sekuru vako ndaive imbwa yemumwe,
Mumwe murume, mudiki pandiri pazera,
Murume aindidaidza achiti, "Boy!"
Kunge ndine mukaka pamhino, asi ndiri saimba. (Rukuvhute, 20).
Today you will not understand all this,
That I, your grandfather was someone's dog,
Someone much younger than me,
Would call me "Boy!"
As if I was still a child when in fact I was married.

By perceiving Africans as less human and therefore eroding their confidence in themselves as full human beings, colonialism justified its activities and its existence. Failure by Europeans to call Africans by their names led to the marginalisation of the social significance of names in African society. In the last two stanzas, the writer condemns the oppressive tax system which took the form of various forms of taxation like the poll tax, dog tax, hut tax, and so on. He shows how the Africans humbled themselves even when they went to pay tax which was meant to enrich the tax collectors at the expense of the indigenous people. The writer therefore shows a clear understanding of colonial violence which he depicts in a very concrete manner.

In *Ndozvarira Pai?* (Where Shall I Give Birth?) Zimunya, in simple and straightforward language, uses the first person narrative to show how the same violence that is captured in the title of the poem, generated resistance as evidenced in the last stanza of the poem. The title of the poem, which carries connotations of lamentation, agony and wailing is adopted from a Shona protest song against the hardships of life, particularly the violence of the colonial period which made the African an unwanted stranger in the land of his birth. The settlers made sure that there was no place in which the African could feel at home. The writer is also aware of the fact that the African was needed in the new establishments like cities and mines only for the purposes of
generating capital for the benefit of the settlers. The writer complains:

Ndofarira pai
Maiwe! Ndofarira pai?

Nditi muHarare, mujoni wondisunga

Papurazi dzinongova nyemba, basa harikase
Nditi mumugodhi, upenyu ibakayawo
Mumayadhi, hunzi pondo yoga
Nditi kufodya, kwava kufira chikwereti
Kumusha, munda kateni-teni
Mombe shanu nemhuri gurusvusvu:
Vana votakatira makoko (Chakarira Chindunduma, 15).

Where shall I relax,
Oh mother! Where shall I relax?

I get to Harare and the police officer arrests me

At the farm, we live on beans and there is no end to work
In the mines, we live on dried fish
In the white residential areas we earn one pound only
In the tobacco farms we get deep into debt
In the communal lands the field is reduced
Five cattle and many children:
Children live on crumbs.

The dried beans that workers are fed on in farms reminds one of food rationing, a concept of World War I which is meant to keep the body fit so that it can be exploited to provide the necessary labour needed to generate wealth for the settlers. The cry Maiwe! depicts desperation and an element of despair. It is a cry which generates resistance in the oppressed. This changes the tone of the poem from that of despair to that of anger and impatience:
The persona is summoning fellow sufferers to join hands with him and fight the oppressor, who is depicted in the image of the venomous black snake (*bunu*) and a vulture (*gora*). These images emphasise the settlers' inhumanity in their design to make profit. As seen in the last stanza, it is this violence against the indigenous people that led to the War of Liberation that is depicted in the Chinotomba image - an image which is derived from a Shona folktale\(^1\). The image 'celebrates the struggle against imperialism'\(^1\). It is a celebration of restoration of freedom. Through it the writer puts the suffering of the Africans and the resultant conflict in context.

*Tipeiwo Dariro: Mazwi Matsva Munhetembo* (Please Give us an Arena: New Voices in Poetry (1994)) was published after a couple of publications in the post-independence era. The budding writers of this era are asking for an opportunity for their voices to be heard in a situation where old voices, that have little new poetry to contribute, still dominate the scene\(^2\). In Zuva Rakasvika Mhandu (The Day the Enemy Came) R. Mashiri revisits the war theme and exploits his innovative capacity to break with trends so far established. The poem focuses on the pain, humiliation and trauma suffered by a family. The viewpoint is that of a survivor. What is recounted is the untold trauma that people who did not hold the gun suffered:
Meso akaramba kuzvitenda,
Tichinge tiri kuona zviroto,
Tose takaitwa denderedzwa,
Tichiokera mai vachibatwa chibaro,
Baba vachirova manja,
Vamwe vana vachipururudza,
Tose zvedu tichiimba:
   Ndonzwa kunaka, dzokorora. (Tipeiwo Dariro, 56).

My eyes could not take it in,
We appeared to be dreaming,
All of us were surrounded,
Watching mother being raped,
While father was clapping,
And other children were ululating,
All of us were singing:
   I am enjoying myself, do it again.

This stanza depicts the gun as a symbol of horror. A woman is raped by an armed man in the presence of her defenceless son and husband. Her daughter is similarly abused. The poem is in the form of reminiscences from her son. His trauma arises from being forced to witness his mother and sister being raped. This is taboo. As shown in stanza 2, the trauma also arises from his inability to defend his mother from the rapist, despite her appeal to him to do so. This is a defilement of his manhood. The moonlight dance song that the children are forced to sing is associated with positive excitement. The song contrasts with the emotionally crippling atmosphere generated by the rapist’s act.

The devastating nature of the torture is seen when the persona recounts how he saw his sister being raped:

Ndakaokera kahanzvadzi kachidamburwa umhandara,
Ropa richierera sepabaiwa nhongo,
Mhere kachiipangura,
Mhere isina ani akainzwa. (Tipeiwo Dariro, 57).
I watched my sister losing her virginity,  
Blood flowing as if a goat had been slaughtered,  
While she screamed,  
With no-one heeding the scream.

The violation of the narrator's sister's body results in the loss of her virginity which is a public violation of African values. The preservation of virginity before marriage is of paramount value in traditional African society. The blood that results from the rapist's brutal act leaves the narrator with permanent psychological scars. The embarrassment arises from witnessing this act in the presence of other people, including his own parents. Being made to sing in appreciation and inability to act because of fear heightens the torture. The narrator is also traumatised by having helplessly watched his own father being tortured by having hot charcoal shoved into his boots before being shot through the mouth at point blank range.

Such kinds of atrocities have been taboo subjects for poetry so far. As has already been seen, the poets that have been dealt with so far write from the nationalist point of view that plays down the fact that the war was brutal. The peasants are not put at the centre of the experiences of the liberation war.

The experience depicted by Mashiri therefore shows the toll that the war took in the living, and the need to cleanse survivors from very incapacitating experiences.
4.4 Conclusion

Because of the nationalist impetus, independence was celebrated through poetry. It would appear that those who chose to celebrate it in writing had to do so responsibly, by nationalists' standards. This entailed avoiding issues that could cause embarrassment to the new nation, for instance, matters that would demean the stature of freedom fighters which, at independence, was used as a symbol of heroism in the new nation. Issues such as rape that took place in refugee camps, violation of guerrilla ethical codes like over-relaxing with girls in the rural areas, making excessive demands on peasants and being tardy in operations therefore had to be avoided. This means that there was a deliberate attempt to match guerrilla war propaganda with historical truth as the basis of nation-building. There is a deliberate confusion of nationalist leaders and freedom fighters, although they existed as entities during the war. The nationalist leaders, most of whom were not well known by the peasants are put at the centre, and the soldiers who depended on the peasants for support are largely ignored. This confusion serves as a means of legitimating the leadership positions of the former. There is again a blanket condemnation of the Rhodesian security forces much along the same lines as that of the propaganda that was part of independence. The polarisation of the forces reflects the true nature of the war, but most of the poems lack innovativeness which would render to a young reader the poetry as real life experiences rather than as propaganda. The restraint in the condemnation of colonialism could also be a result of the policy
of reconciliation that was pronounced at independence. The conciliatory tone moves through the poetry, although, ironically, the reconciliation is between blacks and whites and not the two major nationalist parties over which the blacks were divided. The reconciliation therefore focuses on race issues rather than equity at economic level. So to a large extent, the poetry is part of symbol-creation that characterised the first few years of independence, that is, laying a legitimate foundation for the first black government.

The limitation in the poetic vision could arise from two factors. Firstly, as stated in Chapter 3, there is lack of first hand experience of the war arising from the fact that the poems were solicited through literary competitions. The second factor is the writers' inability to handle experience through the prescribed mode of poetry as a medium of communication. This is easily seen from the fact that apart from old writers like Mutswairo, Kumbirai and Sigogo, most of the contributors to this poetry are new voices. The only success stories are those of Chirikure and a few others. Therefore some poets are so-called because of one poem, and this is precisely the weakness of collective effort - novices coming together to capture an epoch through a medium that they have no experience of.

While the poetry might be mundane and prosaic in many parts, it however performs an important psychological function of providing the much needed therapy for psychological traumas experienced during the war. It could have been more effective in performing
this role had it dwelt thoroughly on the suffering, sorrow and pain that came with the war. What it does to a limited extent is to help individuals with similar experiences rid themselves of the same trauma. The reason why emotions come out in this repressed manner is that the country never stopped to take stock of its losses as a nation, by merely focusing on the suffering that had taken place during the war. A lot of crippling emotions remain hidden to this day.
Endnotes


3. Ibid, (35).


7. Martinus Daneel's *Guerrilla's Snuff*, Harare, Baobab Books, 1995, recounts the sacrifices made by the villagers in Gutu where the war was raging.


10. E Chiwome also makes the same observation in *A Critical History of Shona Poetry*, (106).


15. Ibid, (45).


19. Ibid, 98.


CHAPTER 5

POEMS ON THE UNITY ACCORD

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter makes frequent references to reconciliation of races to each other, which, as shown in Chapter 2, is in fact the reconciliation of the nationalists to the international business community, particularly the community whose interests are being represented by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. As independence is being celebrated, the government is at war with the people of Matebeleland who are believed to harbour people who have risen against it. This experience, which starts in 1981 to 1987, is yet to be recorded through art. The matter is only officially researched into and published under official protest by the Zimbabwe Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Zimbabwe Legal Aid Resources Foundation. This means that a bit of light is thrown into it only in 1997. This epoch is captured retrospectively in the celebration of the Unity Accord, signed in December, 1987. The poetry that celebrates the signing of the Unity Accord therefore draws attention to a critical phase of history that is yet to be represented in art. Commenting on the silence of both the government and academics on this historical epoch, S. Robins has this to say:

The official silence on these atrocities is devastating, but equally disturbing has been the silence of many academics who have written about Zimbabwe's recent past. The 1990s have, however, witnessed the beginnings of a break in this academic silence.
This phase was marked by violence arising from conflict between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU - the two rival political parties that drew their support from predominantly Shona speaking and Ndebele speaking areas respectively. To the people of Matebeleland, the landslide victory of ZANU PF in the first general elections in 1980, meant defeat and therefore exclusion from power. As already stated in Chapter 2, in early 1982 armed clashes between ZIPRA and ZANLA provoked a major defection of ex-ZIPRA soldiers from the Zimbabwe National Army. The defectors joined armed bands of disillusioned ex-fighters who were roaming the countryside in Matebeleland and parts of the Midlands, and thus strengthened the 'dissident' movement. They were later joined by the racist South African-sponsored Super ZAPU counter-insurgents. South Africa was determined to ensure Zimbabwe's political instability and economic dependence, due to the latter's landlocked position. Zimbabwe's independence was a threat to the colonial government of apartheid South Africa as this quotation shows:

There is also useful historical background [in the report by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Legal Resources Foundation]. The report for instance, confirms that South African agents promoted an organisation called Super Zapu as part of a wider campaign of destabilising called Operation Drama.2

According to Michael Evans, apartheid South Africa's destabilising activities were aimed at guarding its interests against what it believed was 'a consolidation of Zimbabwean military and economic strength to fuel the concealed ideology of Afro-Marxism'. South Africa's destabilising strategies were therefore used for domestic propaganda purposes to prove to the
Africans that 'majority rule was economically harmful for Blackruled countries'. Michael Evans makes the following comment:

The bloody sweep of Five Brigade through Matebeleland and the international condemnation it elicited can partly be blamed on Pretoria's manipulation of Ndebele resentment of the Mugabe government in 1983. In the words of Emmerson Munangagwa, [Minister of State for Security] South African-trained super-Zapu elements were able to 'superimpose' themselves on to the 'general bandit activity being carried out by former Zipra forces'.

To quell the violence that had erupted, the government deployed the Fifth Brigade (referred to as Five Brigade in the above quote) - the North Korean-trained ZANLA ex-combatants with specific instructions to their founder-commander to 'plough and reconstruct' from the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe. Also deployed were the CIO, the police and ZANU PF Youth League. The killings, disappearances and torture that were carried out by government forces against the defenceless civilians far outweighed the violence that was attributed to the 'dissidents'. Michael Evans, commenting on the government's use of armed forces, has this to say:

It has been suggested that Zanu has used the South African threat to magnify the seriousness of domestic insurgency to justify repressing Zapu and consolidating Zanu power.

As already stated in Chapter 2, since the government could ill-afford the resultant negative publicity, negotiations between the major political parties led to the signing of the Unity Accord on 22 December, 1987. This effectively brought to an end the violence in Matebeleland and the Midlands. Since the war under discussion (referred to as the counter-insurgency war in Chapter 135
2) was waged by the state against the people of Matebeleland and parts of the Midlands, the Unity Accord is celebrated only by poets writing in Ndebele as it is that section of the population that got victimised most during the post-independence disturbances. It is for this reason that there are no Shona poems celebrating the Unity Accord.

5.2 Poems that Celebrate the Unity Accord

These poems are characterised by a celebration of the signing of the aforesaid peace agreement between PF ZAPU and ZANU PF, the two major political parties that fought the war. The signing of this agreement and the declaration of an amnesty in 1988 brought about the cessation of violence in Matebeleland. It is this return to normality that the poets are celebrating. In Jerome R. Nyathi's Ilanga Elihle (A Good Day), news of the unity of ZANU PF and PF ZAPU appears to arrive at a village from Harare where the Accord was signed. Although the news comes from outside the community, it excites the community all the same. It appears to be something they had awaited for long. The unity of the political parties is symbolised in the bull and the cock, the party symbols for PF ZAPU and ZANU PF respectively. Their coming together is said to usher a new era which excites the peasants:

Kambe yimi lo sibili loba ngiyaphupha?

.........................
Indonsakusa nansiya, seliyaphuma ilanga!
Ngizwil' ukukhala kwephude
Akunkunzi layo evumelayo na? Impela yiyo (Giya Mthwakazi, 161).
Could this be real or a dream?

There is the morning star, the sun is about to rise!
I heard the crowing of the cock
Isn't that the bull that is responding? For sure it is.

The poet is simply overwhelmed by the coming together of the two parties which he likens to the appearance of the morning star which ushers a new day. It is not clear though in the poem what tangible results in material, political and social terms this unity is going to bring to the community which is celebrating. In the poem, unity seems to be an end in itself. All it can afford people is excitement and happiness:

Laph' obumi khona uzwil' ukuthokoza na?
Laph' obumi khona uzwil' ukuqunjwaqunjwa na?
Ngibuzil' ukuba kungabe kuyini?
Bangithe ntsho baghwebana bafa luhleko (Giya Mthwakazi, 161).

Where you were standing did you feel the happiness?
Where you were standing did you feel being tickled?
I asked what the matter was
They all looked at me and burst out laughing

The writer elicits the reader's participation through a series of rhetorical questions. The resultant atmosphere of urgency and excitement suggests that there is some naivety or misunderstanding on the part of the recipients of the news. Absent in the poem is the historical and the social contexts of the Unity Accord. The persona therefore demonstrates a very low level of understanding of history. Of note is the fact that the concerned communities of Matebeleland are not part of the history that they are celebrating. The passiveness of the people makes it difficult to perceive the actual events that led to the unity.
and the significance thereof. The unspecified setting is intended to make the celebrations all pervasive, yet the same persona ironically reveals ignorance of the meaning of unity. When he eventually joins the others in celebrating, it appears like mob psychology. He fails to give the Unity Accord relevance in the hearts and the minds of the people. Because of its unconvincing nature, that is, lack of concrete manifestations of the excitement, the poem is reduced to nationalist propaganda. It amounts to a mere celebration of party leadership that decided to set aside its differences in order to make the new nation a reality. This view is echoed by John Makumbe, University of Zimbabwe political scientist, who describes the Unity Accord as an 'intra elite cohesion' whereby the elite from the two major political parties realised the benefits of coming together. Moreover, the fact that opposition political parties did not take part suggests that 'total unity did not take place'. Similarly, when the government declared December 22 a public holiday to mark the unity of the main liberation movements, police in Bulawayo had to intervene to block a planned demonstration by the University of Zimbabwe students whose spokesman protested:

In our view the National Unity Day holiday is a day of mourning instead of celebration because we will be commemorating the cold-blooded massacres of innocent civilians. The whole idea of this holiday as seen by the government is a painful irony to us.

These views are contrary to the official truth that is espoused by the poets under discussion. The poems are part of the 'national truths' or 'praise texts' similar to those found in history books written under the same conditions of 'nationalist
triumphalism'.

Siyabonga iUnity Bakhokheli (We are Grateful for Unity, Leaders) by Artwell Masuku is a typical example of partisan poetry which is characterised by a blind allegiance to the party, the government and the political leadership. The poem is fashioned after traditional Zulu praise poetry. The writer showers praises and thanks to the ZANU PF leader Robert Mugabe and the PF ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo for bringing about unity and peace in the country. In a bid to legitimate a Western type of government, there is an attempt to link the two leaders with their apparently eminent ancestry. However, since the ancestry of the two leaders cannot be linked to a dynasty of rulership in the given communities, the writer plays down the use of traditional symbols for legitimation purposes:

Uyinkosi uhlobo lwakho
Kambe singathi ufuze bani?
Ungabe ufuze ukhokho na?
Kungabe yisipho sakho
Siyakuhlonipha Cde. Mugabe
Siyabonga, siyabonga (Giya Mthwakazi, 172).

Your family is a family of kings
Who shall we say you take after?
Do you take after your ancestor?
Or is it your talent?
We respect you Cde. Mugabe
We thank you, we thank you.

The above stanza amounts to symbol creation through praise poetry. The one time vibrant poetry is scaled down to empty praise singing. As indicated in stanza 4, it appears the writer is not certain whether he should attribute what he perceives as
the heroic deeds of the two leaders to their ancestors or to God who gave them this talent. The writer is unconsciously invoking two different religious belief systems - the Christian, in which there is direct divine intervention, and the traditional, in which the ancestors intercede for the suppliants in much the same way as saints are believed to intercede for Christians. Moreover, traditionally, the success of individuals is attributable to ancestors in the sense that individuals are expected to model themselves on their parents. To the extent that heroic poetry is validated by history, the ancestry of the two leaders cannot be associated with any known heroic deeds to legitimise their positions. The reference to ancestry can only be legitimate when a king or chief rules the people on behalf of ancestors who are the founders of the nation. The poem manouvres traditional symbols in order to strengthen individuals.

In stanza 3, the founder of the Ndebele nation, Mzilikazi, and the Zezuru spirit medium, Nehanda, are said to be embracing in celebration of the unity of the two major political parties. This is an attempt by the writer to legitimise Zimbabwe through the use of traditional symbols that arise at different phases of the history of the Ndebele and the Shona. This in turn is an attempt to convert a colony into a nation state that has no social, historical and philosophical foundation in the communities that make it up. Therefore what we call Zimbabwe is a geo-physical rather than a social phenomenon.
In a process of myth-making, individuals are made to stand for the whole country:

Liyisizwe lina ngokwenu (Giya Mthwakazi, 172).

You (leaders) are the embodiment of the nation.

The writer seems oblivious of the fact that besides Shona and Ndebele, Zimbabwe has over half a dozen minority languages, representing various ethnic groups. Moreover, far from representing the two major ethnic groups in the country, Mugabe and Nkomo at this point in time represent only cliques within these groups - the ZANU PF and PF ZAPU elite respectively - and use ethnicity as a mobilising strategy. The unity of the leaders helps to give Zimbabwe a semblance of a united community.

There are glaring silences to crucial issues in post-independence Zimbabwe like the causes of disunity and the challenges of independence: We know that ZANU PF and PF ZAPU contested the 1980 general elections as separate parties, thus dividing the nation along ethnic lines. The next general elections in 1985 were conducted in the same manner. The counter-insurgency war, as recounted in Chapter 2, is conveniently ignored by the writer, who selects only those aspects of the leaders that depict them as heroes, and not selfish nationalist politicians. There is also silence against the tragic effect of colonialism on independent Africa and the inherited problem of reducing a colony into an independent nation-state using Western models. A lot of vital information is therefore played down,
making the poem a propagandist tool for the nationalist leaders and their supporters. The writer appears to be a party enthusiast whose objective is to consolidate nationalist positions.

Ferdinard Namate-Ndlovu's *Isivumelwano Sokumanyana [22.12.87]* (The Unity Agreement [22.12.87]) is a historical poem as can be inferred from the date that forms part of the title of the poem. The poem focuses on a diarised aspect of independence history and yet it begins by discouraging readers from probing that history:

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Mangasiding' izehlakalo ebezikhona
Ngemva kwalesi sivumelwano somanyano (Giya Mthwakazi, 164).
Let us not find out about events
Before the signing of this unity agreement.
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The stanza raises suspicion because the voice sounds like the voice of propaganda, yet it is made to appear more knowledgeable and to sound like the voice of the community. The voice is clearly manipulative. The statement pre-empts investigation. Historically, this is a fact which stands for those people who did not see the need to investigate the Matebeleland atrocities. By discouraging investigation, reflection and self-criticism in preference for celebration, the voice advocates ignorance. The second stanza shows that the writer is pro-government. People of other ethnic groups who resisted the Shona-dominated government of the day are depicted as psychopaths. They conform to the official label of 'dissidents' which was used to mean trouble-makers, murderers, madmen, in short, people acting without a cause. Richard Werbner shows the way in which ethnic differences were exploited by the Shona-dominated government after
The nationalist struggle [had] fed and in turn was fed by its antithesis, the polarisation of two quasi-nations or super tribes, the Shona against the Ndebele... The catastrophe of quasi-nationalism is that it can capture the might of the nation state and bring authorized violence down ruthlessly against the people who seem to stand in the way of the nation being united and pure as one body... It is as if quasi-nationalist victims, by being of an opposed quasi-nation, put themselves outside the nation, indeed beyond the pale of humanity.

Stanza 3 has an interesting version of this event, that is, disturbances as a form of self destruction - a perpetuation of violence against self as demonstrated in the burning of villages:

Mingak’ imiz’ etshiswe ngabanikazi?
Yaloba kwaloba langengan’ ezimsulwa (Giya Mthwakazi, 164).

How many villages were burnt by the owners?
And were destroyed including innocent babies

The writer exonerates the state by taking the blame for the post-independence Matebeleland disturbances from the state machinery to the people themselves. This view is echoed in stanza 5 where the writer records the massive destruction and the suffering as an internal act, for which the communities in question should take the blame. History is being re-written by the poet.

The unrest also took the form of disruption of village life and mass killings as evidenced by mass graves:

Mingaki imizi ezicentel’ ubunxiwa?
Amathambo abaniniwo azingcwaba nyandanye lawezinyamazana
Kwathi labo abasilileyo bantshuma? (Giya Mthwakazi, 164).
How many villages were responsible for their destruction? The bones of their owners buried themselves together with those of wild animals. Even those who survived disappeared.

In stanza 7, the persona’s disillusionment is tempered by the kind-heartedness of nationalist leaders who forge unity. Of note is the fact that they came to the rescue of the community as outsiders to the problems. The two leaders are said to represent the spirit of independence that is personified in Josiah Tongogara, the ZANLA military commander, and Jason Moyo of ZIPRA. Tongogara and Moyo, both of whom died during the war, are said to symbolise national sovereignty and selflessness. In an attempt to link the dead and the living, the dead heroes are seen as providing a legitimate base for the nationalist leaders.

In reality, it is known that the soldiers who fought the war are different from the nationalists who masterminded the same war from the rear. Most of the former soldiers belong to the suffering majority, that is, to a class different from the nationalists. The former soldiers have presented themselves as a force to reckon with, as seen by their violent demonstrations against the government’s decision to suspend disbursement of the War Victims Compensation Fund amongst allegations of looting and abuse of the same fund. Throughout the poem there is an attempt to camouflage personal ambitions and intrigues in the history of the liberation struggle so that we see the individuals’ greed not as manipulative, but as nationalist or collective acts.
The Unity Accord is seen as ushering a democratic era that will empower the people:

Kuthi lalaph' embizweni zelizwe
Okhulumayo azwiwe bamnanze (Giya Mthwakazi, 165).

Even in the national arena
Whoever talks should be heard and cared for.

This is part of the post-independence rhetoric about egalitarianism, which the nationalist leaders who are portrayed as outsiders to the communities that they purport to serve, have taken upon themselves to achieve. In the next two stanzas, the party is canonised and we are made to think that it works for the people, yet contradictions that have bedevilled post-independence history make it clear that the party serves the interests of the privileged. Party positions have become the basis of the new class positions. People are pressured to join the party in order to access wealth. Wealth therefore has become the criterion for joining the ruling party instead of the hitherto used racial criterion. Those holding privileged positions legitimise them by showing how hard they have worked for the party.

In stanza 11 there is an appeal to the insurgents to lay down arms for the good of the nation:

Ngaso lesi isivumelwano sokumanyana
Lab' akade bephe isizwe isiphundu
Mabalahl' ingqondo yobuzimu balahle langezikhali
Zibutheleleiwe kabutsha zibengezokuvikel' uZulu
Lemicabango yabo ihlelwe kabutsha ngabantusi
Lithule izwe lihotshe' umoya omnandi (Giya Mthwakazi, 163).
By this unity agreement
Even those who had turned their backs on the nation
Must throw away these ogre-like thoughts together with
their weapons
Which should be gathered to defend the public
Their thoughts should be examined by the leaders
So that the country should have peace and breathe fresh
air.

What is interesting is that the so-called dissidents represented
by the mythical symbol izimu (ogre) are fighting the nation. The
persona tells us that there are people who are not part of the
nation. It appears the nation is made up of the nationalists. If
people can stand outside the nation, then the concept of a nation
becomes unreal and elusive. Investigations of the thoughts or
grievances of the insurgents insinuate that they are psychotics
while the leadership are the psychiatrists. This implies that
nationalism has answers to some of the problems that arose at
independence, for instance, state repression of civilians. It
could also mean that people have serious grievances that need to
be looked into during times of peace. A historical poem could
have attempted to give the reasons for some of these grievances
instead of condemning one warring side and exonerating the other.
There is a sense in which this problem can be said to be an
outcome of the war itself, which is ironically a legacy of
colonialism, as people were mobilised along ethnic lines to fight
the war, and independence did not mean the realisation of
everybody’s goals.

In stanza 13 AIDS, laziness and jealousy are viewed as pressing
problems for Zimbabwe. The writer therefore implies that if these
problems are overcome the nation will be on the road to economic
freedom. This is an ambivalent statement in a situation where independence did not usher the envisaged era of the dismantling of colonial structures. In the absence of vibrant labour unions, the plight of the workers will continue to be the same as before independence. The writer's voice is therefore a voice from the West and an extension of colonialism. He advocates hard work but is silent about the division of the proceeds. This could also be a statement about the inefficiency that is rampant in the public service. Independence was celebrated through under-performance, defined as freedom from oppressive work. The more pressing problems in post-independence Zimbabwe have been the unavailability of land for resettlement purposes, rising levels of unemployment and rehabilitation of war victims.

The writer views multi-national companies like Delta Corporation and Lonrho as active agents in seeking solutions to the land question:

Ngoba sesimanyene ngalesi sivumelwano
Asiqhubelen' ingal' ende kubafo
Sicel' izandla kubo Delta Corporation labo Lonro
Asikawuthi hlasi ngezandla unhlab' ebesiwalwela
Kodwa ngaso lesi sivumelwano
Amazw' ethu sice' angaba lesisindo! (Giya Mthwakazi, 166).

Since we are united because of this agreement
Let us extend a hand of reconciliation to our enemies
And ask for assistance from Delta Corporation and Lonrho
Because we have not yet got hold of the land for which we fought
But because of this agreement
When we ask our voices can carry a lot of weight!

The idea of getting land through aid is tantamount to surrendering independence to Western agencies in the country.
This appeal further shows that there is something wrong with the nation: how can it be independent without the land for which it went to war? The writer’s vision of development through aid weakens self-reliance and self-sustainment which should be at the heart of the philosophy of liberation.

Tommy M. Ndlovu’s *Zimbabwe* reflects nationalist rhetoric on unity. The writer idealises different ethnic groups which make up the nation and celebrates diversity:

Bezizwe ligamangali ngobunengi
Ukubambana kwethu kusekwahlukaneni
Ukwemukela kokwahlukanaka yinhlanyelo yokubambana
Ukubambana yikwazi imihlobo yethu
Ukwaz’ umhlobo womunye yikwaz’ ulimi lwakhe (Giya Mthwakazi, 180).

Foreigners, do not be surprised by our numbers
Our unity is in our diversity
Accepting our diversity is seeds for unity
Unity is knowing our different ethnic groups
Knowing an individual’s ethnicity is knowing their language.

This image contrasts sharply with what is happening on the ground where that very diversity is threatening unity, as is endorsed by the political mobilisation of the people through regional and ethnic lines. The writer paints a touristic image of Zimbabwe for consumption by visitors, whom he directly addresses in his poem. In stanza 1, the image of the flower with many colours that is used to depict Zimbabwe is not a true reflection of the situation on the ground. The writer overlooks the fact that flowers can bloom and wither, and do not automatically bear fruit. The benefit of ethnic diversity to nation building is not specified. What the writer celebrates is a potential which has yet to be
realised. The reality in post-independence Zimbabwe is that ethnic diversity has been exploited by nationalist leaders for their benefit. For instance, apart from the official language, English, the government has promoted two national languages, Shona and Ndebele at the expense of languages spoken by other ethnic groups in the country. This has resulted in the lack of awareness by the general population that 'Zimbabwe is made up of many people answering to different ethnic identities and nationalities'. This grading of languages means that the cultures, and therefore the speakers of the languages, are themselves graded in order of importance. The nation has failed to harness diversity for productive purposes. The fact that English has remained the dominant language means that Zimbabwe is dominated by Western culture. The rosy picture of Zimbabwe as a paradise conforms to the touristic image of the country. It is a facade of the potentially explosive nature of the politics based on tribalism on which the nation is founded.

Similarly, Ndabezinhle's Sigogo's poem *Uxolo EZimbabwe* (Reconciliation in Zimbabwe) reflects the rhetoric of nation building, that is, discourse that was used to give the people a sense of oneness under the new flag:

Laqhubek' ilizw' elikhulu
Lath' ezimbabwe enkulu
Akukho muntu wezizweni
Akukho muntu welizweni
Kayikh' impumalanga
Kanye lay' intshonalanga
Okukhona yisizwe sinye
Isizwe salizwe linye
Son' esotha langa linye
Siphande mhlabathi munye (*Giya Mthwakazi*, 178).
The big voice continued
And said in great Zimbabwe
There is no stranger
There is no foreigner
There is no east
And west
What is there is one nation
A nation that belongs to one country
A nation that receives rays from the same sun
And tills the same soil.

The above stanza reflects the socialist rhetoric of the time. The big voice sounds like an authoritarian voice, imposing its will on the people. Extending a hand of welcome to foreigners is tantamount to inviting foreign capital against which the war was fought. This again leads to the renege on earlier promises of taking the land and giving it back to the 'sons of the soil', a slogan used to mobilise the masses during the war. The writer's statement is therefore a statement of betrayal. It succeeds in disarming peasants in order to ensure that the land question is not pursued with vigour. That there is no east and west is a false analysis of history which plays down economic and other differences among the peoples of the world. We know that economically, the world is divided between the East and the West. At international level the West stands for wealth. The challenge is how to achieve long-lasting unity between the famished and the overfed. The strikes that have dogged the public service and paralysed industry in Zimbabwe from the mid-1990s indicate failure by both nationalists and those writers who represent them, to read history. In the Zimbabwean context, the east and west are regional realities that necessitated the unity which is the topic under discussion. In the global arena, relative to the impoverished East, the West stands for wealth.
The writer adopts the language of political rallies in a bid to create common symbols for the people. Reference to nationalism is a statement about a nation that never was. The inhabitants of the geographical phenomenon known as Zimbabwe do not refer to themselves as Zimbabweans until they have crossed the borders, which the majority rarely does. Zimbabwe exists in the minds and in atlases. Moreover, the term that is used to refer to Zimbabwe's largest ethnic group - Shona - is not used by the people to refer to themselves. The so-called Shonas refer to themselves as Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Korekore, and so on. A number of theories have been formulated about the origin of the term Shona. The historian, David Beach, argues that the term Shona was first used in the 1830s by the Ndebele to refer to the Rozvi, and was extended to other 'Shona' speakers by the Europeans in the nineteenth century. According to Mutswairo, the term appears to have been derived from the Zulu word shona (to sink or disappear) and this arose from the fact that the Rozvi would flee from the seasoned Ndebele raiders and disappear into mountain strongholds. Zimbabwe is therefore made up of many potential small nations or traditional nation states.

In stanza 7, the writer celebrates a semblance of peace that was brought about by the signing of the Unity Accord, without going into the causes of the brutalisation of Matebeleland and the resultant suffering of its inhabitants. By claiming that the world was surprised because the chaos that it expected independence would bring in Zimbabwe was never witnessed, the writer is inadvertently celebrating the fact that independence
was a non-event. The world was surprised because the whites were not dispossessed of the land as was expected by the indigenous people of Zimbabwe.

Stanza 8 celebrates failure:

Ngempela akubanga njalo
Okwakunganjalo kwaba njalo
Obeluval' embilinini wakhe
Wethul' imithwalo yakhe
Wabuyel' ubupekleni bakhe
Akwaba Khomanisi kwakhe
Elayithumb' impahla yakhe
Ayimbe mgodi ungasuwakhe (Giya Mthwakazi, 179).

For sure, it did not happen like that
That which was not like that became like that
He who was scared
Unpacked his belongings
And once more enjoyed the good life
No Communist came to his place
And confiscated his property
Which he had obtained not through his sweat.

The writer is clearly on the side of the propertied class, which, besides the whites, also includes the blacks of the interim government of 1978. He thinks the government is magnanimous for not having appropriated land to the landless. A foreign ideology, that is, Marxism-Communism, had been used to mobilise the peasants. The fact that it did not prevail after independence indicates failure by the government to redistribute wealth. At the end of the war the supporters of the war, who were largely the peasants, were poorer than they had been before the war, while those who were being fought were still comfortable. What the writer is inadvertently celebrating is the failure of the policy of 'growth with equity', which was espoused by the political elite at independence, to take root. He shows that
unlike what the world had been made to believe by the Rhodesian propaganda, the leaders were not Communists but African nationalists. Implicitly, they were less radical in their socio-economic transformation than war propaganda had made people to believe. The poem amounts to failure by nationalism to deliver the goods.

The last stanza celebrates the relative tranquillity with which transition to independence came, which the writer refers to in the following manner:

Ngoba okwabaseZimbabwe
Ukuzithiba bazibambe
Ekwenzen' umonakalo

Akukho sizwe esakukholwayo
Akukho sizwe sokukholwayo (Giya Mthwakazi, 179).

Because what was done by the people of Zimbabwe
In controlling themselves
From causing damage

No nation ever forgot it
No nation will ever forget it.

As indicated in Chapter 2, the transition to independence was a natural outcome of the fact that colonialism to independence was characterised by conservative reform rather than radical change. Rather than smash colonial structures as advocated by Lenin as a natural outcome of a revolution, independence marked the transition of a few people into power. The writer thanks the nationalist leaders for being 'civilised', because they did not do what they had promised to do, that is, to give back to the people their wealth in the form of land. The various nations of the world had completely misread the intentions of the
nationalists whom they mistakenly identified with Communists. As the last two lines indicate, the true identity of the political leadership came as an unforgettable revelation to the world.

Sigogo's pre-occupation with form, particularly end rhyme, at the expense of content, leaves a lot to be desired, as can be seen from this example:

Ngempela akubanga njalo
Okwakunganjalo kwaba njalo (Giya Mthwakazi, 179).

For sure it never happened that way
That which was not like that became like that.

The fact that the writer sacrifices meaning to get verse suggests that the content of the poetry does not come from the heart. It is a legitimate theme for composition as it is a subject that is popular with the powers that be.

Sithenjisiwe J.J. Ndlovu's *Imoyamunye IZimbabwe* (Zimbabwe is of One Spirit) is a catalogue of events that culminated with the signing of the Unity Accord. The writer is obviously writing from the point of view of the ruling ZANU PF party. She refers to the post-independence disturbances as being the work of abahlamuki (dissidents), a term, as has been shown, that was officially used to refer to the people of Matebeleland who refused to accept that independence had truly come with the assumption of power by the ZANU PF party. This is captured in stanza 9 when the writer refers to the period soon after independence:
It is a well-known fact that some of the so-called dissidents were the military wing of a party that was a rival to the ruling party. We also know that the warring parties, although they tried to make 'an uneasy alliance' towards the end of the war, had a long history of conflicts and suspicions, as this report by Martin and Johnson shows:

There had been difficulties between ZANLA and ZIPRA from the outset, and at two joint training camps ... there had been clashes and a considerable number of ZIPRA guerrillas had been killed. There had been differences over political education, strategy and methods of mobilisation.

The above quotation shows that ZAPU's disillusionment with the ruling party and the disgruntled elements within ZIPRA that deserted the national army and swelled the ranks of the so-called dissidents were not a mystery to the ruling party or to the generality of the people of Zimbabwe, as the writer would like to make us believe. After independence, the two parties had arms at their disposal which they used to the detriment of the masses. The 1985 General Elections were marked by violence, and matters
came to a head when the government ordered the closure of ZAPU offices and banned all ZAPU meetings in 1987. Effectively, this means that ZAPU was then banned. These measures increased suspicion and resulted in an escalation of violence. This led to an ‘impoverished state of the countryside, following the looting of crops, cattle, and personal goods.....’ Although due to mounting criticism the Fifth Brigade was withdrawn in 1985, killings and disappearances continued, forcing villagers, particularly the able-bodied ones, to escape to the cities or neighbouring countries, particularly South Africa and Botswana, in search of alternatives.

In the absence of any tangible evidence of their distinguished performance, the nationalist leaders are celebrated as heroes of intelligence amaqhawe engqondo in order to legitimise their privileged positions of leading the nation. Further, like Artwell Masuku, Ndlovu adopts the Ndebele\Zulu traditional poetic style, notably the royal salute bayethe, as a legitimising strategy. The repetition of the salute generates a jubilant mood which fits in well with the celebratory nature of the poem. Of note in the last two stanzas is the fact that the writer thanks the leaders for bringing the violence in Matebeleland to an end:

Sibatshayel' ihlonbe abakhokholi
Abathe ngokuxotshwa ngabahlamuki
Babangcino qobolwayo, babanjongonye
Njengamhla siphuma siphuma eyenkululeko (Giya Mthwakazi, 163).

We congratulate the leaders
Who although were provoked by dissidents
Did not react and had one aim
Like what happened when we fought the war.
We know that as far as the post-independence disturbances are concerned, the leaders were neither innocent nor bystanders. For instance, the government responded to these disturbances by deploying the Korean-trained Fifth Brigade army in Matebeleland, imposing a curfew and various other forms of restrictions that were meant to deter would-be dissidents and their supporters. These measures paralysed the lives of the villagers. The violence that the leaders are congratulated for bringing to an end was, in the first place, a result of their failure to unite the two armies that had been mobilised along ethnic lines. The writer therefore displays a very superficial and distorted knowledge of history. The writer ends his poem with the nationalist slogan, ‘Forward with unity’, and the Nguni royal salute, Bayethe now being applied to the President of Zimbabwe. He writes as a nationalist politician for the people of Matebeleland, on behalf of the nationalist leaders.

5.3 Conclusion

In the African culture, unity was the basis of existence from the nuclear family level to clan level. Among other reasons, people united mainly for economic and defence purposes. The post-independence war was a result of individuals who wanted to entrench their privileged positions for personal gains at the expense of national gain. A more conducive atmosphere was needed for the enjoyment of the privileges that go with these positions. The signing of the Unity Accord brought an immediate cessation of violence in Matebeleland. It is the signing of this agreement
that the poets, who grew up in the tradition of conformist poetry, celebrate as peace. The poetry, written by commissioned writers on behalf of the government, is meant to pacify victims of the government-sponsored post-independence violence in Matebeleland and parts of the Midlands. Since the violence was not experienced in many parts of Mashonaland, no poems in Shona celebrate the signing of the Unity Accord.

Although the signing of the agreement seems to have worked well for those for whom it was forged, it has, however, helped to expose class contradictions within the new nation, as the vanguard of the ruling party has, and continues to implement economic programmes that serve the interests of the West. The Unity has also served to sharpen the contradictions between the rich and the poor. The poverty of the majority of Zimbabweans, 60% of whom live below the poverty datum line\textsuperscript{24}, is threatening the peace that is being celebrated by the poets. The many strikes by workers against employers, and demonstrations against the government - the most recent being that by war veterans - serve to show the fragility of the peace that the writers are celebrating. This further shows that what is at the heart of society is not the ethnic issue, but wealth, particularly in the form of land, and its redistribution.
Endnotes


6. Zimbabwe Independent, (B5).

7. Ibid, (1).

8. Ibid, (1).


12. Ibid, (2).


14. J.S. Hachipola gives a list of 16 minority languages of Zimbabwe which represent the various ethnic groups in the country in ‘Survey of Minority Languages of Zimbabwe: A Research Report’, (Unpublished), Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Zimbabwe, 1996, 1.


23. Zimbabwe's President, Robert Mugabe, is well-known for having obtained more than half a dozen first degrees, a Master's degree and an almost equal number of honorary degrees. Most of the latter were conferred after independence.

24. The Financial Gazette, June 18, 1998, (6) quoting recent government figures which indicate that 64% of Zimbabwe's 12 million people live in abject poverty. This has exacerbated the problem of rural urban-migration as peasants flood the cities and towns in search of new alternatives.
CHAPTER 6

IMAGES OF BETRAYAL: BREAK WITH NATIONALIST TRENDS

6.1 Introduction

Chapters 2 - 5 look at poetry that largely conforms to the demands of nationalism. Poets are seen to be concerned with nation building as defined by the elite. Various images arise from the reality that exists to a very large extent in the lives of the new African elite. These poetic images largely match the official truth which is made up of perceptions of life of the past, present and future that the rulers expect the masses, who are the subject people, to espouse. Even when the voices of the peasants dominate, they do not articulate the political, social and economic awareness of the people at the grassroots level in the communal lands, farms and mines. It would appear that the poets in this category fail to show the difference between the lives of the poor and those of the rich, that is, the different realities informing on the one hand, the lives and interests of the African elite, and on the other, those of the masses. This is failure by the poets to show the difference between the lives of the beneficiaries of independence and the losers.

One positive development that comes with the heightened sense of cultural nationalism at independence is the formation of African theatre groups at national level, the most prominent of
which is the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre (ZACT). Related to this was the rise of community theatre; a type of theatre that exploited theatre and performance in articulating the views from below, that is, those that were not articulated in official truth. These views arose as a result of the rhetoric on socialism that was in vogue during the war and in the first few years of independence. They were complemented by the views of Afrocentric scholars that were floated around in university corridors and in the print and electronic media. Notable among the Afrocentricists on the Zimbabwean scene at this stage was Ngugi wa Mirii from Kenya who had written and produced popular plays with Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo. The latter had a stint with the Faculty of Education at the University of Zimbabwe. Also noteworthy were the contributions by Ngugi wa Thiong'o through his novels and talks at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair and writers' workshops. Micere Mugo and writer Ama Ata Aidoo helped to bring views about life that had hitherto been restricted by economic and cultural sanctions to East and West Africa.

The period after independence in Zimbabwe therefore witnessed a cultural renaissance. At the University of Zimbabwe, a theatre unit was introduced in the Faculty of Arts that eventually developed into a fully-fledged Department of Theatre Arts. This, and related departments gave rise to a new type of writer who was very conscious of the contradictions in society that existed at independence. Chirikure Chirikure is one of them. A graduate of African Languages and Literature at the University of Zimbabwe,
actor with ZACT and the University theatre group, poetry performer at many fora together with renowned artists like Oliver Mutukudzi, Dumisani Maraire, Stella Chiweshe and Andy Brown, Chirikure was to give Zimbabwean poetry in indigenous languages (Shona) a turning point. His university education and cultural exposure led to the composition of poetry whose ideological clarity, depth and breadth is so far unparalleled. He took advantage of his job as a book editor in charge of the Literature and Humanities section of College Press Publishers to publish his own poetry. The same position has given him an opportunity to publish two volumes of poetry, breaking with the tradition of multi-voiced poetry and its limitations, and also to edit poems by young writers who probably would have found it difficult to break into the tradition dominated by old voices.

6.2 Chirikure’s Vision in Rukuvhute

Published in 1989, Chirikure’s first collection Rukuvhute (Umbilical Cord) looks at a very broad range of experiences. When he looks at the war, the romantic tone that dominates earlier poetry is missing. He reminisces the suffering of the masses during the war. In the poems Ndihwo Hupenyu Wacho, Kunemi Vana Vemufrika, Ndipo Patakamuviga Pano and PaKamungoma (Gutu) all of which were discussed in Chapter 4, Chirikure shows that a lot was lost by the sacrificing masses during the war. He situates the suffering of the masses in African heritage, that is, in the maintenance of the link rukuvhute between the contemporary Africans and their ancestors from whom they inherited the land.
and the spirit of resistance. In his very first poem in *Rukuvhute, Iwe Africa* (You Africa), which has a Pan-Africanist flavour, he links himself to the extended family that is the nucleus to the many communities in Africa that have suffered for the liberation of Africa:

Mitumbu yavanasekuru,  
Rukuvhute rwangu ini,  
Ropa ramadzikoma magamba,  
Dikita rababa, nyakubereka,  
Misodzi yaamai, nyakutumbura:

zvese zvinomedzwa newe,  
iwe nyakuzvibereka,  
iwe nyakuzvirodzeka,  
iwe nyakuzvichengeta,  
iwe, Afrika (Rukuvhute, 7).

The corpses of the ancestors,  
My own umbilical cord,  
The blood of my brothers and heroes,  
The sweat of my father, my progenitor,  
The tears of my mother, the one who bore me:

all are swallowed by you,  
you the bearer,  
you the incubator,  
you the keeper,  
you Africa.

The above stanza shows that Chirikure’s heroes are the ancestors, the fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters - some of them freedom fighters and others liberation war collaborators - who sacrificed their lives in various ways for patriotic causes. He shows the ordinary persons’ inalienable link with the land. So for him the stage for poetry is the individual linked to the family, linked to the country, linked to the ancestors and linked to the continent.
Unlike his contemporaries whose pictures remind readers of yesteryear, that is the war and the actual celebrations, this poet sends warning signals about the direction of independence. In his poem Rwendo Rurefu (The Journey is Long), the poet warns the nation that seems to be behaving as if the end of the war is the end of the struggle, that there is a long agenda that has yet to be tackled. The conclusion of the poem is a clear warning:

Ngatiyeukei-
Rwendo rurefu, runotoda manyatera (Rukuvhute, 19).

Let us remember-
The journey is long, it needs tyre sandals.

The durable, rough, home-made tyre sandals that are needed to travel the road leading to the fulfilment of the goals of independence indicate that the nation has to brace itself for hardships. The poet suggests that not much has been achieved so far. Independence is only the beginning of a long journey. This sentiment is well captured by Freedom Nyamubaya’s title of a collection of poems, On The Road Again'. Chirikure also notes the role of the contemporary artists (singers and writers) in charting the new path that guides the nation. To the poet therefore, nationalists will not determine the way. The assumption made by earlier poets, that is, taking idealism for reality, is deconstructed here. The writer shows the importance of maintaining a fighting spirit as a way of braving the many challenges ahead.

The same sentiment is celebrated in a poem that was composed in memory of the fifth year of independence in 1985 - Chava
Chigondora, Chava Chimombe (A Heifer is Now a Full-grown Cow). The poem, whose title is proverbial, looks at the new nation in the metaphor of a heifer, that though young, should be old enough to fend for itself. The writer shows that in terms of achieving the goals of independence, the country still has a long way to go:

Nhazi mhuru yasvitsa makore mashanu,  
Chatova chigondora zvachakadaro.  
Chinoziva, kwachakabva pedo, kwachinoenda kure (Rukuvhute, 21).

Today the calf is five years old,  
It is already a heifer.  
It knows that there is still a long way to go.

That people should fend for themselves is a warning against dependence on the West. In the background there was a lot of aid meetings, the biggest being the Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development (Zimcord) organised by the government in 1981. Therefore Zimbabwe’s development strategy, right from the start, depended heavily on external borrowing, and the result was that the country got heavily indebted to the West. To the writer, what is needed in a country like Zimbabwe with a lot of potential, is proper management of the economy to sustain its people. His fear is validated by the introduction of ESAP.

Chirikure’s poem is easily accessible to the intended listeners. The imagery is drawn from the world of the ordinary people who own cattle.
In contrast to the deification of the leaders as seen in earlier poems, Chirikure's *Ndiwe Uri Mberi* (You are Leading) sounds a warning to the leadership. The persona admonishes, and thereby challenges the leader that by virtue of his/her leadership position, he/she should exercise caution, diligence and integrity:

> Chifambawo neungwaru,
> Mhuri yose ingarasika,
> Nekuti, ndiwe uri mberi (Rukuvhute, 23).

> Walk with caution,
> The whole family might get lost,
> Because you are leading.

The persona assumes the voice of the society, and this points to the fact that society knows what it wants and is moving towards attainment of certain goals. All that is needed is a good leader, without which the whole nation can be destroyed. This is a radical departure from the perception of the majority of writers whose poems are discussed in the earlier chapters.

*Zuro, Nhasi Namangwana* (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow) is a poem on much more subtle betrayal than is depicted in earlier poetry, that is, the betrayal of the masses by the educated who champion the cause of the oppressed masses while still in universities and colleges, but betray the same struggle once they start working. This is captured in the following lines:
Zuro:
Taisangana siku nesikati,
Tichitsoropodza kumira kwezvinhu,
Vanotsvetera ruzhinji, vanoba pfuma,
.................................
Tichizomanya nemigwagwa mudhorobha,
Tichiimba takasimudza mapepa:
  Down with exploiters!
  Down with capitalists!
  Down with bourgeois!

Nhasi:
Ndava kushanda, pachikoro ndakabva,
Ndotungidzawo mudzanga seri kwebhenji,
Ndichironga upenyu hwekambani,
Nekufunga zuva richawedzerwa mari,
Manheru ndichapfuura nomubhawa,
Tichitsoropodza mamirire ezvinhu
Navo vakomana, "mhare mudzidzo":
  University students are noisy.
  What change will slogans bring?
  They are too full of food we tax-payers buy!

Mangwana:
Ndichatenga kangu kamotokari,
Neimba yacho muGunhill,
Ndozoedza kuvhurawo kabhizimisi,
.................................
Zvegutsa-ruzhinji ingano chete,
Chikuru iwhisky nebrandy,
Mimanzi ichibva kune vanoshupika!
  Long live the struggle,
  The struggle to fight Bhabharasi! (Rukuvhute, (24).

Yesterday:
We used to meet night and day,
Criticising the state of affairs,
Those who cheat the masses, who loot,
.................................
Then run down the streets,
Singing and waving placards:
  Down with exploiters!
  Down with capitalists!
  Down with bourgeois! [sic]

Today:
I am employed, I have since left school,
I light a cigarette while sitting behind a desk,
While I plan the life of the company,
Thinking about the day of the next salary increase,
In the evening I pass through the beer hall,
To scutinise the state of affairs
With the boys "the intellectuals":
  University students are noisy.
  What change will slogans bring?
  They are too full of food we tax-payers buy!
Tomorrow:
I shall buy my own car,
And a house in Gunhill,
And try to start my own business,
...................................
Socialism is all fantasy,
What's important is brandy and whisky,
As music comes from the poor!
   Long live the struggle,
   The struggle to fight hang-over!

The poem shows how intellectuals join the elite and perpetuate the class that thrives at the expense of the poor. Chiwome observes the following about this tragic state of affairs:

The plight of Zimbabwe, which is probably the plight of many former colonies, is that the educated vanguard of the revolution can only be activists in the island-institutions of higher learning. Once they have joined the world of profit, they drop their revolutionary idealism, adopt decadent bourgeois habits and surrender their souls to the agenda of capitalism which supports their personal ambition.

Chirikure further shows the danger of fighting oppression using a foreign idiom - English, thereby perpetuating the myth that English is the language of development. He satirises the elite who, when the opportunity to change a system arises, merely joins the system and quickly forgets the suffering of the very people from whom it arose and whom it claimed to represent, in pursuance of the very materialistic goals that it used to denounce. The poem satirises post-independence Zimbabwe, especially its manifestation of neo-colonialism.

Hapana Kupindira (No-one Should Jump the Queue) is a poem on bread shortages that plagued Zimbabwe, the one-time bread basket of Southern Africa, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the
poem the ordinary people are seen fighting among themselves in order to get bread that is in short supply:

Varume,
Anongopindira chete tinorovana!
Ngatiitei sevanhu vane pfungwa.
Vamwe tamukira runyanhiriri,
Ndokufora, iye zvino dova ratoenda,
Iwe ndipo paunoda kupindira,
Kunge ndiwe wega une dumbu?

.............................................
Tose tiri pano, tinochida chingwa chacho.
Pamberi nekunzwisisa! (Rukuvhute, 25).

Gentlemen,
If anyone jumps the queue we will fight!
Let's behave like thinking human beings.
Some of us woke up at dawn,
And we queued, and now the dew is gone,
And you come and try to jump the queue,
As if you are the only one with a stomach?

.............................................
All of us here want the bread.
Forward with commonsense!

What is important to note is that people turn against one another, and in the process lose their dignity and self-worth, because of a problem they did not create. In doing so they lose sight of the enemy. The irony lies in the fact that independence is failing to give people basic necessities because the economy has been mismanaged in the name of socialism. Also noteworthy is the writer's ability to use the war slogans that were used by freedom fighters and nationalist politicians, to satirise the false consciousness created around food shortages. Ironically, due to the restructuring of the economy in the early 1990s which resulted in the removal of food subsidies, Zimbabweans can no longer afford to buy the now abundantly available basic
necessities due to financial constraints.

*Inga Wani* (By the Way) is a poem on betrayal of the masses by the leaders. The use of the voice of the masses to directly address the middle class marks a turning point in post-independence poetry. Hitherto, the voice of reason was from above to below. In the poem the ordinary people feel abandoned. They recount the sacrifices that they made during the war. They fought side by side with the leaders and went on to celebrate independence together, but now they feel abandoned:

KO NHASI WAVA KUNDIPIRA GOTSI WANI,
WAVA KUDYA NEMINWE, ZVIMWE UCHIRASA,
WAVA KUTAURA NEMUMHINO, ZVATISINGANZVI,
ASI TAISIMBOTI PAMWE, "TIRI TOSE!" (RUKUVHUTE, 26).

Today why are you turning your back on me?
You nibble food and throw away some,
You speak through your nose, things that we do not understand,
But in unison we used to say, "We are Together!"

The sentiments expressed by the poet come against the backdrop of a decline in the economy of the country which, among other factors, as shown in Chapter 2, has been attributed to the mismanagement of the economy by the ruling elite. A certain percentage of the ruling elite has used national wealth for personal gains as is reflected by their openly lavish lifestyles which sharply contrast with that of those who elected them to power*. As far back as 1983, the then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe issued a strong statement against "bourgeois ministers, civil servants and people in office" who were accumulating wealth. The ruling party leadership was given two options: 'to
quit their posts or relinquish their property' because 'they could not have it both ways'. In this he was supported by the then ZANU secretary for administration Maurice Nyagumbo, who even suggested that an emergency congress be called by the party 'to tell the people that because leaders had acquired property, scientific socialism was difficult to implement'. It is interesting to note that press reports have alleged that the President and his family are also accumulating wealth at the expense of the nation. The leaders have derived comfort from a system that they had promised to dismantle, and were subsequently elected to power on the basis of that promise. By condemning the ruling elite for using the English language in post-independence Zimbabwe, the writer shows how irrelevant and how insensitive to the needs of their people the rulers are. Despite the fact that 90% of the Zimbabwean population speaks Shona and Ndebele, English remains the 'language of the mass media, private affairs, political rallies, elitist religion, formal discussion, business and recreation'. The result has been the marginalisation of the indigenous languages and their speakers, and the cultures that are embedded in these languages. Unless the indigenous languages are resurrected and brought to the mainstream culture through their use in business as is the case in the developed Europe, America and Japan, their speakers will continue being marginalised.

As the title indicates, Rusarira (Discrimination) is a poem on the problems of discrimination that originate in the colonial period and become a serious predicament after independence:
This condemnation of discrimination, which comes out powerfully through the use of rhetorical questions, comes against the backdrop of preferential treatment in the distribution of wealth, yet the suffering majority made a significant contribution to the attainment of independence. Discrimination in the Zimbabwean situation came in the form of divisions of the population along regional and ethnic lines. As has already been argued in Chapter 5, it is this division that was the deep-seated cause of the counter-insurgency war in Matebeleland and parts of the Midlands. There has been an outcry particularly from Matebeleland that Harare, the capital city, has had more than its fair share of the so-called development projects, as compared to Bulawayo, the second largest city situated in Matebeleland. Commenting on the economic and political problems facing Matebeleland, the spokesman of the University of Zimbabwe students and the Imbovana pressure group in Bulawayo had this to say:

People who are not economic with the truth will tell you that this region has been deliberately driven into the political and economic wilderness. The problem is that the politics and economics of this country have been tribalised and as a result everything happens in Harare. That makes reconciliation practically impossible."
The view expressed above is consistent with the concept of metropolis-periphery model for development created by capitalism. Elsewhere in the country, development projects are concentrated in the home-areas of those that wield power. Chirikure also condemns nepotism which in Zimbabwe has been a basis for the creation of a new class. It appears the wealth of the country is being inherited by a few. For instance, there has been an outcry in the press about government-backed indigenous companies that continue to win tenders on major projects in the country. Whereas during the colonial period the criterion for accessing wealth was based on colour and race, independence has ushered a new criterion based on tribalism and nepotism. It is now clear that socialism was mere rhetoric and that its policy of 'growth-with-equity' was used by the nationalist leaders to enlist the people's support which they needed in order to entrench their privileged positions.

In *Pashoma Ipapo* (The Little that I Have), the persona talks about the distribution of wealth and debates about whether he should give the little that he has to the family or the community:

```
Chondinetsa chinhu chimwe chete;
Pashoma pandinapo apa,
Ndopa mhuri here kana sahwira? (Rukuvhute, 29).
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There is only one thing that bothers me;
The little that I have,
Shall I give the family or the community?

The answer is in the concluding stanza:
As for me,
I love everyone, I also admire everyone,
We shall share the little that we have among all!

The writer makes it clear that there is not enough wealth to go round, and in order to distribute it in a humane manner, it has to be shared equally. The writer therefore sees the fulfilment of the 'growth-with-equity' policy of the nationalist leaders as the answer to the nation’s problems.

In Dai... (If...), the poet talks about the importance of national unity using animal metaphor. He uses the image of oxen which, when inspanned, should pull in unison. Using a variety of other familiar images, he shows how disunity can lead to the destruction of the nation. In the concluding stanza, he likens the nation to an earthworm (tsutsukuviri) whereby the masses and the elite seem to have different agendas and are therefore pulling in opposite directions. The result is that there is no development. This is a statement of betrayal of the masses by the ruling elite.

*Rwizi Rwunozara Nemadiro* (The River Gets Flooded by Tributaries) is a proverbial title of a poem that shows the importance of harnessing diversity for the purposes of nation building. The poet refers to the nation as a traditional village with many talents: hunters (vavhimi) who work together and share their spoil, a potter (muumbi) whose variety of products satisfy the diverse needs of the village, and a celebrated farmer who
distributes his produce to the needy in the village. Everyone has a role to play in contributing to the welfare of the village. This village is like the mighty Zambezi River that overflows because of the waters that form its tributaries:

Wedu musha chidziro cheimba,
Wese munhu ari mauri anokosha,
Rake basa,
Chake chipo,
Dzake shungu,
Hwake umhizha,

Zvinosunga wedu musha (Rukuvhute, 32).

Our home is [like] a wall of a house,

Everyone in our home is important,
His/her role,
His/her talent,
His/her ambition,
His/her expertise,
Unite our home.

The writer therefore hints at the importance of harnessing cultural diversity for nation building. The different talents nation-wide should contribute to the comfort of the whole nation. Regionalism, tribalism, religion, ideologies and other forms of diversity can be used positively to help build a nation.

In Inongova "Yes, Yes", Chirikure attacks the concept of development using a foreign language. Notwithstanding the many arguments in favour of European languages as official languages in Africa, the thrust of the satire is that while official languages may have their place, mother-tongues should be encouraged to promote all round development. Jerome Hachipola observes Zimbabwe's lack of comprehensive information about the
language situation within its borders. This is because not much has been done to identify indigenous languages with development. The writer attacks the lack of indigenous language policies after independence, the continued dominance of the English language and obsession of African parents with former non-African schools. As the language of the coloniser, English is, and continues to be identified with status, and it is for this reason that middle-class children 'now clamour to speak only English and institutions like pre-schools have helped to make this a reality for many'. This dependence on a foreign language that carries foreign values and beliefs compromises identity, and therefore, independence. Commenting on the adverse effect that the dependence on a foreign language has had on the Shona people, Chiwome observes:

With the marginalisation of the mother tongue, the Shona lose the language of their history, emotions and dreams. In brief, they lose their being and their destiny. They lose their ability to communicate with one another. They lose the language through which they can communicate national secrets. They lose the language of mass communication.

This observation is not only applicable to all the ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, but can be generalised to cover all the once colonised peoples of the African continent.

Chirikure devotes a good section of his poetry to the peasants, as seen in poems which are dedicated to his parents and clansmen, that is, those that invested in the young to create, ironically, a class of affluent Africans. Man‘a (Cracked Feet), a poem dedicated to all the peasant farmers in the communal
lands, is almost an obituary to the suffering masses who work on the land, but harvest nothing:

Kudoroverera ivhu rapachuru
Kudochivirira mufudze waanaBhokiseni,
Kudomwaya murakwani wemugomo Zvapera,
Chinoenda kudura hwava!
Chandinongowana ndicho chimwe-
Man’ a anenge ivhu remunda wemumatenganyika (Rukuvhute, 36).

We added soil from the anthill
We added the cow dung of the Boxings,
We added dead leaves from the Zvapera hill,
We still put nothing in the granary!
I harvest one thing-
Feet that are as cracked as the heavy soil of the commercial farms.

The above stanza is a record of the plight of the landless peasants. It reflects the overcrowding on land that yields nothing, in spite of all traditional means of enriching the soil. As has already been shown, this grim picture is a reality in Zimbabwe as independence has so far failed to give people the land for which they fought. That the writer persistently identifies himself with the underprivileged provides a sharp contrast from the poems that have been considered so far.

In Nzira Kurukuvhute (Way to the Source) the writer leaves national problems as seen from the city to make a close look at rural life through his relatives. Unlike the city, the rural area, depicted as the home of the African, is seen to be caring and protecting its inhabitants.

Homwe (Spirit Medium) is a poem about a celebrated hunter who finds himself in court in an independent country for killing an
antelope (ngwarati), a protected species. He is sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour. This reflects the situation whereby ironically, independence maintains colonial laws that undermine the subsistence of the peasants. The Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species (CITES) has held conferences whose thrust has been the conservation of endangered species of plants and animals without much regard for the welfare of the people with whom the species share their environment. The Convention has sought to protect the African elephant, whose great numbers have sometimes caused havoc in the rural areas and threatened the livelihood of many. The Communal Areas Management Plan for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) on the other hand is trying to evolve a conservation system that preserves both animals and people. The poet’s concern are the contradictions in an independent country where the law turns celebrities of old into criminals. One is reminded of Martinus Daneel’s ex-combatant who at independence is imprisoned for attempting to murder a white farmer in a bid to avenge the abuse suffered by his father at the hands of the farmer. One is also reminded of Ngugi’s Matigari, where vagrancy is presented as a crime in post-independence Kenya.

*Mai Vangu Mamayo* (My Mother Mamoyo) is dedicated to a peasant mother, who represents all the women in the rural areas who till the land for subsistence. The persona, who is the son, thanks his mother for working hard on the land to make sure the family is comfortable. The woman preserves the traditional delicacies among which are water melons (*mavisi*) and sweet reeds (*ipwa*) for his
son who works in the urban area. These delicacies, which are an expression of love and care, link the lost son with his poor rural-based mother:

Ini ndinenge ndiri muguta,
............................
Asi hapana nezuva rimwe,
Ramunondibudisa mupfungwa (Rukuvhute, 40).

I will be in the city,
............................
But there is not even a day,
That you do not think about me.

The above stanza shows that the simple peasant women are the people who link the up-and-coming elite to the land of their birth, and it is this same link that makes rural development an imperative. What is important is the way he depicts rural life with its simplicity and poverty, and yet its dedication to the comfort of the sons in the cities. This is different from other poems where the rural area is not expected to offer much in the way of comfort.

Kunemi VaDerera (To You Derera) is a celebration of the extended family and its continued importance to the lives of the indigenous people after independence. The persona shows the importance of patriarchy by expressing gratitude to his grandfather (VaDerera) for giving the clan its identity in their land of birth. The old man links the persona to the community through the ancestors. Evident here is the fact that since the extended family is all settled on the land, there is need to improve the land to make life more liveable.
Chirikure also satirises the cultural hodge-podge that is evident in contemporary funerals, as evident in the poem *Pamariro* (At a Funeral). The culture conflict, which has been a feature of colonised and independent Africa, emerges sharply when a man dies. In the poem under discussion, the first speaker at the dead man's funeral is a minister of religion who treats the dead man as a Christian, and dedicates the dead man's soul to the Christian God - *Mwari waAbraham* (the God of Abraham). The next speaker is a representative of the Shona religion who dedicates the man’s soul to the ancestors. Next comes a representative of the post-independence political system, the Provincial Governor, who declares the immortality of the man - a war hero - on this earth. Finally, there is the grief-stricken dead man’s widow, for whom things will never be the same. The send-off, as portrayed in the poem, is meaningless because it is characterised by ritual from conflicting cultures. The same conflict characterises occasions like birth and marriage among Africans.

To the writer, rural life is not always idealised as seen in the poem *Usiku Uviri* (Two Nights). This is a light-hearted satire about the pandemonium that takes place in a village after the eclipse of the sun. A sudden eclipse confounds villagers who take it as a bad omen. They interpret it, in their worldview, as a bad omen which is a result of mischief and sin. The whole village rushes to the home of the kraalhead who also has no answer for this phenomenon. The irony is that the kraalhead as a creation of the colonialists is a civil servant who does not represent the customs that he is asked to interpret. The villagers then start
accusing each other of witchcraft and also allowing modernity to
penetrate their lives:

Takazonzwa vamwe saimba vakwidza inzwi
"Iko ku roya kwanyanya muno mumusha,
Mweya yevakafa nhasi yazopfuka!"

Mumwewo akamugammha:
"Chimanjemanje chenyu ichi hama!
Midzimu takaigumbura kare naizvo izvi!" (Rukuvhute, 64).

We then heard one head of the family in a loud voice saying
"Witchcraft has reached alarming proportions in this
village,
The spirits of the dead today have risen in vengeance!"

Another one supported him:
"This modernity of yours!
We angered the ancestral spirits a long time ago because of
this."

However, the parents' fears are allayed by the village's school
children who explain the mystery. What the poet demonstrates is
that the culture in question, like other dynamic cultures, has
its own limitations and is ready to adapt and be enriched.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the literary trend that succeeded the
independence euphoria that was characterised by the celebration
of nationalism. This took a variety of forms which can be broadly
summarised as accounting for the gains and losses of the war of
liberation. The succeeding trend acknowledges the importance of
the national democratic war but is cautious about boldly
announcing the gains of the same historical era. The precautious
approach seems to derive from observations made in the
contemporary socio-economic era where there are glaring
discrepancies between official claims of success versus the existential condition of many people.

Chirikure first underscores the fact that the story of the suffering of the people during the war has not been told and the same story of subsequent suffering after independence is not being told. Chirikure in *Rukuvhute* shifts the perspective from which war and independence are to be viewed by assuming the voice of the rural people and in some cases, the urban workers. Their poetry reflects a complex and sombre picture of war and independence, that way emphasising the fact that the whole truth has not been told.

By assuming a class position that runs contrary to the nationalists and the elite, Chirikure reveals the shortcomings of nationalist poetry. What is evident from this perspective is that there are two realities. One arises from the world of the rich who are the wielders of power, and the other arises from the world of the poor who bear the brunt of war and subsequent harsh political and economic changes. Writing almost a decade after independence when it is becoming clearer that nationalism does not resolve the problems created by capitalism, Chirikure produces poetry which has a potential to carry Zimbabwean literature in African languages beyond official rhetoric and war propaganda.
Endnotes


2. Ibid, (106).


6. Ibid, (109-110)


10. Ibid, (263).


13. Abraham Mpondo, the spokesman of the University of Zimbabwe students in Bulawayo whose planned anti-Unity Day demonstration was blocked by police, in *Zimbabwe Independent*, January 2, 1998, (2).

14. Examples of these are tenders for the cellular phones which was won by the government-backed Internet, after a bitter wrangle with Econet company. This decision was overturned by the High Court after Econet’s appeal. Another example is the building of the new international airport which was won by a Cyprus-based firm - Air Habour Technologies - amid bitter complaints which led to the withdrawal of donor funding for the airport.

20. William Beinart and Colin Bundy observe the ambivalent role of the headman during the colonial period when his people required him to represent their interests while his colonial masters expected him to exercise control over his people on their behalf in *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei & Eastern Cape 1890-1930*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, (97).
CHAPTER 7

DISILLUSIONMENT WITH INDEPENDENCE: CHIRIKURE'S VISION IN CHAMUPUPURI

7.1 Introduction

What becomes evident in Chirikure’s collection after the publication of his second anthology, Chamupupuri (Whirlwind), is that he depicts the history to which he is familiar using poetic images. He takes the second volume to now give a much clearer picture of independence than he had given in Rukuvhute. The optimism and hope that one finds in Rukuvhute are replaced by images of doubt and despair and amount to a very sharp criticism of the manner in which Zimbabweans have transformed their independence. Most of the poems are images of the various aspects of life experienced after independence. After recounting the suffering of the freedom fighters and the masses, Chirikure moves on to highlight the gains and losses of independence to the same masses. The general picture is grim. The tone is incisively critical and bitter as he contrasts reality and illusion.

7.2 The Discrepancy between Expectations from the Past and the Present Reality.

7.2.1 An Allegory of Neo-colonialism

Chirikure decries independence as a repetition of colonialism as seen in the poem Mweya Nomurume Pagomo (The Spirit and the Man
on a Mountain). This poem is a parody of the Biblical story of the temptation of Jesus by the Devil. The setting, however, is now in Africa:

A certain spirit took one man,
To the top of Mount Kilimanjaro,
And whispered with a persuasive voice to this man:
Cast your eyes to the east, west, north and south,
Observe the wealth in the soil, mountains and rivers,
This country is like a heifer sitting in a cross-legged manner.

The persuasive spirit, whose voice sounds like the voice of reason, shows the man all the riches of the world. That this is a voice from the West is seen from the conditions that are set for the man’s inheritance of this wealth:

It is very easy for me to give you this wealth
If only you are prepared to make a promise,
The promise that in return for the offer,
You shall fill up the sea for me with sweat, diarrhoea and blood!

The mweya therefore denotes the spirit of exploitation. It appeals to greed. What is not clear from the poem is whether the man will own the wealth or hold it in trust for the spirit. The last line depicts three images of suffering: slavery (sweat),
dehydration (diarrhoea) and death (blood). These images emanate from contracts between the African elite and the West. This is appropriate imagery coming as it does in the backdrop of the Lancaster House Agreement whereby the political leadership signed a contract to rule the country on condition that the whites were not dispossessed of the land for which the war was fought. As pointed out in Chapter 2, independence was characterised by conservative rather than radical reform. The conditions on which independence was given were tragic in the sense that they betray most of promises made to the people before independence. What we have in the poem is an image of an abortive independence, an independence which is bound not to yield the fruits expected by the people. The poem is a symbol of a cursed land of people who are unhealthy, literally and spiritually, a bleeding nation composed of people who sweat without harvesting.

Chirikure shows how the life we lead is a fulfilment of the promise that was made to the spirit:

Ipapo ndipo pakabva pangofira sarungano!
Hezvo nhasi, vakuru woye, tiri patiri! (Chamupupuri, 11).

At that point the storyteller died!
Leaving us where we find ourselves in today!

What we get from the poem is a panoramic image of the post-independence era in metaphorical form. The poem sets the stage for the poems that will follow. The difference between Jesus and the man in the poem is that Jesus recognised the voice and rebuked the Devil; but the man, because of his shortcomings, obviously succumbed to the temptation. The series of poems that
follow are an elaboration of how the promise that was made to this spirit is being fulfilled in post-independence Zimbabwe.

7.2.2 The Winds of Negative Social Transformation

Chamupupuri (Whirlwind) summarises the history of Africa from colonialism to independence. The wind of change that Chirikure refers to in stanzas 2 and 3 is the spirit of nationalism that gripped the African continent and culminated in flag independence. Of note, however, is that the advent of the wind of change is announced by arrivals from the West:

Ndakarinzwa shoko raMacmillan wekuBritain
Hanzi kwava nemhepo itsva inovhuvhuta muAfrica
(Chamupupuri, 12).

I heard the word of Macmillan of Britain
Saying there was a new wind blowing in Africa.

What is clear is the fact that the change that is referred to was negotiated from outside and with outsiders whose concern was not in line with the welfare of the African people. This points to the betrayal of the people by the African elite.

In stanza 3, the gentle wind has turned so violent that it uproots the very foundation of the human brain. The destruction that it causes is captured in the following lines:

Ndotarisa uko nekoko nhasi ndoona imwe ngoma
Mhepo iya yashanduka ruvara, yava chamupupuri
Chamupupuri chodzura mbariro dzemusoro yevanhu
Choshezheudza pfumo kune wamai, richisiya mhandu
Chodzimaidza meso, kufamba yangova fembera fembera
(Chamupupuri, 12).
I cast my eyes here and there today and I hear a different tune
The wind had changed to a whirlwind
A whirlwind that uproots the brain of people
It turns the spear to a relative instead of the enemy
It is blinding people, no-one seems to see the way.

The violent change has subverted the people's values and left them confused and directionless. People have lost sight of the enemy and are turning against one another. This could be an allusion to the dissident problem that plagued Zimbabwe soon after independence. The fact that people are said to be groping in the dark is reflective of the confusion that reigned after independence as far as the direction of the economic development of the country was concerned. While independence was celebrated using socialist rhetoric as shown in Chapter 2, the reality on the ground was that the economic system inherited was capitalistic, and not much was done to transform it to a socialist one. Addressing a reception at the historic Lancaster House in the United Kingdom at the beginning of 1997, President Mugabe was reported in the pro-government newspaper, The Herald, as having advised the British Government to:

appreciate that it had not been easy to transform the economy. The Government had inherited socialism from the days of the struggle and tried to implement it at independence... The Government then realised that it was impossible to transform the economy to a socialist one and hence the launching of the economic reform programme.

The economic hardships brought about by this economic reform programme have bred robbers:
Chonyemudza mari, mari yosandura vanwe kuita zvigeven’a (Chamupupuri, 12)

[The whirlwind] denies people money, and money has transformed people into beasts.

There is evidence that suggests an increase on 'hidden social costs' of ESAP such as 'common crimes in the form of muggings, armed robberies, burglaries and white-collar crime'. The robbers could also include the leaders of the country who, because of greed, have been involved in corrupt practices as shown in Chapter 2, thereby betraying the masses and robbing them of their share of the national wealth. In the poem under discussion, the corruption has compromised the institutions of justice. Children have been exposed to this violence, thus tearing apart the hopes of the masses:

Chobvuta nhembe nezvigaro zvemagweta, chichikanda muchoto
Chobvarura mureza weruzhinji, chichiturika ura hwesvava (Chamupupuri, 12).

It is tearing off the clothing and chairs of lawyers and throwing them into the fire
It is tearing apart the flag of the masses and killing babies.

In the last stanza the violent wind is seen destroying rukuvhute (the umbilical cord). This symbolises the destruction of the people’s link with the land by upsetting all traditions on which development should be founded. The confusion that reigns is reflected through the use of what appears to be carelessly arranged lines as can be seen from the rugged right hand margin of the poem. These rugged lines whose endings are free of punctuation are also reflective of the lack of commitment of the
leadership to the welfare of the masses. What we get from the poem are the shortcomings of nationalism. Independence, which is expected to cleanse the country of the evils of colonialism, comes like a gentle wind, but it is a forerunner to the whirlwind, which symbolises total chaos reflected by a change of direction which is effected without consulting the people. The facade of decency and progress has been replaced by naked greed, corruption and selfishness.

7.2.3 The Inverted Image of the Independence Flame

This section paints a grim picture of the economic hardships that are faced by the majority of Zimbabweans. It focuses on the plight of the worker. The poem Kabudura (A Pair of Shorts) takes the epistolary mode. A worker writes a letter to his wife in the rural areas complaining that the pair of trousers that they bought together has been cut to a pair of shorts, and that he will be coming home during a national holiday - Heroes Day - during which she would then have a chance to see it herself. Of note is the writer's selection of the holiday that the persona uses to visit his rural home. Heroes Day is a commemoration of the sacrifices made by the freedom fighters to bring about independence which, ironically, has resulted in even more severe suffering of the masses.

The persona seems to be sounding a warning in advance that he will not be able to provide his wife with money for the most basic necessity, that is, to pay for the grinding of corn into
mealie-meal. He is also apologising ahead of his coming that the pair of trousers is torn not out of carelessness or love of fashion, or the weather conditions:

Handina kuzviita kuda kufambirana nenguva,
Kana kuda kutsvaka kufefeterwa nemhepo!
Handingادرardo nekupisa kwava kuita mari,
Handingaroti izvozvo nechando chemwaka uno (Chamupupuri, 86).

I did not do it in order to move with the times,
Nor did I do it in order to get fresh air!
I cannot do that because of the contemporary money problems,
I cannot dream of that in this cold season.

The third line which refers to economic hardships reflects the plight of the workers whose wages in real terms, as was shown in Chapter 2, are a fraction of what they were at independence. The resultant poverty is the reason for cutting the pair of trousers into a pair of shorts:

Mai mwana, chisingasakari chokwadi chinoshura!
Mudhebhe uya, nekudhura kwawakatiita kwose,
Ndakatozopepuka ndatokwenyiwawo nevamwe.
Kumabvi nekuhweshero uku ndanga ndangova mushwi,
Ndikati kuzvigona regai ndidambure kemakumbo,
Kwakuchikwereta tsono kune vemoyo michena,
Kwakuita dhunge-tunge zvigamba pahweshero (Chamupupuri, 86).

Mother of our child, there is nothing that stays forever!
That pair of trousers, expensive as it was,
Ended me getting whispered to by friends.
My knees were bare and I was naked on the backside,
I solved the problem by cutting it at knee-length,
I then borrowed a needle from the kind-hearted,
Then patched up the backside.

This is a picture of abject poverty. The worker tries to tell his wife that this is the plight of the majority of men that he sees around him. Even those who seem to be well-paid like foremen and
Managers complain that life is a patched-up affair:

Mai vemwana, chido chemwoyo,  
Ndikatarisa uko neuko, papi nepapi zvapo,  
Ndinoona ndiyo ngwavaira yedu isu ruzhinji.  
Kana kubvunzawo vamwe vose vose zvavo,  
Chero ivo vana foromani, naivo vacho varidzi vebasa,  
Vose vanongoti: Upenyu hwangova hwekusonanidza (Chamupupuri, 86).

Mother of our child, my sweetheart,  
When I cast my eyes everywhere,  
I realise that this is the plight of most of us.  
You can ask anyone for that matter,  
Even the foremen and the owners of business,  
They all say: Life is a patched up affair.

The above stanza paints the economic hardships faced by the majority of Zimbabweans. Figures in the national papers have indicated that over 60% of Zimbabweans live below the poverty datum line. This comes in spite of the fact that people work very hard. We also get the detail that workers are poorly accommodated in squalid hostels in Harare. Confirming that the condition of his trousers is not a result of carelessness, the persona comments:

Handingadaro nekupisa kwemusana pabasa,  
Handingafarisi néchando chemedu muhositeri (Chamupupuri, 86).

I cannot do that because of the back pain when working,  
I cannot be so careless bearing in mind the cold in our hostels.

The hostels that are referred to are single apartments that were intended only for male workers when they were built during the colonial period. Married couples were therefore forced to live apart, thus encouraging prostitution and promiscuity. Due to the
shortage of accommodation, the hostels have been converted into family accommodation. The Mbare hostels in Harare have an official population of 5,000, but the Harare City Council has acknowledged that the figure could be as high as 50,000, as some tenants are sub-letting their rooms. Eshmael Mlambo writes that 'up to 1950, 80% of 'native' urban accommodation was for single people'. Commenting further on the urban squalor, he has this to say:

Highfield Township had 7,000 houses accommodating 80,000 people in darkness. Mambo and Monomotapa in Gwelo, Barbourfields, Mpopoma and Makokoba in Bulawayo, Sakubva in Umtali and Rimuka in Gatooma drank water from the same pipes that served toilets and bathrooms. Families shared communal bathrooms which had no water.

Similar observations have been made by Mamphela Ramphele about those who live in the squalor of similar hostel accommodation in Cape Town:

The size and number of rooms per ‘door’ [perhaps the closest equivalent to a house] also vary from area to area, from block to block, and within each ‘door’. The common characteristic is however, the lack of privacy. People share what limited space there is: blocks, zones, ‘doors’ and even beds are shared by varying numbers of people. The overall average bed occupancy rate for all the hostel types is 2.8 people per bed.

This limited physical space is also limiting in the sense that it fails to ‘delineate private’ and ‘personal space’ making hostels ‘a symbol of the denial of the personhood of the people housed in them’. This forced confinement recalls to mind imprisonment, as confirmed by the experiences of Neville Alexander in Robben Island, from 1964-1974, during the ten years
of political imprisonment there. However, in the poem under discussion, in spite of the overcrowding, the workers cannot get relief from the winter chill. They seem to be poorer than the unemployed in the rural areas. This grinding poverty has been created by capitalism. There is therefore no justification for taking up paid employment and being away from home.

Contrary to the plight of the majority who go about semi-naked yet they work very hard, there are a few who cut up their trousers in order to move with fashion. These are even prepared to pay exorbitant amounts of money to wear shorts that appear torn when they are new:

Asi ndinozoti ndonyatsazve kunan’anidza,
Ndoona vanwe vachiita midhebhe yekucheka,
Kucheka mitsva, inokosha kupfuura dengu rendarama.
Ava ndivo vanotsvaka kurohwa nemhepo,
Ndivo vanokwasha kufamba mberi nenhambo.
Ini handigoni; chigayo mungabata pasi! (Chamupupuri, 86).

But when I look closely,
I see others cutting their pairs of trousers,
Cutting new pairs of trousers that cost a lot of money.
These are in search of fresh air,
They want to move with time.
I cannot afford that; lest there will be no money to grind corn.

These contradictions, which are inherent in capitalism make the city ‘a place of existential contradictions’ 10. The writer satirises the affluent who are insensitive to the plight of the poor.

The poem Mandigona (You Have Fixed Me) is also satirical. It is in the form of a ‘thank-you’ for a farewell present at a work-
place. The persona, an old man, 'thanks' his employers for giving him an expensive-looking watch as a retirement gift.

In stanza 2, the old man says the watch will be like a souvenir to him as well as being a source of very lengthy reflections, even about the future. In stanza 3, the persona says when he looks at this watch with his failing eyesight, he will be reminded of his 50 years of service during which he used to wake up at dawn and walk from the location to his work-place in the industrial area. In Zimbabwe, locations or high density suburbs, as they came to be known after independence, are situated close to heavy industrial sites to ensure that workers report to work on time. The persona alludes to the fact that he would have needed the watch most while he was still working:

Ndaitya kurasana nenguva,
Asi chiringiro chacho ndakanga ndisina? (Chamupupuri, 88).

I was afraid of losing the rhythm of time,
Although I had no time marker?

Ironically, the watch comes at a time when he has no real use for it. He needed it most as a worker, but because he could not afford it, he relied on the sun as the third line of stanza 4 shows. The watch, which he will wear on his withered hand, will be a constant reminder of how hard he worked in order to ensure that the company made profit:
When I wear this watch,
In this withered hand of mine,
I shall remember the movement of time,
From Monday to Saturday,
Running with metals and machines,
Trying to get money into the company.
I knew time is precious,
Laziness and sleep are valueless.

In the above stanza, the worker appears to be trapped in the cyclical passage of time, which 'marks modernist pessimism'. The stanza articulates the values of industry, that is, hard labour and profit. However, the hard labour and the long working week which contrast sharply with the remuneration of the workers are reminiscent of slaves and prisoners. One is also reminded of the forced labour of the colonial period - an indication that many of the undesirable practices of the colonial period still persist after independence. The worker is given just enough to ensure that profit is realised. In the poem under discussion, the persona had to contend with drinking water the whole day and then having sadza and vegetables in the evening. The watch is also going to remind the persona of his Sundays, as recounted in stanza 6. On Sundays the persona had watched people drinking recklessly, staggering in a drunken stupor and shouting at each other. Alcohol becomes their way of silencing disturbing thoughts:
I listened to and scrutinised many people, staggered and insulting each other like dogs. They would drink beer in compensation, trying to dispel bothersome thoughts, thoughts about the history of their lives. Beer is the blanket of the poor!

In the absence of recreational facilities, alcohol abuse, which is a common problem among industrial and farm workers, is a strategy for cushioning themselves psychologically against the harsh economic and social environment. However, in their drunken state, people lose sight of their real enemy as they turn against each other. In stanza 6, the irony in the whole poem becomes clearer. After retirement the worker lives a life of destitution:

When I clean my watch, at home, sitting on the verandah of my house, looking ahead, to the times to follow; where shall money to fend for the family come from? Where shall strength to work for money in neighbours’ fields come from?

After serving the company for 50 years, the old, retired and unwanted worker is relegated to his dilapidated home in the rural area which is the backyard of development. He has nothing to show but a watch, which comes at a time when it is not really a
necessity. As in the poem Kabudura, the workers seem to be economically worse off than they were before they left the rural areas. Having been severed from his community, the dejected worker finally retires to his rural home with neither the money nor the energy to fend for his family. In the last stanza the persona satirises the worthlessness of employment:

Ndinovimba imi vashandi muchasara pano,  
Muchaonawo kukosha kwekurera basa -  
Onai ini, dai ndisina kufudza basa,  
Chokwadi ndaingofa ndisina kupfeka wachi!  
Ndinotenda vana vangu vachapepuka mangwana,  
Vagoona kukosha kwechipo chababa! (Chamupunuri, 89).

I hope you workers who are staying behind,  
Shall see the importance of keeping jobs -  
See, if I had not kept my job,  
I would have died without a watch!  
I hope my children shall awaken in the future,  
To be able to see the importance of their father's gift.

The last two lines of the above stanza are a warning to future generations that capitalism has not benefitted the poor majority. Without any pension or a retirement package, it would appear that the persona worked only to wear a watch, which has little use value for his family. The poem is a condemnation of the continued exploitation of the workers in Zimbabwe. The year 1997 saw a series of strikes by various categories of employees in both the private and public sectors demanding a better pay package and better working conditions. At the end of that year, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions successfully organised mass demonstrations country-wide against newly introduced government taxes and levies that meant further reduction of salaries and wages.
Chirikure seems to emphasise that the road to ESAP which replaced the road to socialism does not appear to lead to a mode that serves the masses of the formerly colonised African peasants and workers.

7.2.4 Illusory Celebrations

The poet also satirises the suffering majority of the people for passively accepting their condition. In *Hope Dzangu* (My Sleep), Chirikure uses a common Shona idiomatic expression to castigate the nation for allowing itself to be misled by nationalist rhetoric into a false sense of security. Sleep presupposes peace, but in this case the nation sleeps in the face of impending danger:

Hope!
Hope ndidzo dzoita titsakatikire mudzikirira,
Hope dzatakarega dzichitipinda mukati metsinga.
Hezvo tinorota tiri pajakwara, mwedzi muchena,
Huruva ichimona ngoma ichidandauka -
Hatimbozvipi kana kanguva kekuzvivunzawo:
Dehwe rekukaka ngoma yacho richabvepi,
Hezvo mombe dzakaenda nevatorwa?
Muti wokuveza ngoma yacho uchabvepi,
Hezvo vanwe vedu vakatengesa mitondo kumhiri?
(*Champupupuri*, 38).

Sleep!
Sleep makes us perish in nightmares,
Sleep that we allowed to enter our veins.
Do we not dream of the beer-for-work party, in broad moonlight,
We never pause to think:
Where shall we get the skin to make the drum?
Cattle were confiscated by enemies,
Where shall the tree to make the drum come from,
Some of us sold the *mutondo* tree to people abroad?
The writer foregrounds the root cause of the problem with the nation in the very first line. The stanza is a metaphor for a lot of empty promises that the masses are fed on. The nation does not question the basis of the promises but instead builds hope based on illusions. What disturbs the writer is the fact that the nation celebrates while a section of the population is plundering the economy in partnership with foreign nationals as seen in the last four lines of the above stanza. Ramphele, commenting on the situation in South Africa, emphasises the importance of critical awareness of one-self in history. In its absence, it becomes more likely for one to flow with the stream and to become prey to ambitious politicians. Democratic systems function well if there is trust in such systems, as well as in the capacity of individual citizens to act as a restraint on political ambition acting against the common good. Such trust in 'the system' can only develop if the majority of people understand 'the system' and believe in their own capacity to exercise control over it and to influence its direction.

The above quote calls for an active civil society, which in Zimbabwe, as is the case with South Africa, is not yet a reality. For instance, the steadily-plunging Zimbabwe dollar bears testimony to the fact that the country's economy is collapsing, yet the generality of the population seems to be oblivious of this fact. In November, 1997, the Reserve Bank had to intervene to save the economy from collapsing after the Zimbabwean dollar had come under heavy pressure of import demand. Coupled with the loss of electric power that plunged most parts of the country into darkness and adversely affected business, that particular Friday was nicknamed 'Black Friday.' On August 4, 1998, the
dollar once more fell against major currencies as 'it came under heavy speculative pressure from importers'\textsuperscript{16}.

The writer uses familiar body metaphor of sleeping as opposed to vigilance. In Shona as well as Ndebele tradition, being asleep is associated with not being vigilant. Ironically, the poems that were dealt with in the previous chapters, particularly in Chapter 4, urge the nation to be vigilant. One recalls to mind such poems as Kumbirai's \textit{Mhururu yeZimbabwe} that refers to ZANU PF as representing the dawn of a new era, yet Chirikure's poem which is under consideration shows how the same party is lulling its supporters into deep sleep from which there is no possibility of a reawakening:

\begin{quote}
Tichavigwa muguva rakadzika-dzika kwazvo! (Chamupupuri, 38).
We shall be buried in a very deep grave!
\end{quote}

The above line expresses the sentiment that there is no possibility for recovery from the damage caused by the false promises. The message is that one cannot reincarnate when one dies a natural death. The irony is that the nation went to sleep at independence. Foreigners simply facilitated its death:

\begin{quote}
Tigozoridzirwa ngoma yemariro naivo vatorwa (Chamupupuri, 38).
Then foreigners will sing funeral dirges for us.
\end{quote}

One is reminded of the continued dominance of the economy by multi-nationals and the austerity measures that are part and
parcel of aid given by foreign-based institutions like the World Bank and IMF.

The proverbial title of the poem *Imbwa Nyoro* - literally 'Soft Dogs' - is the Shona equivalent of the English proverb, still waters run deep. The writer shows that although dogs that appear soft are dangerous, there are some that have no teeth, and they therefore shy away from challenge. The poem is a metaphor for the oppressed masses who seem to do nothing about challenges that are before them. This echoes the writer's concern about the false consciousness of the masses in the poem *Hope Dzangu* that was discussed earlier. In the poem under discussion, the writer inverts a proverb in order to provoke the oppressed into action.

In *Chimoto* (Flame), Chirikure compares the journey of independence to a common activity in the village, that is, asking a neighbour for a burning piece of wood and a bundle of grass to light a fire. However, to the persona's disillusionment, he discovers that his deserted home (*matongo*) has no firewood. On their own, the borrowed flame and grass cannot be used to make the much-needed fire. The fact that only bark is available and even trees have disappeared suggests that the ruins have become wastelands. This alludes to the disruption of the indigenous people's lives by colonialism. Asking for assistance from outside the home alludes to the historical fact that independence was negotiated from outside the country, at Lancaster House. However, the tragedy of this situation is the failure to make independence a reality using what is available in the country.
In the absence of conditions that are conducive to the realisation of the goals of freedom, the persona has no option but to fight for survival:

Ndiani akambomona shambakodzi negwande?
Ndiani akamboita zhara akasamuka chibhebhenenga?
Ndingatora ngozi ndarwira zvangu changu here?
(Chamupupuri, 13).

Who has ever cooked sadza using bark [as fuel]?
Who has ever got hungry and did not turn wild?
Would I be committing a crime to fight to recover what is mine?

Evident in the above stanza is the hunger that pervades the whole nation. As shown in Chapter 2, there is hunger for land, hunger for employment and so on. The basic necessities that are essential for the survival of the nation have remained out of reach for the majority. Central to the writer's perception is that independence is not just the flame (ideas and agreements) that can be obtained from outside, but that all the resources at home should be harnessed to make it a reality to the majority. The writer subscribes to the view that a revolution is fought throughout history in an attempt to improve on things at each phase.

In Mtliko (The Oath) Chirikure critiques post-independence art in the form of poetry, music and the visual arts. As evident in the previous chapters, a lot of art has been produced that eulogises the heroes of the war, but Chirikure is opposed to it because it is not linked to the oaths made to the people by the same heroes:
The writer is opposed to the art that celebrates achievements that have yet to be realised, without focusing on the problems facing the people. This picture of broken promises shows that the oath of independence has been betrayed. The essence of the oath was to make available to the masses:

makombo
minda
ivhu rababa (Chakarira Chindunduma, 14).

virgin land
fields
my father's soil

The writer suggests that post-independence art should focus on broken promises instead of eulogising the political leadership. From this viewpoint the writer becomes more and more concrete in building images that show that there is not much justification to continue to celebrate independence that is not offering much material gain.

7.2.5 Broken Promises

The broken promises have given birth to the poem Rutendo (Thanks Giving), a bitter satire about the suffering of freedom fighters
after independence. It is ironical that the freedom fighter, who fought to ensure an equitable distribution of the country’s wealth, now finds himself without the basic necessities like food and shelter. Commenting on the plight of freedom fighters and the disabled in parliament in February, 1989, Member of Parliament N.K. Ndlovu had this to say:

Talking about heroes - who are they? Are we referring to dead heroes, if we are referring to our heroes, do we not have living heroes? ... The very fact that they are not mentioned, I think is a cover up because most of the living heroes are walking the streets of Harare bare-footed, dressed in torn trousers without jobs. They are walking the streets of Mutare, Masvingo, Gweru, Bulawayo, KweKwe, et cetera, without actually mentioning those who have backed away from the city centres and are living in communal centres without anybody realising what their plight is about... Their hopes are dying and in fact their hopes are dead already because nothing has come forward.

The above quote is the reality that is reflected in the poem under discussion. The freedom fighter ironically thanks the city fathers for building parks with well-maintained flower beds and benches that the former fighter has converted into a bed. From this ‘bedroom’, the persona can watch people who are overfed coming from hotels in the city centre in the accompaniment of prostitutes, and staggering with drunkenness. He is able to witness all this thanks to the provision of electricity by the city fathers:

Ndinokurumbidzai nemagetsi enyu manjenjenje,
Usiku ndava kuona vanoita upombwe mudzimotokari,
Ndoona vanodzvova tsvi vachitatarika kubva mumahotera,
Kudovaira kwenguva handichakuoni zvazvadai (Chamupupuri, 15).
I praise you for your very bright lights,
At night I can now watch those committing adultery in cars,
I see all those staggering and belching as they leave hotels,
I am no longer conscious of the slow passage of time.

One is reminded of Africa Unity Square in Harare and similar parks in other cities in which the homeless have taken refuge after independence.

The one time hero has been reduced to an insignificant beggar and as shown in stanza 1, people go about their business without noticing him. The bench is all the comfort that he needs for the night since he cannot dream any more. Dreaming belongs to the war era when there was independence to dream about:

Ndavakunyatsa kudzeya hope dzangu dzisina zviroto.
Ko, ndingarotei sendine zuro kana ramangwana?
Zvose ndakazvisiya paChimoio, muchimurenga! (Chamupupuri, 15).

I can now enjoy my dreamless sleep.
What would I dream of when I have no yesterday and tomorrow?
I left all dreams at Chimoio during the war!

What is apparent in the above stanza is that due to the failure of flag independence to fulfil the promises made during the war, the hopes of independence have been replaced by disillusionment and despair. The contradictions that bedevil independent Zimbabwe are seen in the allusion to the biblical story of the rich man and Lazarus. From his apparently advantageous position near the rubbish bin, the ex-combatant has access to the leftovers thrown into the bin by the rich.
It is clear from this poem that Chirikure is processing history. He condemns the senselessness of creating more comfort for the rich, in this case, parks, when the poor have no land and lack even the most basic necessities. He draws attention to the expense of electricity that lights up the parks all night and the expense that goes into maintaining the parks as can be seen from the neat flower beds, yet the majority of the people are living below the poverty datum line. The concerns and pre-occupations of the African elite are exactly the same as those of the colonialists. They inherit a park and maintain it in exactly the same manner as the colonialists at the expense of the rate-payers who can hardly make ends meet.

In *Nhasi Rinocherwa Neni* (Today is my Turn to Distribute the Beer), Chirikure takes a very traditional setting of beer sharing during village work parties in order to comment on the inequitable distribution of wealth. In the traditional setting, beer sharing is done following laid down procedure whereby people take turns to drink until everyone has had their share. In stanza 2 the persona, an old man who in the traditional culture symbolises wisdom, protests that unlike the demands of custom, the boys who have been entrusted by adults to distribute the beer, drink most of it themselves. It comes as a shock to the elders who are waiting for their share that the beer has been finished by youngsters whose task was to distribute it to elders. Stanza 3 shows that at a similar occasion, when, according to Shona culture, a nephew is asked to distribute the beer, he gives only women from his own village. The writer here is satirising
those who use their privileged positions as instruments of narrow sectional interests. One is reminded of problems emanating from allegations of nepotism, regionalism and tribalism that have dogged Zimbabwe since independence, particularly in the civil service. Commenting on the adverse effects of tribalist and nepotist tendencies on indigenisation in his contribution on President Mugabe’s state-of-the-nation address, Highfield member of Parliament, Richard Shambambeva-Nyandoro declared:

Only a person who deserves the job should get it... We can only succeed when we are united, we must kill these tribalists and nepotists tendencies.

These individualistic tendencies are further reflected in stanza 4 when, according to Shona culture, the son-in-law is asked to distribute the beer, but instead hugs the beer pot in an attempt to defend it from those who sent him:

Takati Manhede gara hari, ndiwe mukuwasha, Ndipo paakaita hari yekuvhumbatira senhiyo, Uku ari mubishi kuhon’a kunge imbwa ine hona, Gume azorutsira muhari macho; kuzvimbirwa (Chamupupuri, 45).

We agreed that Manhede, the son-in-law should share out the beer, He then went ahead to embrace the pot as if it was a chicken, While he growled like a dog with a bone, In the end he threw up in the very pot; a result of overdrinking.

The fact that the son-in-law even vomits into the beer container indicates that he has taken more than he needs, and that extra goes to waste instead of benefiting those who are in need. This is a clear case of inhumanity, selfishness and greed. The whole
The poem is a metaphor for the old people in the rural areas who voted the elite into power but are now suffering as a result. The poem makes a mockery of the government's policy of 'growth with equity' as was discussed in Chapter 2. That this policy has not been a success is heard through the voice of the old man. Those in power are shown to lack wisdom and as a result, they do not hold themselves accountable to those who elected them to power. There is a missing philosophy that can be obtained from traditional society, that is, traditional wisdom. This is what the persona, as a representative of that wisdom, endeavours to correct when he takes over responsibility:

Zvino nhasi pano ndiri kuigara ndini ini.  
Ndicharinganisa zvidikwadikwa zvenyu zvese.  
Vematumbu maviri nhasi midzimu yakupirai gotsi,  
Musazvitambudza zvenyu nekunditsonya kana kukwenya.  
Nditarisei namazvo, mangwana muzive zhira (Chamupupuri, 45).

Today I shall do it myself.  
I shall satisfy your appetites.  
Those who have two stomachs will be in trouble today,  
Do not bother winking or scratching me.  
Watch me closely so that tomorrow you will do it properly.

The persona makes clear that to distribute does not mean to loot. The writer is condemning indulgence, selfishness and greed as those who are entrusted with the redistribution of wealth are taking more than they need. By using the traditional setting of beer sharing, the writer brings in the element of an egalitarian society. This is a feature of traditional society which can also be seen in other spheres of activity like hunting expeditions, where the spoil was shared equally among the participating hunters. The poem castigates greed and selfishness which
undermine the social values enshrined in the tradition of sharing food and drink.

7.2.6 Social Displacement: Inverted Political Morality

The post-independence era has been characterised by displacement of people which takes the form of homelessness and loneliness. *Tiri Pano (Porta Farm) (We are Here (Porta Farm)* is a poem about life in a squatter camp. Porta Farm, one of the first squatter camps to be set up by the City Council and Local Government, is situated about 30 kilometres out of Harare along the Harare-Bulawayo highway. This and similar camps were created to resettle marginal communities created at independence so as to keep them out of the sight of the local elite and foreign dignitaries who visit Harare from time to time. For instance, in Harare, beggars were rounded up and dumped on empty land in preparation for the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in 1984, and it was left up to the Department of Social Services and Christian Care, a non-governmental organisation, to 'discover them and to provide them with food and shelter'19. At independence, there was an influx of destitutes into the cities in search of better alternatives. Demobilised former freedom fighters, the rural landless and the unemployed swelled the ranks of those who had left their rural homes for the safety of the cities during the war. These people, who are supposed to have benefited from independence, formed the class of urban squatters. Squatter camps arose from this scenario as an attempt to rid the cities of these marginalised communities. This concept appears to be a continuation of the
early days of colonialism when the indigenous people were barred from walking on the pavement to ensure that they did not mix with the settlers. That these were meant to be mop-up activities is seen in similar operations that involved the mass indiscriminate rounding up and resettlement of 'prostitutes' at independence in minda mirefu (cooperative farms). The indiscriminate rounding up of unaccompanied women in city hotels and streets by the Zimbabwe Republic Police and their branding as prostitutes in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to an outcry from the public. As noted by Bourdillon, many innocent people were caught up in these round-ups which are contrary to justice.

Chirikure gives us a glimpse of the lives of some of these marginal communities. The dejection in the inhabitants of the squatter camp is seen from the fact that no-one wishes the other a good night or a good day because there is nothing to look forward to. Because of the inhuman conditions in which they live, instead of the usual 'Muvate zvakanaka' (Sleep well), the inhabitants simply say, 'Ave mangwana' (See you tomorrow). Similar greetings tainted with disillusionment are used in the mornings. What is apparent is that the squatters live in extremely squalid, overcrowded and unhealthy conditions, where there is a serious danger of life-threatening diseases like cholera:

Inga zvingori pachena: svava, majaya, chembere, Dope ndirwo rukukwe, mwando ndiro gumbeze! (Chamupupuri, 17).

But it is clear: babies, young men, and the old, Excreta is their mat, stench their blanket.
Besides the danger of diseases, the squatters face the danger of the destruction of their plastic shacks by fires and loss of human life, which has been a reality in a number of cases. Of note is that these marginalised communities have no hope of living a more decent life until a revolution comes:

Zvicharamba zvakadaro, sekuonawo kwedu isu, Kusvika zuva rakuchauya chamupupuri Chigotiti simu, nezvitumba zvedu, zvese neimbwa’ Tigoti hwiru hwiru kunge ngoro yemoto yaElija: Asi handioni tichinotidzi-i panayave: Takan’ora! (Chamupupuri 17).

It shall remain like this as far as we see, Till the day that a whirlwind shall come To take us, our hovels and our dogs In the chariot like that of Elijah: But I do not see us land before God: we are profane!

The writer does not seem to envisage the marginalised communities taking part in the revolution. The writer uses the biblical image of Elijah and the burning chariot to show that because they see themselves as social outcasts, the communities do not see themselves going to heaven, in other words, leading better lives. To them, life has been reduced to mere existence. The poem ends on this note of despair.

In Haano Mamirire E kunze...... (Here is the Weather Forecast......), Chirikure links the weather conditions outside to the harsh economic conditions after independence. The poem uses familiar terminology from the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation weather forecast. The writer catalogues disastrous conditions that are a result of failure to fulfil the promises that were made during the war. The harsh weather conditions that
are reflective of the frequent and successive years of drought after independence, match the economic drought that has been a characteristic feature of the lives of the majority of Zimbabweans, particularly of the late 1980s:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pasi rufuse} \\
\text{denga ibaravara} \\
\text{nzizi majecha} \\
\text{miti zigutsa (Chamupupuri, 30).}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{the earth is hot,} \\
\text{the sky is clean shaven} \\
\text{rivers are silted,} \\
\text{trees are stumps}
\end{align*}
\]

The above stanza is a picture of a desolate landscape. The unbearable heat and the clear skies signify a severe drought, which has resulted in siltation of the rivers and destruction of the vegetation. The villages look as if they are deserted (dzimba matongo) and the broken pots (hari zvainga) indicate starvation, as are stomachs that are full of wind (dumbu mweya). The rough, tough skins that are likened to an animal’s hide (chiso idehwe) signify an unhealthy state of mind and body. The bulging or swollen eyes (meso matamba) and the thin legs that look like twigs (makumbo itsotso) indicate sickness and thinness arising from starvation. This image reminds one of newspaper and television pictures of starving Africans in war-torn areas like Somalia and the Great Lakes Region. People dream of sleeping because they cannot sleep any more (hope zviroto). Mafemo (panting) indicates overwork on the part of the people who are ironically starving. Panting could also indicate unhealthiness and a general state of suffering. The result of all this suffering are frequent deaths:
mitsago makuva
makuva mitsago (Chamupupuri, 30).

pillows are graves
graves are pillows.

The poem presents a gruesome picture of generations of people that have been caught in a vicious cycle of poverty, resulting in certain death. The concluding statement hameno tikaona ramangwana (we do not know whether or not tomorrow will find us alive), is a statement of disillusionment, bordering on despair. The people still suffer from various forms of deprivation, for instance, economic marginalisation as evidenced by landlessness, hunger and poverty. This is the condition of the ordinary people where political independence has failed to positively transform their lives.

In Ruvara Rwerwaivhi (The Colour of a Chameleon), Chirikure draws attention to the problems of the laws that are imposed from above, using common experiences whereby beggars, blind people and cripples get rounded up for breaking the law:

Hevo vondundurudzwa nemapurisa wevanhu,
Vakaqukuchira mwana, ndiro, mbereko nedikita.  
Kwavachavata hameno: vadarika mutemo wenyika,
Mutemo unorambidza vapemhi, chinyadziso kuvashanyi
(Chamupupuri, 18).

There she gets dragged along by a people’s policeman,
She embraces her child, plates and sweat.
She will sleep in an unknown place: she has transgressed the laws of the country,
The law outlaws beggars, they are an embarrassment to tourists.
As in the case of the squatters, removing the beggars from the streets is a mopping-up exercise that is meant to remove the unsightly from the streets that must be kept clean for the benefit of visitors from beyond Zimbabwe's borders. This means that those who design the law do not have the welfare of the people at heart. Through this poem, Chirikure sheds a bit of light into the life of a blind beggar. Like squatters, beggars are seen to be outsiders to the community. Again like squatters, they are periodically rounded up and arrested by the police (mupurisa wevanhu) (the people' policeman), who ironically should be the custodians of the democratic rights of the people. The law of the land is seen to be fickle and confusing, hence its comparison to a chameleon:

Nhasi, pidigu, ja-a!
Mangwana pidigu, ja-a!
Ndirwo ruvara rwerwaivhi,
Ndiiwo mutemo wenyika! (Chamupupuri, 18).

Today it summersaults!
Tomorrow it summersaults again!
That is the colour of a chameleon,
That is the law of the country!

Whereas in democratic societies public debates are held and politicians lobby people to oppose or support proposed bills, in Zimbabwe, parliamentarians make laws that affect the lives of the people without consulting the people concerned, for instance, the Legal Age of Majority Act, the Matrimonial Causes Act and the amendment of the Law and Order Maintenance Act. Some of the laws are rushed through Parliament without due consideration of their implications on the lives of the people for whom they are passed.
In Munhu Asina Hama (A Person Without Relatives), Chirikure shows how victims of the war have become victims of the independence era. A corpse of a disabled man remains unclaimed in a mortuary after all attempts to notify relatives through radio, television and newspapers have failed. The dead man, who is likely to be a former freedom fighter, lost all his relatives at the same time that he lost his fingers from an enemy shot during the war. His relatives' corpses were left to be devoured by wild animals. At the time of his death he was living a life of destitution, as was his companion:

Dai zvakasvika munzeve dzeuyu mukomana, (the news about the man’s death)
Mukomana wekudziya mapepa muzasi mebhiriji,
Angadai akaudza nyika zvaakanzwa nemushakabvu:
Murume wekushaya zvigunwe wacho uyu,
Zvigunwe akazvishaya pamwe nemhuri yake;
Mhuri nezvigunwe zvake zvangova mupfudze,
Pashure pekudamburwa nebara rengarara,
Ngarara dziri kuti dziri kusadhararira ivo!
(Chamupupuri, 37).

If the news had reached this young man,
The boy warming himself up with papers under the bridge,
He would have told the world what he had heard about the deceased:
This man without fingers,
He lost his fingers when he lost his family;
His fingers and his relatives have become part of the soil;
After meeting the bullet of an enemy,
The enemy that claimed to be struggling for them.

Of note is the fact that there is no decent burial for victims of the war who die even after independence. The survivors are still victims of a system that claims to be fighting for them. The fact that the dead man’s companion who sleeps under the bridge has no access to the medium of communication used to announce the deceased’s death shows that Zimbabwe is made up of
two different worlds: the world of poverty as opposed to the world of affluence.

The deceased is finally given a pauper’s burial. This reflects a current problem in Zimbabwe where the government has been accused of failing to rehabilitate war victims. The recent country-wide demonstrations by former freedom fighters demanding compensation for physical and mental stress suffered during the war is often cited as indicating failure by the state to cater for the needs of ex-combatants after independence.

The poem Zvirahwe (Nedudziro Dzacho) (Riddles and their Explanations) takes the form of a children’s game of riddles, which in traditional society, is meant for entertainment and to sharpen the intellect of the participants by making them aware of their environment. Chirikure’s riddles are a social commentary, for example:

Ngoma yekwedu inotambwa nevane madondoro vega: Africa!
Mugoti wekwedu unopiwa vakasungwa mbiradzakondo chete: Africa!
Tsoro yekwedu inofa ichiri kugadzirirwa kurongwa: Africa!
Tsetswa nehope zvonosvodzwa, misodzi ichiponewa: Africa! (Chamupupuri,).

A dance in our home area which is danced only by disabled people: Africa!
A cooking stick in our home area that is given only to those whose legs and hands are tied: Africa!
The draughts of our home area that get aborted before playing starts:

Africa!

Laughter and sleep are replaced by tears:

Africa!

The first riddle is an image of the people who participate in Africa's development, that is the ruling elite. These are people who have been either physically disabled by the wars that were fought to liberate the continent from colonial rule, or mentally incapacitated through Western education, as is the case with Africa's ruling elite.

The second riddle symbolises the stringent conditions that are part of the financial aid that is given to most African countries by the IMF and The World Bank. As indicated in Chapter 2, Zimbabwe was required to cut down on government expenditure by trimming the size of the civil service and removing subsidies on basic commodities like sugar and maize meal. This has meant no progress for the people as can be seen from the rise in the number of the unemployed and also the cost of living for the ordinary Zimbabweans.

The third riddle is an image of the many strategies and plans that have yet to bear fruits as reflected in the many meetings, talks and conferences on the African continent sponsored by the Non-Aligned Movement, OAU and SADCC that have seen many resolutions made but no corresponding action.

The last riddle represents the suffering peoples of Africa whose
lives have been devastated by war and famine. All the images in the riddles paint a grim picture of the African continent. Through the use of riddles, the writer adopts a light-hearted approach to draw attention to very serious problems that have bedevilled the African continent. The pictures drawn show a country that has made costly mistakes, that way finding itself joining the ranks of the suffering post-independence African states.

7.2.7 Repercussions of Exploitation

The poems in this section are a warning to the ruling elite about the repercussions of exploiting the people. In Tsikidzi (A Bedbug), the cause of the general suffering of the people as a result of exploitation is given in the image of a familiar parasite - a bedbug. This is an image of exploiters, individuals who live on the sweat of others. The writer makes it clear that the answer to oppression and exploitation is to fight in order to destroy the exploiters:

Ndokarega katakwaire sendisingaooni,
Ndogozvuvira rupasa zvose nemachira muchoto,
Ndigozvitungidza zvose neimba yangu,
Mwoyo ugodekara ndichikanzwa koputika (Chamupupuri, 19).

I will let it crawl as if I do not see it,
Then I will pull both the mat and the blankets into the fire,
Then I will burn them including my house,
I shall be satisfied to hear it explode.

This is not what happened in Zimbabwe where, as was shown in Chapter 2, the whites, who comprise about 4% of the Zimbabwean
population, continue owning more than half on the country's economy. The writer is calling for a revolution to smash inherited structures in order to start from scratch, as advocated by Lenin. The call comes against continued oppression in both the private and public sectors, as can be seen in country-wide strikes by workers in both sectors in demand of salaries that are commensurate with the cost of living. These protests were sporadic in the mid-1990s and then escalated in 1998 when they took a national character for the first time. The low salaries of the workers contrast sharply with the manifold salary increases that the political leaders and owners of business enterprises award themselves. The writer is measuring leaders by the promises that they themselves made when they mobilised people to fight for independence.

That the government embarked on the IMF/World Bank sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) without consulting the people (Chapter 2), is reflected in the poem Kunge Isaka naAbrama (Pakubya kweESAP) (Like Isaac and Abraham [The Advent of ESAP]. In stanza 1, Chirikure compares the lives of the people after independence to a journey. He uses the biblical story of Isaac and Abraham to reveal how the leaders started talking about the hardships that lay ahead before the people's hopes of recovering their wealth, as promised, had been fulfilled. The writer uses the common slogan of 'tightening of belts' that the ruling elite used to prepare the masses for the envisaged economic hardships:
Monditi, 'Sunga manyatera tirove pasi izvozvi,
Usunge dzibate, rwendo rwacho rurefu-refu!' (Chamupupuri, 20).

You say to me, 'Tie you sandals fast so that we may leave,
Tie them fast, the journey is very long!'

That the people were least prepared for these hardships is seen
in the son's protest in the second stanza:

Inga munoziva wani, ndiri munhu wemhuri,
Ndogonyangarika sedova mashambanzou ano,
Ndisina chandasiya ndapaka munzeve dzemhuri?
Hamuoni, ndingadzoka musha rangova dongo? (Chamupupuri, 20).

Surely, you know I am a family man,
How can I just disappear at this hour of dawn,
When I have not deliberated with my family?
Can't you see I could come back to a deserted home?

The ruling elite is depicted in the biblical image of Abraham,
and the masses that are to be sacrificed against their wish to
the demands of IMF and World Bank are depicted in the image of
naively obedient Isaac. This allegory of faith is depicted in
satirical form as deceit. God was faithful but humans fail
others. What human beings suggest therefore should be questioned
instead of being taken religiously. People should be involved in
decisions that affect their lives. This applies even to
development issues. In stanza 3 and 4, very fundamental questions
are raised on behalf of the masses, for instance, what has
necessitated the journey, how long the proposed journey is, who
is behind the journey and exactly where the destination is. In
the case of Isaac, it is clear that God was behind the plan. But
in this case, the ultimate question is whose vision the dream is:
Ndianiko akambokurotsai rwendo rwacho uru? (Chamupupuri, 20).

Who actually made you dream of this journey?

All these issues recall to one’s mind the fact that the people were not consulted by the government when it embarked on the IMF\World Bank sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, as already discussed in Chapter 2. Very little attempt was made by the political elite to explain to the people exactly where the reforms would take them to. The people are asking for debate and dialogue about an economic forecast before being plunged into an economic plan. The failure to consult the people has resulted in the masses being sacrificed on the altar of global capitalist economics. The demands of the spirit of the first poem in the anthology under discussion are being fulfilled.

In Shamwari Yeropa (Comrade), Chirikure metaphorically uses a common Shona belief that there is no murder that remains a mystery in order to warn the perpetrators of violence that there shall be retribution for their crimes. The title of the poem is a pun which literally means ‘the-one-who-loves-blood’, and it is echoed in line 3 of stanza 1. In this stanza, the writer shows how the perpetrators of violence try by all means to obliterate evidence of their crime:

Wakapukuta, nemucheka pose pose pawakadzamba,
Wakadzima tsoka dzako munzira yawakanyahwaira,
Wakapukuta madonhwe eropa mugwara rawakatora,
Wakadzima hwema hwako nokukusha mhiripiri,
Wakapisa nhembe, ndokugeza muviri, kudzinga munhuwi werufu (Chamupupuri, 41).
You cleared all the points you touched,
You cleared your spoor from the path you crept along,
You cleaned the blood stains from the trail,
You got rid of your scent by sprinkling pepper,
You burnt your skin aprons, and bathed, to cleanse yourself
of the smell of death.

Chirikure is writing against the backdrop of a culture of
violence that saw the disappearance of people without trace which
was common in the country before and after independence. The
writer refers to modern political systems which have machinery
for obliterating evidence of the crimes that they perpetrate. In
Zimbabwe, the culture of independence was also associated with
the disappearance of those perceived by the rulers to be rivals,
particularly during the Fifth Brigade era in Matebeleland and
parts of the Midlands.

In stanza 2, the writer shows that each time an innocent person
is murdered, the spirit world gets alerted by the suffering of
those who remain on whose behalf it then intervenes to make sure
that the crime catches up with its perpetrators:

Wakadzima nokuvhara zvese zvese zvawakafungira,
Asi hauna kuvhara zvitubu zvemisodzi yemhuri yake,
Hauna kuvhara zhira yeziso revari kumafuramhepo,
Nhasi midzimu yashungurudzwa nemisodzi yemhuri iyi,
Tichakunzwa woimba rumbo rusina angabvumira (Chamupupuri,
41).

You got rid of all traces of evidence,
But you did not block the springs of tears of the family,
You did not block the way to those in the spirit world,
Today the spirits are moved by the tears of this family,
We shall hear you sing a song that has no chorus.

The spiritual dimension to suffering is consistent with the
psychology of guilt feeling, something akin to Macbeth’s dilemma
in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. The writer shows that there shall be no suffering in vain. Not allowing despair to take root in the minds of the victims is in line with the social vision of African people. Those who commit crimes against humanity will always be punished. The poem satirises the rulers for being power hungry.

*Marutsi* (Vomit) was popularised by the musician Oliver Mutukudzi as a hit song by the same title. This effort underscores the link between oracy and literacy. Using physiological metaphor, the writer demonstrates how the rule of the political elite is tantamount to forcing people to eat dirt:

```
Kanyanisa!
Kanyanisa zvose
mbovha, mabori,
madzihwa, misodzi,
dikita, urwa,
dove, marutsi! (Chamupupuri, 43).
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Mix up!
Mix up everything
saliva, mucus,
mucus, tears,
sweat, puss,
excreta, vomit!
```

The above mixture, which is mostly composed of excretions from the human body, conjures up images of suffering. The writer goes on to show how it has not been easy to challenge the wishes of the political elite:

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ndichoka chido chako:
chawatema hachikanukwi,
chawarota chinotoitwa (Chamupupuri, 43).
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that’s your wish:
what you decide on cannot be challenged,
what you dream of has to be accomplished.
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The above quote shows how dictatorships come into being. The tragedy, however, as reflected in the last line of the above stanza, is that such rule is not based on reality. One is reminded of government plans, policies and decisions that are not taken in consultation with the people and do not have the latter's welfare at heart. However, such dictatorships are not without repercussions. Like the human body that throws out anything that disrupts its system, the suffering masses will also naturally rise against this dehumanising violence:

Saka kanyanisa!
Kanyanisa undipe,
asi ndangodya, hokoyo:
ndichakurutsira iwe
  mumuromo
  mumhino
  mumaziso
  uchabitirwa! (Chamupupuri, 43).

Go ahead and mix up!
Mix up and give me,
but after I have eaten be careful:
I shall throw up on you
  in the mouth
  in the nose
  in the eyes
  you shall drown!

The above is a warning that suffering is followed by retributive action which chokes the provoker. The elite should therefore expect retribution.

7.2.8 Impact of the Global Economy

Chirikure critiques the country's economy for its inherent weakness. Expedient economic policies at independence
impoverished the country. Further to that, the economy got deeply embedded in Western capitalist schemes to the extent of losing its autonomy.

Mari Yekunze (Foreign Currency) depicts the perverted love of foreign currency in Zimbabwe, which is also the case in other African countries. This is because the local currency is relatively weaker, and cannot be used to advantage in international business. In Zimbabwe, foreign currency became a big issue after independence because of its scarcity. It was tightly controlled by the Reserve Bank, and one had to apply for exchange authority in order to buy it. The idea was to protect the country from domination by other currencies that were ironically needed to buy goods that were not available in the country. Again, this was a continuation of denouncing foreign capital by the elite which they had started during the war. There is a sense in which independence land-locked people in an attempt to protect them from foreign investors. Ironically, this was at a time when the country was borrowing funds in order to finance its growing expenditure. The government therefore needed foreign currency to repay its debt.

In order to show the people’s love for and dependency on foreign currency, Chirikure refers to it as the father, ancestor, God and political authority of the people:

Handiti ndini ndangova baba, mudzimu naMwari wenyu?
Ini Khomuredi Shefu Baba Mari Yekunze Kwenyika! (Chamupupuri, 21).
 Isn't it that I am now your father, ancestor and God?  
I, Comrade Chef Father Foreign Currency!

This image of a foreign currency-based export-oriented economy contrasts strongly with the government rhetoric about self-reliance. The writer satirises the country's deepening dependency on foreign aid and shows how this fact made it difficult for it to be economically independent. Even in the agricultural sector, peasant farmers were encouraged to grow crops like tobacco and cotton that would earn the government foreign currency. The result was less-than-normal harvests for crops like beans, millet and rapoko on which peasant families have depended in the past. This in turn would force the government to provide food aid for the people, hence ensuring the people's continued support for the government.

Vamwe Vatinavo (Some People in our Midst) is about a section of the population, namely, the business sector, that argues that it is only interested in serving people, and not in politics, which it derogatorily refers to as madzanambwanana (petty issues).

The callousness with which the persona articulates the business sector's position betrays its real concern, that is, profit:

```
'Tsukutsanai,  
Kweshanai!
Kweshanai, asi musandiguma!  
Handitomboroti zvechigaro cheParamende!
Asi kana mune zvamunoda kutenga,  
E-eh, ha-a, apo tinganzwisana chose!  
Kana nechikwereti chaicho ndinokupai!
Futi ndine mitengo yakaderera fani!  
Sero gore rose! (Chamupupuri, 49).
```
Shake each other,  
Challenge one another!  

When you challenge each other do not push me!  
I am not interested in a seat in Parliament!  

But if you want to buy anything,  
Yes, we can talk about that!  
I can sell you on credit!  
I have very good bargains!  
Things are on sale for the whole year!

The first two lines are images of pain and suffering which contrast strongly with the persona's alleged concern, that is, to serve the people by selling them goods at competitive prices, having a sale all year round for their benefit and even making credit facilities available to them. The unprecedented violent food riots that rocked Harare and other towns at the beginning of 1998 which were aimed at the business community for hiking the prices of basic commodities are indicative not only of the economic hardships faced by the people, but of the empty promises articulated by the business sector, as those in the above stanza. Further, the declared disinterest in politics by the business community can only point to its naivety as it does not guarantee its immunity from problems of a political nature.

The writer castigates the accumulation of wealth through exploitation of the masses. This is a condemnation of capitalism. The international business community does not regard itself as part of the suffering masses, and as a result, it is not interested in finding solutions to problems that have bedevilled the nation.
Tsukutsanai, asi musandinanavira!
Handina kuyambukira nyanza izvozvo! (Chamupupuri, 49)

Shake each other but don’t get close to me!
I did not cross the seas for that!

This contradicts the concept of ‘sons of soil’ (mwana wevhu) that was referred to earlier.

7.2.9 The Nationalist Leader and the backward Setting

These poems show the extent to which the political leadership has distanced itself from the electorate. Waenda (He has Gone) is a satire arising from the relationship between the political elite and the masses. The persona is a voice from the rural community. He recounts a visit by a member of Parliament (MP) to his constituency to address a rally. MPs are expected to make such routine visits to their constituencies for which they are paid.

Striking about the occasion is that although he is a local MP, he is not used to anything that is local. First, the rural heat makes him sweat profusely:

Patakaona oramba ongochururuka dikita,
Tose takatanga kunetseka mupfungwa,
Asi takangoti semunhu ane nyembe,
Ajairira hofisi dzinotonhorera,
Kwete zuva neguruva pasi pemuti (Chamupupuri, 22).

When we saw him continue to sweat profusely,
We all became anxious,
But we thought maybe as a boss,
He is used to cool offices,
Not the blazing sun and dust under a tree.

What is striking about the above stanza is how far removed the MP is from the people that he is representing. He is used to the
air-conditioned offices in the city as opposed to the dry and dusty conditions in the rural areas. This gap between the political elite and the masses is further satirised in stanzas 2 and 3:

Patakazonzwa mudumbu make morira,
Takabva zvino tazonyanya kunetseka,
Asi takangoti semunhu ane chigaro,
Ajairira kudya nekunwa zvirí nane,
Kwete mangayí nemvura yemurukova.

Patakazoona ongamhanya kuchimbudzi,
Takabva tangoti changamire vaya vofa.
Paakazongoti ndava kuenda, chisarai,
Hapana akazombomumisa, kwete.
Taigodii iko kusina zvipatara? (Chamupupuri, 22).

When we head his stomach complain,
We grew very worried,
But we thought perhaps as an important person,
He is used to eating and drinking better things,
Not boiled maize and water from the stream.

When we saw him rush to the toilet,
We thought the man was in danger of dying,
When he bid us farewell,
No-one could stop him.
What could we do in the absence of clinics?

Important to note is that the MP cannot stand the harshness of conditions is his own constituency. For instance, his bowels get upset because he is used to tap water and refined food as opposed to river water and boiled maize that constitute the poor villagers' diet. The statement about lack of hospitals shows how the people have been made to believe that, like the elite, they should depend on Western health institutions for their health needs. The fact that there are alternative health institutions for the rural people is ignored. Ironically, the elite has failed to build clinics and hospitals for the rural communities. Even where these were built, they remained idle due to shortage of
funds to buy medicines and employ personnel to man them.

The whole poem is a critique of the central government's failure to transform rural communities after independence. The MP's discomfort exposes the relationship between Parliament and the rural communities, which have always been in the backyard of development. In Zimbabwe, people have always complained about the lack of avenues to voice their concerns to central government arising from failure by politicians to regularly visit their constituencies. The MP in the poem feels so threatened by the environment in which he was born that he leaves without addressing the rally:

Paakazenge zvino aenda, yangova huruva, 
Ndipo patakazoti bengenu, pepu. 
Mhomho yese ndiye, simu, tobe, 
Zvigunwe ndokunongedza kunzira yake: 
'Ayenda asati ataura nesu. Atoenda shefu uya!' 
(Chamupupuri, 22).

When he was gone leaving a trail of dust, 
That's when we came back to our senses. 
The gathering stood up, 
Their fingers pointed in the direction he had taken: 
'He left before speaking to us. That VIP is gone.'

Such individuals who are strangers to their own people but comfortable in exile cannot be true representatives of the people from whom they have been severed.

The poem Mhuka Dzesango (Wild Animals) is a myth which has been converted into a satire of the modern politics of nationalism in Zimbabwe. The myth recounts how the creator invited all animals to choose the limbs that they wanted. The bird chose wings in
case he needed to fly. The elephant chose a massive body and the lion chose claws and canine teeth. The invitation, however, did not reach the worm who was hiding in the dung in a cattle pen. Even if he had heard, he could not have made it to the creator’s place because he could have been picked and eaten by the birds.

This myth is a metaphor about those who are strong versus the down-trodden in society. It shows the origin of poverty. The rich are rich because they feed on others. This is a depiction of political opportunism in the post-independence era which, as shown in Chapter 2, has seen a consolidation of colonial class structures. There is an element of disillusionment in that the down-trodden find it difficult to improve their lot:

Nanhasi gonye musvuuganda paari, narini narini wose, Achafa achingokweshana nekukanya-kanya ndove (Chamupupuri, 50).

Till this day, caterpillar is poor, and shall remain so, He shall perish while wallowing in the dung.

However, even for the rich, prosperity is no blessing since there is a price to pay:

Vaya vane zvipo vari kufurwa nemhepo, vachidya vachifara, Asi uku vari kukweshana, kudamburana, nokukovodana (Chamupupuri, 50).

The gifted ones live in luxury, eating and enjoying themselves, But on the other hand they fight each other, tear at each other and bite each other.

The above stanza shows the contradiction that is entailed in the accumulation of capital. The rich fight among themselves in order
to protect their wealth, and therefore their power.

7.2.10 The Career Politician

At independence Zimbabwe drew its political leaders from nationalist leaders who had waged the war of liberation. To a large extent, the leadership team has remained intact. In practice this has turned politics into a career. Those leaders who can hold on to their seats for three terms are entitled to a pension. This makes people hold on to their posts sometimes at a great cost to their country.

The poem Mushonga Wemunhikwi (The Cure for Hiccups) depicts the betrayal of the masses by the politicians. The poem is in the form of a prayer of a nationalist leader. The leader confesses that he nearly cursed God for making him a politician:

Ndakamboda kukugumbukirai, Zame,
Ndoti makaita zindakupa - zindakutorera,
Kundipa chipo chekuparidza shoko rezvenyika,
Asi manheru ndozoguma ndava nemunhikwi (Chamupupuri, 23).

I nearly got annoyed with you, God,
Feeling that you had given with one hand and taken with another,
You gave me the gift of preaching politics,
But ending up with hiccups in the evening.

The hiccups are a reflection of the exhaustion, disillusionment and hollowness felt by the politician after days of repeating the same rhetoric to the electorate. When the thanks-giving prayer is interrupted by thirst, we get to know the cure for the politician's earlier problems when he makes this demand:
Cresencia, please give me a glass of whisky, 
My dear young sister-in-law, I need to stop the hiccups, 
So that I can conclude my prayer!

Whisky, which symbolises money and comfort, is the answer to the discomfort that was earlier experienced by the politician as a result of the false promises made to the people. Now the politician thanks God because his drunken state does not permit him to feel hollow any more. Emptiness has been replaced by drunkenness. This reveals how dehumanising the political system after independence is. The inhumane colonial system is being perpetuated by the black elite after independence. As they cheat the peasants they dehumanise themselves.

Watswanya Development (You Have Destroyed Development) is an appraisal of the performance of the political leadership. Chirikure again shows how far removed the political leadership is from the people who elected it to power. In stanza 1, he shows that the masses sacrificed the little that they had in order to educate the present elite in the hope that this was a worthwhile investment. Whatever the leader obtained would be ploughed back into the community for its development:

Kana mukati-kati meurozvi hwako, 
kungwarira nekushinga uchikuti vigilance, 
kushanda zvine mukoho ichikuti production, 
kufambira mberi kwezvinangwa uchikuti progress, 
kubudirira kweruzhinji rwedu uchikuti development, 
hapana kana chimwe chatingashoropodza pauiri - inga ndiko saka taitsanya tichiti uwane dzidzo! (Chamupupuri, 27).
If deep in your brain,
you call alertness and bravery vigilance
you call productive work production,
you call pursuing goals diligently progress
you call success of the masses development,
there is nothing I would criticise about you -
that's why we used to fast so that you may be educated.

The above stanza defines the attributes that are the prerequisite and the measure of development, that is, the betterment of the lives of the majority. The writer satirises the type of education that is offered in the country's educational institutions for being irrelevant to the developmental needs of the communities that invest in it. The curriculum, which was designed to remove Africans from their own people so that they could effectively and efficiently serve settler interests is still intact, with only cosmetic changes having been incorporated at independence. This type of education produces a leader, who, as shown in stanza 2, misleads and deceives the people using a foreign idiom, which symbolises his distance from the people whose interests he is supposed to be serving. As shown in stanza 2, the terms used by the leader are meaningless to the masses in the rural areas before whom they are flashed during occasions like weddings, beer-for-sale parties, funerals and rallies. It should be noted that the terms are used to camouflage the rhetoric that normally characterises such occasions. At the end of the stanza, the persona makes it clear that there is need for re-education and re-orientation of the leadership. Failure to do this is tantamount to the following:
wakonewa vigilance, 
wabvoronga production, 
wasvodzesa progress, 
wartsyana development! (Chamupupuri, 27).

you failed to cultivate vigilance, 
You messed up production, 
you aborted progress, 
you crushed development!

Such a leadership that cannot identify with the people frustrates all the developmental efforts and destroys development.

Kusika Nyimo derives its title from a game that is normally played after a good harvest. It consists of spinning roundnuts (nyimo) and takes the form of traditional boast poetry, where the participants boast of heroic deeds. In the poem, the persona's boasts of killing people are made vivid through the use of ideophones:

Uyu de! 
Uyo ga! 
Uyo bho! (Chamupupuri, 32).

This one gets knocked! 
That one gets knocked! 
That one killed!

The ideophonic expressions are indicative of a deadly blow aimed at the enemy. The poem is about the politics of eliminating rivals. The image represents most post-independence governments in Africa, which, like colonial governments, have been accused of eliminating their rivals and opponents. The murderers are so comfortable that they do not see the possibility of retribution:
Zvandakadya mwana waNdaundau
Ko ndakanzwinyi?

Nyangwe kuenda zvenyu kumatare,
Chero kuromba madumwa anofema,
Mungagondidini? (Chamupupuri, 32).

I killed Ndaundau's child
What harm befell me?

Even if you go to the courts,
Or acquire potent charms,
What can you do to me?

The above lines indicate the politics of staying on in power for as long as possible. They satirise power-hungry leaders who are well-known for their intolerance of criticism, fear of high performers and elimination of rivals. In Zimbabwe, as in some other parts of Africa, there are a number of prominent people whose deaths have not been taken as normal. For instance, the Zimbabwean war traditions have the ZANLA commander, Josiah Tongogara, who allegedly died in a car accident on the eve of Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the late Minister of Industry and Technology Mr Chris Ushewokunze who died in 1994, and the outspoken member of Parliament for Makokoba suburb, Mr Sidney Malunga who died in 1995. All of them died in car accidents. Even suicides have been questionable, for instance, the death by suicide of Minister Maurice Nyagumbo after allegations of corruption levelled against him in the Willogate scandal that rocked the government in late 1980s. Chirikure has successfully used traditional games to critique society on these very sensitive issues.
7.2.11 Disorientation

The poems in this section focus on the self-destructive tendencies that have trickled down to the ordinary Zimbabweans as a ripple effect of the decadence that starts from above. Modern society has lost its cultural bearings and social morality. In the poem *Kondakita Wemazuva Ano* (The Present Day Conductor), Chirikure depicts the attitudes of workers in the post-independence era. He shows that besides being a characteristic of the political leadership, irresponsibleness and non-accountability have perverted even the ordinary worker who now refuses to work. Such workers are represented by the bus conductor. Because he is in a hurry to have fun with girls, the conductor finds different excuses for not serving his clients. He will carry neither short-distance, middle-distance nor long-distance passengers. As shown in stanza 1, it is a bother for him to carry the first category because:

Twumari twenyu twunosembura pachenji apa,
Izviwo zviteshi inongova 'pamutamba uno,' 'paruware urwo!'
Tingazowana vanajojina vofembedzwa netwugondora!

Your little money is not easy to change,
As for your bus stops, you keep hearing 'at that *mutamba*
tree', 'at that flat rock!'
We will find our Georginas playing with adolescent boys!

This uncaring attitude and neglect of duty can also be seen in the case of middle-distance passengers who it is alleged, as reflected in stanza 2, are a bother to transport because they become so comfortable that they sleep and only wake up when the
bus has passed their destinations. In this dizzy state, they also litter the bus with forgotten items. As for the long-distance passengers, the conductor complains:

Tsvina, tsvina kani: mangai, mbambaira, manhanga, Uko muchiita futi bhazi chimbudzi: (hatipi risesi!) Zvinosemesa kunonoka kurezva vanaJojina tichikorobha! (Chamupupuri, 26).

Dirt all over: boiled maize, sweet potatoes, and pumpkins, On the other hand you use the bus as a toilet: (There are no short breaks on the journey!) It is nauseating to be late for the Georginas while we scrub the bus!

The bus has been reduced to private transport to ferry the workers to go and have fun with girls. The period after independence witnessed serious problems in the transport sector, and it was not unusual for travellers to the rural areas to be stranded at bus termini, especially during public holidays. Part of this problem was due to the attitudes of bus operators and their employees. The writer uses this problem to satirise the negative attitudes towards work, the arrogance of employees and the laxity that arose due to the new government's populist policies of the redistribution of wealth as opposed to its creation, as was discussed in Chapter 2. It is important to note that such policies are potentially damaging to the economic development of the country. The love of mindless entertainment is reflective of the extravagance and corrupt practices of the elite, as reflected in Chapter 2.

Mutoro Wareruka (Rumbo) (The Burden has Become Light) [A Song] is a satire which celebrates the development of weapons from the
primitive stick to stone, then the arrow followed by the gun, then the cannon followed by the scud missile that was first used in the Gulf War in 1991, and finally, chemical weapons. The irony lies in the fact that the poem is a celebration of the destructive genius of man. The writer’s message is that since the development of tools does not imply comfort of human beings, technological development does not necessarily imply social progress. It can mean more violence and more deaths. Civilisation is characterised by such contradictions. The writer concludes the poem on a satirical note:

Ngatitendei uyo akatipa chipo chekushandisa njere,
Zuva nezuva mutoro wedu uri kuita kunge shizha.
Pafungei, dai tiri kupi nhasi tichishandisa matombo?

Let us thank the one who gave us the gift of thinking,
Everyday our burden gets as light as a feather.
Just imagine, where would we be if we were still using stones [as weapons]?

The answer to the question posed in the last line is that channelled in the right direction, the human, financial and material resources used in the manufacture of destructive weapons could go a long way in alleviating poverty.

The poem Tongai Tione Sekuru (Let’s Have Your Verdict Sekuru) is an appeal to the elders to help solve the identity problem of people, particularly the rich who reside in the cities. In the first stanza, through clan praise poetry, we see the history that defines the Madyirapazhe clan to which the persona belongs. Traditionally, in most African societies, it is taboo for members of a particular clan to eat certain animals or their parts. For
the Madyirapazhe clan, it is taboo to eat the leg of a cow. Besides giving a particular clan its identity, such taboos were probably meant to preserve certain species of animals from extinction.t

Stanza 2, is about modernisation and its attendant identity crisis:

Asika, tinyeuriireiwo muri ikoko,
Ikoko kunyikadzimu, kumatare asi epwere;
Pwere dzenyu dzanhasi muchadzitonga seiko?
Sekuru, chirango chamakatara chabvanganyuka,
Nhasi changova mamvemve, marengenya. (Chamupupuri, 71)

Tell us you who are above,
In the spirit world, where no children may sit;
How shall you try the youth of today?
Grandfather, the custom you laid down has been destroyed,
Today it's torn to shreds.

The above is an image of cultural anarchy caused by materialism and greed. The persona appeals to the assistance of the ancestors for the restoration of order. It is an appeal to the ancestors not to be angered by the behaviour of the living members and then judge them too harshly. That would result in the ancestors withdrawing their protective powers and therefore exposing their descendants to dangers. For instance, as shown in stanza 3, people today neither observe taboos nor venerate their vital link with the ancestors. People freely eat all kinds of meat: roasted, grilled, fried, mince and meat pies. The taboos associated with food have been forgotten:
Tarisai, nhasi kudya rangova jakwatira,  
Nyama dzonaya nemhando kunge jecha:  
Dzakasasikwa, dzakagochwa, dzakakangwa,  
Dzakagaiwa, nedzakakombwa nechingwa.  
Isaruraude, sekuru vanguwe-we!

Todzinonga-nonga mumahotera,  
Todziworera muzvitoro nemasiraha,  
Todzichakanyura mumabiko nemumitambo,  
Vapwere nevakuru, mutambo wapfumbira!  
Ndiani angaziva kuti iyi nyama igumbo? (Chamupupuri, 71)

Look, there is so much food today,  
Meats come in all kinds,  
The dried, roasted and grilled,  
Minced and in pies.  
The choice is wide, grandfather!

We pick our choices in hotels,  
We get them in bulk in butcheries,  
We eat them avidly at social functions,  
It's common practice among the old and the young!  
Who shall know that this meat comes from the leg?

The above quotation suggests that this identity crisis applies to the rich in the cities whose lifestyles make it possible for them to regularly consume large quantities of specially prepared meat in hotels and parties, and those who can afford to buy it from butcheries. In Zimbabwe, independence saw the creation of intellectual and emotional confusion among members of the educated elite. This is the class of people who have cut ties with tradition and therefore lost their identity. The poem satirises modernity. It shows how greed causes violation of many other customs. However, the poem could also refer to the poor whose poverty forces them not to discriminate.
7.3 Conclusion

In *Chamupupuri*, as the title suggests, most of the poems change in tone from admonishing people of the post-independence era about the follies in their nascent culture towards open criticism of the politico-economic and social cultures they are creating. The element of ambivalence about the direction of development is gone and the writer takes a class position where now the ruling elite are depicted as oppressors while the ruled are depicted as the oppressed. The poetry in a way takes the form of the pedagogy of the oppressed. In this discourse, the writer becomes a teacher in his community who sensitises his people through sarcasm, humour and irony of the need to be wary of the system. The poet's vision is not about reforming the system through well-considered popular policies; he now focuses on the need for the masses to come to grips with their oppressive conditions as the first step towards positively transforming their own conditions. The poetry is therefore contemporaneous; it follows life closely and highlights all the issues that the official media and conformist literature carefully avoid. In this collection the seeds of subversive literature are sown to the extent that the writer tries to deconstruct neo-colonialism.

The strength of Chirikure's poetry is its timeliness: most of it gets to the people through performance even before it is published. In Zimbabwe this represents a serious and new poetic trend to engage reality. Prior to this, published poetry tended to be ahistorical.
Endnotes


8. Ibid, (30).

9. Ibid, Footnote 1, (23).

10. Ibid, (82).


12. Similar observations are made by Mamphela Ramphele about drug and alcohol abuse among hostel dwellers in Cape Town in A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town, (64-65).


15. Ibid, (1).


22. Business was badly hit in Harare as food rioters ransacked shops and destroyed property both in the Central Business District and in the high density suburbs. *The Herald*, January 20, 1998, in its headlines 'Looting as Food Riots Hit Harare' reported widespread looting and destruction of property as police apparently failed to contain the situation. The riots later spread to other centres in the country and the situation was only brought back to normal through the deployment of the Zimbabwe National Army.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Art does not destroy the institution. Art is totally dependent on institutions. Essentially, it is institutionalised. At best the radical seeks to transform notions of art within the institution.

To appreciate the social vision of poets writing in Shona and Ndebele, there is need to look at the poetry in question in relation to history. The poetry is nurtured by publishing houses that have their own ambivalent history in relation to the state and the economy. Various authors and critics have argued that pre-independence publishing was channelled into articulating the colonial vision and/or missionary concerns. Its growth was largely dependent on the extent to which writers could articulate an African social vision against the backdrop of missionary and colonial influence. It also depended on the mission statement of the publishers at a time when the interests of the state and those of the publishers were nearly identical.

At independence in 1980, the new government made conservative changes to accommodate some of the aspirations of the Africans, although in essence, a neo-colonial state was born, as was the case elsewhere in Africa before Zimbabwe became independent. As social and economic inequalities cease to be expressed in racialist terms, this presents a challenge to the writer. The post-independence writer, writing predominantly about the war and independence, as was the case in Zimbabwe, faces the challenge of representing the truth to the reader out of his/her own perceptions and the official truth. The latter arises from the
African nationalists' statements which are a combination of fact and official propaganda which help create identity for the new nation. Such statements are disseminated through the government-controlled and independent media, as well as political rallies. History is the truth underlying those statements. This challenge is equally great for the poet who celebrates independence and the one who critiques the reality of independence beyond celebration.

In the volumes of poetry, most of which get published through the Literature Bureau tradition of soliciting poems on given themes, most of the writers conform to the official truth. This truth comes in a variety of forms. The first is the deification of the nationalist leaders who are now presented as guerrillas who fought the war rather than nationalist leaders who masterminded the war from the rear. These leaders are also shown as championing the causes of the masses as articulated by the freedom fighters whom they have since replaced. Secondly, there is the celebration of the gun despite it being also a symbol of violence. Thirdly, there is the celebration of the freedom fighters as selfless individuals. Fourthly, there is the celebration of nationalism as the goal of independence. Lastly, there is celebration which takes the form of reflections about the nature of colonialism and sacrifices made during the war by the peasants. What is notable here is that colonialism tends to be analysed superficially. So also are the sacrifices of the masses who bore the brunt of the war. The war is therefore idealised by underplaying the commitment, sacrifices and suffering of the peasants and exaggerating the role of the
nationalist leaders. This becomes part of the process of entrenching the position of the emergent African elite which to a large extent also becomes the economic elite. The idealisation, which amounts to a romantic distortion of history, appears to undermine serious nation building in the sense that without reflecting the sacrifices, the war becomes a celebration of violence. By painting the guerrillas and nationalist leaders as altruists, the poetry tends to urge readers to be uncritical of the ambivalent political and economic positions of the African elite. The poetry therefore underplays the fact that the elite are middlemen of capital on the one hand, and a self-interested class apart from the masses on the other. In the poetry published during this phase, the suffering, deaths and destruction which are an integral part of the war are recorded peripherally. In other words, the price paid for independence, which should go a long way towards encouraging people to cherish their independence, is understated.

The subsequent phase beginning from 1989 is characterised by poetry that celebrates the unity of the two political parties that fought the liberation war. This is a celebration of the end of a period of mass killings and other forms of disruption as a result of armed conflict between the ZANU PF which is represented by the post-independence Zimbabwean state, and its rival party - PF ZAPU. This means that while independence is being celebrated, the war between the state and the insurgents in Matebeleland and the Midlands is raging. While this conflict is recorded in history, there is hardly any poetry that reflects this phase. The
poetry comes only at the point of celebrating unity. This shows that writers avoid sensitive and yet most pertinent historical issues in conformity with the culture of self-censorship. What is interesting is that only the Ndebele are celebrants of this unity. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, the Ndebele bore the brunt of the civil war after independence. Secondly, the avoidance by writers of sensitive topics is in line with the culture of conformity that was referred to earlier on. The third reason could be the inability of writers to read history, resulting in the tendency to record chronicles rather than reality. The resultant poetry is an oblique and one-sided recording of the struggle of various interest groups for independence. The nationalist leaders are depicted as victors because they have created peace for innocent people, more than coming together in their own right. Glaringly evident in this poetry is the avoidance of the historical detail about the Unity Accord. That the celebration is out of context is another gesture of the apparent deification of the two nationalist leaders and their parties by peasants for bringing an end to the war which in fact they had started.

The next phase from 1990 onwards witnessed the rise of a new generation of young poets who are distinguished by their fairly high level of education. Most of them are university and teachers' colleges graduates. Some of them like Chirikure bring into published poetry theatrical skills, acquired from post-independence theatre groups. These groups put theatre in an ideological context for development purposes. Influential artist-
cum-critics including Ngugi waMiri, Ngugi waThiong’o, Micere Mugo and Ama Ata Aidoo popularised community performances in East and West Africa which led to the exile of some of them. Independence therefore opened up Zimbabwe poetry gates to related artistic activities from West, East and Southern Africa. There is a general move towards performing poetry which is intended for publication. This fusion of poetry and song is common in traditional African ritual. Contrary to the established channels for publishing, the poetry that is critical is not solicited. It arises from the initiatives of individuals in an attempt to rise to the challenges of critically commenting on their history.

Chirikure takes the sensibility of the masses to the stage and into published poetry. He exploits the hitherto marginalised oral mode to boost its literary counterpart. He performs his art with well-known singers like Oliver Mutukudzi, Andy Brown, Stella Chiweshe and Effat Mujuru. Through editing, he also encourages and brings to light some young artists whose voices could have found it difficult to break into the established poetic tradition. Together, these few literary voices grapple with post-independence Zimbabwean life from the point of view of the masses. This poetry attempts to ‘move away from its elitist identity in order to concern itself with the condition and aspirations of the majority of the people who speak the language in question’. That way Chirikure brings into poetry a belated but very important literary critique of Zimbabwean history.
Chirikure satirises post-independence Zimbabwean society for failing to transform its independence for its benefit. In this creative thrust lie the seeds of poetry that attempts to raise the awareness of people to life beyond what is given through official channels.
Endnotes


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UNPUBLISHED THESES, REPORTS, DISSERTATIONS AND SEMINAR AND CONFERENCE PAPERS


NEWSPAPERS, JOURNALS AND PAMPHLETS


