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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The poet speaks not for himself only but for his fellowmen. His cry is their cry, which only he can utter. That is what gives it its depth. But if he is to speak for them, he must suffer with them, rejoice with them, work with them, fight with them. Thomson in Amuta (1989:176)

1.1 Background of the study

This study is in the area of literary studies. It derives from and is predicated on the seemingly developing trend in post independence Shona poetry where the quest and struggle for total liberation is the pervasive mood. By total liberation, the study implies “that which concerns all sectors of the personality,” Fanon (1968:310). This implies commitment to making the “freedman in every sense a free man and citizen,” Puckrein (1993:3) that is politically, economically as well as culturally. Post-independence Shona poetry reveals a trend in Zimbabwean literary experience in which poets are committed to the struggle for liberation of the whole personality. While this can be true of other literary genres such as novelistic creations and drama this study pays particular attention to Shona poetry set in the post-independence period (1994-2004). The researcher chooses poetry because “the commonly accepted notion [is] that poetry represents a vehicle through which one’s deepest and most distilled thoughts may be expressed,” (Matambirofa in Mguni et al, 2006: 87). Furthermore, Mazrui (2004) reminds us that of all literary forms poetry is the most indigenous literary form. Against this background the study argues that poetry is a cultural site for negotiating a truly liberated identity. This study holds that pursuing the quest for freedom allows the researcher to extract the major factors that create a human condition that is defined by a quest for equality, freedom and justice. In actual fact, pursuing the quest allows the researcher to “diagnose Africa’s problems, the sources of those problems, and how Africa can move beyond them,” (Ostergard et al in Mazrui, 2004:xii). It is the contention of this study that a grapple with the quest for total liberation is a window or lens through which the problems bedeviling African people are brought to the fore. In that context the study is of grave import. The quest for total liberation manifest in post-independence Shona poetry is the launch pad to a deeper understanding of the politico-economic as well as socio-cultural problems that inhibit complete and authentic liberation. These problems, the study

argues, are rooted in the incapacitating neocolonial environment. Post-independence Shona poets contend that the African condition which is defined by a longing for freedom must be blamed on leadership crisis in Africa, corruption, unequal economic relations between Africa and the rest of the world, racism, lack of properly Africanised education, failure to put the best out of African historical and cultural experiences to the service of change, failure to redistribute the land or rather improper utilization of the distributed land, among many others. The study argues that the major problematic of post independence poetry in expressing the quest for freedom is that the poets largely limit their authorial gaze to Africa. The argument maintained is that it is rather myopic for poets to attribute Africa's problems only to Africa itself. Post independence poets fall short of realizing that the capitalist imperialist world system plays a greater role in impeding Africa's march to total liberation. It is the contention of the study that post-independence Shona poetry lacks a far-reaching global look necessary to not only knowing the enemy but all the enemies of Africa's total liberation. The study holds that as long as the quest for freedom is incompatible with hegemony total liberation remains a myth.

Furthermore, the study devotes a section to the quest and struggle for women's liberation in which the factors identified include traditional cultural practices that render women mere appendages of men, marriage as a tool of entrapment, women's self-depreciation and male chauvinism. It is argued in the section on women's writing and the quest for freedom that *Ngatisimuke* is a feminist project which wrongly and disastrously identifies men as the chief enemy to women's liberation to the extent that their art degenerates into misguided activism. Guided and oriented by African womanism the study maintains that in order for women's writing to be purposeful and liberating it is imperative that they understand gender relations within the framework of the history and culture that shapes gender relations.

This study therefore explicates the quest and struggle for humanity in the anthologies namely, *Chamupupuri* (1994), *Hakurarwi* (1998), *Ngatisimuke: Nhapitapi YeNhorimbo* (2006), henceforth, *Ngatisimuke* and *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* (2004). More importantly, the study attempts a critical exegesis of the successes and shortcomings of the poets whose poetry is under study in so far as their creative productions are foregrounded in African existential philosophy. The centerpiece of this thesis therefore, is that post-independence Shona poets "are on the

pilgrimage to regain our freedom.” (Asante in Mazama, 2002:219).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This research is energized by the idea that despite attainment of political independence a situation is developing in post independence Shona poetry in which the quest and struggle for total liberation is the pervasive mood. While poetry set in colonial Africa is committed to protest against the painful grip of colonialism in which poets protest against racial prejudice, alien rule and cultural arrogance of alien rulers, a trend or trajectory of thought is discernible in post independence poetry in which poets are registering a quest for equality, freedom and justice. To the poets political independence therefore, “was indeed a necessary condition before Africa could fulfill or realize any of her fundamental aspirations. But by itself political sovereignty was not enough-it was not a sufficient condition. It was not true that ‘all else would be added unto it,” Mazrui (2004:105). Post-independence Shona poetry attests to the development of this trajectory of thought where the search for freedom is the imperative. The problem is summarized in Nyamubaya’s (1986:13) view that “independence came, but freedom was not there.” This study therefore problematises political independence and unravels the socio-economic and political factors leading to the failure to attain what Babu (1981:6) refers to as “complete and authentic liberation of Africa” as reflected in the poetry under exegesis. The central problem is summarized in the very first sentence in Babu’s (1981:1) book, that;

A situation is rapidly developing in Africa which is strongly reminiscent of the pre-independence era, when the masses were demanding change at any price. The masses then were demanding change of government, change of political and social direction, change in their status and self respect, change in their economic well-being; they demand change for the better. Now they are doing the same.

The central problem is that political kingdom has failed to bring fundamental changes to life conditions to the extent that poets present a human condition which is marked or defined by a quest and struggle for equality, justice and freedom. Furthermore, it is pertinent to note here that as the poets write it seems they are largely concerned with “fighting internal oppression” to the extent that they fail to notice that the western capitalist imperialist system plays a major role in impoverishing Africa.

With regards to women's poetry, the study holds that the major problem is that they seem to view the male counterpart as the chief enemy a situation attributable to the idea that the poets are writing from a feminist point of view. The study argues that it is flawed and simplistic to blame the male counterpart for the condition of women. This tends to produce cheap literature which is largely misguided activism. Instead of protesting against the male counterpart as the poets do, situating art in the larger framework of socio-cultural, political and economic conditions that shape African gender relations would have helped produce better art. African womanism, rather than feminism would have helped poets produce sober and mature art in so far as African womanism is an authentic agenda for women of African descent.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to unravel the factors that affect the complete and authentic liberation of African people after attaining political sovereignty. Furthermore, the study is committed to discussing the factors that limit African women's genuine freedom. It is also hoped that the study explicates the ramifications of the incapacitating neocolonial environment on the African condition while in the process contribute to the dialogue with Africa. The study therefore is aimed at diagnosing Africa's problems with a view to contribute to the debates on how to transcend the problems and bring about a more humane society that unlocks Africa's creative potential necessary to reclaiming liberty, freedom and justice. This study is also a critical engagement with the extent to which each poet's social vision is informed by and rooted in African existential philosophy, a philosophy which situates human agency and optimism at the centre. Utilizing Afrocentricity as an evaluative tool, the study judges post independence Shona poetry on the basis of the identified major principles of the Afrocentric conception of reality. It is hoped that such a critical modality is a positive step towards the struggle for complete and authentic liberation in view of the idea that "the ultimate goal of Afrocentricity...is, the recovery of African freedom and creativity," Mazama (2002:219). The study therefore elucidates the poets' social vision and commitment to "transcend the limitations and bitterness of our past and present, or how to build new and stronger walls where we have gained the forts," Muponde (2000:218). It is concerned with the metaphysics of the human condition in order to provide "critical consciousness for the nation," Nkosi (1965:162). The present study therefore is not only aimed at unraveling the quest for freedom but commitment to the struggle for complete and

authentic liberation. This thesis takes off from the premise that African poets must immerse their art in African existential philosophy.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives underlying this study are to:

A	explicate the quest and struggle for total liberation in selected post-independence Shona poetry anthologies while in the process exposing the politico-economic and cultural factors that limit the liberation of the whole personality.
B	ascertain the extent to which post-independence Shona poetry is rooted in African existential philosophy.
C	elucidate the ramifications of the critical perspectives taken up by the poets in their writing to the proper understanding of the African condition as well as freedom of African people.
D	utilize Afrocentricity to interrogate the contributions and weaknesses of the selected post independence Shona poetry in the struggle for a genuinely liberated identity.

1.5 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

a	What are the socio-cultural and politico-economic factors that hinder complete and authentic liberation in Africa?
b	Does the poem or book of poems situate African existential philosophy at the centre in interpreting reality and struggling for change?
c	Do the poets situate their art in African history and culture in grappling with the African condition in a neocolonial environment?
d	What are the contributions and weaknesses of the poets in grappling with the notion

	of nominal independence?
e	To what extent can poetry be regarded as an integral part of the struggle for freedom equality and justice?

1.6 Justification of the study

Discourse on total liberation is rife in Zimbabwe, other African countries and even beyond. In Zimbabwe, questions of sovereignty and territorial integrity, economic indigenization and empowerment as well as land politics are discussed in the context of the search for total liberation. The quest for total liberation manifests itself in discourse on progressive change in political addresses, speeches, music and the media among many other forms of expression. This is evident in philosophies such as 100 percent empowerment, total independence and sovereignty and democratic change among many others. All these aim at one ultimate goal, total liberation. Underlying these philosophies is the idea that political independence is characterized by different problems which render independence rather partial or incomplete. The object of inquiry in this study, therefore, is to diagnose these problems and be part of the struggle for the ultimate goal-total liberation which is defined by equality, justice and freedom. This study is justifiable in the sense that poetry is just but one cultural site for diagnosing Africa's problems, the source of these problems and suggesting a cure. It is therefore pertinent to carry out the research on post independence poetry in order to put poetry to the service of change. It is also hoped that the study is an act of "conversing with Africa" to use wa Ngugi's (2001) words in a book by the same title. It is also necessary to carry out the research because total liberation is of both national and continental interest and on that basis the study contributes to current debates on the African condition.

The study focuses on poetry as a literary genre because, as Mazrui (2004) reminds us, it is the most indigenous of all literary forms in Africa. As indicated earlier on, the study focuses on post-independence Shona poetry because, it "represents a vehicle through which one's deepest and most distilled thoughts may be expressed," Matambirofa in Mguni et al (2006:87). In view of the foregoing the study is necessary in the sense that it hopes to extract the thoughts on the quest for

freedom as they find expression in selected post-independence poetry. The present researcher notes that poetry is gaining much creative space in Zimbabwe but little research is going on in this genre. It is also worth noting that poetry has to a very large extent been viewed as a footnote to novelistic discourses and in some instances it has been viewed as difficult. It is against this background that the present researcher focuses on post-independence Shona poetry because like novels poetry also needs adequate scholarly attention for it is also a site for reflecting on and debating the politics of the African condition and work towards a cure to the problems ravaging society. It is necessary to carry out the research because it is anticipated that it can be useful to different educational levels in literary studies. In this sense it can be beneficial to university students, academics and other literary practitioners. The critical arguments raised in this thesis can also benefit poets especially their social vision with regards to the quest and struggle for total freedom. It is anticipated that publishers can also benefit from the study by way of judging good and bad art against the backdrop that the study argues that poets are only successful if they immerse their art in African existential philosophy. By and large, this thesis is anticipated to provide important direction towards what we can refer to as good art, that which struggles for freedom, equality and justice. The study is also worthwhile in that it is revolutionary in the sense of putting poetry to the service of progressive change to the African condition which is largely defined by poverty, corruption, lack of political as well as economic power necessary to guarantee sovereignty and freedom, racial prejudice among many other vices. The study is therefore a contribution to the current debates on total freedom in Zimbabwe, Africa and other oppressed peoples of the world.

While Chiwome analyses post independence poetry in a section under the same name in *A Critical History of Shona Poetry*, this study complements such efforts by analyzing the passion for complete and authentic liberation manifest in the selected anthologies. Other researchers have analysed post-independence Shona poetry but no researcher known to the present researcher has specifically focussed on the quest and struggle for freedom. It is worthwhile that this study focuses on post-independence poetry to assess the contribution of this literary genre in liberation which is the hallmark of humanity. The study complements earlier efforts by specifically looking at the politics of liberation in post independence Zimbabwe as it finds expression in Shona poetry set in the post-independence period. In view of Rodney's (1972:7) assertion that "the phenomenon of neocolonialism cries out for extensive investigation in order to formulate the

strategy and tactics of African emancipation and development” this study is necessary because it is one of the concerned voices on the African condition in order to substitute suffering with happiness.

This study goes beyond reflection on disillusionment as other researchers such as Griffiths (2002), Obiechina (1990) and Chigidi (1994) among many others have done. This is so because although disillusionment is a characteristic of post-independence Africa especially soon after independence, a serious researcher must indeed go beyond the writer’s reflection on the disillusionment and interrogate the extent to which the writers’ critical perspective can lead to the liberation of the disillusioned people. It is also essential in the sense that the poets’ critical perspectives are interrogated in order to determine whether the works are informed by Africa history and culture or not for in order for art to be purposeful the history and culture of the society that produces the art is important. The study maintains that depiction of disillusionment without redress legitimizes suffering in Africa. In actual fact, the present research argues that post independence Shona poetry is concerned with “...people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity,” (Toure in Fanon, 1963:166). This is particularly essential in order that Zimbabwean poets beam forth the idea that Africans are only free when they put the best of their history and culture to the service of change. The present study therefore judges Zimbabwean post independence Shona poetry in that context in order to deduce the contribution of poetry to freedom which is rooted in African historical and cultural experiences. In the light of this, the study is justifiable because it appreciates poetry from an Afrocentric point of view.

In the pursuit of the quest for total liberation in post independence Shona poetry, the study primarily relies on the selected four poetry anthologies namely, *Chamupupuri* (1994), *Hakurarwi* (1998), *Ngatisimuke-Nhapitapi YeNhorimbo* (2004) and *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* (2004). These four were selected as representative texts to the general thrust and direction of post independence poetry which is largely premised on the expression of the quest and search for total liberation. It must be indicated that while the study focuses on the quest and struggle for freedom in the selected anthologies the poetry also handles other thematic concerns. However, the selected anthologies reveal a more profound commitment to the struggle for total liberation. These constitute a selected sample of the poetry that shows commitment to struggle for genuine freedom. On the more the four anthologies were selected as representative texts because it was

anticipated that the researcher would handle the data with greater precision than when the poetry anthologies are too many.

While the study focuses on poetry produced between 1994 and 2004 it must be indicated that *Madirativhange* (1997) and *Shaurai* (2004), have been left out because they do not provide much evidence on the subject under discussion. *Shaurai* contains clan praises and religious poetry (*madzinza nemidzimu*), didactic poetry (*Nhango dzapadare/Kuraya*), *Bembera*, *ndyaringo*, *Mavingu neJikinyira*, War poetry (*Chimurenga*), Love poetry (*rudo*), *Kutsutsumwa*, *Kuyemura*, and Change (*Shanduko*). This researcher argues that there is no much innovation and deliberate effort to deal with more challenging themes in the age and time the poets are writing. The compilers recycle social themes which preoccupy poets of the colonial period. *Madirativhange* like any other anthology compiled by the Literature Bureau does not deal with more challenging themes but largely revolves around social themes. Like *Shaurai*, the anthology does not capture the historical developments or bread and butter issues of the time. In *Shaurai* poetry on war is rather celebratory. On the other hand, *Nhaka yenhetembo* (1996) is also left out because the anthology is a reproduction of the poetry of Hodza's traditional poetry, Hamutyinei's poetry which revolves around social issues and Chivaura's poetry on social issues. Mwanaka, Shotgame, Matenga and Mhondera also contribute their poetry in the anthology. The study holds that there is little innovation in this work and hence the anthology is left out. Instead, Mwanaka and Mhondera's poetry in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* is representative of the ideas of the poets on the subject of inquiry in this study. Against this backdrop, this study heavily relies on the four selected anthologies to substantiate and authenticate the arguments raised in the study.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is on the pursuit of liberation in post-independence Shona poetry published from 1994-2004. The study revolves around the selected poetry's contribution to the struggle for complete and authentic liberation. The study is concerned with critically interrogating the literature under study in as far as the literature is committed to struggling for social justice. The writers' vision in their writings is under scrutiny to determine whether the writer is aiming at liberation or sinks the readership into further pessimism. While the study is on post independence Shona poetry the study also makes cross reference to other literary genres in order to broaden the scope of the study. The study focusses on the factors attributed to the partial

independence and the extent to which the poets' contribution to fighting the rapacious hegemonic capitalist world system.

1.8 Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 is the introduction to the study which defines the problem of the study; that despite the fact that formal colonialism is over in Africa, there is a seemingly developing trend in Shona poetry where poets like those writing in the context of colonialism engage in a struggle for total freedom. It is in Chapter 1 where the aim of the study has been spelt out. It has been noted that the study aims to unearth the socio-political and sociocultural factors that militate against total liberation. The study unravels the extent to which each poet's vision is rooted in African history and culture as well as the contributions and weaknesses of the poetry in the struggle for total liberation. The chapter also lays out the justification of the study which is to contribute to current debates on total liberation from an Afrocentric point of view. The study revolves around the problem that despite attainment of political independence a quest for total liberation manifests itself in post independence Shona poetry.

Chapter 2 of the thesis reviews extant studies on poetry set in different post colonies, including the Afro-American communities. The chapter relies on Mazrui's (1978) classification of African literature. The argument maintained in Chapter 2 is that the quest and struggle for freedom is a common feature of different parts of Africa and other formerly colonized peoples of Asia and South America evidenced by the idea that this poetry is largely an act of protest. The chapter is a solid foundation on which arguments raised in later chapters is rooted.

Chapter 3 explicates the theoretical framework utilized in this study as well as the research methodology. The chapter explains the principles of Afrocentric thought and praxis. Furthermore, the chapter discusses Africana womanism and its applicability to the study of the condition of women of African descent. Against this background, Afrocentricity and Africana womanism are chosen in as far as they situate reality in the context of the experiences of the people that they seek to explain.

In Chapter 4, findings of the study from interviews and questionnaires are presented and analysed. The chapter notes that land politics, lack of education, injurious leadership, disrespecting one's history and culture and racism are the most dominant factors attributed to the

failure to attain authentic liberation. The chapter concludes that key informants largely lack a global outlook in their understanding of Africa's impediments to freedom, peace and justice.

Chapter 5 is basically discussion of findings from the selected poetry anthologies. In the light of the findings from interviews and questionnaires presented and analysed in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 is a critical interrogation of post independence Shona poetry in the context of struggle for total liberation. The argument maintained in the chapter is that while a quest for genuine independence manifests itself in the selected poetry, to a very large extent poets largely emphasise on endogenous factors that impede Africa's genuine independence. In view of that, the poets largely hold a domesticated and myopic vision of the world. The poetry is lacking a global outlook that can allow poets to expose the exogenous factors that derail Africa's liberation.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion which provides summative conclusions on the major findings of the study. The study observes that while poets are struggling for total liberation they lack a scientific vision to Africa's problems. The study contends that instead of reducing poetry to mere lamentation and moralization poets must internationalise the struggle in order to not only know impediments to Africa's true liberation but all Africa's enemies. Internationalizing the struggle helps provide a leverage to know both endogenous and exogenous impediments to total liberation. it is also emphasized in the chapter that poetry is a necessary and never adequate tool in the struggle for total liberation.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with laying bare the major thrust of the study which is exploration and explication of the passion to liberate manifest in post-independence Shona poetry specifically in the following anthologies, *Chamupupuri*, *Hakurarwi*, *Ngatisimuke and Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka*. The chapter has noted that the passion to liberate is a pervasive concern of post-independence Shona poets. It has also been observed in the chapter that like writers writing during the colonial period whose literature is committed to freedom post-independence Shona poetry reveals commitment to struggling for total liberation. The aim, objectives, justification, research questions, statement of the problem and scope of study have been laid out. Chapter 2 is literature review.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

I not only use all the brains that I have, but all that I can borrow. Wilson in O'Leary (2010:71).

The production of new knowledge is fundamentally dependent on past knowledge. O'Leary (2010:71)

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study by way of spelling out the background, aim and objectives of the study, statement of the problem, questions to be answered by the research, justification and scope of the study as well as summary of chapters. This chapter reviews extant literature on the quest for total liberation in African poetry. The chapter sets out to capture the pursuit for liberation as it finds expression in poetry set in different parts of the African continent and also the Afro-American community. In actual fact, the chapter is a pursuit of the quest for liberation as it finds expression in African and Afro-American poetry. The chapter provides an overview of the major trends in African poetry with a view to provide a springboard upon which the arguments raised in the following chapters are anchored. This thesis hopes to use Mazrui's (1978) classification of African literature. Mazrui's classification is insightful into major trends in African and Afro-American poetry. It is pertinent at the outset to indicate that by and large this chapter is informed by Mazrui (1978)'s classification of African literature. While Mazrui's classification is on African literature in general for the purposes of this thesis poetry is the genre that is used to substantiate Mazrui's critical reflections on African literature. Besides Mazrui's (1978) classification of African literature other researchers' work is reviewed in this chapter in order to spell out the point of departure from existing studies. This chapter sustains arguments raised in the discussion and analysis of findings in Chapter 4. It is Mazrui's categorization that the researcher turns to.

2.2 Mazrui's Classification of African Literature.

As indicated above, for the purposes of this thesis Mazrui's (1978) proposition regarding the categorization of African literature is the launch pad upon which the study is anchored. Mazrui (1978:9) indicates that "African literature has in fact, been a meeting point between African creativity and African political activity at large." This literature, observes Mazrui, especially prose but including poetry, is sometimes direct as protest. Be that as it may, Mazrui indicates that in some cases it is mere political observation and recording. Mazrui (1978:9) argues that:

The politics come in sometimes directly as protest. Here then you have art being invoked as a method of registering political grievance and asserting militant objection. But there are occasions when the political component in African literature is merely an exercise in political observation and recording.

Mazrui reaches the conclusion that the most persistent socio-political themes can be reduced to the following five strands; i) protest against alien control- colonial or neo-colonial, ii) protest against cultural arrogance of alien rulers, iii) protest against racial prejudice, iv) literature of detached observation of culture contact and the process of culture change and, v) literature of protest against Africa itself- at least against the current generation of Africans. It is crucial to note that while Mazrui refers to literature in general in this thesis particular attention is paid to poetry as a literary genre since this study is paying particular attention to poetry.

This study treats Afro- American poetry essentially as closely related to African poetry against the backdrop that Black Americans must be thought of in terms of African history and culture. In the light of the foregoing, Nkosi (1965:99) argues that "a great deal of Africa survives in the mores of American Negroes through such accidents as the continuous history of segregation." This study insists that such an undertaking is rewarding to both the formerly colonized African subject on the African soil and the Black Americans who are continuously pushed to the periphery by the white supremacist system. An acid look at Mazrui's classification reveals that to a very large extent African literature (poetry included) is an act of protest. As the chapter unfolds, it will increasingly become clear that the act of protest is in itself a manifestation of the African peoples' urge to disentangle themselves from different forces that seek to subjugate, exploit, oppress and dehumanise them and resultantly limit their potential as a race. It is now the

five preceding strands that are now discussed to lay bare the quest for freedom manifest in African poetry set in different parts of the continent.

2.2.1 African Poetry as Protest against Alien Control-Colonial or Neo-colonial

This type of protest is a feature of all parts of Africa. Poets expose the evil that is associated with the colonial as well as neocolonial powers. Mazrui (1982:9) notes that “this is a comprehensive protest and tends to be discernible in the literature of all the parts of the African continent.” To illustrate how this protest was employed this study will largely refer to the Zimbabwean case. It is worth noting that this is protest aimed at resisting political domination. To use wa Thiong'o's (1986:2) words, “the writer we are talking about was born on the crest of anti-colonial upheaval and worldwide revolutionary ferment.” In this section we refer widely to Ngara (1985), wa Thiong'o (1972, 1981), Nazombe in Ngara and Morrison, (1989) and Amuta (1989).

In this strand, literature is put to the service of humanity where it is a weapon to fight foreign domination. Literature that belongs to this strand is committed to the “...rejection of the forces of colonialism and imperialism and their attendant ideologies,” Ngara (1985:26). Furthermore, Ngara (ibid: 26) observes the following:

The very nature of colonialism and imperialism inevitably leads to revolt by the colonized whose exploitation, dehumanization and enslavement sooner or later result in a national consciousness that openly challenges foreign domination.

Revolt is a subject matter of African poetry in that poetry is fashioned to capture resistance to exploitation, enslavement and dehumanization. In this strand, African poetry reflects on and with utter contempt, the evil that is perpetuated by the invader. Basically it is the tension between the nationalist forces and colonial forces that produces poetry of revolt. The two opposing forces motivate protest poetry which is an instance of revolutionary art. In this strand poetry shows disapproval of colonial domination and the subsequent dehumanization and enslavement of the colonized subjects. To use Fanon's words (1968:240), it is a “literature of combat.” This implies that this is poetry which inspires people to fight for their independence and sovereignty. In other words, this poetry urges the colonized peoples to disentangle themselves from the yoke of colonialism through struggle. It is poetry which restores the hope and optimism upon which a struggle can be waged to free the colonized from colonial rule. This poetry injects optimism, will

and power into the colonized to actively participate in the process of reclaiming their independence from the imperialists. Ngara (1985:27) observes that:

In Zimbabwe all negotiations with the colonial rulers failed until the principal nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU, abandoned the conference table and resorted to armed struggle in the bush...Zimbabweans, young and old, wrote and composed revolutionary and Marxist inspired poems and songs.

These poems and songs were used to expose the evil perpetuated by the colonizer and reinvigorate the power in the colonized to fight against oppression. In the context of colonialism, poetry can not afford to neglect the revolutionary consciousness that grips the nation. In actual fact, it is aligned with it. Poets and poetry are therefore part and parcel of the common objective among the colonized masses to resist oppression.

Ngara (1985) observes that the revolution motivated literary creativity in Zimbabwe. In his view, in the literary sphere, the revolution inspired a rich and profound creativity which has given Zimbabwe the volume entitled *And Now the Poets Speak* (1981). While Ngara draws an example from poetry in English the same is true of poetry in indigenous languages. The publication of the Shona poetry anthology entitled *Nduri DzeZimbabwe* (1983) also shows commitment to revisit the war period and castigate the invaders' ambitions and practices and expose the extent of damage that colonialism has had on the colonized. The poets decry the debilitating effects of colonialism on the African subject. One such poem is 'Soko Risina Musoro' by Herbert Chitepo. Because of such repressive state apparatuses as the Literature Bureau and Censorship Board among many others, revolutionary poetry could not see the light of day. However, independence ushered a new era in the creative arena and hence revolutionary poetry was produced soon after the attainment of political independence. In the light of this, Muponde (2000:50) aptly observes the following:

The attainment of political independence in 1980 gave the writers latitude to revisit the colonial era to fill in the cultural lacunae created by the enforced omission of revolutionary themes.

The colonial period had been characterized by "...innocuous, apolitical and ahistorical issues which were promoted and supported by the colonial government." Muponde (2000:50). Chivaura (undated: 11) cited in Muponde, (2000:50) observes that this is "poetry of liberation, not in the combative sense of directly inspiring national liberation but in the sense of having been, itself,

inspired by a war already won. [It is] nationalistic in a wider, more embracive sense.” The poetry registers the pain, struggles and suffering of the Africans under the yoke of colonialism. In the light of this, Amuta (1989:177) notes that “every historical epoch writes its own poetry or rather expresses itself in appropriate idiom in the poetry of its most committed and sensitive minds.” The colonial experience provides the subject matter of the poetry which is inspired by this very epoch. Ngara, in *Ideology and Form in African Poetry* (1990) in the chapter ‘Vision and Form in South African Liberation Poetry’ emphasizes on artists’ articulation of “the people’s aspirations, sustain[ance of] their spirits and generally working in line with the liberation movements.” Furthermore, in a Chapter entitled ‘Poetry and The African Liberation Struggle’, Ngara discusses the poetry of Wole Soyinka, Musaemura Zimunya, Chenjerai Hove and Freedom Nyamubaya. In the poetry liberation war experiences are given due attention. Ngara’s analysis, like Nazombe, Metcalf and Sumaili to a very large extent, discusses the role of literature to the liberation of African peoples from colonial bondage.

Ngara (1985) discusses Carlos Chombo’s poem ‘Poem’ and notes that it is representative of the concern of the poetry on the war of liberation in the anthology *And Now the Poets Speak* (1981). Its major concern is “resisting the violence of effective occupation” by the wanton killings instituted by the colonial regime. Ngara (1985:28) argues that Chombo “...sets out to define poetry in terms of African struggles, suffering and labour. This is the true source of revolutionary poetry.” The literature in the anthology is influenced by the liberation struggle. The poetry captures the “...tensions, conflicts and contradictions at the heart of a community’s being and process of becoming,” Ngugi (1981:5). The poets aim to “evoke, to awaken in the observer, listener or reader emotions and impulses to action or opposition,” Hauser in Ngugi (1981:6). The contributors to the anthology, *And Now the Poets Speak*, are concerned with reawakening the spirit of resistance against colonial domination. In this anthology, poetry under the sections, ‘The Colonial Scourge’ and ‘The Black Man’s Burden’ attest to the plight of the Black man at the hands of the oppressor. The poets are active members in transforming their society from colonial domination to freedom.

wa Thiongo (1972:68) observes that “during the anti-colonial struggle new song-poems were created to express defiance and people’s collective aspirations.” In Zimbabwe one example of such a composition is ‘Nehanda Nyakasikana’, a protest piece meant to express discontentment

and disapproval of colonial rule. The poem is a trepid protest piece that saw the light of day during the colonial period only to be banned after the colonial authorities realized that it was political. Chiwome (1998:2) observes that the “poem refers to the spirit of Nehanda [and] was used at some nationalist rallies...”

The Angolan poet Agostinho Neto is another poet who has put poetry to the service of the colonized people in Angola. A reading of Amuta (1989) particularly the chapter entitled ‘Poetry and Liberation Politics in Africa’ and Nazombe’s article in Ngara and Morrison (1989) entitled ‘Poetry and Liberation in Central and Southern Africa’ is interesting here. Amuta (1989) observes that in order to understand Agostinho Neto’s poetry one must study the poetry within the context of his involvement in and championship of the struggle for independence in Angola. Nazombe in Ngara and Morrison (1989:50) observes the following of Angolan poetry:

The poetry of Angola has its historical roots in the long tradition which dates back to the closing decades of the nineteenth century. For over a hundred years Angolan intellectuals have been using literature as a weapon against such features of Portuguese colonialism as the slave labour and the social and cultural destruction inflicted upon the country.

Nazombe (1989) observes that as early as 1945, Agostinho Neto published a poem ‘Departure for Forced Labour.’ More so the anthology, *Sacred Hope* (1974) is informed by different stages in the struggle for national liberation. Nazombe (ibid: 50) quotes part of the introduction to ‘Sacred Hope’ and the quotation confirms the fact that poetry was put to the service of the struggle:

By the end of the decade poetry had become the principal means by which writers sought to establish links with the people, writing for the people, making of the despair and suffering of the people in the villages and the *musseques* the material of poetry, rediscovering a land and customs which had been deformed and distorted by the colonial oppressor, and creating a modern national literature which gave voice to the people’s aspirations.

It is increasingly becoming clear that colonial rule gives birth to revolutionary poetry which is an inevitable weapon to challenge and dismantle colonial domination and replace it with freedom of the masses from the painful grip of the colonial masters. In the context of foreign domination, literature is fashioned to be part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggle. Indeed, “anti-imperialist resurgence was reflected in literature” wa Thiongo (1986:14).

In the context of colonialism, the poet is on the side of the colonized and hence "...pitches his tent with the people in their struggle for justice and humane existence," Amuta (1989:177). Amuta (1989) establishes that poetry is an indispensable tool to the fight for freedom in Africa. He also notes that the struggle for justice and freedom is the prime measure of good poetry. Amuta (1989:177) astutely observes the following of poetry and poets in the context of colonial rule:

In the African world, this historical necessity, in which the poet as a man of culture devotes his art and life to the pursuit of justice and freedom, has become part of the very legitimacy of the poetic undertaking. To be a significant poet in Africa at a time like this is to stand up and be counted in the struggle against foreign domination and class and racial injustice.

Amuta notes that the importance of Neto's poetry in *Sacred Hope* (1974) in the liberation war is imbedded in that it is a vital element of People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA.) Poetry is used to reject colonial values and hence provides a voice to the dominated, marginalized and bifurcated Africans. Amuta (1989) observes the following of Agostinho Neto:

The significance of Neto's poetry in the struggle for Angolan independence is subsumed within the overall active involvement of literature and culture in the strategy of the MPLA.

In historical experiences such as colonialism, poets can not afford to be neutral. They align with the colonized masses in their struggle for social justice and freedom. Amuta (ibid: 177) is more to the point when he says:

In situations requiring direct involved heroic intervention in defence or pursuit of progressive values, poets have often found themselves fighting on the side of the people. This is why poets as diverse in nationality and outlook as Christopher Caudwell, John Cornford, Louis Aragon, Christopher Okibgo, Maxim Gorky and Dennis Brutus have dedicated their art and sometimes their lives to the pursuit of freedom.

In other words, the poets use their creative talents to challenge the oppressive ruling class and instill strength and hope in the oppressed which are necessary to the fight for freedom from bondage. Amuta (ibid: 177) surmises that:

The poet who lends his art to the service of freedom restates the truism that socially redeeming political action is the highest form of artistic expression ...In present day Africa, armed struggle against colonialism present decisive challenges that need to be addressed as vigorously on other cultural fronts.

Agostinho Neto is an example of a poet who uses his art to expose and reject the injustices of the colonial system. Amuta (1989) notes that a keen awareness of the exploitative essence of colonialism pervades Neto's poetry. Amuta (1989) and Nazombe (1989) attest to the idea that Neto is a committed poet to the struggle against colonialism. In the light of the foregoing, Amuta (1989:186) observes that "Neto's poetry occupied a prominent position in this active deployment of art in the service of the struggle." Neto is informed by the historical experience of the masses and his task is to reflect on the plight of the masses and society to regain their strength and fight for freedom. It must be categorically stated that while Neto discusses the plight of the colonized in *Sacred Hope* he does not sink the colonized into pessimism. In actual fact, hope prevails and it is on the basis of hope that people can meaningfully wage a struggle for their own liberation. Amuta (1989:186) notes the following of *Sacred Hope*:

The poems collected in *Sacred Hope* span several years in Neto's career as well as various stages in the struggle for national liberation. Consequently, the themes range from the need to use valuable elements from the past to shape the future to reflections on the deprivations and sufferings of the people under colonial rule.

The condition of the colonized under colonial tutelage is the subject of Neto's art. Amuta (1989) observes that relations of dominance and subordination define the colonial equation. In a poem entitled 'Saturday in the Muceques' Neto (1974) captures the plight of the colonized thus:

Muceques are poor neighbourhoods
Of poor people
And they become part of life itself
Transformed into despair
Into hope and mystic anxiety

and in the backyards
sown with excrement and bad smells
in furniture dirty with grease
in tattered sheets
in mattressless beds (pp7-9)

Neto captures the brutish conditions that the colonized live in. Neto (1974) manages to maintain hope and sees agony and misery as temporary conditions that justify struggle against colonialism. Neto's poetry in *Sacred Hope* does not succumb to the ontology of defeat. He realizes that without hope life loses its vitality and hence the masses lose the power to act with will and intent to attain freedom. Despite exposing the brutish conditions hope remains the

defining characteristic of Neto's poetry. Therefore, Neto and his work were part of the African revolution.

wa Thiongo (1981) in a chapter entitled 'The Links that Bind Us' also discusses the extent to which literature is put to the service of humanity in the context of colonialism. wa Thiongo notes that African poets therefore have a story to tell, a story of a people who resist colonial domination. While African poets have this serious duty of telling the plight of the colonized people, wa Thiongo (1981:102) has this to say:

...it is also an Asian story and any cursory glance of the history of China, Indo-China, India, Africa, the West Indies and Afro-America, will see the testimony in tears and blood. We are a truly colonized people whose sweat has been cruelly exploited by western-monopoly capital to build the monument called western civilization.

wa Thiongo (1981) observes that in order to be relevant, the progressive African writer must align himself with the colonized. In wa Thiongo's view African writers reenact the wishes and aspirations of their brothers both in Africa and in the western world. The African writer therefore tells the story of liberation and freedom and this is basically what such icons as Nat Turner, who led a slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831 and Toussaint l'Ouverture who led a 1791 revolt in Haiti stood for. wa Thiongo (ibid: 104) establishes that:

The true literature of the African peoples, from the Americas and the West Indies to the continent of Africa, is written with the blood of the people on their black flesh. It is the literature of struggle: the struggle of ordinary people, who against great odds have nevertheless changed and are continuing to change oppressive social systems and hence the power map of the twentieth century.

As has been observed of Agostinho Neto, Solomon Mutsvairo and Carlos Chombo's poetry in *And Now the Poets Speak* (1981) is given impetus by the historical experience which calls for collective struggle to free the colonized from domination and its debilitating aesthetics. The poet, therefore, can not abstract him/herself from the people but must be in unison with the people in the struggle so as to capture truthfully their urge for freedom. In wa Thiongo's view, this is true of all progressive writers from the oppressed world. wa Thiongo (1981) observes that the most enduring links that bind the African peoples on the continent and in the diaspora with those of Asia are a shared experience of the past and a shared hope for the future. These are the links, observes wa Thiongo (ibid:105), that bind the African to the words of Abay Kunanbayav (1972), the Kazakh poet of the nineteenth century part of which is quoted below:

Oh that freedom should reign

wa Thiongo (ibid: 105) also establishes that these are the links that bind the Kenyans and of course the rest of Africa to the words of Sembene Ousmane (1972) in his poem 'Fingers,'

Across the rivers and languages
Of Europe and Asia
Of China and Africa
Of India and the Oceans
Let us join fingers to take away
All the power of their finger
Which keeps humanity in mourning.

Or to those of the Vietnamese poet Thu Bon (1973) in his celebratory certainty of victory:

Our hatred is the plough-share that plunges
into the earth

Our guns will chastise the enemy
In order to bury him for ever into the depths
of this earth

wa Thiongo (1981:106) concludes his chapter by noting that as Africans and other oppressed people "struggle against the forces which exploit us in South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Rhodesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Palestine we are truly waging war against all those forces that exploit, oppress, humiliate and dwarf the creative spirit."

This section has established that poetry is an indispensable tool to resist colonial rule in different parts of the world. It has been argued that in Zimbabwe, poets protest against foreign domination and the poem 'Nehanda Nyakasikana' among numerous other poems, attest to this. Ngara notes that contributors to '*And now the Poets Speak*' (1981) write revolutionary poetry in the sense of rejecting 'effective occupation'. Nazombe (1989) and Amuta (1989) argue that Agostinho Neto has put literature to the service of the struggle in Angola. The two concur that Neto's poetry is motivated by colonialism and that in his writing Neto is on the side of the masses. Furthermore, while Neto is concerned with the plight of the colonized under the yoke of colonialism hope pervades Neto's poetry. The section has noted that wa Thiongo (1981) establishes that a shared hope for the future and a shared experience of the past are what binds the continental Africans and Afro- Americans with those of Asia and other oppressed peoples of

the world. Reference to Kunanbayav (1972), Ousmane (1972) and Bon's (1973) poetry has been made and the common thread is that like Mutsvairo (1956) in his poem 'Nehanda Nyakasikana', Chombo (1981) in 'Poem' and Agostinho Neto's poetry in *Sacred Hope* (1974) the major concern is protest against colonial rule. The section has revealed that Mazrui's view that under the rubric of African literature there is protest against colonial rule is a truism. wa Thiongo (1986:3) aptly notes that "the promptings of [the writer's] imagination sprung from the fountain of the African anti-imperialist, anti-colonial movement ..." These writers 'tell freedom.' While this section has been concerned with African literature as protest against colonial rule the following section is committed to protest against cultural arrogance of the alien rulers.

2.2.2 African Poetry as Protest against Cultural Arrogance of Alien Rulers

This section discusses protest against cultural arrogance with particular reference to African poetry. This type of protest is concerned with resistance to cultural prejudice. Mazrui (ibid: 9) surmises that "objection to cultural prejudice is perhaps pre-eminently observable in the literature of French-speaking Africa." In Francophone Africa nostalgia for the old African traditions is the dominant theme. While there is relative acceptance of the Western cultural impact in English-speaking Africa this is in stark contrast to the literary passions of Francophone Africa. In actual fact, in English speaking Africa there is less preoccupation with the survival of African culture, less rebellion against imported cultural innovation. While Mazrui (1978) is concerned with literature in general this discussion is validated by reference to poetry as a literary genre. Mazrui (1978:11) astutely notes that:

Francophone literature revolves around rebelling against adopting and celebrating foreign cultures. Writers are heavily concerned with the survival of African culture. Francophone poetry is largely protest against cultural arrogance.

Furthermore, Mazrui (1978:11) observes that the reason is that:

The British permitted the survival of many institutions...These kinds of organizations, and even the concessions to vernaculars in schools, were much less common in French colonies. There was less toleration of local cultures and local institutions.

Dathorne (1976) concurs with Mazrui (1978) when he observes that in former English speaking territories the culture of the colonized was "left whole." In actual fact, "the writer was able to incorporate large segments of his world into the new literature he was developing in an alien language." The net result, observes Dathorne (1976:217), is that literature (including poetry) in

“French and Portuguese had no or little relationship with tribal consciousness, whereas in English to a large extent the wholeness of tribal life was left undisturbed.” Mazrui (1978) observes that the French were culturally arrogant in their attitude towards the local traditions in their colonies. Instead they stood for assimilation as far as possible. Mazrui (1978:11) makes an interesting and pertinent observation that “the difference between English-speaking and French-speaking Africans is that for the two decades, the latter were on the whole, the more culturally creative of the two groups.” This is against the backdrop that Africans who were ruled by the French were more exposed than their British counterparts to collective humiliation on the cultural scene. In Francophone Africa assimilation of the colonized took centre stage. The culture of the colonizers was deemed superior to the culture of the colonized hence justifying assimilation. Mazrui (1978) contends that unlike the British counterparts who were concerned with subjugating the Black man on the basis of skin pigmentation “what the French were ultimately guilty of was cultural arrogance.” Mazrui (1978:10) succinctly observes the following:

Nevertheless it remains arguable that the greater volume of poetry...and other forms of artistic expression in French speaking Africa in those early days was in part a reaction to the French colonial rulers displayed in their exercise of power. It was certainly not for nothing that negritude was a movement for glorifying traditional values in Africa tended to be pre-eminently a Francophone phenomenon in its literary form. To rebel against French cultural arrogance was to romanticize African roots through cultural media, or so it was assumed.

Mazrui observes that cultural arrogance of the French establishment during colonial rule has given rise to protest in literature. This attempt to keep down and out the cultural elements of the colonized instead breeds a protest tradition against cultural arrogance. Examples of poets whose poetry attest to this include Aime Cesaire (1995), Leon Damas (1948,1956), Leopold Sedar Senghor (1948,1961,1964) and David Diop (1956), who can be regarded as pioneer poets. These poets were concerned with invalidating and deconstructing the perceived superiority of French culture over that of the colonized Africans. The poets therefore celebrate Africa. The arrogance of the French on the cultural arena is the spring from which protest literature emerges. In view of this, Dathorne (1976:217) rightly observes that “in former French and Portuguese territories assimilationist attitudes and directives caused the emergence of detribalized literature.” Poets invest their energy in challenging the colonial establishment’s cultural arrogance. The general concern among negritude poets is that they “expressed concern for the predicament of their race

and the legacy of a colonial bondage ...Negritude was a conscious effort to reach back into a wider array of lost traditional values,” Dathorne (1976:219).

2.2.2.1 Negritude as Literature-Poetry

Rosello (1995) in the introduction to Cesaire’s *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (1995:46) observes that “Aime Cesaire coined the word ‘Negritude’ as an attempt to reappropriate the word ‘negre’ which had painful connotations for all black people.” Dathorne (1976) reminds us that Cesaire established negritude as an informal forum for poets. These poets castigated the arrogance of the French colonizers. Damas (1948, 1956), Cesaire (1995) and Senghor (1948, 1956, 1961) later became the chief exponents of negritude as a doctrine. Rosello in Cesaire (1995:28-29) observes the following:

Cesaire, Senghor and Damas, three Black students from very different backgrounds, working together on the formulation of their common ‘Negritude’, can be seen as representative symbol of black Parisian writers’ quest for cultural identity.

It must be categorically stated that negritude, with all its imperfections, was a step in the right direction aimed at resisting assimilation into mainstream French culture. The aim of negritude was to promote and establish a black cultural identity. The prime objective of negritude therefore was to reclaim and revitalize African heritage. Rosello in Cesaire (1995:21) notes that:

For a whole generation of Black students exiled in Paris, reclaiming their African heritage became a first positive step towards cultural liberation. This attempt went against the prevalent policy of assimilation, which was viewed as the only viable solution for colonized people.

This is the major thrust of the poetry of the negritude movement. The aim of the negritude movement was to castigate the French policy of assimilation which is viewed by the colonized as only meant to confuse and weaken the colonized subject. Negritude poets are against the subjugation of the heritage of the African peoples and hence “denounce assimilation as a sham.” Rosello in Cesaire (1995:21). The poets are committed to situating their heritage at the centre and push the French culture to the periphery. The poets are eager to attain cultural liberation hence their poetry is protest against assimilation which as Senghor in Cesaire (1995:21) rightly observes “meant being assimilated rather than assimilating Western culture.”

A quick survey of the major concerns of Césaire, Senghor and Dama's poetry reveals that their poetry is committed to protesting against assimilation into mainstream French culture. This research contends that these poets are representative of the general concern of Negritude poets. Their literature is genuine commitment to the anti-colonial struggle in that the poets are writing against assimilation.

2.2.2.2 Aime Césaire's Poetry and Resisting Assimilation

In his *A Notebook of My Return to My Native Land* (1995) Césaire is saddened by the Black man's acceptance of the superiority of the colonizer which resultantly sinks the colonized people into a subservient lot who is acted upon. Acceptance of the subordinate position is in a way an act of legitimating domination of the colonial power. As indicated earlier, Dathorne observes that Césaire established negritude as an informal forum for poets. Dathorne further notes that at first, Césaire used the techniques of surrealism. Dathorne (1976:22) quotes Breton, the chief exponent of surrealism who defines it as "everything which by new ways aims at a greater emancipation of the spirit." Against this background, Césaire is committed to liberating the African from a condition of subservience which is the aim of the French establishment in Africa. For Césaire, it was essential to cultivate unity among the colonized so that they would realize visions of a better future on the basis of their culture. To Césaire and other poets of his generation, the duty of the poet is to "establish the broken link." His long poem, *A Notebook of My Return to My Native Land* (1995) among many others, attest to this. Rosello in Césaire (1995:27) observes that; "for Césaire it was crucial to help black people unite and to transcend crippling and divisive stereotypes among communities of African descent." In *A Notebook of My Return to my Native Land* there is the nostalgic link between the poet and past. He longs for the beauty that defines the African past. In the poem Césaire is committed to idea that "Africa was not one long night of savagery..." Achebe (1989), and therefore emphasises on restoring the broken link between the past and the African peoples. Rosello (1995) observes the following in this regard:

For Caribbean Blacks, assimilation meant emphasizing their link with the metropole and denying their African ancestors. Therefore for the generation of Césaire, it seemed desirable and urgent to restore the broken link.

For Césaire and other Negritude poets rootedness in African culture and resistance against assimilation is the imperative. In *A Notebook of My Return to my Native Land*, argues Dathorne

(1976:224), Césaire “writes bitterly of the Black man’s acceptance of his inferior lot, which is also the acceptance of the world as it is:

for me the dance
the break-yoke dance
the jailbreak dance
the it-is-beautiful-and-good-and-lawful-to-be-a-blackman
dance...

In the poem, Césaire longs for the African past and challenges the colonized to avoid uncritically adopting foreign cultures while at the same time avoiding self-denigration. Césaire emphasizes that there is dignity in rootedness. Rosello in Césaire (1995:58) observes that “poetry is not an indifferent witness but a powerful cry of revolt which should awaken the mute crowd.” The poet is therefore a voice of the voiceless colonized people who stimulates the crowd to collective action which is a necessary first step towards freedom.

2.2.2.3 Protest against Cultural Arrogance: The Leon Damas Example

In the fashion of other negritude poets Damas (1948, 1956) is concerned with revitalizing the African past and on that basis resist the cultural dominance of the colonizer. Damas’s concern is to make the past relevant to the present and future. Darthone (1976:229) observes that Damas’ poetry is a manifestation of the “rejection of the props of the white world and a turning toward the African continent which was to become all of him.” In the spirit of negritude Damas longs for the African past which to him is essential for unlocking the creative potential of the dominated people. Damas has a vested interest in the legacy of African culture and hence makes an effort to reconstruct the Africa past. Dathorne (1976:229) notes that in one of his early poems, ‘Hoquet’ Damas describes the prejudices of a creole mother:

Quiet
Pray have I told you or not that you must speak French
The French of France
The French of French people
French French...

The creole mother is a symbol of the French colonial policy which was aimed at not only pushing the colonized to the periphery but silencing them. Damas expresses his discontentment with French subjugation of the culture of African people. This system rendered the colonized

mere consumers of culture and not makers of history and culture. The lines cited above emphasise the arrogance of the French who invest their energy in taming the colonized. In this regard Dathorne (1976) observes that not only his speech but his entire way of thinking and behaving was subjected to patterns laid down by the French. Like Césaire, Damas is concerned with exposing and protesting against the superiority of the French. In this regard Damas is equal to the task of revitalizing African humanity. Damas cited in Dathorne (1976) makes an interesting observation that whether these writers came from the Islands, Africa or Madagascar, they had the same goal; the rehabilitation of the black man, the affirmation of his equality before the white world, the affirmation of the African personality.

2.2.2.4 Leopold Sedar Senghor and Protest Against Cultural Arrogance

Senghor is equal to the task of protesting against cultural arrogance of the French. Senghor proceeds from the premise that “those who colonized us justified our political and economic independence by the theory of tabula rasa. We had, they assessed, invented nothing, written nothing. We had neither carved nor sung,” Dathorne (1976:230). Furthermore, Dathorne (1976) pontificates that Senghor’s poetry is accompanied by an appropriate traditional instrument which sets the rhythm. Senghor, unlike Césaire and Damas is closer to the African past because his is not an imagined past as is the case with Césaire and Damas. Furthermore, Dathorne observes that his closeness allows him to make use of place names from his childhood as well as heroes of his tribe. This reference tends to be a celebration of the African past and in a way a preservation of the history of the clan. As Hammond in Ngara and Morrison (1989), observes of Birago Diop, the same can be said of Senghor:

The fact that he returns to his childhood signifies an important aspect of the African writer’s art; he is recalling the traditional and essentially African nature of origins.

To him it is crucial to preserve the place names and heroes and hence maintain the Africanity of the African peoples. Senghor is against assimilation hence his obsession with traditional images. Senghor cited by Hammond (1989) observes that all that can happen is that we become pale copies of Frenchmen, consumers not producers of culture. Senghor like other Francophone poets:

...expresses his hatred of colonialism and of ‘assimilation’ which was the policy of the French government, through its so-called ‘civilising mission’, to assimilate Africans into the French culture and way of living by giving them education, dealing specifically with

French history and tradition, all but ignoring the origins and culture of the African people.

His poem 'Nuit de sine' from *Poemes* (1964) exemplifies reference to ancestor-image that dominates Senghor's poetry. He writes:

Woman, light the lamp of clear oil and let the children, like their
Parents, talk about their ancestors.
Listen to the voice of the Ancestors of Elissa. Like us exiled
They did not wish to die, to lose their seminal flow in dust.

Let me breathe the smell of our Dead Ones, let me recall and
repeat their living accents, let me learn
To live before I go down, deeper than the diver, into the deep
darkness of sleep (pp.14-15)

This section has established that Francophone poetry is largely protest against cultural arrogance of the alien rulers. The poets place African history and culture at the centre in order to inspire a revolution against the imperialist tendencies of the alien rulers. It has also been observed that poets resist the perceived superiority of the French colonial system and celebrate the African past. To borrow wa Thiong'o's (1993) phrase, negritude poets are concerned with "freeing culture from Eurocentrism."

2.2.3 African Poetry and Protest against Racial Prejudice

While it is true that the strands discussed here overlap, this strand should not be confused with the other two discussed above. Mazrui (ibid: 9) rightly observes that "protest against racial prejudice and racial discrimination is pre-eminently a feature of the literature of Southern Africa." This is a different type of protest in which skin colour is the major determinant of an artist's work. In this type of protest "the artist is not kicking against cultural domination, or indeed even against cultural humiliation," (ibid: 9). Instead, what is more paramount is skin colour. Conscious of the difference in skin colour and how colour is used to elevate the white and oppress the black, artists protest against segregation on the lines of skin colour. For the South African poet brutish white supremacist system and the struggles of the Black community for emancipation is the imperative. To use Pointer's words, South African poets invest their energy and "...talent to capture and clarify the experiences of South Africa's majority and to suggest the inevitable direction their struggle must take and the goals it must take."

It must be indicated that in this thesis we observe that Afro-American poetry is replete with protest of this nature. Nkosi (1965:146) notes that the “the dominant note of most black American writing is still, of course that of ‘protest...’” This poetry has been used to fight the white supremacist system in America. To use Nkosi’s (1965:146) words, protest poetry has “...been [a] powerful and necessary means of escape from a psychological prison created by a white-oriented society.” One can speak of a ‘protest tradition’ for the Black Americans. Nkosi (ibid: 147) astutely observes that the protest tradition “may have been central to Negro poetry, as indeed it is to all black American literature...” For our purposes, a proper reading of Nkosi’s chapters namely, ‘Africa in Negro American Poetry’, ‘Black Power or Souls of Black Writers’ and ‘The Poet of Regeneration’ substantiate the close affinity between poetry by Black Americans and that set in Southern Africa and hence the justification for including the Black American poetry here as an act of protest against racial prejudice and segregation. In this section we note that South African poets, particularly Black Consciousness poets and Negro poets note that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour-line- the relation of the darker to the lighter faces of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea,” Du Bois cited in Nkosi (1965:107):

2.2.3.1 South African Poetry as an act of Protest against Racial Prejudice

As Mazrui (1978) rightly observes protest against racial prejudice is most recognizable in Southern Africa, South Africa to be specific. South African literature is replete with protest of this nature. South African poets’ represented in the anthology *Poets to the People* such as Keorapetse Kgotsitsile (1980, Mongane Serote, Dennis Brutus (1978, 1980) and Mazisi Kunene (1980) among many others “...write against the background of apartheid and are part of the struggle against its oppressive state machinery,” Ngara in Ngara and Morrison (1989:65). Furthermore, Ngara (1989) observes that “suffering, pain, violence, anger and the determination to fight and defeat the system are the major concerns of poems by Dennis Brutus, Keorapetse Kgotsitsile, Mazisi Kunene and other revolutionary writers.” It is the urge to liberate the African multitudes whose life is characterized by anguish, poverty, violence and excruciating pain as a result of the white supremacist system that marks poetry on racial prejudice. La Guma in Pointer (2001: xviii) observes that:

The proposition of art for the sake of art finds no foothold in the atmosphere of racism, violence and crude exploitation which is the day- to- day experience of the South African people.

In this section the major concern is to establish the quest for freedom from racial prejudice that marks South African poetry produced during the apartheid era. It is crucial at this point to invite wa Thiong'o (1993:116) who argues that racism is war on peace within and among nations. He gives the image of a colonial farmer who could stand on the bodies of his gardeners to enjoy the beauty of the tea plantation and ironically proclaim peace:

Today that colonial farmer could be one of the white masters of apartheid standing on the backs of millions of blacks in South Africa and Namibia, shouting peace while carrying out war against the people. Or he could be the West standing on the backs of Asia, Africa and South America shouting peace while arming their favourite puppets who carry out war against the people.

South African poets show that the white race is against peace by trampling on the black race. To the poets, subjugation on the basis of skin colour is a threat to peace and tranquility which the poets resist outrightly as shown by the examples given above. Pointer (2001) observes that South African poets and novelists helped to expose apartheid, and to extol the noble struggles of those who oppose one of the most hateful, white supremacist, racist systems the world has ever known. Racism in South Africa has given birth to a tradition of protest which is a manifestation of the urge for liberation among the oppressed peoples of South Africa and the world over.

In this section a reading of Nkomo's (1989) article entitled 'Vision and Form in South African Liberation Poetry', Amuta's 'Poetry and Liberation Politics in Africa' and Nkomo's chapters in the book, *Home and Exile* referred to above help us to establish protest against racial prejudice in South Africa and America respectively. Apartheid is one of the major subjects of South African poetry informed by the apartheid era. Their poetry is poetry of disenchantment and protest against the white-oriented system that strips the Blacks of their humanity. The artist has a serious duty to capture the debilitating realities of the apartheid system and facilitate resistance and struggle against the system that benefits the white race while pushing the black race to the periphery.

Keorapetse Kgotsile is a South African poet whose poetry is concerned with the African people's struggle for freedom. The artist is immersed in the politics of the day and his art can not

afford to be neutral. In his poetry, Kgositsile registers the violence of the oppressor and the anger of the imperiled Black subject. Ngara in Ngara and Morrison (1989:67) notes the following of Kgositsile “the images of violence and the realization that it is only through suffering that freedom will eventually be achieved is echoed in Keorapetse Kgositsile’s poems...”

Kgositsile’s poetry shows the necessity of struggle in the face of racial prejudice and segregation. He is aware that struggle is the only formula that will extract the dominated peoples of South Africa from the undesirable condition of the white dominated society. Kgosistile challenges objecthood and emphasizes that human agency and urgency constitute the prime undertaking. Ngara (1989:67) quotes the following lines that support necessity of struggle in Kgositsile’s poetry:

Child of the crisis
Son of sirens knuckles and boots
Tongues pronounce judgement yes
And so do guns and grenades
Armed peace is an act of love
We know. We now know

Somewhere a mother will rejoice.

Kgositsile’ poetry is truly revolutionary and is indeed a spring of hope. He plants hope into the minds of the segregated Black majority. The poet challenges the racist exploitation of the Africans by the whites. He brings “hope in the midst of despair” to use the phrase from Wodajo’s (2000) book of the same title. Kgositsile underlines the fact that freedom signified by ‘rejoice’ is realizable only when the colonized seize the initiative to fight the colonial powers and change the scheme of things. Kgositsile’s poetry is against the white supremacist system whose colonial formula only works to keep the Blackman down. In support of this Darthone (1976:214) observes that “his subject matter tends to be the same throughout all his works; the Black proclamation against the Man’s (the white man’s) persistent desire to downgrade the Blacks.” Kgositsile dismisses the antics of the white man with utter contempt. In other words, Kgositsile is a bitter poet. In a characteristically Black American fashion, Kgositsile poetry is largely an indictment of the white race’s superiority complex. Muponde (2000:130) observes that an “... uncompromising militant radicalism is... found in South African poets like Mzwakhe Mbuli, Sepamla, Keorapetse Kgositsile and Mongane Serote.”

Dennis Brutus is also a militant poet whose poetry is worth discussing. Amuta (1989:179) observes that South African poetry on apartheid largely manifests "...a combative, uncompromising tradition that not only exposes the underlying materialism of the system but invites responses that are totally geared towards its nullification and transcendence." Brutus is one poet who is anti-apartheid because of its exploitative and repressive nature. Brutus's collection, *Stubborn Hope* is replete with poetry that is militant and direct. Amuta (1989) notes that the collection "presents a diversity of themes and concerns derived from the apartheid situation which lends a fairly picture total of the South African experience."

Ngara (1989:66) notes that "Brutus brings out the violence and inhumanity to which the prisoners are subjected." Ngara (1989) and Amuta (1989) concur that Brutus is an optimistic poet who despite the brutish conditions does not lead the colonized down paths of pessimism. To Brutus 'therapeutic violence' is a necessity for the victims of the oppressive and exploitative racial system. Amuta (1989:180) indicates that "Brutus is intensely aware that given the distortions of apartheid, a certain therapeutic violence is required to cleanse it of the scourge of injustice and oppression."

Brutus is of the view that society has been inflicted by the racist scourge and because the scourge is well calculated to service the white race a certain degree of violence is necessary to restore sanity in South Africa. Amuta (1989) quotes the following lines:

If in time I can endure no longer
the torturing of unrequitedness
and claw your contours with deliberate clumsiness
I beg you to remember
such violence may be
pervasion of frustrated tenderness.

Brutus reaffirms the necessity of revolutionary violence to realize visions of a free society. Brutus's contention is that human agency is the magic formula to the realization of a just and free society. In the same vein Ngara maintains that despite capturing the brutality that defines apartheid South Africa Brutus has no reason to despair. This is concretised by the following lines in the poem 'To Those Who Persuade Us' off the anthology *Poets to the People*:

To those who persuade
to purchase despair

we must say No.

Brutus is an optimistic poet who does not surrender to the racist oppressive system which resultantly benefits the white man while relegating the Black man to a subordinate role. Brutus maintains the militancy which defines poetry on apartheid South Africa and the following lines extracted from Ngara (1989:66-67) attest to this:

it is time for action
enough of craft and cunning
and calculating wisdom;
I have seen enough of that
over the years

it is time to prove our resolve
our sincerity
in action.

Brutus shows the determination to struggle against apartheid. In the context of apartheid, Brutus underlines the fact that the Black majority must not negate human agency. One recalls Henry in Gordon (1997:142) who observes that “our insertion into the human world of social life challenges us to intervene practically in social processes so that they do not negate but enhance human agency.” Brutus advances the contention that the violent apartheid system can only be defeated by active struggle. Amuta (1989:181-2) notes that “freedom as the corollary of imprisonment and not incarceration as a permanent condition is the ultimate object of Brutus’s commitment.” In other words freedom is the object of Brutus art. Hope prevails over pessimism despite the challenges posed by apartheid South Africa on the Black race.

The tenor the argument so far has been that South African poets expose the excruciating brutality, pain and anguish that define apartheid South Africa. The discussion has noted that the poetry is “...full of contempt for colonialism in all its forms, also for social justice, poverty, human degradation and racial arrogance,” Pointer (2001: xv). It has been noted that the poets uphold human dignity and equality. Despite the pain in their writings, hope transcends pessimism because the poets emphasise that it is only when the Black race seizes the initiative and wage a struggle against the white race (which orchestrates the inhuman treatment) that the black man can be liberated. While Brutus and Kgositsile are concerned with the class structure of apartheid South Africa, Ngara (1989:72) notes that poets such as Siphos Sepamla, Ingoapele

Madingoane and Mangoane Wally Serote can be classified as Black Consciousness poets. The following is a discussion of poetry of poets to whom skin colour is at the centre of relations of domination and subordination.

A close reading of wa Thiongo's (1993) chapter entitled 'The Ideology of Racism' is crucial to the understanding of apartheid South Africa. Ngara (1989) notes that Black Consciousness poets rose in the 1970s and are concerned with the brutish conditions in which the Black of South Africa live. The Black Consciousness movement ideology is a movement whose ideological orientation is informed by skin colour. Steve Biko is the founder of the Black Consciousness movement. Reflecting on apartheid South Africa, wa Thiongo (1993:120) observes that:

In places like [apartheid] South Africa political domination is clear-cut. A white minority, through the vicious apartheid system, can dominate the majority.

The Black Consciousness Movement argued that in order to gain political and psychological liberation the black people must believe in their blackness. Black Consciousness poets understand reality through the lenses of skin colour. Steve Biko cited in Ngara (1989:71) notes that:

Briefly defined therefore, Black Consciousness is in essence the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation- the blackness of their skin-and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the 'normal' which is white...It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life.

Ngara (1989:71) notes that while such poets as Keorapetse Kgositsile (1980), Dennis Brutus (1978, 1980) and Mazisi Kunene (1980) are concerned with a class analysis of their society, and "there is a group of writers to whom colour is a major determinant of the relations of domination and subordination in South Africa." Poets who belong to this group include Sipho Sepamla (1984), Ingoapele Modingaone (1979) and Mongane Wally Serote (1980). Sepamla and Serote are the most representative of the Black Consciousness poets. For the Black Consciousness Movement; white racism is the major political force in South Africa and that "Africans, Indians, and Coloureds are branded "non-whites" and are therefore oppressed by reason of their colour," Ngara (1989:72). The objective of the Black Consciousness movement is to resist oppression and exploitation of the Black race on the basis of skin colour and to problematise the unjust system

which benefits the minority. In this respect, Ngara (1989: 72) says “their poetry sets out not only to champion the cause of the oppressed blacks but to project, a new ideology which questions and challenges the racist ideology on which the apartheid policy is based.”

Resistance to oppression and exploitation by the Black race is therefore the prime objective of this poetry and skin colour becomes the crucial motivator of that very resistance. The poets therefore are committed to the daily struggles of the South African peoples to free themselves from apartheid. In the context of apartheid the poets can not afford the luxury of divorcing their literature from the important issues of the day. Resistance to domination on the basis of colour is the object of literature produced during the apartheid era. They dramatise in as “powerful a manner as possible the evils of racism,” Pointer (2001: xl).

To make the central concern on skin colour clearer it is pertinent to quote Sepamla’s lines from the poem, ‘On Judgement Day’

black people are born singers
black people are born runners
black people are peace-loving

Sepamla is concerned with the racist images that seek to relegate the black man to the periphery. This is against the backdrop that the white race has been and is notorious for creating negative images about the black race. Even the greatest minds from the white race such as Hegel, Jefferson, Conrad, Trevor-Roper among many others are popular for the wrong reason of creating racist myths about Africa and Africans. Here is one such notorious falsehood masquerading as the true image of the African:

Perhaps in the future, he argued, there will be some African history...But at the present, there is none; there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness...and darkness is not a subject of history. Mazrui (2002:3)

Hegel, Trevor-Roper, Jefferson and others “are image-makers of the western imagination,” wa Thiongo (1993:123). The prime objective is to dehumanize the African and hence “scatter, confuse, and weaken resistance, prevent it, if you like, from reaching the stage of demanding and effecting revolutionary changes in the status quo,” (ibid: 122). In actual fact, the perception of the Africa and the Africans as a land and people without history strips the African peoples of their dignity and a race denied history is doomed. Sepamla (1984) demythologizes, deconstructs

and resists the white man's racist creations about Africans. In the process Sepamla restores, recreates and reconstructs African humanity. To Sepamla, it is erroneous to create myths about the black race in order to dominate and subordinate it.

Ngara discusses Mongane Serote's (1980) poetry in *Poets to the People*. Ngara (1989) analyses the poem 'What is in this Black Shit.' In this poem, Serote protests against racial prejudice and segregation. Serote cited in Ngara (1989):

I am learning to pronounce this 'Shit' well'
Since the other day
At the pass office
When I went to get employment,
The officer there endorsed me to Middleburg,
So I said, hard with all my might, 'Shit!',
I felt a little better
But what is good is, I said it in his face,
A thing my father wouldn't dare do.

In this poem, the black worker challenges humiliation which is now the defining element of the black race. The poet emphasizes the spirit of resistance that has gripped the Black race. In this respect, wa Thiong'o (1993:119) observes that:

This division between workers of different racial groups has been raised to the status of philosophy and political practice in apartheid South Africa.

This has had the effect of pushing the black worker to the periphery and elevating the white worker to a privileged position. Furthermore, wa Thiong'o (ibid:119) observes that the "huge profits extracted from the workers in Asia, Africa and South America are brought back to Europe and North America and Japan and help in raising the standard of living of the West as a whole." In the lines quoted above, Serote (1980) adopts a radical stance and on that basis resists oppression by the racial system in South Africa which rewards the white minority. The poem is on the painful end of the white supremacy as a result of the realization among the oppressed blacks that human agency and urgency are the magic formula to freedom. Ngara (1989: 74) observes that "...this new confidence to face white people and challenge their superiority comes out in such poems as 'The Growing', 'Hell Well, Heaven' and 'My Brothers in the Streets.'"

Women poets also contribute to the anthology *Poets to the People* (1980). These poets like their male counterparts emphasise the necessity of struggle. One such poet is Gloria Nkadimeng (anthology undated) in the poem entitled 'Fallen Hero' which is concerned with resisting racial prejudice. The following lines cited by Ngara (1989:74) are representative of the resistance of the female voices:

i'll be silent like the silenced that (now) you
but I'll ricochet in fury
boomerang to bury this death once and for all.

Ngara (ibid: 74) notes that the lines "...serve to show the anger of the black South African women poets and their resolve to actively engage the enemy alongside their male comrades." The female voices are committed to the fight against the forces that keep down the black race. Such poets include Lindiwe Mabuza (undated), Baleka Kgositsile (undated), Ilva Mackay (undated) and Gloria Mtungwa (undated). They struggle for social justice and use their poetry as a political weapon to inspire resistance to repression.

This section has revealed that South African poetry is replete with protest against racial prejudice. It is "literature of combat" in the sense of inspiring a struggle against racial segregation. The poets are concerned with "setting afoot a new man" to use Fanon's (1968:316) words. The greatest resistance is to be found in the Black consciousness movement poets who display an unparalleled degree of resistance against apartheid. The poets capture the concrete realities of the South African situation in the context of apartheid. La Guma (1976) in Pointer (2001: xv) observes that:

The dynamic of the South African people will always be represented ...by the writings of those who do not fear to reflect real struggle, that is the struggle to overthrow white supremacy, not merely nibble at the fingers, lagging behind the inevitable advance.

South African poets protest against racial prejudice and as Pointer (ibid: xxxii-xxiv) succinctly points out, "...do not leave the man of color in an inextricable malaise; but ...lifts him to his own shoulders and raises him with a new story of hope." wa Thiongo (1993:131) concurs as follows:

...it is imperative for the progressive teacher, writer, educator, to give African children a picture of themselves in the world consistent with their deepest aspirations for peace, equality and higher quality of life. The writing of literature, the criticism of literature, the

teaching of literature: all these ought to be part and parcel of a total and relentless struggle against the material base of racism which in today's world means capitalism and imperialism.

African poets are committed to the struggle against oppression of the man of colour and therefore utilize poetry to express their grievances and this is also evident in Afro-American poetry.

In a chapter entitled 'The Poet of Regeneration,' Nkosi (1965: 146) observes that the "dominant note of most black American writing is still of course, that of 'protest.'" He further notes that the 'protest tradition' may have been central to Negro poetry, as indeed it is to all black American literature. Protest poetry of the Harlem Renaissance is a case in point here hence our inclusion of Black American poetry in Mazrui's classification of African literature. As indicated earlier on, in this thesis we consider Afro-American poetry together with African poetry because "the evidence before our eyes [shows] that a great deal of Africa survives in the mores of African Negroes through such accidents as the continuous history of segregation," Nkosi (1965: 99). Karenga in Cashmore and Jennings (2001:209) observes that it is a "fact that U.S society is a society divided and organized along racial lines..." Resistance against racial subjugation perpetuated by the whites in South Africa during apartheid is largely similar to the struggles of the people of the South in America. The struggle of the oppressed peoples of Africa is therefore the struggle of the oppressed Afro- Americans. Pointer (2001: xxvi) argues "the [South African experience] is very similar to the 'three-tiered social system' that evolved in America's lower South of the early 1700s..." This study argues that protest against racial prejudice is the dominant theme in both apartheid South African and Afro-American poetry. Nkosi's (1965) essays namely 'Africa in American Poetry', 'Black Power or Souls of Black Writers', make interesting here. A closer look at Afro American poetry reveals that Black Americans are committed to resistance against racial prejudice.

Nkosi (1965) observes that some of the poets, the most notable being Claude McKay saw themselves as aliens in the American culture living in enforced exile. In a poem entitled 'Outcast' McKay reveals the entrapment that characterizes Black American's life in the Americas. America is depicted as a land where the black man can not realize his full potential because the American society subjugates the black race. The poem outcast is concerned with the urge for liberation from the debilitating aesthetics of Americanism. McKay exposes the

superiority complex that blinkers the vision of the white race to think that the Blacks are mere prisoners of the western world. Nkosi (1965:109) is admirably succinct:

To come back to race prejudice against black people in white controlled areas of the world, the sheer coincidence that so vastly consequential a force as modern technology is seen historically to have been associated with the white races of Europe, exercises, and has always exercised an influence in the behavior of white toward black people greatly disproportionate to the individual achievement of each of those white persons.

Nkosi (1965) observes that the poet gave it as his opinion that he could find no full expression in American society:

While to its alien gods I bend my knee

Nkosi further notes that Countee Cullen, (1927) saw the condition of the Negro in America as one of enforced exile from “the scenes his father loved.” Poets are at loggerheads with American culture of exclusion on the basis of colour. The poets create an image of Africa which is characterized by “...vigour and masculinity which they contrasted against the puritanic virtues of an Anglo Saxon tradition.” Africa is characterized as a land of plenty and freedom particularly for the Black American whose ancestors were uprooted from Mother Africa. To the Black Americans, the white dominated society only works to push them to the periphery and emasculate the Black race. Racial prejudice is used as an instrument of oppression and enslavement and only incidentally as an agent of their emancipation from poverty, want and the hazards of nature,” Nkosi (ibid: 109). The net effect of racism in US society is that it “closes Blacks in the community, but simultaneously shuts them out from the access and various opportunities available in the larger society,” Karenga in Cashmore and Jennings (2001: 210). It is this realization that inspires resistance against the white race. In this regard Nkosi (ibid: 102) observes the following:

...part of this reaction against Western culture and the withdrawal from it was due to the insensitive manner in which it had excluded the Negro from full participation...

The Negro is silenced by the racial system which elevates the white race to an assumed superior position. The Negro is denied space and it is this denial of space and voice that fuels protest poetry in the Negro community. In a manner characteristic of Black Consciousness poets of South Africa, Black American poets such as MacKay (1970) radical and militant. The following lines attest this:

If we must die let it not be like hogs

Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot
.....
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but we will fight back!

The lines above carry overtones of uncompromising resistance to the US society which is oppressive and violent. History teaches us that the Black man was uprooted from Mother Africa to America through slavery, one of the greatest acts of barbarity Mankind has ever witnessed. Nkosi (ibid: 102) observes that:

...the Negro was wrenched from his homeland and carried into slavery in the most shameful way possible; and in this new homeland the possibility that he might have anything of worth to teach the Europeans culturally was sternly disputed.

Nkosi notes that Negro poets reflect on the idea that America is a world where the black man is inferior and voiceless. The black man is stripped of his humanity and reduced to a mere object that is acted upon by the white man who enjoys the illegitimate privilege of dominating over another race. Nkosi (1965) quotes poet Countee Cullen in his introduction to the 1927 anthology of Negro poetry *Caroling Dusk* who observes that; "Claude McKay is most exercised, rebellious, vituperative to a degree that clouds his lyricism." The poets are aware of the evils of colonialism which is a violent act and this explains the violent stance adopted by the poet. This is an instance of liberating violence. Nkosi notes that McKay and Diop throw their weight behind anti-imperialism struggle.

Faced with the violence and humiliation characterising the Black people in Africa and America, Negro poets and African poets (particularly Francophone poets) find solace in the African Past. The quest for home is dominant in the poetry by the Negroes. It is in the homeland, Africa, where the Negro can realize his full potential because the US society only works to psychologically confuse the Blacks. In the American society, self hate is a psychological tool for oppression. The following lines cited in Nkosi (ibid: 103) illuminate the quest for home as expounded by American Negro poet, Waring Cuney in the poem; 'No Images'

...there are no palm trees
On the street,
And dishwasher gives back no images.

Be that as it may, Nkosi observes that latter day Negro intellectuals such as Lorraine Hansberry ((1959), John Killens (1954), Le Roi Jones (1979) and James Baldwin (1953, 1955) exclaim in contempt “who wants to be integrated into a burning house?” This suggests that the Negroes like Francophone poets resist assimilation into American culture. Negro poetry is awash with the spirit of resistance against assimilation into American culture which is regarded as a “burning house.” Be that as it may, Nkosi is quick to note that a general weakness of this poetry is that it can only be declamatory. Nkosi (ibid:103) surmises that this is a sentiment behind the school of Negro thought which states that the Negro must reject integration into a flabby, morally decrepit society and demand as prior condition for entrance “a radical remaking of American society.” It can be argued therefore that the poets are concerned with rescuing “Black life from the racist interpretations which pose it as pathological and pathogenic and redefine it in its multidimensionality and variousness,” Karenga in Cashmore and Jennings (2001:209). In actual fact, Negro poets distance themselves from American culture which is characterized by greed which results in a racist stance against other races, particularly the blacks. The poets dissociate themselves from the evil in America.

Nkosi (ibid: 104) has also established Negro poets such as LeRoi Jones (1979), AB Spellman (1964, 1966), Bob Koffman’s (1958,1965) “vision is modernistic...and they show less romantic concern with the jungle and are more absorbed with the state of the Negro in America. Young Negro poets such as Horace Bond (1964) are altogether different from the bitter intensity of the earlier poets who profoundly resented their sense of loss.” Negro poetry shows disenchantment with the white racial system which subordinates the Black community. Nkosi holds that like Francophone poets Negro poetry shows that:

A return to Africa—even symbolically through a poetical re-enactment —is a return to lost vitality. Africa stands for rejuvenation and spiritual plenitude. It stands for virility and physical well-being...

Nkosi (ibid) observes that the Negro has a crisis of identity and this crisis is a manifestation of victimhood in the American society. Nkosi observes the primary source of agony in America lies in the fact that there is always “this desire for acceptance into, as well a desire to remain apart from, American society.” This crisis of identity is associated with pain, angst and suffering. However the Negroes are committed to separation from the mainstream of American culture and this severance is “as a source of moral strength.” Nkosi (ibid: 104) reminds us that:

The Negro is seen as being the peerless, incorruptible stone in the polluted stream; the only one still capable of affirming the primal values which formerly moved American society but are now seen as lost to white Americans.

This shows that despite the suffering and pain in US society the Black Americans do not succumb to the challenges but realize visions of a liberated society. This is only realizable through resistance to damnation. This is also evident in Negro poetry.

The section has revealed that existing studies show that Negro poetry is largely protest against the racist US society which is organized in such a manner that the black man must be relegated to perpetual servitude. Nkosi studies referred to here are representative of the general concern in Negro writing. To borrow Karenga's words cited in Cashmore and Jennings (2001:210) poetry by Black Americans is "reflective of issues and problems which are directly related to Black subordination and oppression in US society and Black struggle to end this condition." The section has also revealed that Negro poetry is closely related to the literature from Southern Africa in that both protest against racial prejudice. Furthermore, Negro poetry is closely related to Francophone Africa in the sense that there is resistance to assimilation into mainstream French and American culture respectively

2.2.4 Poetry of Detached Observation of Culture Contact and the Process of Culture Change

It is worth noting that unlike the other three strands this strand is not necessarily an act protest. In this strand the artist is a detached observer capturing the actualities of the society of which his art is a product. While this is not direct protest the artist registers with concern the realities of his society. Mazrui (1978) observes that in this strand the artist is not necessarily protesting. Instead, he/she is largely a critical observer. The writer keeps an eagle's eye on the society so as to capture as truthfully as possible the ongoing realities of his society. In other words, the writer is a concerned observer. Mazrui (1978) gives Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as an example. He notes that:

There is a deep acceptance of history and its demands. There is a sense of human bewilderment which history is exacting. But this consciousness of course is not accompanied by angry protest.

Mazrui (1978) observes that Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is perhaps in this category. Mazrui further notes that literature which is in this strand is not characterized by bitter

or angry protest but is associated on the more by profound lament. Mazrui observes that in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Achebe is essentially a concerned observer than a fighter. In this strand the writer is largely a critical observer of popular issues of a particular society at a given time. In *Beware Soul Brother* (1971), like in his other literary works Achebe is a concerned teacher than a fighter. Achebe (1988:45) observes the following of African writers:

The writer can not expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he must march right in front.

In his view the role of the writer is “to help society to regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement,” Achebe (1988:44). In his poetry anthology, *Beware Soul Brother* (1971), his aim is to teach society to resist inferiority.

Rogers (1978) in an essay in Innes and Lindfors (1978) titled ‘Chinua Achebe’s Poems of Regeneration makes interesting reading here. Rodgers (1978: 284) observes that “in ‘Beware Soul Brother’ and implicitly throughout the collection Achebe identifies the enemies of the public spirit and admonishes his readers to beware.” Rodgers (1978) also observes that, in the more personal poems of the collection which capture the rebirth of hope and love, new life and order, Achebe creates a representative spokesman, an exemplary persona whose experience realizes the goal Achebe seeks for his society as a whole, the regeneration of its deepest aspirations.

In *Beware Soul Brother* (1971), Achebe is a distant and detached observer. Rodgers (1978) views the poem ‘Beware Soul Brother’ as largely a warning to writers who are ‘the men of souls.’ The poem provides law for the arts and important lessons to ‘soul brothers’ that is the writers. Rodgers notes that Achebe “numbers himself among the ‘soul brothers’ and in the poem ‘Answer’ reveals a moment when he felt obliged to try to recover lost vitality. This is regeneration and re-education of the society to know that there is nothing disgraceful about their race. Rodgers (ibid) observes that in three poems namely, ‘Penalty of Godhead,’ ‘Lament of the Sacred Python’ and ‘Dereliction’ Chinua Achebe looks back at the world of the ancestors and expresses the pain he feels for abandoning them. In other words, Achebe cherishes the past and in the process educates the masses to value their past because the past informs both the present and future. The past is therefore depicted as an important point of reference.

Mordekai Hamutyinei is a Shona poet who can be regarded as an observer. Chiwome (1996) describes Hamutyinei as a critical observer of popular social institutions. His poetry shows that he is a distant observer of social institutions. In other words, he is a social satirist who critically observes social issues. Like Achebe, his art is not accompanied by angry protest. His concern is to expose and scorn vices and folly that are associated with popular social institutions like courtship and marriage. His poetry in *Mabvumira eNhetembo* (1969) is largely concerned with critically observing popular social institutions. In a poem titled 'Kana Wamutanga Musikana,' Hamutyinei observes the courtship business with concern. Chiwome (1996) ridicules a girl for engaging in time wasting antics when a suitor approaches her. He ridicules the hide-and-seek game that accompanies courtship. While it is expected of a girl in the traditional set up Chiwome (1996) argues that Hamutyinei critically observes this institution and questions why one has to delay accepting the proposal. Hamutyinei observes that in the traditional set up despite falling for a potential suitor the girl can not propose love to the suitor because the culture does not uphold that:

*Nyangwe rudo rukamubaya mwoyo somunzwa
Haakwanisi iye kurupa kumukomana. (p.17).*

(No matter how much she loves a potential suitor
She can not propose love to the suitor)

Hamutyinei is a concerned observer who sees no logic in engaging in time wasting antics but finds solace in the fact that this is enshrined in our culture. He says:

Vehama ndozvazvinoita parudzi rwedu. (p.18)

(My kith and kin this is the how it is done according to our culture.)

In another poem, *Runoita wegondo*, Hamutyinei is concerned with exposing the plight of Rambisisai who only had a baby after having almost lost hope. She is blessed with a strong baby boy who unexpectedly fell ill and dies. In the poem, Hamutyinei is reflecting on the meaninglessness of life. He observes that the source of happiness is also the source of disappointment. Although Hamutyinei can be said to be a critical observer he is Euro-modernist in his understanding of reality. The researcher holds that it is inadequate to merely reflect on the

absurdity of life without instilling hope into the minds of the readership in order for them to see meaning in struggle.

2.2.5 African Poetry as Protest against Africa itself

Mazrui (1978) notes that the fifth strand is essentially protest against Africa itself-or at least against the current generation of Africans. It must be noted that in this strand we observe that this protest can be divided into two that is i) protest against the current generation of Africans and ii) African women protesting against their male counterparts. What motivates the first type of protest is meaninglessness of independence in Africa. Poets therefore register discontentment with the failure of leaders to nurture a truly independent nation which is characterized by equality, justice and freedom. The writers protest against nominal independence of African nations. Writers are concerned with freeing the nation from imperialism and any form of foreign domination. To use wa Thiongo's (1981:118) words, the role of the writer in a neocolonial state is to, "speak for, speak to, speak out for the strength and determination of the people in their struggle for total liberation." The second type of protest is motivated by women's discontentment with their male counterparts as a result of the perceived oppression by men. This type of protest is discussed later in chapter four. This section therefore, discusses protest against the current generation of Africans.

Mazrui (1978) surmises that Achebe's *A Man of the People* sets the tone of political disenchantment and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born* registers the disillusionment that engulfs independent Ghana at the time of writing. The literary giant Ngugi wa Thiongo also registers the limitations of political independence in his works. *Petals of Blood* (1977), *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1990), *Devil on the Cross* (1987) and *Matigari* (1989) attest to this. In this strand the writers tackle neo-colonialism head-on. By and large, protest against Africa is essentially an expression of grievances to the ruling elite. The writer is "writing against neocolonialism" to use wa Thiongo's (1986) phrase from a book by the same title. wa Thiongo (1986) notes that the African writer has gone through three stages namely the age of the anti-colonial struggle, the age of independence and the age of neocolonialism. wa Thiongo (1986:7) observes the following of Africa's independence:

It was independence with the ruler holding a begging bowl and the ruled holding a shrinking belly. It was independence with a question mark. The age of

independence had produced a new class and a new leadership that often was not very different from the old one.

Against this background, post-independence Zimbabwean poets problematise this type of independence. It is this very disillusionment which motivates protest against Africa itself. The general feeling of these poets and other writers is that “the trouble with [Africa] is simply and squarely the failure of leadership,” Achebe (1983:1). The enemy of the writer writing in a period characterized by neocolonialism is capitalist imperialism. It is this capitalist imperialism which the writers seek to expose and disapprove of. The writer aligns himself with the oppressed people in their struggle to realize visions of a new future which is free from foreign domination. Writers take a swipe at what Achebe (1983:3) refers to as “the tendency to pious materialistic woolliness and self-centred pedestrianism.”

For the purposes of making this type of protest clearer a brief discussion of p’Bitek (1967), Nyamubaya (1986) and Chimisoro’s (1994) poetry is necessary here. These three are chosen because they are representative of the anger that characterizes the writer in a neocolonial state. These poets express indignation and disillusionment. Mazrui (1978) observes that Okot p’Bitek is an angry artist and given half a chance he would dance himself into a frenzy of anger. While Mazrui (1978) and lo Liong (1964) view Okot p’Bitek as a “latter-day voice of negritude”, wa Thiong’o in the introduction to p’Bitek’s *Africa’s Cultural Revolution* (1973: x) argues that “Okot p’Bitek...is writing at a time when most African countries are nominally independent...He is writing against the colonial aftermath in our cultural values.” p’Bitek is saddened by the native ruling class that inherits the ways of the colonial middle-class intact and the end result is that this aping costs the African of his dignity and creative potential. wa Thiong’o (1973) observes that in *Song of Lawino* (1967), Lawino is talking to the Ocols, members of the native ruling class that received colonial education in colonial schools and universities. What disappoints Lawino is the fact that the native ruling class is blindly aping the “Western bourgeoisie- in dress, behavior, and in general conduct of the affairs of the state.” wa Thiong’o in p’Bitek (1973: x). In *Song of Lawino*, Lawino tells Ocol:

Listen Ocol, my old friend,
The ways of your ancestors
Are good,
Their customs are solid
And not hollow

They are not thin, not easily breakable
They can not be blown away
By the winds
Because their roots reach deep into this soil.

In the above lines p'Bitek emphasizes rootedness which to him helps nurture true independence. His view is that aping the ways of former colonizers stifles the freedom of the masses. wa Thiong'o observes that p'Bitek is protesting against the "Ocols of the neocolonial Africa [who] are not interested in reconstructing and developing the broken ends and bruised roots of the African civilization through the only path that would make this possible: a total immersion and involvement in the rural and urban masses," wa Thiong'o in p'Bitek (ibid: x). In *Song of Lawino* (1967) p'Bitek compares the European and African ways of life and dismisses European culture (which is aped by the native bourgeoisie) as useless. Furthermore wa Thiong'o (1972:76) observes that *Song of Lawino* (1967) belongs to a new mood of self-questioning and self examination, to find out "where the rain began to beat us." Lawino observes that the conflicting political parties represent the bourgeoisie class interests and hence the disillusionment suggested by the following lines:

I do not understand
The meaning of Uhuru
I do not understand
Why all the bitterness
And the cruelty
And the cowardice,
The fear,
The daily fear
Eat the hearts
Of political leaders!
Is it the money?
Is it the competition for position?

Okot challenges the myth that African culture is inferior to western culture. His anger is necessitated by the knowledge that the native ruling class does not revitalize the culture of the formerly colonized. Instead of promoting and supporting indigenous cultures the ruling class apes the Western bourgeoisie. His stance is that aping others costs the African his dignity and creative potential. p'Bitek has often been seen as traditionalist. Dathorne (1976:210) observes that, "p'Bitek is really a traditionalist." It can be argued that Dathorne's analysis is rather simplistic. Instead p'Bitek is an artist who values rootedness which provides the leverage to full

creative potential in the present as well as the future. In actual fact, p'Bitek berates the native ruling class for failing to put their cultural values at the centre. At the end of the poem, *Song of Lawino*, the Lawino wishes that husband draw inspiration from the ancestors. p'Bitek's message is that in order for the native ruling class to be functional in their society they should not ape western cultures. The poet is committed to the political troubles of his country and through Lawino is able to ask, "what was the meaning of freedom if there were two opposing parties." Dathorne (1976:211). In this regard, Weil (2001:41) argues that "to be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul." p'Bitek is conscious of the fact that heterogeneity and cooperation among different peoples of the world breeds resistance and freedom.

Song of Ocol (1969) is a celebration of African values with a view to deconstruct the myth that it is inferior to the ways of the former colonisers. *Song of a Prisoner* (1971) is a scathing attack on the native ruling classes who are supposed to be torch-bearers for the new nation but are negating their responsibility to become mere imitators of foreign cultures. Dathorne (1976:211) observes that in *Song of Malaya* the poet uses the work to attack the would-be guardians of contemporary African morality. In *Song of a Prisoner*, p'Bitek is an angry poet because of the disillusionment that engulfs the nation. The poet exposes the lack of power among the majority. *Song of a Prisoner* states in clear and uncertain terms the lack power. The prisoner says:

I want to dance
And forget my smallness,
Let me dance and forget
For a small while
That I am a wretch
The reject of my Country...

The poet is openly bitter about the powerlessness of the majority. He records with bitterness this powerlessness that grips post independence African societies. The poet exposes the entrapment of the masses and it is this disillusionment which gives rise to protest against Africa itself.

Freedom Nyamubaya (1986) is one of the most celebrated poets in Zimbabwe. It is worth noting that she actually participated in the war of liberation and her poetry in *On the Road Again* (1986) is informed by the war of liberation and the "ongoing socio-economic struggles in the age of neocolonialism and imperialism," Muponde (2000:83). The title, *On the Road Again* suggests

that the attainment of political independence ushered a new era which demands that people struggle against capitalist imperialism. Political independence is therefore not an end but the beginning of new struggles. *On the Road Again* was published six years after the attainment of political independence and this is a period which was characterized by disillusionment. This is a period that saw the publication of the play, *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* by Aaron Chiunduramoyo, a play which depicts disillusionment that set in after the attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe. This disillusionment is coupled with protest against the ruling class. The poem, 'Introduction' succinctly captures the objectives of the poet:

Now that I have put my gun down
For almost obvious reasons
The enemy still is here invisible
My barrel has no definite target
Now
Let my hands work-
My mouth sing-
My pencil write-
About the same things my bullet aimed at. (p.1)

Nyamubaya is bitter about the fact that while the people took up arms to fight the colonial regime the pronouncement of independence is meaningless because the "enemy is still here invisible." This implies that imperialists control the affairs of the nation from outside. It is this realization that motivates the poet and the people she stands for to be on the road again with the sole objective of attaining total liberation free from political, economic and cultural domination. The following is a discussion of representative poems on the disillusionment that sets in.

In the poem 'A Mysterious Marriage' Nyamubaya captures the general mood of the poems that are concerned with the shortcomings of political independence. The poem reflects on the idea that the war of liberation gave birth to hollow independence. The poet shows that despite the celebrations and hope that gripped the nation after independence she is saddened by the fact that "freedom hasn't come."

Independence came
But freedom was not there. (p.13)

The poet describes independence as "fruitless and barren." Ngara (1990:122) observes that Nyamubaya is reflecting on "the mood of optimism and hope that gripped the entire population

of Zimbabwe at the end of the war of national liberation and during the preparations for independence.” Muponde (2000) observes that she is also talking about the painful betrayal and abortion of the socio-economic aspirations of the people at Lancaster House (1979) negotiations table.

This painful betrayal is also captured in the poem ‘The Dog and the Hunter’ where the hunter stands for the leader in a neocolonial state and the dog stands for the oppressed masses. The two are in a relationship which is characterized by abuse and lack of trust. It is a fake union between the bourgeoisie and the masses. Nyamubaya says:

In scarcity, the dog and master are friends,
Tied around the neck, the hunter drags him along.
In thick and dark forests, Zvichapera is loose.
Sniffing and trekking game, Zvichapera leads.
Behind trees and ditches,
Game dodges the game.

Until the next hunt, Zvichapera is neither wanted nor fed. (p.8)

The poet is saddened by the fact that despite fighting against the common enemy during the struggle after attainment of political independence the bourgeoisie class relegates the masses to the periphery. The bourgeoisies fatten their pockets while the people are starving. To use Muponde’s (2000:94) words, the masses were manipulated and exploited as instruments of petty-bourgeoisie liberation and destiny. These poems are representative of Nyamubaya’s general concern in the neocolonial environment that is protesting Africa itself.

2.2.5.1 Samuel Chimsoro’s Poetry and Protest Against Africa itself

Samuel Chimsoro also protests against Africa itself. His poems ‘Pfirirai Zimbabwe’ and ‘Kurasiswa, kuzvirasisa nekurasiswa’ in the anthology *Tipeiwo Dariro* help us concretise the argument that Chimsoro is protesting against Africa itself. Chimsoro’s poetry is classified into three ages namely, the age of anti-colonial struggle, the age of independence and the age of neocolonialism. Chimsoro must have had Ngugi’s ideas in ‘Writing against Neocolonialism’ in mind when he came up with this anthology.

The poem 'Pfirirai Zimbabwe' is an attack on the leaders who despite the attainment of independence fail to restore the glory of the nation. His attack is direct as shown in the following lines:

*Nhai baba
Nguva yekupfurunura imba
Haisai yasvika here? (p.72)*

(My dear father
Is the time to rebuild the nation
Not yet up?)

The poet is disappointed by the laxity of the leaders to bring about significant change on the war ravaged society. The poem ends with a reminder to the leaders to make sure that they preside over total liberation which is unshackable:

*Inga yasvika wani nguva
Iya yekuti muturike denga rebako.
Pfirirai Zimbabwe nemakomo
Asina mhandu ingapfurunure. (p.72)*

(Now it is the time
To build the nation
Protect Zimbabwe with mountains
That can not be destroyed by enemies.)

The poem is a lamentation of the failure of the leaders to nurture total liberation which is free from foreign capitalist imperialist forces. Chimisoro also deals with the theme of betrayal in the poem 'Kurasiswa, Kuzvirasisa neKurasika'. The poet shows that while the leader is on the side of the masses during the struggle the attainment of independence has had the effect of widening the gap between the leader and the peasants. The poet attacks the leaders for preaching socialism during the war only to dump the masses after independence. Fanon cited in wa Thiongo (1986:8) observes that:

Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie.

The poet is disillusioned by the leadership who are largely imitating the ways of the colonial leaders. The poet is saddened by the betrayal of the masses:

Ndoti here pabva gondo pamhara zizi? (p.86)

(Should I say the black leader has assumed the role of the former colonizer?)

The poet observes that the leaders are concerned with profiteering while the majority suffers. The leaders also negate the founding principles of the war of liberation.

Pakasiwa paye nemhumhi pava kupedziswa namagora.(p.88)

(That which was left by the erstwhile colonizers is now being devoured by black rulers.)

The poet attacks the leaders for failing to respect the will of the people. The leader is ridiculed for being in charge of the company that is profiteering while the masses suffer. In the light of this, Kesteloot in Jones and Jones (1996:4-5) concretizes this idea saying:

African novelists and playwrights [including poets], Francophone as well as Anglophone, reacted very quickly and echoed the deviations of indigenous politicians, the ridiculous aspects and contradictory morals of the new bourgeoisie, the disappointments and difficulties of the people whose condition only worsened rather than improved.

2.3 Other Related Studies

This section reviews works by other researchers namely, Nkosi (1983), Matambirofa (2006), Kandawasvika-Chivandikwa (2006), Ngara (1990), Muponde (2000) and Muchayi (2000). In discussing these works effort is made to define the point of departure and in cases where a study is insightful to the present study, it is the extent to which it illuminates the present study that is emphasized.

In *Home and Exile*, Nkosi (1983) discusses the relationship between literature and liberation in which he observes that writers and intellectuals have an important role to play not only in the sphere of social and political theory but in the production of artistic work which alone can unite

the heart and the head. It is Nkosi's submission that the contribution of the poet comes in two stages that is during the actual struggle for liberation itself and during the period of reconstruction which follows the successful conclusion of the wars of liberation when writers register not only the pains and joys of national rebirth but begin to constitute an important source of critical consciousness for the nation. This study is not concerned with recording the joys and pains of the birth of new nation but rather on the role of poetry in recording the wishes and aspirations of Africans and Zimbabweans, in particular, in their struggle for total liberation. By interpreting the quest for total liberation it is anticipated that it is an act of dialogue with Africa, dialogue which is essential to providing critical consciousness for all nations. In analyzing post independence Shona poetry effort is made to judge the contribution as well as weakness of the poets whose poetry is discussed and analysed towards bringing about critical consciousness for the nation.

One of the most prominent critics of Shona poetry is Emmanuel Chiwome. In *A Critical History of Shona Poetry* (1996) Chiwome "places Shona poetry in the context of socio- historical forces that produced it," Chiwome (1996: v). In short, he discusses the socio- historical development of Shona poetry. In a chapter entitled 'Post Independence Poetry,' Chiwome discusses two poetry anthologies namely, Chirikure's *Rukuvhute* and Chimisoro's *Dama Rokutanga*. In his discussion Chiwome is concerned with exposing the nature of themes reflected in the two anthologies. Chiwome contends that while Chirikure is one of the most powerful satirists to date, Chimisoro largely imitates his predecessors who concentrated on social issues. Furthermore, in a Chapter entitled 'New Voices in Poetry' Chiwome (ibid) discusses *Tipeiwo Dariro: Mazwi Matsva Munhetembo* (1994) in which he is concerned with the budding writers of that time. While the major thrust of Chiwome's study is analysis of how the socio-historical factors affect the subject matter of the poetry in selected anthologies the subject of inquiry in this study is the search for freedom, equality and justice in four selected anthologies. While Chiwome discusses one of Chirikure's works (*Rukuvhute*) this study analyses other works by Chirikure which are *Chamupupuri* (1994) and *Hakurarwi* (1998) with a view to give scholarly attention to Chirikure's other works. Furthermore, while Chiwome is informed by the socio-historical approach, this researcher is guided by Afrocentricity.

Matambirofa in Mguni et al (2006) in a chapter entitled ‘The Problematics of a Feminist Ontology: Reflections on the Zimbabwe Women Writers’ Project *Ngatisimuke: Nhapitapi yeNhorimbo*’ “characterize[s] gender in general with a view to determining the extent to which the poems in Zimbabwe Women Writers anthology are feminist” (ibid: 103). He contends that the poets who contribute their poetry in *Ngatisimuke* are feminist in orientation. Matambirofa contends the condition of women is heavily influenced by the cultural-political history of colonization and independence more than anything else (ibid: 103). More so, it is argued that the women are mainly concerned with issues relating to the family. Feminism is projected as a problematic theoretical framework. This study analyses the text from a womanist perspective because, as Matambirofa rightly observes, “the poems...straddle two closely related sub- genres, womanism and humanism (ibid: 103). The point of departure in this research is that the major concern of this is to discuss the factors attributed to the oppression of women. This study proceeds from the premise that women’s poetry in *Ngatisimuke* reveals a quest for freedom, equality and justice to the extent that because they are guided by feminism their art is reduced to misguided activism. In actual fact, this study situates the anthology in the cultural context which produces it.

Kandawasvika-Chivandikwa in Mguni et al (ibid:182-194) in a chapter entitled ‘Zimbabwe Women Writers’ Portrayal of Women’s Oppression and Struggles for Liberation in *Masimba* and *Vus’ Inkophe*’ critically discusses the factors and solutions suggested by women writers in the named short story anthologies. Kandawasvika-Chivandikwa notes that the majority of the stories revolve around the marriage institution. She observes that women poets argue for the transformation of the marriage institution by allowing both men and women to equally and actively participate in reconstruction of African humanity. However, in this study evidence on the quest for liberation is primarily drawn from, *Ngatisimuke*, a poetry anthology to find out whether there is any paradigm shift. Kandawasvika’s findings in her study are insightful to the present study though.

Muponde (2000) in a study entitled *Zimbabwean Literature (Poetry)* studies the work of the following Zimbabwean poets, Musaemura Zimunya, Chenjerai Hove, Freedom Nyamubaya and Tafataona Mahoso. Muponde’s study is comparative in nature and revolves around the degree of sensitivity of each poet to the sense of history and the demands placed on each poet by the

society in the throes of change. The title suggests that the study deals with Zimbabwean poetry but in actual fact it deals with Zimbabwean poetry in English and ignores Zimbabwean poetry in indigenous languages. While Muponde's study is insightful to this study we find that the title of his study tends to peripherise Zimbabwean poetry in indigenous languages. Against this background, the present study is concerned with the quest and struggle for freedom for complete and authentic freedom in post independence Shona poetry. In the said study, it seems Muponde is guided by the socio-historical approach. The present study is guided and oriented by Afrocentricity.

Muchayi (2000) in a dissertation entitled *Political Satire in Chirikure Chirikure's Poetry in Chamupupuri and Hakurarwi* discusses Chirikure's political satire where he argues that an exploration, understanding and interpretation of the socio-historical climate against which the satire is set is a prerequisite in understanding the meaning of the work. He argues that the poet's interpretation is shaped by the economic, social and political issues in his society. While this study also analyses *Chamupupuri* and *Hakurarwi* the major thrust of this study is the quest and struggle for freedom. As indicated earlier on, pursuing the quest paves a way for a greater and understanding of Africa's problems and suggesting a cure. Furthermore, Muchayi analyses the two works using the socio-historical approach but the present study utilizes Afrocentricity in pursuing the quest and struggle for freedom in Chirikure's *Chamupupuri* and *Hakurarwi* as well as *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* while *Africana Womanism* is used to analyse *Ngatisimuke*, a female authored anthology.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has been basically a survey of quest for liberation in African as well as Afro-American poetry. Mazrui's (1978) classification of African literature has provided the objective apparatus with which to elucidate the urge for liberation in African poetry. Mazrui's classification has been insightful to the present study in that Mazrui's ideas have been explored against the major concerns of African poetry. It must be noted that Mazrui's five strands with the exception of one reveals that African literature is to a very large extent an act of protest. The chapter, through a survey of the existing literature has shown that protest against alien control is a feature of all formerly colonized African nations and that protest against cultural arrogance of the alien rulers is largely a feature of Francophone Africa. A review of Ngara (1985) has

revealed that Neto, Mutsvairo, Chombo and suchlike are concerned with resisting colonial domination. Theirs is a literature of liberation from the painful grip of colonialism. A review of Darthone (1976) reveals that Aime Cesaire, Leon Damas and Leopold Sedar Senghor's poetry concretises the idea that Francophone literature is largely concerned with revolt against cultural arrogance of the alien rulers. Conscious of the fact that the French policy of assimilation is meant to effect subjugation and exploitation of the colonized peoples, the poets register their anger and resistance to assimilation. While Mazrui is of the contention that protest against racial prejudice is a feature of the literature of Southern Africa it has been argued in the chapter that Afro-American literature is also largely an act of protest against racial prejudice and segregation in the Americas. The chapter has maintained that against the background that Afro-Americans must be thought of in terms of African history and culture, it is therefore logical and rewarding that Afro-American poetry is discussed together with African poetry. It can be argued that South African poets such as Keorapetse Kgotsitsile, Dennis Brutus and the Black Consciousness poets are concerned with resisting the debilitating aesthetics of the brutish and racist white supremacist system in apartheid South Africa. The poets castigate racism with all the impunity it deserves. In the same manner, Afro-American poetry is also largely committed to the militant and radical resistance against racial oppression and exploitation.

Protest against Africa itself is a strand that has been discussed. Mazrui argues that this protest is motivated by the disillusionment that set in after the attainment of political independence. It has been argued that the poetry of Nyamubaya, p'Bitek and Chimsoro reveals that it is largely protest against Africa itself. In fact the poetry is a scathing attack on the native bourgeoisie class which according to the poets has negated the initial goals of the struggle and is failing to improve the life of the majority peoples. The chapter also discussed literature of detached observation of the process of culture contact and the process of culture change. Achebe's poetry in '*Beware Soul Brother*' which has been viewed as poetry of regeneration by Rodgers in Innes and Lindfors (1978) is representative of this strand. It has also been argued that Modekai Hamutyinei is a detached critical observer of popular social institutions.

The chapter has also reviewed the work of other researchers who have studied Shona poetry and these include Matambirofa (2006), Kandawasvika-Chivandikwa (2006), Muchayi (2000), Nkosi

(1983), and Chiwome (1996). Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework and research methodology.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As we enter this new millennium, I cannot stress enough the critical need today for Africana scholars throughout the world to create our own paradigms and theoretical frameworks for assessing our works. We need our own Africana theorists, not scholars who duplicate or use theories created by others in analyzing Africana texts. Indeed, developing paradigms and critical theories, which is our true mission, makes possible for better monitoring interpretations of our works in an effort to keep them both authentic and accurate in order to maintain their originality in meaning and value. Hudson-Weems in Hudson-Weems (2007:75).

The fact of the matter is that Africana womanism is a response to the need for collective definition and recreation of the authentic agenda that is birthright of every living person. Asante in Hudson- Weems (2008:55).

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter has been concerned with reviewing extant literature related to the present study and this chapter presents both theoretical framework and research methods utilized in this study. The chapter explains the theoretical underpinnings of the critical approaches adopted for carrying out the study. This chapter, therefore, provides a detailed account of the critical approaches and justification for choosing the approaches. Furthermore, the methods of collecting data for the research are also identified and explained in this chapter.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is oriented and guided by Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity is an “intellectual perspective deriving its name from the centrality of African people and phenomena in the interpretation of data,” Asante in Hudson-Weems (2007:29). The first framer or chief exponent of Afrocentricity is Molefi Kete Asante who defines Afrocentricity in the triumvirate Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge (1990), Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change (1980) and The Afrocentric Idea (1987). The contention of the chapter is that Afrocentricity is particularly fitting for a thesis on liberation because Afrocentricity is a liberating perspective in itself. The philosophical basis of this thesis is derived from Afrocentricity. This study holds that endogeneity which refers to

“an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in the African conditions, centering of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one’s intellectual work,” Adesina (2008) is particularly crucial to any study of African literature.

3.2.1 Afrocentricity

Asante is the leading proponent of the Afrocentric approach. In his book, *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987), Asante views himself as a Diopian in as much as his philosophical projections and insights are influenced by Cheikh Anta Diop. Although the terms, ‘Afro-centric’ and ‘Afri-centric’, are used by quite a number of scholars prior to Asante’s publication of the book, *Afrocentricity-The Theory of Social Change* in 1980, the concept is attributed to Asante. Asante first uses the term in that book. Gray (2001:19) observes that Asante’s *Afrocentricity* (1980) “is the first document in modern history attempting intentional, explicit formulation of an African Centred approach to thinking, learning, living and building.” Afrocentricity was coined and popularized by Asante. While Asante’s ideas are captured in ‘The Gray Template’(which is utilized in this thesis) it is pertinent that to highlight some crucial issues raised by the chief proponent of Afrocentricity in as far as these issues have a far reaching influence on the trajectory of thought maintained in this thesis. Asante (1998:7) presents an “Afrocentric vision wrapped in the optimism that remains the attitude of the African multitudes.” Asante in Hudson-Weems (2007:30) observes that:

Indeed, Afrocentricity contends that there could be no social or economic struggle that would make sense if African people remained enamored with the philosophical and intellectual positions of white hegemonic nationalism as it relates to Africa and African people.

Asante emphasizes that Afrocentricity is essentially concerned with centering Africans and not treating them as marginals to Europe. As a theory and movement Afrocentricity places African history and culture at the centre of any analysis. Asante observes that the Afrocentric thinker, practitioner or writer asks the question, “does the practitioner, thinker or writer place the African at the centre?” in our pursuit of the quest for total liberation effort is made assess the extent to which post independence poets put Africa and Africans at the centre. One of the most important ideas set forth by Asante in his writings is that:

Afrocentricity is the idea that African peoples and interests must be viewed as actors and agency in human history, rather than as marginal to the European historical experience-which has been institutionalized as universal. Asante in Ekwe-Ekwe (2001:1).

Asante maintains that any committed Afrocentric practitioner, thinker or writer must always depict Africans as actors (agents) and not helpless victims who are acted upon. Asante emphasizes that in order to realize full freedom, Africans must be active participants in that very process. Afrocentricity therefore merges theory and practice. In his writings, Asante maintains that it is essential that Africans seize the initiative to act with the will and intent to transform society. Ekwe-Ekwe (2001:1-2) astutely notes the following:

Africa or Africans or indeed African interests as subject(s) and/or agent(s) of History? No intellectual disposition could have been more revolutionary, with its impact and implications most far reaching. Surely this was a turning point in the all too familiar truncated trajectory of the age long liberation struggles of African peoples to free themselves from European world domination

Asante emphasizes that practitioners, thinkers and writers (including poets) must always direct efforts to challenge objecthood among the Africans. Every Afrocentric critic, therefore, must focus on and invest energy in depicting Africans as inevitable creators. In this thesis we contend that any serious poet must always reflect on African peoples as subjects and not objects of history. That is non-negotiable. This is what Freire (1996) refers to as “pedagogy of the oppressed” in a book by the same title. In our analysis of the post-independence Shona poetry the contribution and weaknesses of the poets is in terms of whether the poet concerned is committed to centering the African and depicting him or her as a subject who is a master of his or her liberation. To use Chinweizu’s (1975:496-7) words, under the rubric of Afrocentricity, Asante provides:

...a strong Afrocentric view of the world and of ourselves... [That] we must approach all problems and issues from the viewpoint of our own interests...We must work to liberate Africa, to create a liberated African culture, to foster a new global order within which we can stay liberated.

The history, definition and scope of Afrocentricity are provided by Gray (2001) in a book entitled *Afrocentric Thought and Praxis: An Intellectual History*. We find Gray’s views very useful and comprehensive to the extent that we do not intend to repeat that here. In a chapter, ‘Afrocentricity: History, Definition and Scope’, Gray (2001) traces the historical development of Afrocentricity. He concentrates on the work of Afrocentric giants namely; Molefi Kete Asante

(1980, 1987, 1988), Maulana Karenga (1982), Kariamuwelsh-Asante (with Molefi Asante) (1985) and Marimba Ani (1985). Gray (2001) extracts “the principal principles defining Afrocentric thought and praxis.” Gray sets forth an analytical grid based on the major principles derived from the scholars named above. According to Gray thirteen major principles emerge as the most prominent. The thirteen principles constitute what Gray calls ‘The Gray Template.’ In this thesis we utilise ‘The Gray Template’ as an analytical tool to study post-independence Shona poetry. ‘The Gray Template’ is particularly fitting because it is a conglomeration of the ideas of some of the major and most celebrated Afrocentric thinkers. The template is utilized as an evaluative tool. It is the objective apparatus with which to analyse the poetry. The researcher utilizes Afrocentricity in view of Keto’s (1995: viii) observation that; the justification for the paradigm implies an overdue recognition that over the last two centuries, knowledge about Africans inside and outside Africa has been greatly distorted by reliance on frameworks of analysis, interpretation and perspective premised on a European centre, a European perspective and European preferences.”

The following are the thirteen principal principles extracted by Gray which constitute *The Gray Template*:

- 1) The Meta- Constants : Humanising and Harmonising
- 2) The Primacy of African people and African civilization.
- 3) An African audience as the Priority Audience.
- 4) *Njia* as Theme.
- 5) The way of Heru as theme.
- 6) Harmosis as Mode.
- 7) Whollistic Afrocentric Action as Goal.
- 8) Sankofan approach.
- 9) Nommoic Creativity.
- 10) Maatic argumentation.

- 11) Explicit Locational Indicators Intentionality.
- 12) African Collective Memory- Perception Competence.
- 13) *Nzuri* as Invitation and Standard.

The Meta-Constants: Humanizing and Harmonizing is the priority principle because the primary objective of Afrocentricity is to humanize and harmonise. Gray (2001:90) observes that:

The quintessential intent of Afrocentric thought and praxis is to humanize and harmonise. This particular principle is non-negotiable. An effort or product qualifying as Afrocentric demonstrates the intent to humanize [and harmonise] African people.

Gray (2001) further observes that this principle asks the following questions among many others.

- 1) Does that particular theory invite African people to stand tall and realize their full potential?
- 2) Does that poem or book of poems ultimately help restore harmony with African persons and the African community?

The primacy of African people and African civilization is another crucial principle. Gray (2001: 91) rightly observes that, “Afrocentric thinkers, practitioners are clear about the fact that African people are not only the parentpeople but the parentcivilisation of world civilization. Gray (2001) notes that this is indicated in an Afrocentric work especially when the work implies or references the origins of people or civilisation. Gray observes that an Afrocentric work must celebrate the indisputable truth that Africa is the mother of civilization. All Afrocentric thinkers, practitioners and writers “must know, bear witness to, and bear forth these truths.” Gray (2001:93). The study is committed to unraveling the extent to which post independence Shona poetry is devoted to projecting African people as the parentpeople and parentcivilisation.

The third principle, an African audience as the priority audience, emphasizes the idea that writers (for example poets), thinkers and practitioners must always hold African people as the priority audience with a view to elevate the African people. Gray (2001: 94-5) emphasizes that “a non-African audience is secondary, a Pan African audience or a particular African audience is primary.” In the light of this principle, Karenga in Hudson-Weems (2007: 29) observes that “it is a quality of thought that is rooted in the cultural image and human interest of African people.”

Njia as theme is a principle which distinguishes Afrocentric thought. *Njia* is a Kiswahili term meaning “the way.” The principle rests upon the primacy of victorious thought. Profound hope is central to Afrocentric thought and praxis. Objecthood and pessimism have no place in any work to be called Afrocentric. This principle challenges Afro-pessimism and dismisses it with utter contempt. Gray (2001:95) points out that *Njia* as theme means that at a time when life conditions are incredibly dire for most African people, Afrocentric writers, practitioners and thinkers begin by determining victory can be had. Victorious thought must therefore be the pervasive mood. Gray (2001: 95) reiterates that for any thinker, practitioner or writer:

The final word is a victorious word. Afrocentric writers do not follow the tradition of the Greek tragedies. Afrocentric thinkers are not proponents of dread or pessimistic existentialism. Afrocentric practitioners do not practice or teach accommodationism, the chosen way of those who are cowardly, those who fear or who can not envision whollistic freedom and authentic independence.

Njia as way is a principle which is centred on “forward, relentless, optimistic thriving unto victory,” Gray (2001:96). In this thesis the poets are judged in terms of their commitment to *Njia*. The basic assumption is that African poets must transcend pessimism in order that victory can be had.

The way of Heru as theme “involves doing the work of resurrecting and restoring African people with confidence,” Gray (2001:96). The way of Heru is present when a work is confident rather than doubtful. The Afrocentric writer, thinker and practitioner must emphasise that culture is core, foundational matter that must be understood. The way of Heru implies that African people can achieve greatness and freedom in the contemporary dispensation if they unify and utilize their collective economic and political power.

Harmosis as mode is another principle of *The Gray Template*. Harmosis is a term and concept cast by Gray (2001). Harmosis as defined by Gray (2001) is the harmonious synthesis of ancient and traditional African cultural ideas to life with constructive contemporary cultural possibilities and approaches to life. Harmosis is concerned with synthesis that benefits and empowers Africans. Because synthesis can either elevate or subjugate the African people effort must be made to ensure that synthesis does not injure African culture. In view of the foregoing in this study we elucidate the poets’ dedication to harmonizing traditional and contemporary cultural possibilities to the betterment of the human condition.

Wholistic Afrocentric action as goal is another principle distinguishing Afrocentric thought and praxis. The essence of this principle is that “the goal of all Afrocentric endeavours is to produce persons and a people who move, behave, act in an Afrocentric manner in every sphere of life,” Gray (2001: 100). In actual fact, Afrocentric thinkers, practitioners and writers (read poets) are concerned with influencing action. Therefore, Afrocentric poets “work to influence behavior wholistically,” Gray (2001:101). They all intend to make the people Afrocentric in every dimension.

Sankofan approach is another principle of Afrocentric thought and praxis which, according to Gray (2001: 101) “ensures that Afrocentric thought and praxis begins with African history.” This implies that Afrocentric thinkers, practitioners and poets’ effort is rooted in the best of African history. Gray (2001:102) astutely surmises that:

Sankofan Approach begins with African history. It does not consist, however, of simply having a surface or conversational familiarity with the African past. It includes drawing on that past functionally, anchoring efforts in that past-gleaning the most instructive and constructive information from the African past, refining that information as necessary, and then utilizing the information along with one’s particular personal desires to achieve pro-African purposes in the present and the future.

Nommoic Creativity is another principle distinguishing Afrocentric thought and praxis. It is concerned with creating words and the strategic creation of concepts. Gray (2001:103) submits that Nommoic Creativity “contains within it the understanding that words contain power and, used rightly, words can achieve and accomplish what many strong hands, arms, legs and backs can not.” Gray could not say it in better words than the following “...words are sacred when they are used in such a fashion that they free, liberate, help, and heal African people,” (ibid: 103).

Maatic argumentation is another Afrocentric principle. It is concerned with *Maat*-justice as the pervasive condition throughout society. Gray (2001:108) notes that “its priority concern however is justice for and between human beings.” In this study we argue that any poet worth his salt must write about the necessity that “*Maat* (justice) can be achieved and maintained in its various forms: justice between African couples, justice between African leaders and African communities, justice for African people everywhere,” Gray (ibid). African poets, like any other African writer must be committed to writing about justice and by writing about justice they quicken its fruition.

The Explicit Locational Indicators Intentionality is a principle which holds that Afrocentric writers (including poets), thinkers and practitioners are intentional about locating their efforts in an explicit Afrocentric place. Gray (2001) observes that poets, practitioners and thinkers committed to Afrocentricity systematically employ African-centred terms, metaphors, names, symbols, ontological and epistemological assumptions and teleological stances. In other words the Afrocentric writer indicates that "...the novel, [poem] is being located in an African place explicitly and intentionally," Gray (2001:10).

African Collective Memory-Perception competence is yet another distinguishing principle of Afrocentric thought and praxis. This principle holds that African people are linked by their historical experiences. These experiences therefore connect African people all over the globe. In fact there are "links that bind us" to use wa Thiongo's words. Gray (2001:113) succinctly observes that:

African people share a common memory base consisting of shared, common feelings, attitudes, and proclivities or propensities, and we share a common perceptual base consisting of shared and common responses to tangible and intangible stimuli.

Continental Africans have suffered under the yoke of colonialism and diasporan Africans have suffered slavery and still suffer from the exploitative and oppressive white supremacist system. These shared experiences shape continental and diasporan Africans' ontological existence. Any serious Afrocentric poet therefore, has a serious mandate to "demonstrate awareness of the reality that African people share memory and perception," Gray (2001:113). Furthermore, Gray (2001) argues that this principle requires that practitioners, thinkers and poets' work:

- a) demonstrate competence relative to touching and activating the collective memory and,
- b) demonstrate competence relative to attracting a knowing and affirmative collective perceptual response from African people.

Nzuri as Invitation and Standard is another principle of *The Gray Template*. *Nzuri* is a term holding that beauty and good are synonymous, that is, that which is considered good is also beautiful. This is a feature of centred African culture. Gray (2001: 117) indicates that *Nzuri* as invitation and standard encourages Afrocentric practitioners, thinkers and poets among many other writers;

- a) to sprinkle their work with-and to weave into the fabric of their work –invitations to a true understanding of *Nzuri*.
- b) to have their work reflect, affirm and/or demonstrate *Nzuri* as an attainable worth holding and practicing.

In fact, Afrocentric poets, practitioners and thinkers utilize *Nzuri*. Gray (2001: 120) is more to the point when he observes that:

This does not mean that Afrocentric artists write books and poems wherein the exclusive focus is *Nzuri*. It does mean, however, that in some of their books, poems and plays substantive emphasis is given to the truth that a person is truly beautiful when that person manifests constructive behavior.

These principles are insightful to the present research to the extent that the study utilizes *The Gray Template* as an analytical tool to explicate the urge for freedom in post independence Shona poetry. Karenga in Cashmore and Jennings (2001: 209) observes that against the backdrop of imperialism which seeks to keep the Black man down "...it becomes important that the Blacks who are concerned with political, economic and cultural emancipation have an emancipatory social science which is Afrocentric." In view of this, Afrocentricity is particularly fitting for a thesis on liberation in view of the fact that Afrocentricity "establishes a world-view about the writing and speaking of oppressed people," Asante (1998:173).

3.2.2 Africana Womanism

Africana Womanism is a theory propounded by Clenora Hudson-Weems in the late 1990s. Hudson-Weems identifies eighteen descriptors that accurately define the nature and actions that have defined the Africana womanist for centuries. In this study, it is utilized to analyse poetry authored by female poets especially in *Ngatisimuke*. Defining the Africana womanist Hill in Hudson–Weems (2008:5) observes that "an African womanist ...is a black woman activist who is family centred rather than female centred and who focuses on race and class empowerment before gender empowerment." The eighteen descriptors are self-namer, self-definer, family-centred, genuine in sisterhood, strong, in concert with male in struggle, whole, authentic, flexible role player, and respected, recognized, spiritual, male compatible, respectful of elders, adaptable, ambitious, mothering and nurturing. Utilizing these descriptors the study critically interrogates the poetry in *Ngatisimuke* and pass critical judgements on the poets' contribution or weakness to

the liberation of African women in the context of the theoretical principles of Africana womanism. In other words, Africana Womanism is concerned with analyzing gender relations from an Afrocentric point of view. The theory takes cognisance of the role of African history and culture in the liberation of women. Hudson-Weems (2007: 82) observes the following:

Africana Womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture; therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women... The primary goal of Africana women, then, is to create their own criteria for assessing their realities, both in thought and in action.

Unlike feminism which is concerned with female empowerment African womanism begins with race empowerment. The theory emphasizes the primacy of experiences in history and culture of women of African descent. In other words, Africana womanism is an Afrocentric conceptualization of gender relations because the understanding of reality is through the lenses the African people's collective experience. At the centre of the theory is self naming and self definition. In actual fact, Africana womanism is aimed at seizing the initiative to define the African woman by situating her in the context of her unique experiences. This is emancipatory. On the other hand, importing and imposing a theory like feminism (in its various forms) as a legitimate theory for assessing the condition of African women does not nurture harmony among African men, women and children. It leads to chaosization of African communities. Consider Hudsons-Weems (2007:23):

Africana womanism is an authentic and emancipatory paradigm which is 'family centred' and it is first and foremost concerned with race empowerment rather than female empowerment which, in reality, is a part of, not separate from, the wholism of African life.

The theory emphasizes complementarity between African men and women. It emphasizes collective struggle of African peoples that is women, men and children. Sofola in Nnaemeka (1998:52-3) succinctly notes the following in view of complementarity:

The African world-view underscores the idea that both genders have the same divine source even though each has its own distinctive roles to play in the life of the community. Consequently, the African sees the human society as an organic, holistic reality whose existence and survival can be achieved only through a positive, harmonious social organization in which all the members are relevant and effective.

Mguni in Mguni et al (2006: 42) states that “African women critics in Africa and the Diaspora ...argue that the condition of the African woman can only be fully appreciated in the context of African culture and, that genuine liberation of African women can only take place in the same context.” Africana womanism is utilised because it is concerned with harmony between men and women of African descent. Acholonu in Hudson-Weems (2008:59) rightly observes that “feminism in this regard subscribes to exclusive individualism, which is a philosophy of life alien to Africans and therefore quite antithetical to our communal way of life.”

In utilizing Africana womanism the researcher anticipates that “such a perspective helps to diagonalise her [African woman’s] problems and suggest a cure,” Sofola in Nnaemeka (1998). This is necessitated by the fact that the theory is grounded in African culture, and therefore focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African women. In this thesis Africana womanism is utilized because it makes it possible to fully and objectively understand the condition of Africana women within their unique experiences, needs and aspirations. Since the study is on the quest and struggle for liberation, it is necessary to study the poetry in the context of Africana Womanism because it places the woman in the orbit of African culture rather feminism which is a western oriented ideology. Hudson-Weems (2007: 22) maintains that “Africana womanism then stands as an exemplar for such a strategy for our liberation via collective struggle with Africana men, women and children.”

The Afrocentric critics whose ideas have been discussed above concur that there is need for putting Africa at the centre. Their concern is aptly summarized by Asante in Hudson-Weems (2007:30) who notes that “the principal motive behind their intellectual works seems to be the use of knowledge for the cultural, social, political and economic transformation of African people by suggesting the necessity for a re-centering of African minds in a way that brings about a liberating consciousness.” While this study heavily relies on the views of the scholars discussed above the works of other African and diasporan critics are crucial to the present study. Continental African scholars include Fanon (1968), Chinweizu et al (1985, 1987), Mazrui (1998, 2004), diasporan Afrocentric critics Tsheoloane Keto, Maulana Karenga, Ama Mazama, among many others. This study utilises Afrocentricity and Africana womanism because, as Chinweizu (1987: xix) observes that:

A decolonised and re-educated African ought always to demand that matters be explained from an Afro-centric viewpoint, with scientific tools, and that the results be translated into intelligible common sense. By so insisting, we enable ourselves to spot and avoid ideologies, open as well as hidden, by which we are liable to be confused and misled, and attractive myths by which we are liable to be tricked and lynched *en masse*.

Africana Womanism and Afrocentricity have been chosen because they “help to shape basic models of the human condition that are consistent with the thrust of African world- view and our contemporary condition,” Baldwin (1992:56)

3.3 Research Methodology

This section is the research methodology for the study. This study is qualitative in nature and there are various definitions of qualitative research. Punch (2003:4) defines qualitative research as “empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers” while on the contrary quantitative research is “empirical research where the data are in the form of numbers.” Punch (2003) emphasizes that qualitative research investigates social phenomena which is not quantifiable. Jupp (2006) defines qualitative research as “research that investigates aspects of social life which are not amenable to quantitative measurement.” This study therefore does not rely on quantitative presentation of research findings but that the researcher interprets the meaning of the data collected and present it in argumentative form. Furthermore, Jupp (2006) observes that it is in the nature of qualitative research, with its emphasis on depth and detail and interpretation, that it is often small scale or micro-level. In this study the researcher critically interprets Shona poetry as well as views of informants who took part during the research process. Raj (2005: 18) defines qualitative research as a “method in which while studying a social problem stress is laid on quality rather than on quantity aspect...” what is clear from the definitions of qualitative research is that it deals with words and not quantities as is the case with quantitative data. Sarantakos (1998: 467) observes that qualitative methods of social research “...employ no quantitative standards and techniques...” Therefore, while quantitative research deals with ‘quantity,’ qualitative data is “data which express, usually in words, information about feelings, values and attitudes,” (Lawson and Garrod, (1994) in Sarantakos (ibid).

It is apparent from the three definitions by the three scholars cited above that qualitative research is concerned with meanings and interpretation of social phenomena. This study therefore revolves around reading and critically interpreting Shona poetry as well as responses from

informants on the quest and struggle for freedom as it finds expression in post-independence Shona poetry. Jupp (2006:249) emphasizes that;

...qualitative research is often based upon interpretivism, constructivism and inductivism. It is concerned to expose the subjective meanings through which people interpret the world, the different ways in which reality is constructed (through language, images and cultural artifacts) in particular contexts.

Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) present the characteristics of qualitative research and for the purposes of a clearer understanding of what it is, it is crucial that their ideas are reproduced here.

View of the world	Reality is subjective, socially constructed Facts and values are inextricably linked.
View of the researcher	Research is always involved; he/she is a part of the situation Reflexivity is crucial
Researcher's Status	Democratic (involves informants & stakeholders). Equal status of researcher and all participants
Mode of Science	Social practices are an autonomous discipline
Aim	Understanding social phenomena
Perspective	1 st Person (search for personal knowledge)
Emphasis	Ideographic (focus on describing individual cases)
Participant Selection	Opportunistic, purposive
Nature of data	Non-numerical (narratives/images)
Data Analysis	Inductive Interpretive
Writing	Personal, Collaborative writing, account, story
Specific Methods	Case Studies Participant observation Interviews; path and structured partially determined by participants Ethnographic research Action research

In this study the researcher first identified respondents who were likely to possess information on post independence Shona poetry. The key informants identified for the study are poets whose poetry is under study, publishers or editors, readers especially university students studying or have studied Shona poetry as well as academics. The researcher utilized information from the key informants as well as the poetry under study to draw conclusions on the quest and struggle for total liberation. Jupp (2006:249) indicates that “the methods used in qualitative research, often in combination, are those which are open-ended (to explore participants’ interpretations) and which allow the collection of detailed information in a relatively close setting.” Jupp (2006) argues that these methods include depth interviewing, ethnography and participant observation,

case studies, life histories, discourse analysis and conversational analysis. The present study relied on both primary and secondary sources of data.

3.3.1 Primary Sources

Haralambos and Holborn (1990:720) observe that primary sources of information “consist of data collected by researchers themselves during the course of their work.” They further observe that primary sources would include data collected by researchers using questionnaires, conducting interviews or carrying out participant observation whilst secondary sources include official statistics, mass media products, diaries, letters, government reports, other sociologists’ work and historical and contemporary records.

3.3.1.1 Poetry Anthologies

For the purposes of this research, the primary sources of data were four poetry anthologies namely Chirikure’s *Hakurarwi (1998) and Chamupupuri (1994)*, Zimbabwe Women Writers’ *Ngatisimuke (2006)* and Nyamakura’s *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka (2004)*. The selected anthologies were the primary sources of information in that evidence on the quest and struggle for total liberation was drawn from the selected poetry anthologies. The anthologies named above are the prime sources of information on the problem under investigation namely that despite attaining political independence, underlying post-independence Shona poetry is the quest and struggle for total liberation. The selected poetry anthologies are therefore the principal source of information on the subject. On the basis of these thematic concerns, Chapter 5 is divided into different sections which are derived from the thematic frames identified in the selected body of literary texts. The study uses non-probability sampling to select the poems. Bryman (2001:85) observes that a non-probability sample is one “that has not been selected using a random selection. Essentially, this implies that some units in the population are more likely to be selected than others.” In this study, poems that belong to identified thematic frames were selected for discussion.

3.3.1.2 Interview Method

As indicated above, the researcher solicited for data from poets, academics and publishers using interviews. In view of the fact that the present study revolves around post-independence poetry the researcher first identified key informants. The identified key informants from whom information was gathered through interviews were poets, publishers, and academics. These were regarded as key informants because they were the “individuals who possess special knowledge, status or communication skills and who are willing to share that knowledge with the researcher,” Le Compte and Goertz in Fetterman (1984:34). Muranda (2004:55) also observes that “the key informant technique involves conducting exploratory research by seeking out and talking to respondents with known expertise in the research area.” The researcher interviewed a total of ten informants who include five (5) poets, two (2) publishers and three (3) academics. Furthermore, one poet whose poetry is under study is living abroad and the poet relied on internet interviewing to obtain data from the poet. Other poets also preferred internet interviews to face to face interviews.

Various scholars have defined the interview and these include Jupp (2006), Wellington & Szczerbinski (2007), David and Sutton (2004), among many others. Jupp (2006:157) defines an interview as “a method of data collection, information or opinion gathering that specifically involves asking a series of questions.” David and Sutton (2004:87) observe that “interviewing involves asking people questions, but it is equally about listening carefully to the answers given.” Jupp (2006) further notes that the interview represents a meeting or dialogue between people where personal and social interaction occur. Furthermore, Jupp (2006:157) observes that “developments in computer and information technology have resulted in other formats, for example internet interviews.” Kerlinger in Raj (2005:21) observes that the interview is “perhaps the most ubiquitous method of obtaining information from the people.” In this research, the researcher relied on face to face interviews and internet interviews. Jupp (2006:157) says the following on types of interviews:

Most commonly, interviews are conducted on a face to face basis and they can take a variety of forms. They can range from informal, unstructured, and naturalistic, in depth discussions through to very structured formats with answers offered from a prescribed list in a questionnaire or a standardized interview schedule.

In this study, the researcher utilized internet interviews to solicit data from poets, academics and publishers. Reflecting on electronic communication in the context of interviewing, Jupp (2005:157) surmises that:

In some contexts and for some purposes interviews may be conducted by telephone or by way of electronic communication such as email or fax. Interviews of this nature are popular for reasons of cost effectiveness and for the speed of data collection.

Internet interviews reduced costs of travelling especially in cases where some poets, publishers and academics were based in distant places for example one poet was based in Germany during the time of research and electronic interviews were convenient in collecting data.

In the following table Creswell (2003:186) sums up the advantages and limitations of interviews:

Data Collection Type	Options within Types	Advantages of the Type	Limitations of the type
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Face- to- face: one on one, in person interview *telephone: researcher interviews by phone *Group: researcher interviews participants in a group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *useful when participants cannot be observed directly *Participants can provide historical information *Allows researcher “control” over the line of questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provides “indirect” information filtered through the views of interviewees *Provides information in a designated “place” rather than the natural field setting *Researcher’s presence may bias responses *People are not equally articulate and perceptive

The interview method was handy in collecting data particularly from poets, publishers and academics. The interview method is often said to “reach the parts which other methods cannot reach,” Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007: 81). This is so because interviews permit the researcher to follow up leads and thus obtain data with greater precision. Interviews “allow the

researcher to probe an interviewee's thoughts, value prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives." (ibid: 81). In actual fact, interviews provided greater clarity and immediate feedback. This was made possible by probing the interviewees on the quest for freedom in post independence Shona poetry. As indicated earlier, questionnaires were also utilized to gather views on the subject of inquiry.

3.3.1.3 Questionnaire Method

The questionnaire was useful in gathering data from identified key informants who included, poets, publishers and university students especially those who were studying or had studied Shona poetry at undergraduate or post graduate level. Data was collected from a total of eighteen respondents out of which six (6) were poets, four (4) were publishers and eight (8) students. The questionnaire method is one of the most popular methods of data collection. This method was used for collecting data from relatively large groups for example university students who have or were studying Shona poetry at the time of research. University students were chosen among other readers because they were studying or had studied Shona poetry at a higher level to the extent that well reasoned responses were anticipated. Furthermore, the researcher relied on convenience sampling in soliciting data from university students. In this case, students at Midlands State University who had or were studying Shona poetry at undergraduate or post graduate level were identified as a convenient sample because this is where the researcher was based at the time of research. Bryman (2001:97) observes that a convenience sample is "one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility."

Furthermore, the questionnaire method was employed in cases where identified key informants preferred questionnaires to interviews. Questionnaires were either emailed or distributed physically to informants. Raj (2005:167) defines the questionnaire method as "a method in social research in which information is obtained with the help of questionnaire, which is prepared exclusively for the purpose. In other words, with the help of a set of questions all the data required is collected." Bogardus cited in Raj (ibid: 167) defines a questionnaire as "a list of questions sent to a number of persons for them to answer." On the other hand, Jupp (2005:252) defines the questionnaire as "a set of carefully designed questions given in exactly the same form to a group of people in order to collect data about some topic(s) in which the researcher is interested." In other cases, the researcher did not have to physically deliver questionnaires to

respondents. The researcher mailed questions to respondents who sent back replies to the researcher. In this study, the researcher mailed questions to respondents and received replies which were used as the basis of arguments. One of the advantages of questionnaire method is that data can be used to “collect large quantities of data from considerable numbers of people over a relatively short period of time,” Haralambos and Holborn, 1990:731). Questionnaires were useful to the present research especially when collecting data from students. The researcher also utilized questionnaires to obtain expert or insider information from poets and publishers who preferred questionnaires to interviews. In cases where key informants (publishers, poets and readers) preferred questionnaires to interviews data was gathered from them by way of questionnaire method. Data collected through interviews and questionnaires has been presented and analysed in Chapter 4 while findings from the primary texts are presented and interrogated in Chapter 5.

3.4 Secondary Sources

While selected poetry anthologies as well as key informants in the form of academics, poets, university students and publishers referred to above are the primary sources of data for the research, the study also relied on secondary sources. Secondary sources in the form of critical works were crucial to the study. Haralambos and Holborn (1990:720) observe that secondary sources “consist of data which already exists.” In this study, secondary sources consist of critical works which are related to the present inquiry. These include books, journals, theses and newspapers. Secondary sources were invaluable to the present researcher because ideas in secondary sources were insightful to the study. The arguments raised in this thesis are sustained and concretised by ideas raised by different scholars in order to authenticate or validate the arguments raised in the study.

Critical works on African literature help to sustain and validate the arguments raised in the present study. Works by such African scholarly giants as Chinua Achebe (1988), Ngugi wa Thiongo (1972,1981,1993), Okot p’Bitek (1986), Frantz Fanon (1968), Emmanuel Chiwome (2002), Ali A. Mazrui (1978,1998,2004), Molefi Kete Asante (1980, 1987) Clenora Hudson-Weems (2007), Paulo Freire (1996), Lewis Gordon (1997), Cecil Conteen Gray (2001) among many others, provide important insights to the present study. The ideas of these scholarly giants and many others were crucial to the present research.

Journals were also an important source of data for the research. The researcher referred to several journal articles on literary studies to substantiate arguments raised in the thesis. Furthermore, reference is also made to other literary genres such as novelistic discourses and short stories to enrich and widen the scope of the study. It is pertinent to indicate that secondary sources in the form of critical works allow the researcher to make informed judgements on the works.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the theoretical framework and methodology used in this study. It has been observed that Afrocentrity is an appropriate theory for the study in as far as it grounds African people in their history and culture. The chapter has identified and explained Afrocentricity as the best theory to discuss liberation in post independence poetry. The chapter has noted that the study relied on the Gray Template in interpreting reality. It has also been observed that Afrocentricity puts African aspirations, needs and interests at the centre in order to achieve sanity and freedom among the oppressed peoples of Africa and beyond. It has also been indicated that Africana womanism was used to interrogate women's poetry in *Ngatisimuke*.

The chapter has also discussed the methods of obtaining data for the research. It has been observed that the research is qualitative in nature and the primary sources of data are the selected anthologies as well as key informants from whom data were collected through interviews and questionnaires. Critical works constitute secondary sources of data for the present research. Secondary sources are used to concretise the arguments raised in the study. It must be stressed that this study "uses cultural, social, political and economic lenses of Africa as instruments to illuminate the ordinary lives of Africans," Asante (2007). Chapter 4 presents and analyses findings from interviews and questionnaires.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

There is nothing like having an inside track or having an expert at your fingertips. In fact, key informants can be instrumental in giving you access to a world you might have otherwise tried to understand while being locked on the outside. O'Leary (2010: 171)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from questionnaires and interviews. As has been observed in the preceding chapter that the study relies on interviews and questionnaires as primary sources of data together with the selected poetry anthologies for the study, the present chapter presents findings from interviews and questionnaires. In this chapter findings from interviews and questionnaires are presented, analyzed and interpreted. A critical interrogation of the findings from the selected anthologies is provided for in chapter 5. In order to make the data clear the study uses the symbol (N) to indicate the total number of respondents whereas (n) denotes number of respondents relative to the variable for each table and % denotes percentage. In the case of questionnaires the total number of respondents (N) was eighteen (18) in which case six (6) were poets, four (4) were publishers and eight (8) were students. With regards to interviews, the total number of respondents (N) was ten (10). Out of the ten, three (3) were academics who have studied, teach or has taught African literature, especially poetry, five (5) were poets while two (2) were publishers. It is now the findings from questionnaires and interviews that are presented, analyzed and interpreted.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data from Questionnaires

Table 1: Questionnaire responses from publishers, poets, academics and students on the politico-economic and socio-cultural factors that militate against complete and authentic liberation in Africa, impediments to women’s freedom, the place and role of poetry in the struggle for freedom and the extent to which female poets are guided and oriented by feminism. (N=18)

Broad view	Actual responses
<p>1. There are various factors that militate against the attainment of genuine and authentic freedom.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A serious crisis of leadership in Africa defined by selfishness, greedy, corruption, etc (100%) 2. Partial redistribution of the land or outright failure to address the land question. (85%) 3. Racism is an impediment to the freedom of blacks. (75%). 4. Lack of education (65%). 5. Failure to situate African experiences in the best of African history and culture. (80%). 6. Cultural imperialism (38.9%) 7. Disillusionment that set in after independence as people began to realize that what they hoped to gain with independence remained a dream. (5.5%). 8. Perpetual dependency on foreign powers (55.5%). 9. Fear or self-depreciation (67.7%)
<p>2. African women are heavily oppressed and there are various factors attributable to this.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The chief enemy of women’s freedom is the male counterpart. (77.8%) 2. The marriage institution is an oppressive institution. (50%) 3. Women are oppressed by culture especially traditional practices such as inheritance (66.7%) 4. Self-depreciation (72%) 5. Women are their own oppressors.

	<p>(55.5%)</p> <p>6. Lack of education (61.1%)</p> <p>7. They are free, the oppression that they talk about is a myth (5.6%)</p>
<p>3. The poet or poetry plays an important role in the struggle for authentic freedom.</p>	<p>1. To keep on making noise regarding gaps until the intended goals of the liberation struggle are achieved</p> <p>2. To educate the readership</p> <p>3. A poem is short and condensed and in a few words a lot of information can be exposed.</p> <p>4. Poetry is like music you can sing or play it anywhere and anytime. It is more expressive and is much quicker and easier way of alerting people</p> <p>5. Poetry gives voice to the voiceless</p> <p>6. Provides the necessary stimulus to initiate the quest for freedom and sustains this struggle providing hope for the future.</p> <p>7. It is another way of expressing one's rights ...culprits in whatever position will know that the people will always struggle for their freedom.</p>
<p>4. Women poets largely from a feminist point of view</p>	<p>1. Women feel they were/ are still oppressed and feel enough is enough and it is high time there should be change. Women are angry people because of the effects of some of the cultural beliefs and the position the woman is placed in the home set-up. Because of that we do not blame her for being angry if her anger will bring the intended change.</p> <p>2. I think the assertion is not a fair one. It all depends on the level of development of the poet as an artist and also her motivation to write. Without doubt we have some female poets who pour out their emotions on paper but we can not paint them with the same brush. In fact quite a number are coming up with well reasoned poetry for emancipation, not from a feminist point of view but rather from a gender sensitive point of view.</p> <p>3. Because they are informed by feminism</p>

	<p>their work is divorced from the environment that shape relations between men and women.</p> <p>4. Women poets speak for the educated urban women and tend to view women as a homogenous group.</p>
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4.2.1 Analysis of Findings from Questionnaires on the Factors that Impede Total Liberation

Concerning the factors that militate against complete and authentic liberation 100% of the respondents contend that leadership is an impediment to the freedom of African people. As the interrogation of the poetry in the anthologies selected for the study has revealed, publishers, poets, academics and students seem to hold the view that leadership is a great threat to freedom because African leadership is characterized by corruption, tyranny and greed among many other vices. As will be reiterated in the discussion of the leadership factor in the section on leadership this study maintains that while leadership must shoulder part of the blame for Africa’s problems publishers, poets, academics and readers need to understand that to a very large extent this is an act of blaming the victim for a crime. It is a fact that African leaders are victims of the hegemonic Western powers that render them powerless and ineffective. In fact, to blame leaders alone without a far reaching and scientific approach to Africa’s problems tends to reduce poetry to simple protest against Africa itself. Instead of limiting their gaze to Africa itself a critique on foreign domination would have helped produce better criticism. Like the poets whose poetry has been discussed under the section on leadership respondents tend to limit Africa’s problems to Africa itself and hence their art revolves around fighting internal oppression. These respondents seem to hold a domesticated vision of the African condition.

One of the most cited impediments to freedom is partial or total failure to address the land question after the attainment of political independence. 85% of the respondents cited failure to address the land question as a major drawback to the complete emancipation of African people. As discussed in the discussion on the land issue land is a source of life and without the land poverty is *modus operandi* and *sine qua non* of existence. The respondents are conscious of the fact that land is the basis of life processes and hence failure to redistribute the land or partial redistribution of the land is anti-freedom. Findings revealed that 75% of the respondents

identified racism as a threat to freedom while 65% identified lack of education as a threat to freedom. With regard to education, respondents seem to hold the view that education unlocks the creative potential of the people and transform them into subjects who actively participate in social processes. Therefore, respondents maintain that education can take the people to greater heights characterized by a more fulfilling life. This finds resonance in Malcolm X (1998:43) who observes that:

Education is an important element in the struggle for human rights. It is the means to help our children and our people rediscover their identity and thereby increase their self-respect. Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs only to the people who prepare for it today.

80% of the respondents highlighted total disregard of history and culture as barriers to the fruition of total liberation. The respondents seem to argue that it is on the basis of one's culture and history that a people can be fully liberated. However, to mention that history and culture are crucial without a sound interrogation of the forces at play that push African peoples' culture to the margins is not enough. Mere mention of the fact that history and culture are important is not liberatory. As will be emphasised in the following chapter in the discussion of poetry on history and culture publishers, academics, poets and students (and other readers) need to go beyond blaming the African for loss of culture and 'march right in front' to understand the system that relegates the culture and history of African multitudes to the dustbin. The respondents seem to allude to the fact that Africans have been moved from their platform and in the process are rendered weak because they are consumers of other cultures in which they lose their creative potential. Malcolm X (1998:54) observes the following on culture and history among the Afro-Americans in the diaspora; "our culture and our history are as old as man himself and yet we know almost nothing about it." This seems to be the view that respondents who mention disrespecting history and culture are emphasizing. While the respondents are successful in realizing the importance of history and culture as emphasized by Afrocentric scholars and thinkers mere mention of the importance of history outside the context of Western hegemony is inadequate.

38.9 % of the respondents highlighted that cultural imperialism is a barrier to freedom, equality and justice. These respondents tend to internationalise Africa's problems which is a better approach to understanding the African condition than those that fix their vision to Africa itself.

Therefore respondents who have a domesticated vision of Africa as those that simplistically blame leadership can not know all Africa's enemies. Internationalizing the struggle as the 38.9 % of the respondents do allows publishers, poets, academics and other readers to know Africa's enemies both on African soil as well as those outside the African continent. To emphasise on one without grappling with the other is self-defeating.

The table shows that 67.7% of the respondents identified fear among the people as a threat to the liberation of African people. The respondents contend that fear militates against the ability of the people to act as agents in history. The respondents seem to blame the people for their condition which is tantamount to blaming the victim. The respondents seem to challenge the people to become subjects who can define their destiny. Fear results in objecthood among the people and therefore respondents hold that in order to be functional Africans must be fearless.

Dependency on foreign powers is a factor that was also identified by 55.5% of the respondents as an impediment to the total freedom of African people, a subject that Chirikure, for example grapples with in poems such as 'Kunge Isaka na Abrama (Pakuuya kweESAP)' and 'Mushonga Wekurutsa.' 55.5% therefore hold the view that Africa is only free when it is in adequate control of its resources an idea that finds resonance in such poems as Chirikure's 'Mushonga wekurutsa' and 'Kunge Isaka naAbrama (Pakuuya kweESAP)'. However, poets, academics, publishers and readers need to understand that they should not end at blaming Africa itself for perpetual dependency on foreign powers but need to understand that the world system is capitalistic in which the West is the dominating power that thrives on exploiting other parts of the world. This is made possible because the West has military, economic and political power. Simplistic protest against Africa itself is tantamount to blaming the victim for a crime. Instead of blaming the victim art needs to expose the system that impoverishes and entraps Africans.

4.2.2 Analysis of Findings from Questionnaires on Factors that Militate Against Women's Freedom

Concerning factors that militate against women's freedom, the table shows that 77.8% of the 18 respondents identified the male counterpart as a threat, 50% identified the marriage institution as a barrier to the free participation of women, 66.7% identified culture as an impediment to liberation of women, 72% of the respondents noted that women themselves tend to look down upon themselves and 61.1% noted that lack of education among the women is a factor that

derails efforts towards the complete and authentic liberation of women. 5.6% of the eighteen respondents noted that women are free and the idea that they are not free is a myth. It is apparent that out of a total of eighteen respondents, 77.8% identified men as the chief enemy of women's freedom. This seems to suggest that the respondents see African men as an enemy of women and not a lovable partner. They see no complementarity and unity of purpose among African men and women. They seem to approach relations between African men and women from a feminist (especially radical feminism) point of view. The result is that they create antagonism between men and women of Africa. 50% of the total respondents view the marriage institution as a tool for oppressing and containing women. This seems to imply they are informed by feminism because they are female-centred and not family-centred. 66.7 % respondents view culture as oppressive to women. True to feminist discourse the respondents seem to attack African culture for relegating African women to the periphery. It seems these respondents are victims of the myths that are created to service both colonialism and neocolonialism for example that African culture as barbaric and enslaving especially to women. The respondents fail to see that it is colonialism as well as neocolonialism that to a very large extent are responsible for pushing women to the margins. Furthermore, they seem to hold the colonialist view of African culture that it cannot nurture harmonious coexistence between men and women. To view culture as oppressive is to side with the real oppressor namely the Western cultures and peoples who view themselves as the Chivalric knight that comes to rescue the damsel (African women) in distress.

72% of the respondents identified fear as a factor that impedes women's freedom. The poets seem to blame women for failing to fight for their freedom because they are engulfed by the big blanket of fear. The respondents fail to realize that women are victims of a system that oppresses both men and women of Africa but women on the more. While the respondents rightly note that fear is incapacitating, it is inadequate to blame the victim for a crime. Fear is a manifestation of the oppressive system that relegates women to the periphery, a fact that the respondents fail to see. The table also reveals that 5.5% of the respondents were of the view that women are their own oppressors. This seems to imply that there is a school of thought that views women as their own oppressors. The respondents seem to suggest that because they wage a struggle against the wrong enemy-men. Instead of siding with men in struggle they seem to weaken the struggle by fighting against their male counterpart in the process leaving the system that oppresses both African men and women intact.

61.1% of the total respondents identified lack of education as a debilitating factor to women's liberation. These respondents are conscious of the fact that education is essential to the oppressed peoples in their fight for freedom. They contend that education is a necessary instrument to the struggles for women's liberation. The respondents view education as particularly crucial to the genuine and authentic freedom of women. However, the respondents do not define what type of education is necessary. 5.6% respondent indicated that women are free and the view that they are oppressed is a myth. The respondent seems to contend that women are free but rather create myths to justify dislodge men from their legitimate roles. The respondent seems to be a male chauvinist who does not view women as oppressed but members of the society who raise the alarm to justify a certain cause.

4.2.3 Analysis of Findings from Questionnaires on the Role of Poetry in the Struggle for Total Liberation

The general findings of the study were that poetry is just but one way of expressing as well as struggling for total liberation. As the results show there is consensus among the respondents that poetry is part and parcel of the struggle for freedom. The respondents contend that the poet is the voice of the voiceless masses in their struggle for freedom. The poet therefore must "march right in front" in the struggle for freedom. One way in which poetry contributes to the struggle for freedom is through satirizing culprits in order for them to change their ways. As the results show one respondent indicated that the role of the poet is to "make noise until the goals of the liberation struggle are achieved." The respondent seems to suggest that the role of the poet and poetry is to raise alarm on the shortcomings of juridical independence. However, the respondent seems to reduce art to mere noise and the artist to a noisemaker. As the results show, poetry is viewed as a means of education in as far as it provides critical consciousness for the people.

4.2.4 Analysis of Findings from Questionnaires on Respondents' Views on the Idea that Women Poets Largely Write from a Feminist Point of View

Findings reveal that one response that was provided is that women feel they are still oppressed and this is what triggers anger in their art. The response reveals that culture is attributed to the entrapment of women in the home set-up. The response reveals that the respondent does not blame the women for being angry if the anger will bring change. The respondent seems to be a

feminist who thinks that expressing anger through art will bring about change on its own. The findings reveal that the idea that women poets largely write from a feminist point of view “is not fair” because according to the respondent “quite a number are coming up with well-reasoned poetry for emancipation, not from a feminist point of view but rather from a gender sensitive point of view.” The results also reveal that one of the responses was that indeed the poets write from a feminist point of view and resultantly their art is divorced from the socio-historical and cultural context that inform their art. The respondent seems to reason from an Africana womanist point of view. The table also shows that one of the responses was that because they are writing from a feminist point of view, women writers speak for the educated urban women. The general view is that women poets write from a feminist point of view.

4.2.5 Presentation and Analysis of Findings from Publishers on the Necessity of Poetry to the Struggle for Total Liberation

Table 2: Publishers’ questionnaire responses on the extent to which poetry is a necessary instrument to the struggle for total freedom. (n=4).

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage%
Very large extent	0	0
Larger extent	3	75
Lesser extent	1	25
Not effective	-	0
Totals	4	100

The findings reveal that 75% of total number of publishers who provided data through the questionnaire method contend that poetry is an instrument necessary to the struggle for freedom to a larger extent while 25% was of the view that poetry is necessary to a lesser extent. 75% of the publishers seem to contend that poetry occupies an integral position in the struggle for liberation. As discussed in Chapter 2, poetry was a necessary tool to the struggle against alien control as Africans resisted and fought against foreign domination in the colonial period. Furthermore, as Africans and other oppressed peoples of the world resisted racial prejudice poetry was part and parcel of the forces that struggled to extricate the oppressed from colonial bondage. In actual fact, poetry complemented the revolutionary forces of that time. 75% of the publishers who provided data through the questionnaire method seem to allude to the idea that

literature is purposeful and functional in the struggle for total liberation. They contend that art can be put to the service of the struggle. While art is relevant to the struggle for freedom it is essential to note that publishers must not imply that it is adequate to the struggle for freedom for art has its own limitations in a world besieged by nuclear power on the military front. 25% of the publishers seem to hold the view that poetry is a necessary tool in the struggle for total liberation to a lesser extent. The respondent seems to suggest that poetry is a necessary but never an adequate tool in the struggle for the attainment and authentic freedom. The respondent belongs to the school of thought that holds the view that art alone cannot be a panacea to Africa's problems. It is therefore apparent from the findings presented in Table 2 that poetry is a necessary tool to the struggle for freedom but this must not be mistaken to imply that it is an adequate tool to the struggle for total liberation.

4.2.6 Presentation and Analysis of Findings on Publishers' Views on Whether or not they have Published Poetry revealing the Quest and Commitment to Struggle for Total Liberation

Table 3: Publishers' views on whether or not they have published poetry expressing the quest and struggle for total liberation. (n=4)

Category	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Yes	4	100
No	0	0
Totals	4	100

Table 3 reveals that out of the four publishers who responded on whether or not they have published poetry on the quest and struggle for freedom, four 100% indicated that indeed they had published such art. This implies that total liberation is a topical issue evidenced by the fact that all the publishers have published poetry which deals with the subject. This confirms that poetry is one of the sites where total liberation is negotiated. In the same vein, Table 4 below reveals that 100% of the publishers hold that they have published poetry on women's emancipation. This confirms the idea that women's freedom is a dominant theme that has received and is receiving much literary attention in Zimbabwe. The table confirms that poetry is receiving much creative space in Zimbabwe and this justifies the focus on women's emancipation in the critical interrogation of the anthology, *Ngatisimuke* in Chapter 5. As the section on women emancipation has revealed, despite fighting for the freedom of women the poets seem to be guided and

oriented by feminism to the extent that their poetry degenerates into misguided activism. Instead of dancing to the tune of their sponsors, poets who write about women emancipation need to adopt a vision of reality that is informed by the socio-historical as well as cultural context that shape gender relations. Therefore, publishing for the sake of publishing does not bring the freedom that the poets are struggling for. Table 4 below is a presentation of findings on whether or not the four publishers have published poetry on women emancipation.

Table 4: Publishers views on whether or not they have published poetry on women emancipation (n=4)

Category	Number of respondents	Percentage%
Yes	4	100
No	-	0
Total	0	100

4.2.7 Presentation and Analysis of Poets' Questionnaire Responses on the Extent to which Poetry is a Necessary Tool for the Struggle for Total Liberation.

Table 5: Poets' questionnaire responses on the extent to which poetry is a necessary tool to realize genuine freedom (n=6)

Category	Number of respondents	Percentage%
Very Large Extent	3	50
Larger Extent	2	33.3
Lesser Extent	1	16.7
Not Effective	0	0
Totals	6	100

On whether poetry is a necessary tool for genuine and authentic freedom, the findings of the study were that 50% contend that poetry is necessary to a very large extent. 50% therefore hold that poetry can be put to the service of equality, freedom and justice to a very large extent. As observed in the discussion of findings from publishers' responses on the extent to which poetry is a necessary tool, 3 poets were of the view that poetry can not afford the luxury of distancing itself from the struggles of the people to regain freedom, equality and justice. Findings also revealed that 33.3% contend that poetry is necessary to a larger extent while 16.7% was of the

view that it is necessary to a lesser extent. The table reveals that voices that hold that poetry is a necessary tool (though not adequate) are louder than those that doubt the necessity of poetry to the struggle for freedom. On the whole, publishers and poets largely concur that poetry is a necessary tool in the struggle for freedom, equality and justice. While publishers and poets are of the view that poetry is a necessary tool in the struggle for freedom it must be reiterated that poetry is not an end in itself but a means to an end in as far as it complements other forces in the struggle for freedom, equality and freedom. To suggest that poetry is an end in itself is to miss the point.

4.2.8 Presentation and Analysis of Findings on Poets’ Responses on the Adequacy of Poetry to the Struggle for Freedom

Table 6: Poets’ questionnaire responses on the adequacy of poetry to the struggle for freedom (n=6)

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Absolutely Adequate	0	0
Adequate to a very large extent	1	16.7
Adequate to a lesser extent	0	0
Not Adequate	5	83.3
Totals	6	100

Findings in Table 6 show that on the adequacy of poetry to the struggle for freedom, equality and justice 83.3% poets viewed poetry as inadequate in so far as realizing freedom, equality and justice is concerned. The findings reveal that to the poets poetry has its own limitations and can not be an adequate tool to the fight for freedom. 83.3% therefore were of the view that poetry is not an end in itself but a means to an end. This is to suggest that poetry is just but one of the instruments necessary to the struggle for freedom. 16.7% were of the view that to a very large extent poetry is adequate to the realization of freedom, equality and justice. This respondent seems to contend that expressing the quest for total liberation through poetry is an end in itself and this must be dismissed with all the impunity that it deserves. This respondent holds a very myopic view of both art and liberation because art alone can not be a substitute for military power as well as other forms of art. Furthermore, while writing can lead to psychological liberation it remains inadequate in as far as bringing about other forms of liberation such as total political and economic liberation.

4.2.9 Presentation and Analysis of Findings from Poets on Whether or not They Write about Women Emancipation

Table 7: Poets' views on whether they write about women's emancipation obtained through the questionnaire method (n=6)

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	5	83.3
No	1	16.7
Total	6	100

Table 7 reveals that 83.3% poets have written poetry on women emancipation while 16.7% indicated that she/he had not published any poetry dealing with the subject. The findings imply that women's liberation is a dominant topic that has or is receiving much literary attention among poets.

4.3 Presentation and Analysis of Data from Interviews

This subsection presents and analyses findings from interviews. For the purposes of this study the researcher collected data from ten (10) interviewees. Out of the ten (10), three (3) were academics, five (5) were poets while two (2) were publishers.

4.3.1 Interviewee 1

Interviewee 1 is a poet who is a political satirist and has published three poetry anthologies and also contributed poems to multi-voiced anthologies. The poet has worked as an editor for one publishing house in Zimbabwe. Presently the poet is based in Germany.

Asked whether the struggle and quest for genuine freedom is a subject of his poetry he said "yes, in many dimensions...political, social and ideological." On the factors that impede complete and authentic freedom he noted that a good number of his poems focus on these, one major factor is greed or selfishness, among many others such as bad leadership, total disregard of African history and culture, dependency...

On the role and place of the poet in the struggle for total liberation he indicated that "it would be naïve to expect total liberation, because the way things are, the various forces will continue with their machinations, in one form or another. He emphasized that "the poet's voice is to help raise

the alarm, create awareness, the hope of introspection within society. Awareness is one key fundamental element in the process.” Reacting to a question on his commitment to the struggle for freedom through poetry he argued that “the fact that the poetry attempts to interrogate issues related to suppression and marginalization is a sign of the will to help improve the way things are.” On whether poetry is an adequate tool to the fight for freedom he puts forth the proposition that “poetry is just but one vehicle. Just like agriculture, one needs many implements to see the crop through to harvest.” This implies that poetry can not be adequate on its own but that it is just a part of the forces that struggle for complete and authentic freedom.

Interviewee 1 contends that his art is indeed concerned with struggling for freedom in its manifold, political, social and ideological. He seems to explain Africa’s problems in terms of the quality of leadership. The respondent seems to be pessimistic because he does not envision total liberation as a possibility. In fact he does not see that it is necessary to struggle against the machinations of the oppressors. The poet does not seem to hold Njia as theme which is an Afrocentric principle which situates hope and optimistic struggle at the centre of any life process or experience. Furthermore, he seems to hold a domesticated vision because he explains Africa’s problems in terms of internal problems like greed alone. Instead a far reaching and scientific vision is necessary to know all Africa’s problems. His poetry therefore is largely protest against Africa itself. The poet contends that poetry is one of the many vehicles for fighting against the limiting factors to Africa’s liberation.

4.3.2 Interviewee 2

Interviewee 2 is a poet whose poetry is under study in this thesis. He is a creative writer, storyteller and poet. Currently he works for the British Council.

On whether the quest and struggle for freedom is a subject of his poetry he said, “yes, very much because the independence we currently have has not made us independent but has come with so many problems.” Responding to a question on the factors that impede total freedom he noted that “it is the usual- leadership crisis, lack of transparency and democracy, oppression, intimidation and fear, unfulfilled promises, lack of sincerity, institutionalization of certain ideas such that they end up being the only ones accepted.” In his view, the role and place of the poet is “to keep talking from a personal and collective point of view. To be a watchdog, to remind and

conscientise people to document history and events, and yes to be a pain that eventually gets attention.” The findings of the study reveal that to the poet as well as other writers the role of the poet is to be a sensitive part of society who grapples with the burning issues of society and in the process be part of the struggle for total emancipation. Interviewee 2 observes that writers must become “true literary guerillas of the masses in their quest and struggle for total liberation.” wa Thiongo (1981: 24). By and large, interviewee 2 holds the view that it is the role of the writer to “write with the vibrations and tremors of the struggles of [the oppressed]...behind him. Yes, he must actively support and in his writing reflect the struggle of the [oppressed peoples of Africa] for total liberation...”

He observes that his reason for writing is precisely to help attain freedom. He says “it is the reason I write-so that something is stirred that generates discussion and awareness.” On the adequacy of poetry to the complete and authentic liberation he indicated that “No. Not everybody can read or access books. Also people tend to associate poetry with the learned. It is just but one of the pieces of firewood helping start a fire and keeping that fire burning.” In his view factors that guarantee genuine freedom are “full democracy and true commitment to nation building.” Interviewee 2 seems to limit his canvas to African soil because he contends that lack of democracy as well as lack of commitment to nation-building as guarantees to total liberation. he seems to ignore the place and role of the outside world in entrapping, enslaving and impoverishing Africans. On the factors that oppress women, interviewee 2 identified fear, lack of education, lack of equal opportunities, culture being used to abuse and silence women.

On women’s poetry interviewee 2 observed that to a very large extent it is true that they write from a feminist point of view. He further argued that “the female poets who write tend to speak for the educated urban women. If they are dealing with cultural issues, they gloss over the real issues affecting their kin in very difficult situations in the rural areas.” He seems to suggest that women’s writing is rather elitist.

Like interview 1, interview 2 explains Africa’s problems within the context of domestic issues that shape the human condition. The reasons that the poet highlights reveal a narrow-minded contention of reality because the impediments that are cited are rather fixated to the African continent. The poet can be criticized for blaming the victim for a crime in view of the fact that both leaders and the people in Africa are victims of global power relations.

4.3.3 Interviewee 3

Interviewee 3 is a poet whose poetry is studied in this thesis. Her poetry appears in several Shona poetry anthologies.

On whether her poetry is committed to the struggle for freedom she indicated that ultimately that is her concern and should be a concern for all responsible poets and other writers. Among the factors that impede the attainment of genuine freedom she identified bad leadership as a major problem in Africa which she accused of being “greedy, corrupt, dictatorial and inhuman. She also identified fear and intimidation, land question, dependency on so-called foreign solutions as obstacles to liberation of true liberation of Africa” The interviewee views the role of the poet as that of fighting for that which rightfully belongs to the majority. On her commitment to the attainment of genuine freedom interviewee 3 indicated that it is her preoccupation to be “part and parcel of the army that fights for complete freedom where people can realize their full capabilities.” She observed that “good leadership and democracy” are the necessary conditions for freedom. She contended that poetry is never and will never be an adequate instrument for attaining freedom but that it is part and parcel of the machinery to fight recolonisation. The respondent blames leadership for Africa’s problems and this is rather simplistic because the respondent fails to notice that Africa’s problems go beyond leadership and continental boundaries. The respondent belongs to the school of thought that explains Africa’s problems in terms of Africa’s problems while turning a blind eye on external problems that render African leaders and people largely powerless and vulnerable to domination.

Pertaining to the factors militating against women’s freedom interviewee 3 indicated that “men, culture, marriage, ignorance of their rights” are the inhibiting factors to women’s freedom. The respondent seems to reason from a feminist point of view because she is rather female-centred instead of family-centred. Furthermore, she blames men for women’s condition and that is the hallmark of feminist thinking.

On whether women poets are guided by feminism and that their poetry is not properly rooted in the history and culture that produce their art, interviewee 3 indicated that women’s oppression must be met with a “militant approach and feminism, especially radical feminism is the best approach to utilize in the struggle for women’s freedom from domination.” In order to alleviate

oppression, women need to be militant and this is where feminism is at its best. Whether feminism comes from the West, East or whatever is not an issue. We are worried about whether the approach speaks for the oppressed women or not.” The respondent seems to be a thoroughgoing feminist because she is unapologetic for utilizing feminism and views it as a panacea to women’s freedom because of its militancy. The respondent seems to celebrate radical feminism and she is an unrepentant radical feminist.

4.3.4 Interviewee 4

Interviewee 4 is a poet whose poetry is under study in this thesis. The respondent has published his poems in several poetry anthologies. Reacting to the question on whether or not his poetry is committed to the struggle for total liberation, he said “indeed, my poetry is an act of struggle for real independence because the independence we obtained in 1980 is meaningless.” Interviewee 3 attributed failure to attain complete and authentic independence to despotic leadership, dependency, land, cultural domination, fear and people looking down upon themselves. He further indicated that “to a very extent many of my poems deal with the inevitability of attaining genuine independence that guarantees free participation of citizens. Asked to comment on the extent to which poetry is adequate to the fight for genuine freedom interviewee 3 reiterated that “to claim that poetry is an adequate instrument in the fight for freedom is an exaggeration. Poetry is only a part of the machinery to fight oppression, never adequate alone.” Interviewee 3 argued that the necessary factors to the attainment of freedom are “responsible leadership, respecting one’s history and culture, unity and others.”

The interviewee also identified women themselves, traditional cultural practices and patriarchy as obstacles to women’s freedom. He further observed that women poets are misguided by feminism and hence their poetry degenerates into empty activism. Rather, they vent out their personal emotions resulting individual experiences. Their art is largely individual experience masquerading as universal experience. This is evident in many poems by women.

The respondent seems to view independence as meaningless as the poet suggests is an exaggeration because significant strides have been made to change life conditions for the blacks after independence. Furthermore, the poet seems to blind the reader to the bigger problems that hinder genuine freedom. The poet fails to critique Western hegemony in order to explain

Africa's problems in that context. His vision is rather limited to the African continent. The poet fails to notice that astute leadership remains elusive or rather a myth in the context of dominating external powers.

4.3.5 Interviewee 5

Interviewee 5 is one of the poets whose poetry is analyzed in this thesis. This respondent contributed several poems to one of the anthologies under discussion.

Regarding commitment to the struggle for total liberation interviewee 5 indicated that his art revolves around exactly that despite dealing with other issues. He further noted that “the bulk of my poetry is necessarily an act of struggle for total liberation.” On the role of the poet and poetry in a world afflicted by different problems he indicated that it is the role of the poet to “expose the bad afflicting society and fight for justice. This is reiterated by Achebe (1975) who says that the primary role of the African creative artist is to struggle for social justice. Land question, bad governance especially ruling by fear, racist notions about Africa and blind acceptance of the inferior position posed by the White race, lack of education as well as African national economies continual dependence on the West are the factors cited by the respondent in explaining why Africa is continually dominated and enslaved despite attainment of political independence. On the adequacy of poetry to the struggle for authentic liberation, the poet concerned holds the view that “absolutely not...it is only a part of the struggle for freedom.” On the factors that guarantee total freedom of the African multitudes interviewee 5 cited the following as the necessary conditions; full control of resources, good governance, unity of purpose (on the basis of these people control their destiny). Pertaining to women's emancipation the respondent identified “men, the capitalist society, patriarchy and to a lesser extent women themselves as impediments to the freedom of women.”

While interviewee 5 raises pertinent issues regarding Africa's liberation he does not realize that full control of resources, good governance, and unity of purpose are impossible in a world that is besieged with hegemony. The poet fails to notice that as long as the West continues dominating politically, militarily as well as culturally Africa's freedom is peripherised.

4.3.6 Interviewee 6

Interviewee 6 is a publisher based in Harare and has studied Shona as one of his subjects at degree level.

Responding to a question on the place and role of the publisher in the struggle for freedom interviewee 6 who happens to be a seasoned publisher noted that “the publisher must keep the struggle on course in order to change the world.” Interviewee 6 cited the following as impediments to freedom of African people; white domination and supremacy, lack of education, dictatorial tendencies that characterize African leaders, expropriation of African resources, land politics which tend to peripherise the Africans from their land and acculturation among others. On whether or not Shona poets largely write about neocolonialism interviewee 6 argued that “to a very large extent it is true but they also write about other issues. In fact they protest against recolonisation of whatever form. The respondent concerned observed that the role of the writer in the struggle for total liberation is to “publish as many works as possible that deal with issues of national interest. These include leadership, land issue and giving such issues due attention helps conscientise society on issues so that they can know the inhibiting factors to free participation.” Responding to a question whether women poets are guided by feminism in their works, the respondent in question noted that “not all poets write from a feminist perspective though many do. Whatever point of view is adopted is not an issue but it is how the poet shows commitment to liberation of women. If feminism brings change it is useful. Oppression of women is a violent process hence militancy is the only way forward.” Interviewee 6 concurs with interviewee 3 on the idea that which theory is adopted by a writer is not an issue but whether it contributes to the liberation of women.

4.3.7 Interviewee 7

Interviewee 7 is a seasoned publisher based in Gweru in Zimbabwe and has published many works.

The respondent concerned views the publisher as a “torch bearer in the fight for total liberation. He/she must help produce art which depicts the interests, hopes and aspirations of the oppressed people. Reflecting on the factors that are attributed to partial independence by the poets interviewee 7 observed that Africans themselves, failure to deal with the land question in full, world system that views blacks as inferior to whites, fear and bad governance are the factors attributable partial independence. On whether poets largely write against neocolonialism the interviewee in question observed that “to a very large extent, yes, and their poetry is largely protest against African leadership for it plays a crucial role in determining the lives of Africans.” On women’s writing interviewee 7 argued that feminist writing tends to draw battlelines between men and women instead of unifying them in struggle. Interviewee 7 holds that women poets tend to abstract women’s condition from the real social conditions that shape African women’s lives. The respondent seems to reason from an African womanist point of view because he is against theories such as feminism that are rather separatist and not synergistic in their understanding of relations between men and women. The interviewee is therefore against separatist attitudes to life.

4.3.8 Interviewee 8

Interview 8 is an academic who is a lecturer at Great Zimbabwe University and has studied Shona literature at both undergraduate and post graduate levels.

On what he considers to be the major concern of post-independence Shona poetry, the respondent who is a lecturer in Shona literature at Great Zimbabwe University indicated that protest against African leadership is a dominant theme. He argued that poets largely contend that what is lacking in Africa is good leadership which can nurture a welfare state. Responding to a question on the extent to which the quest and struggle for total liberation is a subject that has received attention in post-independence poetry interviewee 8 observed that “the desire for a more fulfilling politico-economic and cultural environment is a characteristic of post-independence poetry and this is evident in quite a number of anthologies for example; Chirikure’s *Chamupupuri* and *Rukuvhute*. On the factors militating against complete and authentic liberation of Africans despite end of formal colonialism the respondent cited “reliance on foreign solutions, leadership crisis, acculturation and lack of power over the means of production especially the land.” On the place and role of the poet in the struggle for total liberation the academic

concerned holds that “a good poet must be part and parcel of the collective spirit to attain meaningful liberation. A poet must envision a better future beyond the immediate challenges.” Whether or not poets largely write against neocolonialism interviewee 8 argued that the greatest threat to Africans’ full participation is neocolonialism and though poets deal with many other issues to a large extent they deal with neocolonialism. Responding to a question on what the respondent views as the necessary conditions for full freedom he cited “agrarian reform, good governance and defending Africa’s interests as the most urgent questions to be addressed.” On women’s freedom the respondent in question identified the following as the limiting factors to the full liberation of women “traditional practices that are not only irrelevant today but dangerous to women. On whether women poets especially in *Ngatisimuke* write from a feminist perspective interviewee 8 holds that “these women are sponsored by organizations with their own agendas. Their art is therefore channeled towards feminist activism. On whether poetry is an adequate tool to the fight for genuine freedom the respondent argued that it is “never adequate but complements other strategies for freedom.”

4.3.9 Interviewee 9

Interviewee 9 is a lecturer in African literature at Midlands State University. The respondent has studied African languages and culture at Honours and Masters Levels.

Asked to reflect on what she considers to be the major concern of post-independence poetry the interviewee argued that it “tends to be largely protest against different issues for example women protesting against men, people protesting against their leadership.” The respondent in question noted that “yes indeed, by and large poets envision a truly liberated identity especially in the context of an environment that is defined by intense suffering. This is true of Chirikure’s poetry but a close look at Mabasa’s poetry seems to suggest otherwise.” According to respondent 9 the greatest obstacle according to poets such as Chirikure is leadership which he sees as a failure since it is defined by bad governance. She identifies dependency on foreign aid as a threat, failure to address land politics in a way that rewards the blacks, cultural erosion which reduces Africans to mere objects. On the role of the poet in the struggle for genuine and authentic freedom interviewee 9 observed that “a serious poet ought to side with the masses and signpost the direction that must be taken. The poet must take the reader’s imagination beyond suffering.” The interviewee in question holds that protesting against neocolonialism is one of the dominant

features of post-independence Shona poetry. The poet holds that the necessary conditions for authentic freedom are “good governance which guarantees a decent life for the rest of the population, respecting lessons from the past and making land available to the majority.” Interviewee 9 cited the following as the obstacles to the complete and authentic freedom of women; patriarchy, oppressive cultural practices and women looking down upon themselves. On whether women poets who contribute their poetry in *Ngatisimuke* are guided by feminism in their contention of reality interviewee 9 argued that “really, in actual fact it is radical feminism because they seem to view men as their chief enemy.” On whether poetry is an adequate tool in the fight for genuine freedom interviewee 9 observed that “to wish for poetry alone to bring about total liberation is to wish for the impossible. Art will remain art; it is only a necessary and never adequate tool for liberation.”

4.3.10 Interviewee 10

Interviewee 10 is a lecturer at Midlands State University, Zimbabwe. He is a lecturer in Trends in Contemporary African Novel and has taught Shona both in high schools and at degree level.

Asked what he considers to be the major concern of post independence poetry he argued that “basically, that poetry (either) celebrates or denigrates black majority rule.” On the extent to which the poetry is committed to the quest and struggle for total liberation he argued that generally speaking all literature is partisan and neutrality in the writing of poetry is a myth. As such there are two types of poets, those that are disillusioned by the realities of independence and those that approve of the status quo...” He further observed that taking into consideration that women’s complaints are part of the general disgruntlement with independence and part of the call for total liberation, it seems the voices which advocate total freedom are much louder than those that approve of the status quo...” From his reading of post independence poetry interviewee 10 attributed partial liberation to “unequal gender opportunities in both the domestic and the outside of domestic arenas, corruption in the state and civil society structures, economic meltdown as heralded by ESAP, the futility of a cultural revolution and general failure of the ruling elite...” On the place and role of the poet in the struggle for freedom interviewee 10 indicated that “the poet has to be the voice of the voiceless creatures, his/her poems have to be sighs of the oppressed creatures, the hearts of the heartless Africa. They should help to raise African people’s life awareness and critical consciousness and to interpret for the Africans the

riddle of neocolonialism. Interviewee 10 argued that “struggling for sound vertical and horizontal relations between different ethnic groups and between the state, non state actors and the majority for the purposes of enhancing nationhood and statehood, reduce foreign intrusion in all domains of African people’s lives in order to attain true sovereignty at politico-economic and socio-cultural levels of life are necessary to the attainment of full freedom. On the factors that militate against women’s freedom, interviewee 10 observed that the “concept of greed is at work. Educated women use the chances they get to speak for women emancipation and general upkeep to enrich themselves, women are relegated to the periphery by the male counterpart, among others. On the adequacy of poetry to the struggle for freedom interviewee 10 had this to say:

Words can not be guns. Words will remain words and not action. It is a time when literary practitioners should take the Fanonian and the Netoian and the Cabralian, way of being both comrades-in-arms with the masses and literary guerillas of the masses in their quest for total freedom.

Interviewee 10 seems to be influenced by wa Thiong'o's ideas in his interpretation of the role of the artist. He seems to reason from a Marxist point of view. The findings reveal that all the academics who were interviewed were of the contention that that poetry alone is not adequate to the struggle for freedom.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter has presented and analysed research findings from questionnaires and interviews. First and foremost the findings reveal that the struggle for total liberation is an acknowledged issue in literature. The results from interviews and questionnaire suggest that the struggle for complete and authentic freedom is gaining much space in Zimbabwean poetry. The chapter has observed that the most dominant factors identified by participants are leadership, lack of education, disrespecting one’s history and culture and land politics. These were the most commonly cited impediments among the respondents who provided data through questionnaires and interviews. Factors such as dependency on foreign powers, fear, greed and cultural dominance of the whites were also identified as obstacles to Africa’s total liberation. The chapter has revealed that publishers, poets, readers and academics tend to blame Africans for their condition. Findings from questionnaires reveal that 100% of the publishers have published poetry on the quest and struggle for freedom and this implies that this is a topical issue in literature. Furthermore, findings from questionnaires like those from interviews reveal that

respondents are of the view that poetry can not be an adequate tool for realizing total liberation. In fact, it is just but a part of the struggle for freedom. This implies that it is a necessary instrument but not and never adequate to the attainment of total liberation. In actual fact respondents contend that poetry is an inevitable part of the struggle for total liberation. The findings show that the poet is viewed as the voice of the voiceless people.

Concerning factors that impede women's freedom findings reveal that men, marriage, culture or traditional practices, self-depreciation, women themselves, lack of education or ignorance and greed have been identified as the major impediments to women's freedom. Findings reveal that men are one of the most commonly cited factors that impede total liberation. Men are identified as one of the major threats to the total liberation of women. From the findings it is apparent that respondents that belong to the school of thought that holds that women are heavily oppressed are more than those that view women as free. This implies that women's oppression is an acknowledged problem by the respondents. It seems respondents largely approach gender issues from a feminist point of view, a situation that is problematized in the interrogation of poems in the following chapter. In the light of these findings, the major preoccupation of Chapter 5 is to critically interrogate post- independence Shona poetry in the context of struggle for complete and authentic freedom.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis should be approached as a critical, reflexive, and interactive process that cycles between data and an overarching research framework. O’Leary (2010:277).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is a critical interrogation of the selected poetry anthologies namely *Hakurarwi* (1998), *Chamupupuri* (1994), *Ngatisimuke* (2004) and *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* (2004). It is a contention of this chapter that the quest and struggle for freedom is the pervasive preoccupation of poets whose poetry is under study. It is crucial to indicate at the outset that the inhibiting factors to the attainment of full liberation are manifold as the chapter will reveal. In actual fact, the chapter maintains that the poets “are writing against neocolonialism” to use wa Thiong’o’s (1986) words. Furthermore, the contributions and weaknesses of the poetry to the fight for social justice and equality are also discussed. The success or otherwise of the poetry is measured in terms of whether the poetry is decorated with a sense of hope or optimism to help the oppressed free themselves from the state of victimhood. The chapter does not intend to discuss each and every poem in the selected anthologies but only those that are representative. As indicated in Chapter 2, the study relies on non-probability sampling. Accordingly, the poetry has been classified according to thematic concerns namely i) Leadership Factor, the African Condition and the Quest for Total Liberation in Post Independence Shona Poetry ii) Post Independence Shona Poetry, Land and the Quest for Total Liberation, iii) Post Independence Shona Poetry, History, Culture and Total Liberation, iv) Poetry, Education and Freedom, v) Transcending Racism as an Indispensable Condition for Total Liberation, vi) Zimbabwe Women Poets and the Struggle for Women’s Liberation. This categorization does not mean that the poems discussed in each section do not discuss other issues but that the poems are classified according to their major subject. The following section discusses African leadership, the African condition and the underlying quest for freedom in post-independence Shona poetry. In this chapter evidence on the quest for total liberation in post-independence Shona poetry is laid down. The critical

judgements that are made here also apply to the major findings of the study in the preceding chapter. Drawing insights from Chapter 2 where Mazrui's (1978) classification of African literature has been discussed, this Chapter discusses the quest for freedom in post independence Shona poetry. The present chapter builds on the five strands discussed in Chapter 2. Utilising Afrocentric principles as well as the theoretical principles of Africana womanism discussed in Chapter 3, this Chapter is a critical engagement with the selected poetry anthologies; suffice here to indicate that "all Afrocentric analysis is a critique on domination," Asante (2009). In view of the research findings presented in the previous chapter, this chapter critically analyses post-independence Shona poetry in the context of struggle for total liberation.

5.2 Leadership Factor, the African Condition and the Quest for Total Liberation in Post-independence Shona Poetry

This section is committed to an analysis of the extent to which African leadership shapes the human condition as it finds expression in the poetry under exegesis. It is important to note that while Shona poetry deals with a wide range of issues we observe that protest against Africa itself is largely the most dominant subject of post-independence poetry. The major motivator of this type of protest is what West in Gordon (1997:249) describes as "the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership" in Africa. The poets whose poetry is under discussion depict "the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership" as a debilitating factor to the realization of full freedom. In actual fact, the poets contest the political, economic and social oppression orchestrated by the leadership. As the section will show, African leaders are blamed for the condition of African people which borders on entrapment and intense suffering. The poets maintain that there is a serious crisis of leadership in Africa which has resulted in neocolonialism to take centre stage despite the attainment of political independence. The section argues that while political independence was a necessary condition it was never an adequate condition. Criticising Nkrumah's popular assertion that "seek ye first the political kingdom, and all things shall be added unto you," Mazrui (2004: 105) reminds us that "political sovereignty (or the 'political kingdom') was indeed a necessary condition before Africa could fulfill or realize any of her other fundamental aspirations. But by itself political sovereignty was not enough-it was not a sufficient condition. It was simply not true that 'all else would be added unto it.'" The poets discussed in this section contend that post-independence Africa is plagued by a serious crisis of

leadership to the extent that instead of everything being added unto the people it seems all things are being subtracted from the people. In this thesis, we observe that underlying the attack on the leadership is yearning for better living conditions for the African multitudes whose condition is largely blamed for the leadership. While post-independence Shona poets also write about social issues it can be argued that poets discussed in this section are writing against neocolonialism, to use wa Thiongo's (1986) words in a book by the same title. Reflecting on neocolonialism, Nyerere in Eze (1998: 92) observes that:

Neocolonialism is a greater danger to independent countries than is colonialism...In neocolonialism, however, the people are divided from their leaders and, instead of providing true leadership and guidance which is informed at every point by the ideal of the general welfare, leaders come to neglect the very people who put them in power and incautiously become instruments of suppression on behalf of neocolonialists.

In this thesis, the researcher maintains that post independence poetry is largely advocacy for freedom and justice from unprincipled leadership and demands political and economic justice. The poetry discussed in this section reveals that a debilitating factor to the freedom of African people "is the absence of effective, in the sense of quality, leadership, both politically and intellectually..." Johnson in Gordon (1998: 250). The researcher goes by Carew in Gordon's view that with regards to freedom there are two schools of thought –the class school and the race school. First, we discuss the class school which maintains that "the main path for freedom lies in economic viability," Carew in Gordon (1997:226). It is maintained in this thesis that while leadership must bear a share of the blame on the African condition it is rather parochial to limit or lay the blame on African leadership alone. The poets whose poetry is discussed in this section are more concerned with "fighting internal oppression," Babu (1981) to the extent that their commitment to grappling with the effects of the outside world especially the hegemonic Western powers is rather marginal. It is the contention of the thesis that a serious writer must also explain Africa's problems in the context of the larger framework of global politics where hegemonic powers especially the West are responsible for the suffering of the African multitudes as well as other oppressed peoples of the world. The argument pursued in this section is that poetry would have failed if it does not go beyond fighting internal oppression associated with leadership. Therefore, fighting internal oppression is just but a part of a bigger struggle to the extent that fighting internal oppression alone is self-defeating. The study maintains that fighting internal oppression must not be viewed as an end in itself but a means to an end. The section maintains

that “it is not sufficient to just constantly mention that Africa is a poor continent. [Poets] should go beyond mere mentioning and honestly find out why the continent is still poor. Are our leaders the main cause of our poverty? There is more to it than meets the eye,” Atime in Ankomah (2008). Poets must grapple with both endogenous and exogenous factors that motivate the quest for total liberation in post independence Africa. Nnolim in Emenyonu (2006:4) makes an interesting observation that “the writer in the 21st century should...be more imaginatively aggressive and expansive, invading other continents and even the skies as new settings, striving to have a global outlook in his creative output, mounting a new international phase and not limiting his canvas to the African soil.” It is the commitment of this section to interrogate the poets’ handling of the quest for freedom within the context of the leadership factor. The poetry discussed in this section belongs to the strand of literature of protest against Africa itself-at least to the current generation of Africans. In this section, poets protest against leadership, in particular and the African people in general. The section maintains that post-independence Shona poets reflect on and attack what Johnson in Gordon (1997:249) refers to as “the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership” in Africa. Simultaneously, the factors inhibiting the realization of full humanity (freedom) despite the attainment of political independence are explicated. This section is therefore an Afrocentric explication of the leadership factor in the context of the pursuit of freedom, equality and justice.

5.2.1 The African Elite, the African Condition and the Pursuit of Total Liberation in Chirikure Chirikure’s *Hakurarwi and Chamupupuri*

Chirikure Chirikure is a political satirist whose poetry handles the subject of African leadership and the African condition. In *Hakurarwi*, Chirikure’s authorial gaze is cast on leadership, among many other issues, in a number of poems. Before discussing individual poems it is pertinent to discuss the title of the anthology. The title suggests a sense of agency in the sense that it is inevitable to take action in order for the people to transform their lives. The title is recognition of “the creativity of struggle, and, indeed the necessity of the operation of forces to any change,” Nkrumah in Eze (1998:93). The title suggests that the African is in a precarious condition and this demands collective struggle in order to extricate him or her from the condition of servitude. This condition demands urgency in struggling for social justice and freedom. In fact, the title suggests subjecthood (agency) and urgency. The underlying meaning of the title is that the people have resolved “to regroup and become a viable force that can seize the initiative,” wa

Mutahi in wa Ngugi (2003: xviii). In other words, the title suggests an awakening in the oppressed, an awakening which challenges the oppressed to be active participants in defining their future. The title suggests a people who are committed to positive action which is aimed at liberating themselves from neocolonialism. All in all, the title shows commitment to the anti-imperialist and anti-neocolonial struggle. The poems in *Hakurarwi* which are discussed in this section are ‘Hakurarwi,’ ‘Yakarwiwa Nesu’, ‘Donongodza Zvako’, ‘Simuka’, ‘Riva’, ‘Hazvigoni’, ‘Kudengezera Nyika’, ‘Utsi Hunokachidza’, ‘Gwara’ and ‘Dhisikodhi’.

‘Yakarwiwa Nesu’ (We fought this War) is concerned with the struggles among members of the independent nation with regards to their contributions to the liberation of the country. Those who were overseas argue that they mobilized funds and support, while guerillas argue that they are the ones who endured all the hardships in the bush who liberated the country. *Mujibhas* and *chimbwidos* argue that they are the ones who assisted the guerillas in several ways including cooking while the masses argue that they provided the moral support including seeking spiritual guidance necessary in the anti-colonial struggle. The poet seems to observe that the end of the war resulted in new struggles among various sectors of the society. Chirikure notes that while the war was won and the nation is free from colonial bondage independence has failed to significantly improve the condition of the formerly colonized. He says:

*Hongu tinotenda
Hondo yakarwiwa, ropa rikayerera, misha ikaparara,
Nhasi nyika yataida yava yedu, takaisunungura
Asika, ndiani ane kiyi dzedura renyika pakati penyu
Ativhurire tinokorere vana zviyo tiwabvuwire kasadza
Hezvo miromo yavo yati papata kunge vapoteri vehondo (p.5)*

(Yes we appreciate
The war was fought, blood was lost and homesteads were destroyed
Today the land that we needed and fought for is now ours and free
But who amongst you has the key to the resources of the nation
To make it possible to provide food for the children
Look, their lips are dry just like refugees.)

Chirikure is saddened by the failure of independence to bring genuine freedom which is characterized by abundance of food among other things. The poet seems to argue that instead of engaging in internal power struggles it is essential that whoever among them is controlling the means of production must improve the welfare of the people. Chirikure is concerned that despite

attaining political independence the people's life has not been meaningfully transformed for they are largely like refugees. In actual fact, Chirikure is scorning those who are in leadership positions and control the means of production who have failed to bring about fundamental change to the life of the newly independent nation. The poet is concerned with the stasis that grips society, a stasis that to a very large extent would suggest that the people are still under colonial rule for they still live like refugees. The poet contends that such leadership fails to address the urgent and burning ills of society. Chirikure exposes the idea that Africa lacks bold, effective and progressive leadership necessary to lead the people to social justice equality and freedom. The poem therefore is a commitment to all sectors of society who participated in the war not to waste time and energy in internal struggles but to understand who is in control of the means of production and face him or her head on for he or she has failed to transform the people's lives. The poet is arguing that "leadership has failed to engage in a critical discussion of issues, actual and potential, affecting the [people] with a view to putting forth concrete situations, even in a pre-emptive way, to some of the ills that wreak havoc in the community," Johnson in Gordon (1997:250).

While Chirikure is grappling with an important issue namely the internal struggles that grip society at the end of the war he seems to blame leadership for the degeneration of the formerly colonized nation into a poorfare state. He fails to realize that all the forces that are involved in the internal struggles are victims of the subtle invisible hand of the imperialist foreign powers that thrive on divide and rule as a strategy for domination and exploitation. While the argument is not to wholly exonerate leadership from the ills that affect society especially the majority, it is rather simplistic to blame leadership for the leadership is also a victim of imperialistic tendencies of the former colonial masters. Chirikure seems to assume that the leaders are powerful and control the means of production but a lucid look at reality reveals that African leadership is tied to the West in a very exploitative relationship such that at times leadership is rather ceremonial. This is to suggest that they do not control much as the poet would want to suggest. The idea of powerlessness and vulnerability of African leadership finds resonance in Babu's (1981: 73) observation that:

The trouble with Africa, as with the rest of the developing world, is that every leader knows that we are tied to the West in an exploitative relationship, as appendages; that this relationship siphons off nearly all our social surplus; and that it leaves us the poorer for

that. Yet nobody is prepared to do anything about it. Of course, they complain very loudly but complaint alone solves no problems. Since practically all leaders in these countries are developing class interests in line with those of the exploiters, they are hesitant to come to grips with the crux of the problem.

Therefore, the greatest weakness of Chirikure's understanding is that he proceeds from the assumption that African leadership is powerful and is in full control of the means of production. He fails to realise that while leadership should shoulder part of the blame to the suffering that characterize society there are other bigger global problems that limit the effective execution of responsible leadership. Furthermore, instead of leaving everything to the leadership who are assumed to own the means of production the poet fails to note that a welfare state is a product of the unification of all the productive forces as they beat the anti-imperialist drum as a united front. On the whole, the poet fails to go beyond the struggle against internal oppression and realize that Africans and other oppressed peoples of the world are "...more and more inextricably involved with the capitalist world," Babu (1981:101).

In 'Donongodza Zvako' (You tell it All) Chirikure reminds the former freedom fighter turned leaders that in narrating their heroic exploits they should never aim at pacifying people. The poet notes that pacifying the people is debilitating in the sense that it provides the former freedom fighter-cum- leader with the leverage to enjoy the fruits of the land while the general populace wallow in poverty. Chirikure is against manipulating heroic deeds in the war to pacifist propaganda which entrenches the leadership's privileged position while pushing the majority to marginal sites. In actual fact, Chirikure is writing against pacifist propaganda and sees it as a threat to realization of genuine freedom. Chirikure seems to note that pacifist propaganda is a threat in the sense that it stifles the potential of the people because it turns the people into objects who look up to the subject (leader) for anything. In the poem Chirikure is underlining the idea that "a neocolonial state tries to impose silence on the population as a whole. Quite often the right to organize has been taken away. People are not allowed to gather freely to voice their thoughts," wa Thiongo (1998:27). Chirikure writes:

*Donongodza zvako nhorondo yako
Handioni chakaipa apa, mhare yedu
Ndokunge chete chinangwa chako pamoyo
Kusiri kuda kundiita chikuku-vata- vata ndongokushumira saZame
Uku iwe uchimora wega uchi nemukaka (p.7)*

(Chronicle your history
I do not see anything bad
As long as your aim in doing this
Is not to pacify me and render me ineffective
While on the other hand you exploit the resources of the nation.)

To use Ostergard et al (eds) words in Mazrui (2004: xiii) Chirikure "...does not hold icons sacred and portrays African leadership as both part of the problem and the solution to the "African condition." Chirikure challenges the people to guard against and resist leaders who aim at pushing them to the periphery by creating the impression that they are invincible. Such leaders instill fear into the minds of the majority. Fear and intimidation which resultantly pacify the people are factors that derail efforts aimed at the realization of genuine freedom. Nyerere in Eze (1998: 78) observes that colonialists instilled fear into the minds of the people and "this practice has not ended yet..." Therefore, fear is an instrument used by the leaders to suppress the people for it pacifies the people and turn them into the acted upon and not actors. wa Ngugi (2003:76) observes the following:

In oppressive societies, a people's whole way of life is manipulated to suit the oppressor. Our history is changed from one of struggle to one of docility and savagery while that of the oppressor is portrayed as the best example of what it means to be human.

Interviews and questionnaires revealed that fear and intimidation are some of the commonly cited factors that derail full freedom. One reader had this to say on the impact of fear and intimidation on the people:

Fear and intimidation are a major factor that impedes the efforts of the oppressed to improve life conditions. In actual fact fear, is a tool that is used by the irresponsible elites to legitimize their rule. Fear is so entrenched that people can not realize their capabilities. It stifles the people's will to act as agents.

While Chirikure is a critical realist who manages to see that pacifist propaganda is debilitating to the creative potential of the masses he fails to unravel the socio-historical factors that motivate such reference to historical experiences. It is crucial to note that in a capitalist imperialist world any responsible leader must remind the people of the history of the nation and national interests if the struggle for genuine freedom is to materialize. It can be argued that in a world defined by imperialism it is crucial that leaders remind the people of the history of the nation in order to resist imperialism on the basis of history. Chirikure seems to observe that all the heroic deeds that are referred to by the leader are not only always the truth but the absolute truth. The poet

who is rather destructive, destabilizing and disturbing and Chirikure maintains that the actions of the leader can only be met with positive action. Nkrumah in Eze (1998:90) defines positive action as “the sum of those forces seeking social justice in terms of the destruction of oligarchic exploitation and oppression.” Such action is revolutionary for it aims at completely transforming the world. The poem suggests people who realize that their liberation is only realizable in the context of struggle. The people are conscious of the fact that in order to secure genuine independence they have to confront the irresponsible leader head on. In Hakurarwi, Chirikure fulfils *Maatic* argumentation which is an Afrocentric principle that is committed to the struggle for justice. The poem shows resolve to attain justice, equality and freedom. Struggle for justice is the pervasive mood in the poem, a struggle that is aimed at humanizing both the oppressor and the oppressed. On that basis it can be argued that Chirikure satisfies *maatic* argumentation and the meta-constants humanizing and harmonizing. Furthermore, the poet fulfils *Njia* as theme as well as the way of *Heru* as theme. With regards to *Njia* as theme, the poet is “...certain about the certainty of African victory,” Gray (2001:161). The poet satisfies the way of *Heru* because the poem is not doubtful that African people can be resurrected from oppression to a life of order and strength. The people realize that human agency is the cure to the deleterious leadership for it has power to topple such leadership. The underlying vision of the poet is summarized in wa Mutahi’s words in wa Ngugi (2003: xi) thus:

We can pride ourselves in our history of struggle from the tip of the cape to the Mediterranean, from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. But we must at the same time be cognizant of the real dangers that we face today and appreciate the fact that we are the ones to solve the problems for ourselves.

In ‘Hakurarwi’ (We shall not sleep) reflection and action become the imperative to the people who are faced with a leader who is defined by bad governance which is captured in the following lines:

Zuva riya wakatuka mbuya, tikazvinyarara
Riya zuva wakatengesa pfuma, tikangonyarara
Nezuro wakapisa dura tikazvinyarara
Nhasi woisa tsvina mutsime?
tsvina mutsime?
tsvina mutsime? (p.9)

(That day you scolded grandmother and we kept quiet
That other day you squandered wealth and we kept quiet

Yesterday you burned down the granary and we kept quiet
Today you shat in the well?
shat in the well?
shat in the well?)

The study contends that 'tsime' (well) symbolizes the nation and its resources and the land and its resources is a source of life. *Tsvina mutsime* (dirty in the well) symbolizes bad governance. What irks the people is that the leader tempers with the well which is a source of life and now the people can not afford to fold their arms as spectators but take action. Chirikure is "suggesting that the African is one of constant struggle. The poet is writing against the subjugation of man and his is a struggle that says "No to scorn of man. No to degradation of man. No to exploitation of man. No to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom," Du Bois in Gordon (1997: 210).

Hakurarwi is a manifestation of people who are committed to a revolution. Malcolm X in Eze (1998:106) aptly observes that "revolutions overturn systems" and the people concerned intend to exactly do that. In this study we argue that the quest for total liberation is the springboard upon which any revolution is premised. The revolutionaries wage a struggle in order to realize freedom, justice and equality. Henry in Gordon (1997:15) certainly has a point when he says:

Our insertion into the human world of social life challenges us to intervene practically in social processes so that they do not negate but enhance human agency.

'Hakurarwi' is about a people who have resolved to actively participate in reclaiming their liberty. The people are conscious of the fact that their liberty is only realizable after waging a struggle against bad governance. Douglass in Gordon (1997: 2) observes the following:

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born out of earnest struggle. This struggle may be a moral one, or it maybe a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will.

As indicated earlier on, Chirikure is a critical realist and in this poem Chirikure seems to be preoccupied with fighting internal oppression that is orchestrated by the leadership, oppression that has motivated active participation in order to change the scheme of things. The study argues that while internal oppression is an acknowledged problem in most post independence African

countries it is not the only form of oppression that is at play. In actual fact, any serious writer must go beyond the fight against internal oppression and fight foreign domination. It is pertinent to observe that any person who engages in a struggle must first and foremost identify not only the right enemy but all the enemies in order to bring about genuine change or a true revolution. The greatest shortcoming of Chirikure's poem is that his understanding of the forces at work in as far as the human condition that borders on entrapment, poverty and suffering is rather myopic in the sense that his art degenerates into a blame game to the extent that he does not realize that it is indisputable that capitalist imperialist powers wreak havoc in African countries. Chirikure risks engaging in a struggle against one enemy only to realize that there are other subtle enemies that determine the lives of African people. Going by the idea that Chirikure is writing against deleterious leadership in Africa he fails to understand that some of the so-called revolutions are sponsored unresisted by the outside world, particularly America and its allies in order to further their interests in the African countries and other parts of the world. In some instances these are mere rebellions that are mistaken for revolutions. The study argues that a struggle that does not look beyond national boundaries is myopic and leads to disillusionment. History is awash with so-called revolutions that are foreign sponsored but led to further chaos, suffering as well as death of the people. While struggle is an essential aspect of any people Chomsky cited in Froese (2006:8) observes the following of the interests of the US in developing countries:

The main commitment of the United States, internationally in the Third World, must be to prevent the rise of nationalist regimes (and populists as their leaders) which are responsive to pressures from the masses of the population for improvement in low living standards and diversification of production, the reason is, we (the US and its allies in imperialism) have to maintain a climate that is conducive to investment, and to ensure conditions which allow for adequate repatriation of profits to the West.

An understanding of the foreign policy of the hegemonic powers especially US and the former colonial master, Britain in the case of Zimbabwe, as an endogenous factor attributable to the suffering of the people would have provided the poet with a more focused and acceptable understanding of the African condition. It has been reiterated that countries such as US and Britain are bent on effecting regime change in many parts of the world to the extent that what is mistaken for a struggle is simply a project of the West through sponsored violence and it is sad to note that at the end it is the imperialist who benefit through the so-called revolutions. History is replete with cases of sponsored violence masquerading as revolution. The recent uprisings

dubbed the Islamic Awakening in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya among many other revolutions in one way are genuine expressions of the disappointment with the leadership. The revolutions are an expression of the people's power as they demand freedom, dignity and equality. However, at times sponsored violence is disguised as a revolution to justify invasion of sovereign states by capitalist imperialist powers for example in the oil rich Libya. Utilising NATO (described by Mugabe as "a terrorist organization, no different from the Taliban and al-Qaeda"), the West has presided over unrests that are aimed at toppling governments. This is not to suggest that the leaders in the said countries are without their own shortcomings but that the uprisings are not primarily intended to benefit the people but to serve the interests of the West. Chirikure falls short of realizing that the so-called revolution that people have resolved to engage in may be a result of the machinations of the imperialistic powers that sponsor violence which is mistaken for a revolution by some sectors of the society.

'Simuka' (Stand up) is a poem which challenges the people to transcend self depreciation and fear of freedom. Chirikure observes that people need to realize that no one was born a leader and that the oppressed can rise to the occasion and be leaders too. Pathological fear is the thesis in the poem and it is a call for an awakening to the oppressed to resist the subordinate position which is seemingly natural.

Kubvira paupwere
dzamara muguva
rumbo ndirworwo
ndakazvarirwa kutongwa
ndakazvarirwa kutongwa (p.11)

(Since birth
Till death
Nothing changes
I was born to be ruled
I was born to be ruled)

Repetition of the line *ndakazvarirwa kutongwa* provides the poet with the platform to emphasise self- depreciation which Freire (1996:45) defines as:

Another characteristic of the oppressed which derives from the internalization of the opinion of the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything, that they are sick, lazy and unproductive –that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness.

Chirikure views self-depreciation as a debilitating factor to the attainment of fuller humanity-freedom. Self-depreciation reduces the oppressed to objects and in 'Simuka' the line '*ndakazvarirwa kutongwa*' (I was born to be ruled) denotes objectification of the dominated group where the oppressor is the subject who acts upon the thing- the oppressed. Fanon (1963:304) observes that:

The important theoretical problem is that it is necessary at all times and in all places to make explicit, to de-mystify, and to harry the insult of mankind that exists in oneself. There must be no waiting until the nation has produced new men, there must be no waiting until men are imperceptibly transformed by revolutionary processes in perpetual renewal.

Chirikure challenges the dominated whose self-esteem is at its lowest level to regain their self worth and begin to view themselves as inevitable subjects. Chirikure challenges the people to conquer fear and Achebe (2009) identifies fear and hate as two of humanity's most destructive and limiting emotions. By directing his art to the oppressed people in society Chirikure satisfies the third principle of Afrocentric thought and praxis because he sees an African audience as the priority audience.

Semaonero ako
Panyika pano
Vekutonga ndevapi?
Simuka ufambe
Simuka ufambe (p.11)

(As you see it
On the whole Earth
Who must rule?
Stand up and walk
Stand up and walk)

Derived from a biblical story in Matthew 9 v 1-8 the phrase 'Simuka Ufambe' challenges the people to intervene practically so as to liberate themselves from a state of domination which subjugates them and moves them to marginal sites. Fromm cited in Freire (1996:41) views this complete domination of one group by another as thingification of the oppressed:

The pleasure in complete domination over another person (or other animate creature) is the very essence of the sadistic drive. Another way of formulating the same thought is to say that the aim of sadism is to transform a man into something inanimate since by complete and absolute control the living loses one essential quality of life-freedom.

Chirikure observes that self-depreciation and sadism, which is “a tendency to inanimate everything and everyone it encounters,” Freire (1996:41) are factors which militate against the total liberation. The poem therefore is a challenge to the oppressed to become a viable force that can seize the initiative and define their own destiny. Chirikure challenges people to resist the fatalistic logic of accepting their oppression and exploitation and instead struggle for total liberation. The poem, *Simuka Ufambe* attests to what Freire (1996) calls “fear of freedom”, a fear which dehumanizes, and binds the oppressed to an assumed natural inferior position. The phrase *ndakazvarirwa kutongwa* is a manifestation of the internalization of the image of the oppressor who is viewed as invincible. Freire (1996:29) reminds us the following on fear of freedom:

The oppressed having internalised the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift...It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.

Chirikure observes that the oppressed are afraid of freedom and challenges them to be agents in order to change the state of affairs. Freire (1996) also reminds us that this fear of freedom is also to be found in the oppressors, though obviously in a different form. The oppressed, he argues, are afraid to embrace freedom, the oppressors are afraid of losing the ‘freedom.’ Instead of fearing their leaders and holding power as a preserve of the leaders, Chirikure seems to echo Nyerere in Eze (1998:79) who observes that:

You must not fear your leaders. Our aim is to hand over responsibility to the people to make their own decisions. Our leaders are not leaders by birth; they are elected by the people. For why should a person be a leader by birth? Our leaders must be chosen by us. There is no need to have hereditary leaders.

Like in ‘*Hakurarwi*,’ Chirikure is committed to the restoration and resurrection of the people to more fulfilling lives and so satisfies the way of *Heru* as theme. The poet is also optimistic that on the basis of struggle victory is certain and on that basis Chirikure also satisfies *Njia* as theme.

While Chirikure can be praised for observing that at times leaders pacify the people and that people must shun objecthood and rise to the occasion and define their own destiny through struggle it is worth noting that in any revolution as implied by the titles ‘*Hakurarwi*’ and ‘*Simuka*’ the people must “know the enemy.” Chirikure seems to suggest that the enemy of the

people is the leadership and going by this observation it follows that the poet is blind to the fact that the enemy of the people goes beyond the leadership. Instead of blaming the leadership alone, Chirikure should understand that “a number of external factors affect the African situation and if [the struggle suggested in the poems] is to be placed in correct perspective and we are to know the enemy, the impact of these factors must be fully grasped,” Nkrumah (1968:1). While leadership has a role to play on the quality of life, foreign domination and imperialism need to be addressed. An understanding of imperialism “especially the means used by the enemy [capitalist imperialist states] to ensure the continued economic exploitation of our territories [and secondly] the nature of the attempts made to destroy the liberation movement,” Nkrumah (ibid: 1) is necessary. The study contends that if the enemy of the people is the leadership alone as Chirikure seems to suggest then it can be argued that his authorial gaze is limited to the internal dynamics of the society he is writing for. A more wider, far reaching and scientific look at world politics and its incapacitating effects on the African leadership and people alike is necessary in order to not only know the enemy but to know all the enemies for the struggle to be purposeful and rewarding. Furthermore, Chirikure seems to be proceeding from the premise that fear is gripping society and to him this is pathological. However, it can be argued that Chirikure is misinterpreting society’s caution for fear and on that basis the lesson to Chirikure is that “caution is not cowardice,” Ngugi (1987). In a sense, in ‘Simuka Ufambe’, Chirikure blames the victim for a crime.

‘Riva’ (Mouse trap) is an attack on a leader who masquerades as very responsible when overseas when in actual fact he is only interested in fattening his pocket. The leader has allowed a lot of corrupt practices but he does not work towards straightening things up by bringing the culprits to book.

*Nyoka inopinda mumba
Yokandira nokutsotsonya mazai
Iwe uchinyatsa kuzviona
Serema wosona muromo (p.15)*

(A snake gets into the house
It lays and hatches eggs
All this in your face
Like a lame you keep quiet)

Chirikure bemoans lack of astute and responsible leadership in Africa, a leadership which helps nurture liberated citizens. Chirikure seems to argue that leaders neglect "...their moral obligation to provide leadership [in the post-independence dispensation] by engaging issues that plague the communities and strategies for social change," West in Gordon (1997: 257). Chirikure laments the lack of quality leadership necessary to nurture and preside over true independence characterized by freedom, equality and justice.

*Wava mhiri kwerwizi
Kure kure, kuvatorwa
Uchiteya mariva ako
Wotaura seune shungu
Hanzi mhuri yangu yaparara (p.15).*

(When you are overseas
Far away among aliens
Laying the ground for your personal gains
You speak as if you are very concerned
That your people are suffering.)

The poet is against parroting or rather empty speeches which the leader makes overseas. He exposes such leaders by noting that underneath the rhetoric is greedy which is the primary motivator of the visit to overseas and what is worrisome is that the welfare of the people is never a priority for the leader. In this poem Chirikure laments what Johnson in Gordon (1997: 249) calls a "serious and deleterious crisis of leadership" in Africa. The leader "...subordinates, instrumentalises, or objectifies others as a means of pleasure for one's profit," (ibid: 249). This implies that the leader uses the people as a means to amass wealth in foreign lands and it is pertinent that we quote Chinweizu (1987:388) who notes the following in view of the African elite's pursuit of grandeur in foreign lands:

When a quest for dignity and glory degenerates into a mere hankering after foreign notice, every African concerned about the health of his culture and society must take alarm. When we seek rehabilitation in the eyes of our oppressors; when our elite deserts its obvious duties and instead dances happy harlot foreign acclaim; when it does not do what it must do to win the hearts of our people-namely, feed their hunger, raise their political consciousness, make them more aware of the ultimate causes and hidden modes of perpetuating their impoverishment, and raise their power and self-esteem in practical ways; when the nation's interests are, with nervous greed, sacrificed for the false grandeur of a few, it is time for profound concern. Such quisling tendencies in her elite are a manifest danger to the welfare of Africa.

Despite instrumentalising the people to his own benefit the people have resolved to bring the irresponsible leader to book:

*Ziva chinhu chimwe hama-
Mangwana vana vako chaivo
Uchawana vakuteya neriva
Riva rine dyiro inonyiminya (p.15).*

(Know one thing my kin
Tomorrow your own children
Will set a trap
A trap with very attractive food.)

It is the poet's contention that the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership must be faced with strategies to curb society from the disastrous consequences of such leadership. The title riva (mouse trap) signifies "the struggle for a more righteous outlook on life," Mazrui (1978: 26). The leadership's primary concern is fattening their pockets and never improving the welfare of the general populace. Chirikure is therefore writing against greedy leaders who do not serve the needs of their people but instead uses the people as a means to an end. Greed is depicted as a factor that militates against equal distribution of resources to the extent that leaders amass wealth while in the process impoverishing the people who ironically voted them into power.

'Hazvighoni' (Impossible) is a satirical poem which attacks the leader for engaging in 'unfinished business.' The poet observes that the elites engage themselves in several projects whose fruits are never realized by the people. The end of the poem shows that the people can not allow this anymore.

*Usati wasimuka watogara
Usati wagara watosimuka
Usati watanga watopedza
Usati wapedza watotanga*

*Zvirongwa zana nemakumi
Musoro uchingova mumwe
Minda gumi neinoraudzira
Badza richingova rimwe*

Iwe!

Hazvigoni! (p.19)

(Before you stand up you sit down
Before you sit down you have stood up
Before you start you have finished
Before you finish you have started

You come up with numerous programmes
Just for yourself
You have many farms
With only one hoe

You
It is impossible!)

Chirikure contends that in order to realize the benefits of an endeavour then one has to pursue the endeavour to its completion. Too many projects at the same time which are not properly managed can not reward the people and therefore Chirikure reminds the leaders to pursue projects to the fullest. The words “Iwe!” and “Hazvigoni!” suggest that the people can no longer accept the leader’s unfinished and unrewarding businesses. The poet “...aligns himself with the struggle for a just world...,” wa Ngugi (2003:19). The poet’s vision therefore is that freedom is only attainable on the basis of programmes that are pursued to completion and where the people actively participate. In the face of such leadership which engages in half baked projects the poet is conscious of the importance of resistance and struggle against such leadership because “the only African personality that we know is one of struggle,” wa Ngugi (2003:76). Chirikure seems to be attacking leaders whose projects are never beneficial to the people but are instances of cheap politicking on the part of the leader to lure the people.

‘Kudengezera nyika’ (Carrying the whole world on your head) is an attack on egocentric leaders who think they know it all and can do it all. The poet satirises leaders who have turned into dictators a situation which stifles the potential of the majority. In ‘Kudengezera nyika’ Chirikure observes that the problems of Africa are native and are rooted in the dictatorial tendencies of the leadership. On indigenous social ills, p’Bitek (1973:6-7) observes that:

I believe that most of our social ills are indigenous, that the primary sources of our problems are native. They are rooted in the social set-up, and the most effective solutions can not be imported, but must be the result of deliberate re-organisation of the resources available for tackling specific issues.

Chirikure castigates dictatorial leaders who mistake themselves for masters. Chirikure seems to observe that African leaders must transform from being dictators in order that they begin the march towards genuine liberation of the people. Nyerere in Eze (1998) reminds us in a Chapter by the same title that “leaders must not be masters.” It is Chirikure’s submission that Africa can not be free as long as leaders are not only masters but are feared by the people. The following lines make interesting reading here;

*Zwawafunga zvekudengezera nyika
Kuitakura kunge dengu rako rezviyo
Chitanga hako wakunga hata
.....
Kusadaro unoikoromora ngozi
Nyangwe kusadaro uchangoikoromora ngozi (p.23)*

(Now that you have resolved to carry the world on your head
Carrying it like your own basketful of grain
Then start by making a comfortable cushion
.....
Failure to do so is tantamount to inviting avenging spirits
Even if you make the cushion you will still invite trouble.)

Chirikure satirises leaders who think and behave in such a manner that the countries that they lead are personal properties to the extent that they can make unilateral decisions without the concern of the people. Chirikure views this practice not only as a great crime against humanity but as an invitation of trouble. Nyerere in Eze (1998: 79) is more to the point when he observes that:

When you (leaders) are selected to lead your fellow men, it does not mean that you know everything better than they do. It does not even mean that you are more intelligent than they are-especially the elders.

Chirikure therefore satirises such leaders who monopolise the affairs of the country and depicts them as masters who are not respected but feared by their people a situation which the poet views as oppressive and a threat to individual freedom. The people instead are rendered objects that are acted upon by the leader and in the process denied individual freedoms and justice. Such a leader who is brave enough to carry the nation on his head it must be stressed is feared by the people as was the case in the colonial period. Chirikure seems to argue that there is urgent need to abolish this seemingly developing trend where the leader is a master or demi-god and the

people are servants because this only works to push the people to marginal sites. Nyerere in Eze (1998: 78) further notes the following on masters and servants:

Our aim is to abolish this division of people between masters and servants and to make every person a master-not a master who oppresses others but one who serves himself. A person who serves himself is a true master.

The poet maintains that as long as the leaders behave like masters who can do virtually anything by virtue of the assumed powers vested in him freedom, equality and justice are moved further afield from the people. Because the leader is a master he is feared by the people and fear militates against the realization of a "...social justice based on the ideas of true equality," Nkrumah in Eze (1998:90). All in all Chirikure is arguing that 'fear breeds misery on the land' to quote wa Thiongo.

'Utsi Hunokachidza' (Teargas) is a satirical poem which exposes leaders who use violence as an instrument for suppressing the people. Violence is viewed by the author as a way of government but sees it as an impediment to freedom of the people. Chirikure castigates leaders who fail to provide basic human rights like food only to use violence when the people ask for what the leader can not provide:

*Unovadira mvura yemupombi huru
Wozopedzisa neutsi hunokachidza
Kana ane shave unoona akupfugamira (p.33).*

(You turn water hoses on them
And finish off with tear gas
Even the most hot headed will bow down to the pressure.)

Chirikure ridicules such leaders who use violence as an instrument to suppress popular will. The poet castigates leaders who silence dissenting voices. Chirikure seems to observe that freedom must not be limited to a particular group in society but is a right to all peoples. Luxemburg in Harold-Barry (2004: xi) observes the following on freedom:

Freedom for supporters of the government only, for members of one party only- no matter how numerous they might be-is no freedom at all. Freedom is always freedom for those who think differently.

Violence is an instrument that is used to instill fear and fear is a barrier to the realization of genuine freedom. In *Matigari* wa Thiongo (1987: 171) observes that in order for the urge for

liberation to materialize then “we must wage war on the fear that has descended on this land. Fear itself is the enemy of the people. It breeds misery on the land.” While positive action is the sum of those forces seeking social justice what Chirikure seems to be alluding to are the incapacitating effects of “negative action which represents the sum of those forces tending to prolong colonial and [neocolonial] subjugation and exploitation. Positive action is revolutionary and negative action is reactionary,” Nkrumah in Eze (1998:90). In ‘Hutsi Hunokachidza’ Chirikure posits that the use of violence against the people instills fear in people and this fear is a factor that stifles progressive forces from working towards realizing total liberation. Fear asphyxiates the will and power to struggle against oppression. To use McGary’s words in Gordon (1997:264):

To do violence to someone is to injure that person, but persons can be injured in two basic ways: we can injure someone by physically abusing that person and we can injure someone by causing that person’s psychological distress.

In ‘Utsi hunokachidza’ Chirikure exposes the extent of damage to the mind of the oppressed as a result of physical violence for violence and fear produces passive objects who are acted upon by the oppressor instead of people who can work towards improving their condition as subjects. Violence and fear, Chirikure seems to argue are inhibiting factors to freedom because they stifle the people’s potentialities to struggle for a better future. While the ruling elites use violence to control if not silence the people “in order that true independence should be won, it is necessary that positive action should come to overwhelm negative action,” Nkrumah in Eze (1998:91). Chirikure’s Utsi hunokachidza emphasizes that the net result of negative action is that “in these poor, underdeveloped countries, where the rule is that the greatest wealth is surrounded by the greatest poverty, the army and the police constitute the pillars of the regime,” Fanon (1968: 172). At the centre of the poem ‘Utsi Hunokachidza’ is the phenomenon of oppressive government that is threatening African people. To the poet these oppressive governments are anti-freedom. Babu (1981:165) aptly observes the following on fighting internal oppression:

Oppressive government is more terrible than tigers. The aim of the struggle in Africa for democratic rights, which are a prerequisite to any economic and political development, is to ensure that governments shall be less terrible than tigers. The short post-colonial history of Africa has been one long, sad spectacle of the naked misuse of power by people in authority, in some extreme cases comparable to the worst of Oriental despotism This cancer is slowly spreading even to the most liberal and enlightened parts of Africa.

'Gwara' (The Way) satirises the African elite who have turned dictators. Dictatorship, Chirikure seems to argue is an anathema to genuine liberation of people because it leads to adversity. Chirikure views dictatorship as a factor that militates against attainment of total liberation. The poet notes that dictatorship limits access to resources necessary for survival and adversity is the defining element of a society ravaged by dictatorship:

*Aramba kutevedza gwara
Ngaaratidzwe!
Tati, aramba kutevedza gwara
Ngaadzidziswe!
Basa achaita rekuropa
Mari achaita yekuvhumuka
Mukadzi chichava chishuwo
Imba achava manhenda
Zvemunda kana kutomborota. (p.37).*

(He/she who has refused to follow the way
Show him/her!
We reiterate that he/she who has refused to follow the way
Teach him/her a lesson!
Deny him/her a job
Deny him/her money
Deny him/her a spouse
Deny him/her a house
Deny his/her land)

It is Chirikure's contention that dictatorship is a sickness or social malaise that is plaguing Africa to the extent that adversity is the pervasive condition because life is characterized by unemployment, denial of land, lack of accommodation and all other forms of adversity. Chirikure contends that dictatorship produces parochial versions of life in the sense that people are forced to conform to the dictates of the one and only leader –the dictator. The result is that the dictator "enslaves the oppressed, murders their gods, their self-worth, takes their land, ...domesticates their children and attempts to create them in his or her own image." Dictatorship is depicted as an obstacle to social participation. wa Ngugi (2003: 59). In the poem Chirikure envisages a nation where there is equal access to opportunities.

'Dhisikodhi' (Discord) is a satirical poem which attacks leaders who have messed up things. The poet uses the metaphor of a choir and reprimands the failing leader. His advice to the despotic leader is clear and straightforward:

*Kana zvekuimba zvichikunetsa, mwana wamai
bvuma,
Bvuma usudurukire kure, vane chipo chekuimba vaimbe! (p. 25).*

(If you can not sing properly
Admit it
Admit it so that you pave way to the talented ones.)

The poet challenges the leader who has messed up things to step down and let those who are gifted to take charge for the good of the nation. The poet reminds such failing elites that they are impediments to genuine freedom. Instead of being progressive and productive, the leader in question is sowing seeds of discord and it is this discord that the poet is against. Chirikure argues that such irresponsible leadership can not meet the challenges facing the people and the only logical option is to step down. He says:

*Ndiwe munhu azokanganisa zvino, mwana wamai-
Woti kukwidza izwi, ugoti kubvarura dhisikodhi!
Hezvo wativhiringa, tose maimbiro angova madirativhange
Rumbo rwose rwenge madzetse ekwaMungezi
muzhezha.(p.25)*

(You have messed up things
You raise your voice, and can not keep in tune
You have messed up things for all people
The song is as if is a product of frogs in Mungezi river
in Summer)

Instead of unifying the people and leading them as a unified force, the leader ironically divides the people. Chirikure is criticizing such irresponsible leaders for failing to nurture unity which is an indispensable part of the struggle to realize fuller liberation defined by freedom, equality and justice. The poet seems to underline the fact that unity of purpose among members of a society including the leader is important for the progress and development of communities. On the contrary dictatorship impoverishes people and turns them into objects who look up to the master the leader.

In 'Riva', 'Hazvigoni', 'Kudengezera Nyika', 'Utsi Hunokachidza', 'Gwara' and 'Dhisikodhi' Chirikure belabours irresponsible African leadership. The poet's success lies in his contention that Africa is plagued by dictatorial tendencies on the part of leadership who do not respect individual freedom to the extent that such leadership is an impediment to political and economic development of the people. His success lies in the fact that in a sense his art is a positive step towards humanizing the African people who are objectified by irresponsible leadership. However, the poet seems to view fighting despotic leadership as an end in itself. In actual fact, dictators must also be seen as both products and victims of a rotten system of global politico-economic relations that are tailor-made to further the interests of the terrorist, capitalist and imperialist countries. Dictators can be viewed as individuals who are groomed by the capitalist countries in order to make possible the continual domination and exploitation of the resources of Africa. In other words, the dictatorship that Chirikure refers to must be seen as a lens through which one can understand the bigger machinery that sustains hegemony and theft. Chirikure does not realize that some of the so-called leaders are puppets of the Western hegemonic powers that are bent on keeping the black man down "by any means necessary." Dictators therefore can be viewed as agents of imperialism and to end at bemoaning dictatorship is not rewarding. While Chirikure raises a crucial issue of "unfinished business" in Africa in the poem Hazvigoni, the poet falls short of realising that this can be reflective of the invisible hand of the foreign dominating power to whose tune the leader dances to. Furthermore, the leaders do not have much choice with regards to the dictates of the dominating power. To suggest that it is impossible without a clear strategy as to how the people can fight the leader, let alone hegemony does not change the situation much. Addai-Sebo in Ankomah (2011:14) surmises that:

It is the violent pursuit of Western "national interests" in Africa and the consequence of the cost in the destruction of human life and the environment that continues to inform the knee-jerk responses of most African leaders to western demands on them. Western countries, in their pursuit of the national interests in Africa, lack compunction and have rooted visceral fear in African leaders.

Overall, the poet seems to be preoccupied with fighting internal oppression without a sound scientific vision which can allow him to grapple with all the factors at play in the global balance of power.

In *Chamupupuri*, Chirikure also attacks leadership for failing to nurture genuine independence which is defined by equality, freedom and justice. The title is derived from former British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan's, speech in South Africa on the 3rd of February 1960 who noted that "a wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not this growth of national consciousness is a political fact." It must be noted that while Macmillan was referring to change for the better in the sense of attaining political independence, Chirikure is arguing that the wind of change later turned into a whirlwind. Macmillan understood that there was growing resistance to colonial rule and hence anticipated that colonialism would be shaken and dislodged. The title, *Chamupupuri*, denotes a sudden change of the scheme of things in which case the wind of change has turned into a whirlwind which is wrecking havoc in the society. In this thesis we view the wind of change as essentially the efforts, especially the anti-colonial struggles that were motivated by the need to regain independence. The whirlwind symbolizes the debilitating experiences after independence that wreck havoc in society to the extent that there is no meaningful change. We submit that the whirlwind refers to neocolonialism and also emphasizes the hostility of the society in which the people are living.

The poet records the quest for change that grips colonized people of Africa that resultantly leads to independence. The poet notes that there is an awakening among the colonized people of Africa who feel that change is inevitable and hence engage in anti-colonial struggles that later bring independence. The poet says:

*Ndakaiona mhupo ichitsvaira nyika yeAfrica
 Ichisvinudza meso evaya vari parumananzombe
 Ichizunza mbambo dzeusvetasimba kuti zu zu zu
 Ichidokerwa yopeperetsa mureza weruzhinji rwevanhu. (p.12)*

(I saw the wing of change blowing across Africa
 Awakening those who were in bondage
 Shacking the roots of exploitation
 Resulting in the attainment of independence.)

The poet notes that having attained independence the happiness that is associated with attaining independence is short-lived because there is a sudden change of things for the worse where the wind of change has turned into a whirlwind, which in actual fact is a threat to life. The poet bemoans the emergence of a new form of colonialism which thwarts the hopes of attaining full

freedom. The poet notes that the wind is anti-life for it is destructive and what the poet seems to emphasise by this is that neocolonialism is a serious threat to the efforts towards achieving fuller humanity. The poet notes the following:

*Ndotarisa uko nekoko nhasi ndoona imwe ngoma
Mhepo iya yashanduka ruvara, yava chamupupuri
Chamupupuri chodzura mbariro
Choshezheudzira pfumo kune wamai richisiya mhandu. (p12).*

(Today if I look around I see a different thing
The wind of change has suddenly changed into a whirlwind
A whirlwind that is destructive
The whirlwind that wreaks havoc on the people instead of the enemy.)

The poet notes that the attainment of independence ushered a new era which is ravaging society- a period of neocolonialism. The poem captures the “transition of imperialism from the colonial to the neocolonial stage,” wa Thiongo (1993: 68). This is a period where blacks who took over power oppress fellow blacks. Chirikure is saddened by this hostile wave which renders the newly independent people victims:

*Ndikatarisisa ndinoona chamupupuri chine shavi
Chamupupuri chodambura-dambura rukuvhute
Uku mhuru haisati yatombodongorera kuti ibude munhumbu
Kana mihacha, pokupirira, midzi yayo chaiturika mudenga. (p.12).*

(A close look reveals a destructive whirlwind
A whirlwind which is anti-life
And independence is still in its infancy
The whirlwind is destructive even to the sacred tress on our land)

What the poet is emphasizing in the lines quoted above is that neocolonialism sets in soon after independence and is ravaging society. The post political independence period is defined by aggression as a result of different factors such as corruption, oppression among many other vices. The period is characterized by hostility as the title *Chamupupuri* denotes. What Chirikure seems to expose is captured by wa Thiongo (1993: 69) as follows:

The increasingly open, naked financial, industrial (eg Free Trade Zones etc), military and political interference of western interests in the affairs of African countries with the active cooperation of the ruling regimes in the same countries, showed quite clearly that the so-called independence had only opened each of the African countries to wider imperialist interests. Dependence abroad, repression at home became the national motto.

Chirikure therefore comes face to face with neocolonialism and the poem *Chamupupuri*, like *Hakurarwi* takes “an anti-imperialist and anti-neo-colonial character,” wa Ngugi (ibid: 69). Be that as it may, the poet does not dissect the cult of neocolonialism in order to expose not only the all enemies but the real enemies of independence. While Chirikure can be credited for noticing the wave of change that is anti-life it must be reiterated that mere exposure without redress is inadequate. While his poem is premised on McMillan’s speech he fails to notice that countries like Britain and other hegemonic powers play a part in wreaking havoc in Africa. In fact, the same countries have maintained their stranglehold on African countries such that the majority of African countries are inarguably under the suzerainty of the capitalist imperialist countries. Ushie (2008) notes that:

This criminal betrayal of the African people's pre-independence expectations and the euphoria at independence naturally resulted in the bifurcation of the continent into two. There is the Africa that profits by neo-colonialism and the Africa that struggles to emerge into a free and truly independent post-colonial world. There has also been the Africa of the predator and the Africa of the prey; Africa of the hunter and Africa of the hunted; Africa of the rich and Africa of the poor; Africa of the oppressor and Africa of the oppressed; Africa that is material-driven and Africa that is conscience-governed; and, finally, there is Africa of the farm and Africa of the town.

This is what Chirikure fails to expose and leaves the reader to guess. While he exposes the severity of the situation posed by independence his art risks entrapping the people further because there is no hint whatsoever as to how the people can save themselves from the threatening situation. In the midst of the harsh realities posed by the neocolonial environment victorious thought is a necessity. The poet does not go beyond the obvious to envision a changed world premised on struggle and transcendence. He tends to peripherise struggle and fails to hold *Njia* as theme.

‘Chimwoto’ is a poem which exposes the extent of exploitation and plunder of African resources that has rendered the African people destitute. The poem depicts an individual who having borrowed fire with all the confidence that firewood would not be a problem he/or she only realizes that there is no more firewood which is a source of energy-a source of life.

Nhasi ndoita dziva dziva nemapani
Ndenge rombe rinotanda botso
Huni ndawana angova makwande

Nemiti minyoro chaiyo yanyangariswa (p.13).

(Today I wander up and down the bare land
Like a destitute
There is no firewood
The land has been deforested)

What Chirikure is emphasizing is that “the Garden of Eden is in decay and inadequately suitable for [human] habitation,” (Mazrui 2004: 1). Having noticed that the situation is so bad that it can not be tolerated Chirikure sees hope in struggle to realize a more liberated identity:

*Ndiani akambomona shambakodzi negwande?
Ndiani akamboita zhara akasamuka chibhebhenenga?
Ndingatora ngozi ndarwira zvangu, changu here?
Hezvo Chimwoto! Ndouyako mutakati!*

(Who on this earth has ever prepared sadza with bark?
Who on this earth has gone hungry without expressing discontentment
Can I invite trouble for fighting for something which is rightfully mine
A struggle is the only option! Here I come you Oppressor!)

Chirikure observes that it is crucial that people realize that their freedom is only a reality through struggle against the oppressor and exploiter. The poem ends with profound optimism for the victim has resolved to engage in “a hand to hand struggle,” to use Fanon’s phrase (1968). The poet realizes that agency is “an indispensable first step towards securing economic independence and integrity,” Nkrumah in Eze (ibid: 90). Underlying the poem ‘Chimwoto’ is the fact that people realize that freedom is only made possible by utilizing the mind and hands. The necessity of positive action to a liberated identity marks Chirikure’s poetry. As the results from interviews and questionnaires have revealed poetry is a necessary but not adequate tool in the struggle for freedom. Interviewee 10 succinctly observes that:

Words cannot be guns. Words will remain words and not action. It is a time when literary practitioners should take the Fanonian and Agostinho Netoian and the Cabralian way of being both comrades-in-arms with the masses and literary guerillas of the masses in their quest for total liberation.

Underlying the respondent’s view above is the idea that poetry must not be viewed as an end in itself but a means to an end. In fact, it complements other forces in the struggle for freedom and Chirikure seems to understand that ultimately positive action that is aimed at seizing power is the

panacea to Africa's problems. Nkosi (1965:109) reiterates the importance of political and economic power in the following words:

Before Africans can make a contribution to world civilization it seems to me axiomatic that they must achieve self-confidence and self-respect, and this confidence can only be achieved through economic and political power. A nation of paupers cannot contribute anything of worth to the world and the safety of such a nation among powerful nations of the world is greatly questionable.

The line "*Hezvo Chimwoto! Ndouyako Mutakati!*" (A struggle is the only option! Here I come you Oppressor) emphasizes commitment to struggle in order to transform society by regaining political as well as economic power which guarantees a more humane society which is defined by political sovereignty, economic power, full democracy, transparency among many other issues.

All in all 'Chimwoto' is an attack on the exploitative tendencies of other races of the world especially the whites. It is wa Thiong'o (1981:24) who reminds us that:

Neocolonialism means the continued exploitation of Africa's total resources and of Africa's labour power by international monopoly capitalism through continued creation and encouragement of subservient weak capitalistic economic structures, captained or overseered by a native ruling class

The poet seems to argue that as long as the imperialists continue to exploit and plunder Africa's resources total liberation remains a myth. In view of Mazrui's (2004) observation that Africa is not in adequate control of its own resources it can be argued that the African is enslaved by the imperialist world system and hence the need to engage in a struggle to change the scheme of things so that African resources can primarily benefit the African. The poet is committed to the search for ways to overcome dependence.

'Rutendo' (Thanksgiving) is a satirical poem which attacks leaders for failing to cater for the former freedom fighters' needs a blunder which has rendered the former freedom fighters victims. In order to capture the extent of betrayal and neglect the poet depicts a freedom fighter whose human condition is defined by vulnerability and abject poverty. The climax of the satiric attack on the leaders is in the following lines:

*Chokwadi ndinokutendai vakuru vangu
Musiki ngaarambe achiwedzera njere dzenyu
Ndidzodzika njere dzenyu dzakava mwenje yedu
Mwenje yakavheneka nzira tema yekurwira makombo
Hezvo nhasi tigere nemaviri wani vakuruwe!
Dai musiri imi, dai ndisiri pano kudai! (p.15).*

(Really, I thank you our leaders
May the Lord richly give you more brains
The brains that led us through
The brains that illuminated the way during the struggle for our land
Today we are comfortable, our dear leaders
If it not because of you we would not be here.)

The former freedom fighter is actually protesting against leadership which he accuses of being responsible for the human condition which is so deplorable despite attaining political independence. The underlying meaning of the poem is that the leadership is negating its duty to rehabilitate the former freedom fighters. The former freedom fighter is therefore “demanding the total and immediate bettering of their lot,” Fanon (1968:107). The poem is a clarion call to rehabilitation of mankind and help nurture a new humane society. Io Liyong (1991) aptly observes that “because the writer is an individual who is committed to humanity he is likely to use his intellect and ability to question the direction of a government and remind it of its goals.” It is the contention of this study that in the poem ‘Rutendo’ Chirikure is simply and squarely reminding African leaders on their negated goals and responsibilities especially on former freedom fighters. The poet is writing against stripping a section or the whole of society of all aspects of humanity as good as colonialism was a systematic negation of the other person of all attributes of humanity. His is a quest for humanization of all sections of society for that must be the duty of responsible leadership.

In ‘Mari Yekunze’ (Foreign Currency) Chirikure views foreign capital or aid as an instrument of neocolonialism and imperialism. He maintains that foreign capital is used to weaken national economies and hence enable the imperialist powers to dictate what to do and what not to do in the imperilled nations. Chirikure views foreign capital as an instrument of continual domination and exploitation of the so-called developing world and create a leeway to extend and guarantee the continued domination of Africa especially by the West. It is Nkrumah in Eze (ibid: 92) who notes that “...it is essential that a liberated territory should not bind her economy to that of the

ousted rulers.” The poet notes that foreign currency or capital strips a whole nation of its sovereignty and integrity because it is the imperialist powers that control virtually all the activities and course of action of the so-called independent nations. The poet captures the aspect of foreign intrusion as follows:

*Handiti ndini ndava kuvheneka kana kudzima zhira yenyu
Handiti ndini ndangova baba, mudzimu naMwari wenyu
Ini Komuredhi Shefu Baba Mari Yekunze Kwenyika! (p. 21).*

(I am the one who is determining your way
I am now your father, guiding spirit as well as your High God.
I Foreign Capital!)

The poet rightly observes that reliance on foreign currency or capital only works to subordinate the very people who adopt foreign capital and render them perpetual servants of the imperialist powers. Foreign capital, the poet seems to argue, is a tool of enslavement which only works to keep the black man dominated and oppressed. Nkrumah in Eze (ibid: 91-92) further observes that:

Any oblique attempt of a foreign power to thwart, balk, corrupt or otherwise pervert the true independence of a sovereign people is neo-colonialist because it seeks, notwithstanding the acknowledged sovereignty of a people to subordinate their interests to those of a foreign power.

The poet holds that economic dependency especially on a foreign power and its currency is antithetical to the crusade against foreign domination. The poet seems to argue that it is only when African nations work towards regaining economic power and sovereignty that they are recognized as forces to reckon with in the capitalist world. On the contrary, existing as an appendage of an economic power further sinks the African nations into servitude. Chirikure is therefore writing against economic victimhood which is necessitated by dependency on foreign capital. Kalouche in Mazrui (2004:459) observes that “Africa’s sons and daughters have become the primary victims of global economic apartheid.” It is Chirikure’s submission that true independence is only a reality when Africa transcends economic dependency. Reflecting on Africa’s economic growth, Mazrui (2004: 743) certainly has a point when he observes that:

Priority should be given to internal policy reforms...we in Africa must accept the discipline, restraint and austerity that are required for establishing what may be termed a new domestic order if ever hope to transform our relationship with the industrialized nations from one of permanent dependence to one of beneficial interdependence which

can generate within African society itself the engine necessary for sustained economic growth.

It can therefore be argued that dependence on foreign currency is a recipe for disaster for Africans because the sovereignty and integrity of the people are jeopardised. The poet seems to observe that no sound national economy is built on and sustained by foreign currency and interests. Fanon (1968) defines a national economy as an economy based on what may be termed local products. Chirikure is agitating for transcendence of Africa's economic dependency especially on superpowers in order that freedom reigns supreme. While Chirikure's 'Mari Yekunze' revolves around dependency on foreign currency it can also be argued that dependency in its cultural, political, economic, educational, scientific and linguistic manifestations is incapacitating. Ngara (1985:26) succinctly observes that:

But nationalism does not necessarily lead to a genuine transformation of society, because the national bourgeoisie often steps into the boots of the departed colonialists, maintaining the same old system and only introducing cosmetic changes, while working in alliance with the international bourgeoisie who control the economy of the country from a distance.

'Heano Mampirire ekunze' (Weather Forecast) presents a dreadful image of Africa. The structure of the poem coupled with the images provided by the poet point to the idea that all is not well and there is very little, if not nothing worth celebrating in Africa. The poet notes that life is threatened by harsh weather conditions for example drought, angst, hunger and in this society death is the thesis (*makuwa mitsago*) while hopelessness is the pervasive mood:

Pasi rufuse
Denga ibaravara
Nzizi majecha
.....
Hupenyu rufuse
Mutsago makuwa
Makuwa mitsago

Hameno tikaona ramangwana.(p.30)

(The land is very hot
The sky is bare
Rivers are characterized by siltation
.....
Life is excruciatingly painful
Pillows are graves

Graves are pillows)

African life conditions are depicted as seemingly threatening the survival of its inhabitants. In this poem Chirikure highlights one existential concern-nihilism which West (1994) cited in Johnson (1997:249) defines as a “life without hope that constitutes a severe threat to the very survival of [the African].” The poet seems to argue that the African is in a very precarious condition and that the “Garden of Eden is in decay,” to use Mazrui’s words. Chirikure depicts a society in which everything is anti-life to the extent that there is no guarantee for any future. The nation is in a state of decay, a cul-de-sac. The future is unimaginable and the poem presence a sense of utter meaninglessness and self-loathing. While the poet is saddened by life conditions the attitude of the poet which borders on despair is not adequate to confront the imperialist and neo-colonial forces. As is emphasized in the discussion of Ignatius Mabasa’s poetry Chirikure’s ‘Heano Mampirire Ekunze’ is not filled with profound hope and a sense of struggle despite longing for a liberated identity. This is as a result of the fact that the poet does not situate his poem in the history and philosophy of existence of the people he is writing for and about. The African people hold victorious thought crucial in their ontological existence. In fact, in this poem Chirikure does not hold *Njia* as theme. In view of this, Osundare in Chiwome (2002: vii) observes that:

A proper understanding of our history will put our present anomy in clear if not more bearable perspective; a more tough-minded dialogue with the past will reveal how much we have gone through and how far we are capable of going. A philosophy of Africa not informed by historical wisdom is most likely to end in a kind of pessimism borne out of prognostication without diagnosis, a sure way to the ontology of defeat.

‘Zvirahwe (nedudziro dzacho)’ is a poem which paints a gloomy picture about African life and like in the poem ‘Hazvigoni’ in *Hakurarwi* Chirikure depicts Africa as a continent that is characterized by erratic programme ventures which are not pursued to completion to the extent that it becomes a continent of unfinished businesses. Furthermore, there is nothing worth celebrating because pain and agony are the defining elements of the continent.

*Tsoro yekwedu inofa ichiri kugadzirwa kurongwa:
Africa*

.....

Setswa nehope zvinosvodzwa, misodzi ichiponewa

Africa. (p.34)

(In our continent programmes are abandoned before implementation
Africa
In our continent joy and peace are unheard of and it is a land of angst
Africa)

The poet exposes the horrifying phenomenon in Africa where life is defined by despondency and impotence. The poet laments the degeneration of Africa into a continent where nothing good happens. Like Mabasa, Chirikure shows a sense of nihilism which is defined by Johnson in Gordon (1997:257) as “a state of mind that views life as meaningless. It is a state of mind that bespeaks self-loathing, despair, emptiness and an utter loss of hope.”

In view of the foregoing, it can be argued that to view Africa as a continent where nothing good happens and where society is characterised by utter pessimism is rather unAfrican for African philosophy of existence is premised on hope and agency. It is a philosophy of life which is life affirming and not anti-life as the poet would want to suggest. The poet seems to sink the people into oblivion for he fails to instill hope into the minds of the people in order that they “...realize visions of a new tomorrow,” Fanon (1968). In fact, emphasizing on suffering without redress undermines the people’s potentialities instead of unlocking that very potential. The greatest weakness of Chirikure’s poem is that he fails to transcend hopelessness and despair and his poem risks entrenching suffering into the philosophy of life of the people to the extent that suffering will seemingly appear natural. It is Chiwome (2002: 239) who reminds us that:

Without hope life crumbles like a clay doll in the tropical rain; resolve loses its essences and impetus, struggle becomes impossible as the wheel of progress is deprived of its vital hub.

Chirikure seems to be bogged down by capturing the seemingly surmountable challenges that the African continent poses. He seems to proceed from the premise that there is a continent somewhere which is more habitable as opposed to Africa which to him is anti-life. The Africa that Chirikure creates in ‘Heano Mamirire ekunze and Zvirahwe (nedudziro dzacho)’ is rather imaginary. The poet dispatches a “vast arsenal of derogatory images of Africa...,” Achebe (2009). On the contrary, Africa is the cradle of civilization and to suggest that it is a threat to humanity is rather false. From an Afrocentric view, Chirikure fails to beam forth the reality that with all its imperfections Africa is the parentcivilisation. As indicated in the discussion of the

theoretical framework in Chapter 3, Afrocentric writers must be clear about the fact that Africans are the parentpeople of humanity and African civilization is the parentcivilisation. The weather pattern suggested by Chirikure is dreadful to the extent that it could not or cannot nurture civilization. ‘Heano Mimirire Ekunze’ denotes chaos in Africa and the poet erroneously contends that death is more important than the very fact of survival. Instead of feeding the readership with the myth that everything in Africa is bad the poet fails to notice that Africa has one of the finest weather conditions in the world. To maintain that African climate is anti- life while ignoring the fact that the Western climate, for example, is one of the greatest threats to humanity is to miss the point. To view African climate alone as a threat to humanity is mere grandstanding in view of the fact that different parts of the world experience natural disasters such as hurricanes for example Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (US) in 2005, Hurricane Irene through the Caribbean, US East Coast and Canada, earthquakes for example the deadliest earthquake in Japan 2011, floods in Thailand and Australia 2011, heat waves for example in the United States, 2011 among many others is ample evidence that the idea that African climate can not be singled out as the worst in the world. Instead of simply lamenting about African climate and the threat it poses to life Chirikure fails to note that Africa is “a great continent, wherein live a proud and varied people, a land which is the new world and was the cradle of civilization...,” Malcom X (1992: 53-54). On the whole, the idea that Africa is a land of hopeless reprobates as suggested by the poem is rather flawed. In the poem ‘Zvirahwe (nedudziro dzacho)’ like ‘Heano mimirire Ekunze’, Chirikure sounds like the Eurocentric scholars who are notorious for denigrating Africa by creating myths that are meant to keep the African in a dominated position. Instead of fighting domination Chirikure seems to be plucking a leaf out of the racist scholars’ books and depict Africa as a continent of chaos. Despite facing challenges it is a falsehood that everything in Africa comes to nought as the poet seems to emphasise. In the poem, ‘Zvirahwe’ Chirikure seems to be preoccupied by the bad afflicting society without turning his art into a spring of hope. He seems to be harbouring the colonialist view of Africa that it is a continent where nothing good happens. In fact, Chirikure’s two poems refereed to above are instances of, “poisonous writing, in full consonance with the tenets of the slave trade-inspired tradition of European portrayal of Africa,” Achebe (2009:87-88). Furthermore, Atime in Ankomah (2008: 9) is more to the point when he observes that “negative reports break the spirit and undermine people’s ability to make positive change or attract goodness into their life. Showing the positive

side of Africa can manifest better dreams and results for the continent...indeed there is a beautiful side of Africa.”

Utilising the biblical story in which God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac (Genesis 22v1-19) in the poem Kunge Isaka naAbrama (Pakuuya kweESAP) Chirikure reflects on the nature of leadership in Africa. Chirikure uses this biblical story to satirise leaders who decide on behalf of the people to venture into different programmes such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) without prior consultation with the people. The poet satirises leaders who like Abraham never bother to inform the people about the course of action to be taken. He castigates leaders who fail to notice that “for the people, the leader is not an authority, but an organism through which they as the people exercise their authority and express their will,” Fanon (1968:185). The people are used as ‘sacrificial lambs’ as is the case with Isaac in the biblical story. The poet says:

*Inga munoziva baba, kusunga ndinosunga chose,
Asika ndingasunga sei, zvakasimba sei chaizvo
Ndisingazivi kureba kwerwendo rwamaronga?
Kune makata here, materu here, chando here?*

*Madii kujekesa, ndepiko kwatakananga kwacho?
Kunei chaita kuti muronge sedimikira kudai?
Ndianiko ambokurotsai rwendo rwacho urwu?
Inga zvinenge zvaIsaka naAbrama kugomo reMoria!(p.20).*

(As you know fully well that I work hard
But how hard should I work
When I do not know how long the journey is?
Is it an uphill, steep slope or cold weather?

Why not spell out clearly where exactly we are going?
What is it that has made you secretly organize the journey?
Who has inspired you to go for a journey?
It is just like Isaac and Abraham on Mount Moria.)

The poet seems to argue that by making unilateral decisions, the leader is rendering the people objects, in fact sacrificial victims. Chirikure is arguing that Africa is an economic victim of the West and as Mazrui (2004:450) rightly observes, “a new system of apartheid extended on a global scale, that is not merely about the North South divide, but that is inherently in need of victims to flourish and prosper where the economic victims have been disproportionately black

and African while the military victims have been disproportionately Muslim.” The poet seems to note that African leaders need to realize that assumed foreign solutions to African problems always turn into threats to the very fact of survival because adopting ‘foreign solutions’ is tantamount to importing problems for the people. The poet seems to contend that Africa must cure the malaise or sickness that has gripped the whole continent-dependency. The poet shows an urge for a break with viewing foreign programmes as the magic formula to African ills. In fact, programmes such as Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) and suchlike are tools of neocolonialism which incapacitate the struggle for sovereignty because the programmes only work to disempower, impoverish and entrap the African multitudes. Mazrui (2004:459) also observes that after colonization “instead, what [the leaders] only inherited [are] structural adjustment programmes [eg ESAP] and liberalization schemes that benefit a few wealthy and create a free market that offers AIDS, famine, murder and theft feely to everyone according to their means.” The poet seems to argue that it is important for the good of the realization of total freedom that African people especially the leaders “transcend dependency” [by] use of indigenous techniques, personnel and approaches to purposeful change.” Mazrui (2004: 443). The poem is a scathing attack on leaders who adopt policies which are said to serve the interests of Africa when in actual fact “...they operate in an environment, with a mentality, and under conditioned attitudes and direct advice that all tend to yield policies that primarily serve the neocolonial powers, policies that often are in direct opposition to the genuine interests of the African peoples,” Chinweizu (1987:356).

Stated more bluntly, Chirikure seems to argue that Africans “must first save themselves from the debilitating effects of [foreign solutions] if they are to achieve liberating self transformation,” Gordon (1997:47). On the whole, the poet exposes social disappointment that engulfs society as a result of a leader who does not realize that the people must express their will. To use Fanon’s (1968:184) words, the poet seems to advise the leader that “I want him to realize that at the same time I show him the way; the nation ought not to be something bossed by a Grand Panjandrum.” Chirikure emphasizes complementarity between the leader and the people failure of which reduces the people to sacrificial lambs. The poet is concerned with leaders who do not incorporate their people in decision making which is a necessary condition for realization of genuine liberation. Chirikure is castigating leaders for adopting policies which strip people of

their will to act in social processes. The poet is saddened by suffering which is brought by external solutions to African problems. Bond and Manyanya (2003: 84) observe the following with regards to ESAP:

Whether Zanu's earlier offerings were welfarist in nature-education and health programmes, especially-or took the form of patronage and civil service jobs, the party could at least claim to be raising living standards during the 1980. In contrast, Esap was soon translated as 'Eternal Suffering for African People.'

The poet is agitating for home-grown solutions to African problems in order that genuine liberation is attained. Failure of to uphold homegrown solutions reduces African countries to poorfare states. Therefore, Kunge Isaka naAbrama is concerned with transcending dependency for the good of the African countries. On the evils of ESAP Mugabe (2001: 117) says:

The hardships we endure today arise from the programme of adjustment to which we acquiesced at the beginning of this decade, which have had the terrible effect of simply wiping off the phenomenal social gains we had made during the first decade of our independence...For the past decade we adjusted and liberalized the economy by way of ESAP and its sequel, ZIMPREST. The question we would not answer in both programmes is for whom were we adjusting the economy...We adjusted for external interests which is why our people have nothing to show, ten years into the adjustment; which; which is why this economy has been declaring monthly dividends to foreigners year in year out...The way forward is to adjust the economy for real ownership and control by indigenous Zimbabweans.

Chirikure is against adopting programmes which never reward indigenous people but further the interests of imperialist countries especially the West. In actual fact, Chirikure holds that African leaders are also responsible for the African condition which borders on poverty. Chinweizu (1987: 399) reminds African leaders to desist from externalizing all the miseries of our condition as follows:

Our generation of African nationalists must respectfully avoid the sentimental dignitarianism of those apostles of the African Personality who prefer to externalize all the blame for the miseries of our condition. Without belittling or disguising the enormous contributions of imperialists to our present situation, we must honestly accept final responsibility for our weakness and backwardness. Africa's backwardness and weakness are man made.

'Mushonga wekurutsa' is also against dependency on foreign powers and Chirikure emphasizes that African philosophical traditions teach us that agency and struggle are indispensable attributes. In 'Mushonga wekurutsa' Chirikure presents human agency as particularly crucial for

the realization of economic independence and integrity. There are different proverbs and axioms such as “*kufa kwemurume kubuda ura*” and “*ndofa ndaedza*” respectively which challenge us to intervene practically in social processes.

*Paiwa nemwoyo wenyu ndinopanzwisisa
Maiti kuti dura rizare hunge wadikitira. (p.73).*

(I really understand what you aimed at.
You said in order to get enough food one has to work or struggle.)

In the above Chirikure seems to underline the fact that African existential philosophy is premised on active participation in social processes and disregards objecthood or inaction. Gordon (1997:15) puts forth the proposition that “our insertion into the material world challenges us to gain effective measures of control over the natural environment.” The poet seems to argue that contrary to this philosophy of life where human agency is an integral part of African people’s life there are leaders who have turned the people into consumers who are stripped of the will and intent to change the environment. In the poem, the poet attacks leaders for stripping people of subjecthood and warns against blind adoption of foreign programmes and aid.

*Zvamaida sekuru, ini ndinozvanzwisisa
Asika, ndingambobvunzawo here zvishomanene
.....
Vanotipa kudya vose vose vanotida here?
Chokudya chose inhungo nembariro yeupenyu here?
Zame akambotipireiko chipo chekurutsa. (p.73).*

(I really understand what you were up to
But can I ask a bit
.....
Are all donors genuine friends
Is all food aid a guarantee to life
Why did God bless us with the gift of choosing what is bad and good for us)

The poet bemoans the seemingly developing trend where Africa is increasingly becoming a continent of consumers of foreign programmes, policies and aid that render the people victims. The poet is emphasizing placing African interests at the centre in life processes and sees uncritical adoption of foreign programmes and aid as putting the people at risk of domination and enslavement. Chirikure seems to argue that in order to realize the best out of relations with the outside capitalist world Africans must set their own agenda and then situate it at the centre.

Instead of “the West and the rest of us” Chinweizu (1987) or “Us and the rest of the West” Muponde (2000) this study maintains that Africa’s relations with the capitalist West and the United States of America must not blind one to exclude the East and other parts of the world. In actual fact, Africa’s relation with the outside world must be “Us and the rest of the World.” Underlying this dictum is the idea that Africa’s interests must be at the centre as it relates with the outside world be it the West, East or any other part of the world. Chinweizu (1987:355-356) observes the following:

The received political faith of most of Africa’s petite bourgeoisie is liberalism in one form or another. These African liberals, as agents of an international liberal imperialism, have a special job to spread the liberal ideology in Africa, to maintain a black front there for a neocolonial world order run by the West, to administer the neocolonial African territories for the West, and to restore the imperialized status quo if any genuinely African nationalist regime should storm its way into power anywhere in Africa.

The net result is that the people are the sacrificial lambs of such liberalism because the programmes are tailor made to suit the interests of the imperialist powers. Ngugi (1993: 110) puts forth the proposition that “the IMF [and] World Bank (WB) are determining the lives and deaths of many in Africa.” In view of the foregoing, this study contends that dependency on foreign capital prepares the ground for effective political, economic and cultural dominance. On the basis of this political, economic and cultural domination Africans are rendered victims by the stultifying politico-economic as well as cultural dictates of the dominating power. ‘Kunge Isaka naAbrama (Pakuuya kweESAP)’ and ‘Mushonga Wekurutsa’ belong to the first strand of Mazrui’s classification of African literature namely literature of protest against alien control in the neocolonial environment. It is poetry of protest against neocolonial domination of weaker nations in the global power relations. Chirikure is writing against the machinations of rich nations that are bent on victimizing the weaker nations while strengthening and sustaining the capitalist interests of the West and United States of America. What invites the poet’s scorn is the sad reality that the leadership has become surrogates of rich nations a situation that breeds poverty and pain among the majority.

In ‘Kunge Isaka naAbrama (Pakuuya KweESAP)’ and ‘Mushonga wekurutsa’ Chirikure seems to argue that the people are victims of their leadership particularly when the leader adopts

policies or programmes that actually impoverish the people. The poet fails to grasp the reality that the leader is also sacrificed by those who actually impose the programmes on developing economies to the extent that both the leader and his or her people are sacrificial lambs besides the fact that it is the majority who suffer more. The poet does not transcend mere blame on leadership to grapple with the problem at a global level. It is crucial to note that capitalist-imperialist countries such as Britain and America have for a long time viewed “Southern Africa as a bastion of imperialism,” Babu (1981:107). The capitalist-imperialists therefore devise strategies that allow the maintenance of African countries as client states using various institutions such as The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as agents of imperialism. This is made possible by the fact that African leadership is not powerful such that at times policies or programmes are imposed on them with little choice, if any. This lack of power stems from the economic and military weakness of the majority of African countries to the extent that repulsing imperialism becomes almost impossible. The poet does not see that this importation and reliance on so-called solutions from outside is a continental problem that can not be blamed on an individual leader but has to be fought within the global context of the world politics in order to know the real enemy. Babu’s (1981) observation that failure to restructure our economies led to their becoming nothing but appendages, some more prosperous than others to the developed countries, and our foreign relations remained colonial in nature sustains the argument that the cult of imperialism is a continental problem that has to be fought in unison with other African nations as well as other dominated peoples of the world. Chirikure’s ridicule of African leadership seems to be directed to a particular leader a situation which does not change the situation much because the problem is bigger than he imagines. No responsible leader plots the suffering of his people but it is an acknowledged fact that at times leaders make blunders that are detrimental to the living conditions of the people. The poet’s imagination is fixed to attacking leadership over dependency without noticing that “our economies are colonial, sometimes known as peripheral economies serving the mature (i.e. capitalist) economies from the sidelines without themselves having a place at the centre of the world economy. In order to serve this international capitalist system, our own economies have evolved a dependent structure in much the same way as rural areas are structured to serve cities,” Babu (1981:74).

Chapter 4 has revealed that fear is one of the factors that are identified by respondents who provided data through interviews and questionnaires. It is a factor that is also identified by poets in the crusade against partial or ersatz independence. In 'Hope Dzangu' Chirikure observes that in the face of different challenges facing the African people it is necessary that people transcend self-depreciation and instead replace it with profound hope and optimism necessary to guarantee and give impetus to struggle against such ills as expropriation of Africa's resources. The poem is against pacifist attitudes to life. The poem is a wake-up call to the people that self-depreciation leads to the demise of the African race. The poet seems to argue that the defeat of neocolonialism is the real object of struggle. Echoing Fanon (1968: 106) Chirikure seems to observe that to achieve freedom African people "must first decide to wake up and shake themselves, use their brains and stop playing the stupid game of the Sleeping Beauty." Chirikure is emphasizing that a prerequisite for bettering the life of the African people is agency. The African has to rise to the occasion as an active participant in social processes. The poet seems to be reminding us that "the battleline against hunger, against ignorance, against poverty, and against unawareness ought to be ever present in the muscles and the intelligencies of men and women," Fanon (1968: 203).

Hope!

Hope ndidzo dzoitita titsakatikire mudzikirira

Hope dzatakarega dzichitipinda mukati metsinga. (p.38)

(Sleeping!

Sleeping is what has made our life degenerate into nightmares.

Sleeping we allowed to be deep seated in our mind and body.)

The poet notes that the people have been pacified by the leader. Chirikure castigates such leaders for failing to lead the people in such a manner that they realize their potential and liberty. Fanon (1968: 168-169) observes that despite the unity of purpose in the struggle for liberation:

The leader pacifies the people. For years on end after independence has been won, we see him, incapable of urging on the people to a concrete task, unable really to open the future to them or of flinging them into the path of national reconstruction, that is to say, of their own reconstruction...During the struggle for liberation the leader awakened the people and promised them a forward march, heroic and unmitigated. Today, he uses every means to put them to sleep, and three or four times a year asks them to remember the colonial period and to look back on the long way they have come since then.

Inaction, observes the poet, is a sure way to the ontology of defeat. The poet is against a disillusioned vision of life and presents vigilance and proactiveness as necessary ingredients to life. The poem emphasizes the necessity of the people's "struggle to become free subjects and to participate in the transformation of society," Freire (1996: 11). Chirikure holds agency as an integral quality of African people while on the contrary objecthood is viewed as a license to intense suffering of the African multitudes. Chirikure is committed to humanizing and harmonizing African people as well as reinvigorating the hope to define their own future. He holds *Njia* as theme and is against helplessness, hopelessness and inaction. He says:

*Tichamera mhoni nemamota mumakotsi,
Tichidai kuswerodedemara, tichinyinurira zvirototo,
Tigozoridzirwa ngoma yemariro naivo vatorwa,
Tichivigwa muguva rakadzika-dzika kwazvo!(p.38).*

(We will develop blisters and boil at the back of our heads
As we wallow in docility
To the extent that foreigners will beat the symbolic drum for death on our behalf
And we will be buried in a deep grave.)

Chirikure is conscious of the fact that "nothing is more powerful than an individual acting out of his conscience, thus helping to bring the collective conscience to life," Cousins in Pointer (2001:225).

'Ndikokovedze Nomazvo' exposes and ridicules tyrannical leaders who incarcerate and extenuate those who question the direction of the leader. The poet seems to argue that Africa is under siege as a result of leaders who use the prison, police as repressive state apparatus. In his view such leaders are a barrier to freedom of expression which is a marker of total freedom among others.

*Wakandisukumidzira muchizarira ndisina fungidziro
Uchiti ndakanukirei uchigova nyama yatakadzimba tose (p.40)*

(You unexpectedly forced me into prison
For expressing discontentment with the unilateral distribution of meat we hunted down together)

The poet exposes and castigates tyrannical leaders who silence dissenting voices to the extent that people are rendered ineffective. Chirikure presents a situation whereby Africa is plagued by

leaders who block the free flow of ideas necessary for nation building. The leader is depicted as a killer who is feared rather than respected by his people and this is aptly captured in the following line “*nekuti maoko ako anenge achinyatsoti bo, bo kubomha rinopisa!* (p.40) (because your hands are dripping with fresh blood).

In ‘Inzwi’ Chirikure also bemoans the absence of freedom of expression. The poet seems to argue that freedom of expression is a necessary condition for the materialization of genuine independence characterized by equality, freedom and justice. The poet is saddened by leaders who silence the people and use this denial of freedom of expression as an oppressive tool:

*Hezvo wakasadharara, kunge hombarume
Ndokuzvomora chivakamazwi changu chose
Hapo wakabva wapindira nemapapu angu chaiwo
Sare ndangova deze risina mbira inorira mariri (p24).*

(Look you behaved like a hunter
You uprooted my capacity to speak
You even targeted my lungs
Hence I am now an empty shell with no voice.)

Lack of freedom of expression is also expressed and castigated as harmful to the attainment of equality, freedom and justice in society. The victim however displays a sense of hope and a meaning in struggle for he or she had devised another way of expressing himself. In fact, action substitutes inaction.

*Asivo ndikaita mimwe mwedzi miviri chenjera
Nokuti ndichadzidza kutaura nemaoko nemaziso
Vane meso ekuona vachandinzwisisa
Sezvo izwi risiro rega rinoshandiswa pahurukuro. (p.42)*

(But after two months be careful
Because I will learn to communicate using my hands and eyes
Those who can see will understand me
Since the voice is not the only one used in dialogue.)

It seems the victim is suggesting that there is need to engage in revolutionary action in order to transform society. While violence is viewed as evil by many it is McGary in Gordon (1997: 264) who aptly surmises that:

Violence for many theorists is evil and is only justified as a means to achieve some extremely important end: [freedom]

The victim tried non-violent means but failed and realizes that physical action is the only case to bring about change. Chirikure views violence as a cleansing force and in this case Fanon (1968: 94) notes that while violence was a necessary means for eliminating the dehumanization of man by another man during colonial rule the same is true in the neocolonial era:

At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force, it forces the colonized from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction, it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.

In fact the line '*nokuti ndichadzidza kutaura nemaoko nemaziso*' (p.42) (because I will learn to communicate using my hands and eyes) emphasizes the adoption of revolutionary violence or action as a means to freedom. The moral lesson in this poem is that liberation is not given but is attainable on the basis of struggle. Fanon (1968:164) says, "...we must understand that African unity can only be achieved through the upward thrust, and under the leadership of the people, that is to say, in defiance of the interests of the bourgeoisie."

Like in 'Inzwi', 'Zevezeve' is a signature of entrapment which manifests in an environment where there is lack of freedom of expression. The poet views freedom of expression as a yardstick to measure the level of liberty among a people. Like in 'Inzwi', freedom of expression is viewed as an indispensable condition for people to realize freedom, justice and equality.

*Ukaona zvamira sezvizvi
Kutaura rangove zevezeve
Chiziva kuti zevezeve racho kungozvinetsa
Dzmunotaura dzacho dzichabatsirei
Imi mose moita mutorododo kumangondo (p.59).*

(If things are like this
Dialogue is only whisper
Then know that even whisper is just a waste of time
What is the use of whatever you are whispering?
And all of you degenerate into abyss)

Chirikure depicts lack of freedom of expression as a manifestation of lack of good governance. Freedom of expression, it must be noted is crucial to the people's struggle for freedom. In fact a people who are denied freedom of expression are doomed because it makes the people subjects who act to change the scheme of things while on the contrary lack of freedom of expression not only limits the people's potential but dehumanizes.

'Marutsi' registers discontentment with the leaders' antics which is an assortment of bad things. In fact it is a satirical poem which exposes and attacks a leader who engages in undemocratic rule. The poet uses such images as *mbovha*, *madzihwa* (mucus), *dikita* (sweat), *urwa* (pus), *ndove* (dung), *marutsi* (vomit) to emphasise the bad habits of the leader. While bad governance is the order of the day the poet reminds the offender that by producing the unpalatable stuff that makes the leader a symbol of bad things will be met with positive action for the poet attacks dictatorial leaders who do not accept criticism as follows:

Kanyanisa
Kanyanisa ndizvidye
Ndichoka chido chako
Chawatema hachikanukwi
.....
Uchabitirwa!

(Mix
Mix so that I eat
That is your wish
Whatever you do or say is not questioned
.....
You will be constipated)

Ironically, the poet notes that the leader's bad practices actually motivate resistance and struggle among the people. Freire (1996: 47) points out that "...the oppressed must see themselves as men and women engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human." Chirikure is emphasizing the fact that the people are not objects which can be manipulated and abused without turning out into a viable force that can dislodge the leader.

Babu (1981: 170) argues that:

Leaders are increasingly isolated from the people and from reality, and live in a world of their own delusion, which forces them into action which are irrational and often fatally

damaging to the country and people. They then subvert the very machinery of government by covering it in a web of secrecy and still more secrecy, until secrecy itself becomes a way of government.

Central to the poems 'Hope Dzangu', 'Ndikohovedze nomazvo', 'Inzwi', 'Zevezeve' and 'Marutsi' discussed above is the idea that there is a seemingly developing trend in Africa where leaders degenerate into some demi-gods, a situation which the poet says is deplorable to the attainment of authentic freedom, equality and justice. Babu (1981:172) notes that it is impossible to attain freedom if the people:

...are led by demi-gods who dictate that what they say shall be law and their random utterances universal truths. Such leaders can never free us from our three scourges: poverty, ignorance and disease. That is to wish for the impossible. To invoke duty from a people without rights is to make democracy stand on its head. In the modern world, the people's rights are prior to their duties, and the reversal of this order equals tyranny.

Chirikure is saddened by the idea that laws can be enacted and used as instruments of repression. Arguably, such laws as Public Order and Security Act (POSA) in Zimbabwe are viewed by some sectors of the society as obnoxious or rather draconic in as far as the law limits freedom of expression. On the other hand it is crucial to interrogate the idea of freedom of expression. Freedom of expression should not be mistaken for irresponsible expression of ideas or feelings. What is crucial is to understand that if unchecked so-called freedom of expression can lead to anarchy especially in view of the fact that hegemonic powers especially Britain and the United States sponsor violence in order to destabilize African nations. It can be argued that the so-called draconic laws are not as bad as they are said to be in view of the fact that they are a way of countering the imperialist hand that produces irresponsible citizens who are easily carried away by the cheap propaganda of the super powers. It is often said that the imperialists utilize or rather abuse such international organizations as the United Nations to further their interests in different parts of world to the extent that countering irresponsible freedom of expression is mistaken for tyranny. Addai-Sebo in *New African* (2011:14) commenting on the United Nations neutrality or lack of it observes that:

The unbridled pursuit of Western self-interest in Libya and Cote d'Ivoire has the consequence of destroying the moral authority of the United Nations and its security council has become a quisling facilitating what is becoming an apparent "recolonisation" of some parts of the world strategic to Western interests...you believe in the neutrality of the UN at your own peril...Africa should never again believe in the neutrality of the UN...

It is pertinent that the poet understands that the so-called lack of freedom of expression is at times a reaction to the global forces that are bent on destabilizing and effecting regime change in different parts of the world including Zimbabwe. These laws are at times a way of defending the sovereignty of particular states against neocolonial powers that thrive on preying on economically, politically and militarily weaker nations.

In ‘Hezvoko!’ the poet emphasises that political leaders who take society for granted without paying due respect to the people risk facing the wrath of the people’s resistance. The poem emphasizes complementarity between the people and the leader and failure by the leader to observe complementarity and respect for the people is disastrous for it will be faced with resistance and resultant downfall of the leader. The poet says:

*Ukasangwara unoguma wagara pasi
Uchinge wagara pasi uchaora kumagaro,
Waora magaro uchadyiwa-dyiwa nembwa’
Wadyiwa-dyiwa nembwa uchamuka ngozi,
Wamuka ngozi wozoti nesu nanga nanga
Iwe! Hatizvidzi isu zvekufurufushwa! (p.63).*

(If you are not careful you will experience a downfall
If you fall down you will rot on the buttocks
And dogs will prey on you
If dogs prey on you, you will turn into an avenging spirit
And you will turn against us
You! We do not want to be troubled!)

It is an expression of the oppressed people’s will to resist the antics of the leader. The poem emphasizes that the people are conscious of their needs and wants and poet is aware that “attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participating in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be served from a burning building, it is to load them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated,” Freire (1996:47) hence the use of the third person “we”. The poem emphasises that resistance against the irresponsible leadership as well as active collective struggle against subjugation are indispensable to the attainment of justice, freedom and equality. A critical engagement with Chirikure Chirikure’s poetry has revealed that he immerses his art in African existential philosophy because his poetry revolves around concerns of freedom, embodied agency as well as

liberation. Commitment to struggle as well as rootedness in African existential philosophy which reflects commitment to changing the scheme of things is echoed by interviewee 1 (a poet) in the findings presented in Chapter 4 who observed that:

The fact that poetry attempts to interrogate issues related to suppression and marginalization is a sign of the will to help to improve the way things are.

Chirikure therefore utilizes poetry to help society work towards changing their life conditions for the better. The poets, as well as his poetry become part and parcel of the African people's collective struggle for a more humane politico-economic as well as socio-cultural environment. Interviewee 10, an academic who has taught Shona literature including poetry for years revealed the following on the role and place of the poet in the struggle for complete liberation:

The poet has to be the voice of the voiceless creatures. His or her poems have to be the sighs of the oppressed creatures, the hearts of the heartless Africa. They should help to raise African people's life awareness and critical consciousness and to interpret for the Africans the riddle of neocolonialism.

Chirikure's *Hezvoko* holds *Njia* as theme because the poem projects profound resistance against the irresponsible leader hence the warning, *Iwe! Hatizvidzi isu zvekufurufushwa* (p.63) (You! We do not want to be troubled!). By so doing Chirikure is against the passive acceptance of the leader's plans and sees the people as inevitable subjects and hence holds the meta -constants humanizing and harmonizing Afrocentric principle in as far as the oppressed are committed to the united (harmonizing) and working towards producing more humane relations between the leader and his people and ultimately make both the leader and the people more humane (humanizing). However, it seems the struggle the poet is referring to is an abstract idea in his mind to the extent that how the people are to engage in struggle remains the reader's guess.

'Mhuka dzesango' and 'Shuro neshoroma' expose the elegance that characterizes the bourgeoisie and the abject poverty and adversity that define the human condition of the oppressed. In 'Mhuka Dzesango', Chirikure uses the story where animals were called forth to choose parts of the body of their choice. The bird, elephant, lion, and the snake chose what were best for them. It is the plight of the worm that the poet expresses where word never reached the worm and if it ever reached the worm he could not successfully reach the place where he would get a part of the body of his choice because the bird would prey on him.

*Nanhasi gonye musvuuganda paari, narini narini
Achafa achingokweshana nekukanya-kanya ndove
Vaye vane zvipo vari kufurwa nemhepo vachidya vachifara nokukovodana*

Inga zvakanzi kakara kununa kudya kamwe. (p.50)

(Even today the worm will remain poor
In its lifetime it will remain in the dung
The gifted ones will be enjoying outside

(It is said that an insect is fattened by preying on other insects)

The study contends that the rest of the other animals other than the worm represent the privileged few who at independence jostled for positions or at least had access to a fair share of the gains of the liberation struggle while the worm refers to the impoverished masses. The poet exposes the sad reality that the fruits of independence turn out to be the preserve of the privileged few. The poet is disturbed by the painful reality that the people are pushed to the periphery where life is characterized by intense suffering (*kukanya kanya ndove*) and adversity (*musvuuganda*). This poverty and strife is a result of exploitation by the bourgeoisie class who exploit (prey on) the underprivileged class. In the poem 'Mhuka Dzesango', like in 'Shuro neShoroma', Chirikure exposes greedy leaders or petite-bourgeoisie who the poet contends are responsible for the human condition that borders on poverty and suffering. In 'Shuro and Shoroma,' Chirikure also notes that society is classical and there are two basic classes the haves (*shoroma*) and the have nots (*shuro*). What Chirikure is referring to here is a situation where there are 'modern black slavers' in the name of the leadership as Chinweizu (1987: 355) puts it:

There is a strange quisling quality about their actions which should force us to ask whether they are primarily African nationalists or modern black slavers serving the West just as the slaving elites did centuries ago. They seem to be victims of a voluntary cultural servitude and of an economic insecurity which predispose them to serve the West rather than Africa.

The poet seems to argue that the African political petite-bourgeoisie are responsible for the impoverishment of the majority, a situation which is antithetical to justice, equality and freedom.

*Ndakazvarwa seshuro
Ndokurarama seshuro*

Ndichafa zvangu seshuro
Ndigovigwa chinyararire seshuro (p.51)

(I was born poor
I lived poorly
I will die poor
I will be buried quietly as a poor man.)

“Kudya Kwevakuru’ also exposes and satirizes leaders for failing to utilize political independence to the transformation of the formerly colonized nations to welfare states. The poet is saddened by the stasis that engulfs society for independence has largely been a superficial condition. The poet bemoans a situation whereby independence is a preserve of the privileged elites. In fact, the national resources are enjoyed by the powerful and the majority is denied access to the resources:

Nhasi ndasvika pakumisa imba dzi-i
Handisati ndambobata chiropa zvandakadai.

(Today I have graduated into fatherhood
But I have never realized the fruits of the struggle.)

In the poem, the poet is castigating the greedy leaders for monopolizing the resources of the nation and enslaving the people. The poet seems to argue that the people are pushed into perpetual servitude by the ‘modern black slavers’ a situation which Chirikure is viewing as anti-freedom. The poet’s message is simply and squarely that the national cake is a preserve of the elite.

‘Mandigona’ depicts the African as the Fanonian “wretched of earth” because it is about the suffering that a man endures in the city as a worker only to be rewarded with a watch which ironically reminds him of his difficulties in the capitalist society. The poet notes that despite five decades of dedicated hard work the worker is not rewarded meaningfully for his work. The poet notes that the capitalist society robs the people of the fruits of their labour. On the whole, the worker is enslaved by the capitalist system. The poet shows commitment to an overhaul of the system that only works to enslave the worker and begin the process of creating a more humane

society. The poet also observes that beer is used as a ‘cure’ to the ills that wreck havoc in society.

*Wachi yangu yonditonedza mazuva eSvondo
Zuva raibuda rigodoka ndakayeva
Ndaiteerera nokuongorora mhomho dzevanhu*

Mhamba igumbeze kune vanoshupika! (p.89).

(My watch reminds me of the days of the week
When I witnessed sunrise and sunset
I supervised many people

Beer is a cure for the suffering people.)

The poet notes that because of the social malaise that engulfs society people find solace in beer. In this regard, Chirikure seems to echo Freire (1996) who observes that beer is often used by the oppressed people as a catharsis. Freire (1996: 47) notes that “lots of times, the peasant gives vent to his sorrows by drinking” The poet seems to be attacking a system which is manned by “hard hearted individual[s] who never see people as people, but rather as mere objects or impersonal cogs, in an ever-turning wheel. In the vast wheel of industry [they] see men as hands,” Lawson in Gordon (1997:49).

Unlike in ‘Hezvoko!’ the poems ‘Mhuka Dzesango’, ‘Shuro neshoroma’, ‘Kudya kwevakuru’ and ‘Mandigona’ are marked by a deplorable pessimistic attitude to life. The poems project a sense of surrender as well as inaction to the challenges posed by the neocolonial environment. The poems are cast in pessimism to the extent that the freedom that the poet is longing for remains a myth. In these poems, Chirikure does not beam forth the idea that no matter how dire times may be victory can be had. His poetry lacks the optimism that drives all life processes. By adopting a nihilistic conceptual modality the poet fails to realize that in a system that dehumanizes the people as well as the leader he has to humanise the very people he is writing for and about. By preaching the gospel of pessimism, Chirikure fails to satisfy the meta-constants-humanising and harmonizing principle of Afrocentric thought and praxis. Chirikure’s poems referred to earlier on, therefore, can not help the people to restore sanity. His art tends to entrap the people in the deep chasm of hopelessness, despair and blind acceptance of situations. His art

is reduced to art of victims who are overwhelmed by the situation. Chirikure should understand that, “but it is not enough for us that our art should merely report the nature of things; it should aim to change it,” Achebe (2009: 128). He invests energy in mere exposure of suffering. Suffice to indicate that poetry that does not carry the reader’s imagination beyond oppression and suffering as well as unlocking the people’s creative potential is worthless.

5.2.2 The Conceptualisation of African Leadership, the African Condition, the Quest and Struggle for Freedom in Mwanaka’s Poetry in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka*

This section critically interrogates the poetry of Nicholas Mwanaka which deals with African leadership. Mwanaka, a seasoned Shona poet, contributed several poems that deal with African leadership in the anthology *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* (2004) and this section grapples with his contention of leadership in the context of the search for complete and authentic liberation.

In ‘Munyika yekwedu’ Mwanaka captures the plight of a people living in a country plagued by hyper-inflation in a so-called independent nation. The poet bemoans mismanagement of the economy and regrets that the fruits of independence have largely not yet reached the people. The poet contends that independence has failed to bear any meaning to the majority despite benefiting the petite- bourgeoisie. Mwanaka seems to argue that bad governance has resulted in poverty because the economy can not sustain the livelihood of its people. In actual fact, the poet is depicting a people who are under siege because of a grossly underperforming economy. The poet contends that African nations lack economic independence and liberty and hence the version of liberation attained at the end of liberation wars is not total. Mwanaka captures the hyper-inflationary environment as follows:

Mari yopera sedova
Kungoiti batei mumaoko
Inenge inobvutwa kana totenga
Pazvinhu zvine mitengo yotunga makore
Muno munyika yokwedu mava kubaya setsono
Nzara yauraya ura hwevoruzhinji
Voruzhinji vaondoroka semadora asvinwa
Vashomanane matumbu akati tanana.
.....
Muno mataneta nokunwa misodzi

Upfumi nanhasi hausati hwasvika patiri (p.48.)

(Money is now melting like dew
Holding it just for a short time
It seems it is confiscated when we purchase goods
Goods with skyrocketing prices
In our country life is painful
Hunger is taking its toll
The people are impoverished
Except for a few who are living luxurious lives
.....
In this country we are tired of existential anguish
Wealth has not yet reached us.)

The poet notes that because of sky-rocketing prices life is characterized by severe hunger, grief and pain while the elites enjoy. What invites the poet's scorn is the fact that at independence leaders promised economic prosperity among other things but this has not materialized. Chinweizu (1987: 355) has this to say pertaining to the African elite and economic development:

Since before independence the African elite have proclaimed it their aim to foster the economic and cultural development of Africa. We have seen how well they've done. The record of stasis is disappointing enough....

What Chinweizu is alluding to is failure of African elite to empower the people because the people would wonder whether the elite are African nationalists or modern black slavers. It is Fanon (1968: 166) who reminds us that:

Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose to become the general president of that company that profiteers impatient for the returns which constitute the national bourgeoisie.

Mwanaka depicts a society ravaged by hunger as a result of the failure of the national economy to cater for its people. Mwanaka notes that the nation is filled with impoverished people and "their shrunken bellies outline what has been called the geography of hunger. It is an underdeveloped world....," Fanon (1968:96). Mwanaka is saddened by independence because the leaders or petite bourgeoisie manipulate independence to their individual benefit. The poet seems to argue that "for such leadership politics functions instrumentally to the realization of their own individual selfish ends," Johnson in Gordon (1997: 251). The quest for freedom is evident in the

last stanza where the poet urges the leader to extricate the people from poverty because independence has largely failed to produce a welfare state. Instead of producing a welfare state political independence has given birth to a poorfare state because the mismanagement of the economy has given birth to poverty:

*Nanhasi tinongochemera vaMugabe
Kuti vatibvisewo murima rokushaya
Nokuti kuzvitonga kwashaya maturo
Kutambura kwedu kwosekwa nevokumamana. (p.49)*

(Even now we cry unto Mugabe
So that he extracts us from adversity
Because independence is meaningless
Our suffering is a subject of scorn by other peoples of the world.)

The poet emphasizes the futility of independence and therefore implores the leader (Mugabe) to extricate the people from abject poverty and suffering. To the poet the leader's wisdom is the last hope to the improvement of the people's life. By no means taking for granted the role and power of the leader for "without the leadership the base would split apart," Fanon (1968: 198) it must be indicated that while the leader signals the direction that the people must follow in consultation with the people, Mwanaka's resolution to leave the crisis to the leader tends to reduce the people to objects that have to be rescued from a threatening situation. What the poet overlooks and takes for granted is that the majority in Africa is not simply driven or led but that there should be complementarity between the leader and the people in order for the leadership's efforts towards improving the welfare of the people to bear fruit. Furthermore, Fanon (1968: 198) maintains that "the movement from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top should be a fixed principle, not through concern for formalism but because simply to respect this principle is the guarantee of salvation." Mwanaka expresses a profound urge for economic prosperity which guarantees progress and development of the people. To the poet, development means "both the elimination of oppression, exploitation, enslavement and humiliation and the promotion of our independence and human dignity," Nyerere in Mutiso and Rohio (1975:548). In this poem, the poet is not quite hopeless but thoroughly discouraged by the state of affairs.

While the poet realizes the importance of astute leadership in bringing about fundamental changes as well as the idea that internal oppression is a cancer that is leading to the suffering of

the majority he fails to realize that exogenous factors such as imperialism are responsible for some of the ills that ravage society. He falls short of understanding that the scorn that is associated with suffering is part of the agenda of the West especially the United States and Britain to create the impression that leadership has failed. This is made possible by utilizing such international news agencies as CNN and BBC. The poet seems to create the impression that Zimbabwe's woes are wholly home-made while the reality is that factors attributable to the hunger, inflation that Mwanaka is referring to cannot be limited to the geographical boundaries. Makaye and Munhande (2008:57-58) are more to the point when they argue that:

There is no doubt that the Western sanctions against the country have had a debilitating impact on the socio-economic life of the people. With the aid of the international news agencies such as CNN and BBC the country's image has been tarnished to such an extent that much of the west has been convinced that Zimbabwe is an unsafe investment destination. Foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country has almost dried up since 2000, save for little from China.

Furthermore, the poet reveals a sense of desperation to the extent that he does not see meaning in struggle and defend the sovereignty and integrity of his motherland. The idea of leaving all to the leader can be interpreted as a sign of surrender to the challenges and also laying the blame on the leader (Mugabe). He fails to note that both the leader and the people are victims of the hegemonic powers which thrive on sowing seeds of discord in sovereign states in order to justify invasion, intrusion and exploitation. Like Chirikure, one of the literary atrocities committed by Mwanaka is that he seems to contend that independence has outrightly failed to empower the people economically as suggested by the lines "*kuzvitonga kwashaya maturo*" (independence is meaningless) "*upfumi nanhasi hausati hwasvika patiri*" (wealth has not reached us) while Chirikure in 'Kudya kwevakuru' says, "*Handisati ndambobata chiropa zvandakadai*" (wealth has not reached my hands). It can be argued that the two poets are expressing their frustrations during the demoralizing experiences posed by the post-independence period. The study contends that to suggest that nothing has changed is rather reflective of the disappointment manifest in the authors' minds. To quote Babu (1981: 166):

In a very important sense they are wrong. The struggle for independence was fought on two important principles :a) that as alien powers, the colonialists had no right to impose their rule on us; b) that such rule had impoverished us through exploiting economically, denying us our basic human rights and democratic liberties and obstructing our development in the social field, especially in education and health. The attainment of juridical independence automatically rectified the first of these. This was a basic human

right which was denied us, the right to rule ourselves. Nobody under any circumstances can deny a people this right. To say that we were better off when we were denied this right is utter rubbish.

Acknowledging the fact that at independence the government was tied up by the Lancaster House constitution which stipulated that land would be redistributed ten years later it is incontestable that in a way unlike in the colonial period the people enjoyed some degree of freedom and to suggest otherwise is an exaggeration. Furthermore, Mwanaka is writing at a time when the Fast Track Land Reform Programme which is aimed at economically empowering the black majority by correcting colonial injustices on land as such the idea that economic power has remained elusive is misplaced.

Mwanaka and suchlike lack a scientific vision that can allow them to explain the suffering that they are referring to in terms of the forces at play. Other than merely exposing the inflationary environment as well as the human condition that is defined by intense suffering the poet fails to go beyond the obvious. By helplessly crying to the leader, the poet suggests that he has surrendered and is waiting for the Chivalric knight (leader) to rescue the damsel in distress (the suffering masses). By so doing, Mwanaka fails to satisfy the meta-constants: humanizing and harmonising principle as well as *Njia* as theme. Instead of beaming forth the idea that victory can be had and contribute to humanising the already objectified people he actually reduces them to spectators who only look up to the leader for salvation. The poet falls short of instilling a sense of struggle as purposeful agents on the part of the people to satisfy *maatic* argumentation. As indicated earlier, Mwanaka does not transcend mere reflection on inflation and suffering and ignores the fact that:

In 2001 and 2002, Britain, the USA, EU and their allies imposed economic sanctions on Zimbabwe in reaction to the countries land reform programme...Zimbabwe has been frozen out of the international financial system for the past decade, it is therefore not true as Western governments always assert that the sanctions are only tartegeted at individuals and companies. Or that the sanctions do not hurt ordinary Zimbabweans. They do! Ankomah (2011:29).

To leave all problems to the leader is an act against freedom which ironically the poet is seeking. The poet reduces the people to mere spectators who have to be liberated by someone. He fails to understand that freedom from the challenges he is exposing is wrested and not donated to the

people by the leader. To suggest that the crisis can be explained in terms of sanctions is not to wholly exonerate leadership from the economic mess. Therefore, Ankomah (ibid: 29) explains:

nobody needs the brain of a rocket scientist to deduce that the economic implosion in Zimbabwe in recent years has largely been due to the sanctions imposed on the country and its allies [against backdrop that] since 2001 all Western banks have stopped lending to Zimbabwe as a country and “any government (African or otherwise) that is not able to borrow (or in the case of Africa, receive donor support) is a government in trouble and can not meet the needs of the people...

Gono (2009) also suggests that sanctions always and everywhere affect the most vulnerable people in society than anyone else and poor Zimbabweans are no exception to the extent that a more focused immersion of the suffering, the poet refers to, in the history of the nation itself would have produced better art. Besides attacking the leadership for the crisis a far reaching critique on domination would have paved way for greater art that transcend helpless victimhood.

‘Nyota Yehurukuro’ (The Quest for Dialogue) is a nationalist poem in which Mwanaka expresses his quest for dialogue with one Solomon Dick Mangarayi who happens to be so much interested in politics. The dialogue that the poet longs for provides a platform for Mangarayi to go down memory lane by capturing the works of African heroes and sheroes who were committed to the struggle for total liberation of Zimbabwean people and Africa in general. Mangarayi traces the history of heroism from the legends, Nehanda and Kaguvi who were hanged but remained resilient and steadfast in the struggle for liberation, lawyer and hero, Herbert Chitepo, Joshua Nkomo and James Chikerema through to the second Chimurenga to independence. What binds all the heroes and sheroes is the passion to liberate. The poet notes that the dialogue reaches its climax when Mangarayi handles the subject of African leadership where focus is on good leadership of the past and the quality of leadership found today. Mangarayi casts his gaze on Patrice Lumumba who was killed when his leadership was in its infancy, Kwame Nkrumah who was committed to the independence of Africa, and salute the leadership of Julius Nyerere who despised corruption, Nelson Mandela, who was imprisoned for a good twenty seven years but helped liberate Azania only to relinquish power after getting into power at independence. Mangarayi then castigates present day leadership who are more like vultures (petite bourgeoisie) which prey on other birds (the majority). The poet notes that such leadership must be castigated with all the impunity that it deserves:

*Mozopedzisira mava kupaza utongi hwevadziviriri vatema
Vaya vakaita semakondo anodya dzimwe shiri
Ava munosvipa setsvina dzinonyadzisa vatema vose
Ivova vakawanda vamunoridzira tsamwa semakavabatira
shamu. (p.50).*

(Lastly you castigate neocolonial black leaders
Those who are like vultures which prey on other birds
You dismiss these as a shameful lot for the black race
You dismiss these with all the impunity that they deserve.)

The poet seems to argue that despite a history which is replete with heroic figures committed to astute and responsible leadership which is a necessary first step towards the march towards total liberation, today Africa is plagued by what has been earlier on referred to as a serious and deleterious crisis of leadership and the sad reality is that such leadership wherever it is found reverses the gains of the struggle for liberation. The poet aligns himself with the anti-neocolonial forces by exposing irresponsible leadership with the hope that they will change their ways for the better. In 'Nyota Yehurukuro' the poet is eager to 'converse with Africa' to use wa Ngugi's words in a book with the same title for "an honest palaver helps clear [the] mist and allows us to arrive at the dialogue that is of concern, how to liberate ourselves," wa Ngugi (2003: xx). All in all, it must be observed that Mwanaka situates his poem in the best of African history and by so doing holds Sankofan approach and the Meta-Constants-humanising and harmonising as principles in the sense that he utilizes history not only to understand the present but to humanize and harmonize African people. Mwanaka uses African examples to exemplify heroism and therefore he makes deliberate and conscious effort to draw lessons from that history hence Mwanaka can be regarded as an Afrocentric poet. It can therefore be argued that by tracing the history of liberation in 'Nyota yehurukuro' Mwanaka is disappointed by the crisis of leadership in Africa despite a history of heroism and commitment to genuine freedom by such legends as Nehanda, Kaguvi, among many other African heroes.

'Ndatonuna sekakara' depicts a society that is plagued by corruption especially by the police who in the poem represents the elite. The poet observes that while the police officer is living a comfortable and luxurious life underlying that comfort and luxury is impoverishment of the majority. The poet emphasises that exploitation is rife and that it is a means of survival for the elite as such:

*Ukaona inda yakakora inopambara
Pane imwe mhuka inokwekwetwa ropa
Ini ndatonuna nomutambo wangu
Ndinoveta mari yoruzhinji nguva nenguva. (p.54)*

(Fat lice is a manifestation of concerted effort to get food
There is another animal whose blood is sucked
I have realized proceeds
I exploit the masses time and again.)

The police officer representing the African elite engages in corruption and what the poet seems to allude to is the fact that independence replaced the white colonialists with what are referred to by Chinweizu (1987) as “modern black slavers.” The poet bemoans the emergence of the modern black slavers who exploit fellow Africans. What makes this form of exploitation more painful is that it is by a fellow black who understands fully well the incapacitating effects of oppression and exploitation:

*Kana ndapfeka huniform yebasa,
Ndinenge ndatova chikara chava mudondo
Nyembe dzichindiremera mumapfudzi angu
Dzinenge mazino echikara ari pachena
Ndikangowana agura mutemo wenyika chete
Anenge oita semhuka yazvitsaudza mune dzimwe
Ndiyo ndinenge ndodonhedza siriri rekuda mari
Ndomumara nemibvunzo izere kutyisidzira.
Kurutivi ndichigofa mari kubva kwaari. (p.55).*

(When I put on my uniform
I will turn into a monster in the jungle
Numerous badges on my shoulders
When I see a person who has committed a crime
He/she will be like a lost animal
I will be salivating as a result of greedy for money
I will ask intimidating questions
While on the other hand I demand money from him/her.)

Mwanaka depicts corruption as a disease that is plaguing society in which the people are the victims of the corrupt elite. As Johnson in Gordon (1997: 251) observes Mwanaka exposes the sad scenario where the elites are concerned with fattening their pockets “rather than to the afflictions of the less fortunate.” Reflecting on corrupt elite in a post independence era Fanon

(1968: 172) observes that “scandals are numerous, ministers grow rich, their wives doll themselves up, the members of parliament feather their nests and there is not a soul down to the simple police man or customs officer who does not join in the great procession of corruption.” The poet seems to observe that these corrupt elites paralyse the society. The poet is exposing the fact that there is a new form of colonialism where some black elites exploit fellow blacks and this is neocolonialism. In such a society the bourgeoisie is “preoccupied with filling their pockets as rapidly as possible, [and in the process] the country sinks all the more deeply into stagnation,” Fanon (ibid: 165). Mwanaka castigates the failure of the leadership to be responsible and work towards equitable distribution of wealth which was one of the reasons for waging a struggle against the erstwhile colonialist. What invites the poet’s scorn is that the leader “...knowingly becomes the aider and abettor of the young bourgeoisie which is plunging into the mire of corruption and pleasure,” Fanon (ibid: 166). The poet satirises such harmful get-rich-quick leadership who fail to realize that they impoverish their own people by deciding to turn a blind eye on the suffering people.

Mwanaka’s *Tofamba setiri mumhute* depicts the disillusionment or rather the nihilism that engulfs society as a result of shortage of basic commodities such as sugar, salt, mealie-meal among many others. Society is engulfed by psychopathology to the extent that people have a blurred vision of the future:

Dzungu rotenderedza musoro

Nzara yabaya muno munyika
Sadza chairo haticharizivi
Upfu hwoerakusanganidzana nahwo
Sauti yokosha kuwana
Kuzoti mafuta ekubikisa tichaaziva here?
Kana shuga toitsvaga namaziso matsvuku (p.58)

(Confusion reigns supreme

 Hunger has taken its toll in this country
 Sadza is scarce
 Mealie meal is hard to come by
 Salt is also scarce
 Even cooking oil is very scarce
 Sugar is also hard to come by.)

The poet exposes the human condition which is characterized by hunger, strife, pain and in such a society the people are vulnerable. Because of vulnerability the people can not meaningfully contribute to the betterment of their lives. In such a society the very fact of survival is threatened by shortage of basic commodities and the future is unimaginable. In this poem Mwanaka “occasions a sense of utter despair, and meaninglessness, an existential anguish,” Johnson in Gordon (1997: 250). The poet uses the image of mist to denote the disillusionment that sets in and the image of the mist is also used by Mungoshi in a story entitled ‘The Little wooden Hut in the Forest’ in the short story anthology, *Walking Still* (1997). The poet emphasizes disillusionment in the following lines which denote that the future is not bright because of the different challenges being faced by the people:

Tava kufamba setiri mumhute
Chokwadi ndiyoyi Zimbabwe yokutambudzika. (p.58).

(It seems we are moving in the mist
Truly, this is Zimbabwe, a land of adversity.)

The poet depicts Zimbabwe as a country of intense suffering where the people cannot realize visions or imagine a new tomorrow because life is threatened by poverty which renders the people vulnerable. In fact, the people are confused and life is defined by anguish. The poet reflects on the sense of entrapment that is felt by the people. As indicated earlier on, the African is in a precarious condition which threatens survival. In the words of Muponde (2000: 25) “what the poet has been able to do is to portray the predicament in which the African finds himself.” Therefore, ‘Tofamba setiri mumhute’ is “a philosophical digestion of the angst, despair, bitterness of the period which it expresses metaphorically,” Muponde (ibid: 112).

However, the poet is far from satisfying Njia as theme and the way of Heru as theme because he does not envision victory in the midst of the suffering he is writing about. It is particularly crucial to indicate at this juncture that while Mwanaka manages to capture the human condition that characterizes the country, Zimbabwe, in a time of intense economic hardships he seems to emphasise the obvious to the extent that he risks sinking the people into further oblivion rather than help exonerate them by signposting the direction in which things must go. The poet is aware that “it is necessary for these sad conditions to be reported, because evil thrives best in quiet,

untidy corners,” Achebe (2009: 93). However, to depict Zimbabwe as a “nation of suffering” is to create the impression that the problems that are wrecking havoc are rather natural but a lucid look at the historical environment that informs Mwanaka reveals that there are various forces both internal as well as external that are at work. Underlying the poem is severe loss of hope and helpless succumb to challenges. It is sad to note that “Africa is probably the second richest continent in the world, and yet its people are among the poorest. This unhappy contradiction cannot be blamed solely on exploitation by foreigners. Our inaction is also to blame,” Babu (1981: 172). Mwanaka ends at the level of mere reflection on the obvious and fails to explicate the possible reasons for the suffering in order to be part and parcel of the anti-neocolonial as well as anti-imperialist struggle. Instead of wallowing in disillusionment, the poet must envision a new tomorrow by unravelling the causes of suffering with a view to open avenues to tackle the incapacitating factors. Mwanaka fails to scientifically explain the crisis he is writing about and hence ends at the level of blaming leadership alone which is grossly inadequate. The RBZ (2006: 4) noted that at the end of 1999 total foreign payments arrears amounted to US\$109 million and they increased astronomically to US\$ 2073.7 million by the end of 2005. During the time there is low capacity utilization in industry and external support dwindled or rather dried up. As a result of this New Zimbabwe .com (2008) reported that:

The general shortage of foreign exchange has had a spin off effect on other aspects of economic life. There is the general shortage of basic goods like maize meal, cooking oil, sugar, meat and soap due to the low capacity utilization in industry. Fuel is critically in short supply. With unemployment around 70 per cent it has reached an all time high. Inflation has reached stagflation levels at 100 000%.

This is not only attributable to blunders that may be made by the leadership but to the fact that such issues as sanctions as well as sabotage by foreign companies that have a role to play in the politics of the country. It is crucial to note that in Zimbabwe 51% of the shareholding for foreign companies is owned by foreigners while 49 % is for Zimbabweans. Furthermore, that situation is even made worse by the fact that in Zimbabwe, 400 of the manufacturers are British and this is a threat to the economic stability of the country. This is because the companies are controlled from outside and when they meddle in the politics of the country sabotage becomes the *modus operandi* and *sine qua non* of their business practice and the net effect is that goods vanish from the shops. This state of affairs in which foreigners control a greater percentage of shares in

foreign companies can be argued to be a situation that furthers the interests of imperialists. To use Rodney's (1972:30-3) words, the poet needs to be reminded that:

The fact of the matter is that the most profound reasons for the economic backwardness of a given African nation are not to be found inside that nation...The true explanation lies in seeking out the relationship between Africa and certain developed countries and in recognizing that it is a relationship of exploitation ...Today in many African countries the foreign ownership is still present, although the armies and the flags of foreign powers have been removed. So long as foreigners own land, mines, factories, banks insurance companies, means of transport, newspapers, power stations, then for so long will the wealth of Africa flow outwards into the hands of those elements. In other words, in the absence of direct political control foreign investment ensures that the natural resources and the labour of Africa produce economic value which is lost to the continent.

It is crucial to note that "if economic power is centred outside of national African boundaries, then political and military power in any real sense is also centred outside..." Rodney (ibid: 36). This renders the African people vulnerable to manipulation, exploitation and impoverishment which the poet fails to see or simply ignores.

'Havachazivi Pauri' is a satirical poem which attacks leaders who promise the people development and progress when voted into power only to fatten their pockets by plundering national resources. The poet is angered by the fact that while the leader promises to eradicate poverty if voted into parliament, the leader instead turns into a 'black slaver' who oppresses the very people who voted him into power. The poet is saddened by the leader who has gone to the extent of assassinating those who bother to question or criticize the despotic leader. What seems to be inviting the poet's scorn on the more is the attack on freedom of expression which is necessary to the attainment of freedom:

*Tiri murima remabasa ako
Pauri kutsika chaipo pakahwandika
.....
Waifuma kumora mari seuchi kubva mumukoko
Iwe nemhuri yako mochachura upfumi hwenyika
Kadumbu kako koti tanana somudzimai ane pamuviri
Kana wofema unenge dafi
Uchifamba nemotokari dzemari yakasviba
Hauchada kunzwa mhopo inokushora
Wawafungira kuti anokutsoropodza unoponda senyoka (p.60)*

(We are not sure of what you are up to
We can not follow your steps

.....
 You clandestinely amassed wealth to your advantage
 Together with your family you exploit national resources
 Your stomach is now bulging like a pregnant woman
 You breathe like a frog
 You also use luxurious cars
 You do not want to be criticized
 You kill whoever you suspect is criticizing you.)

It is the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership that the poet is bemoaning which the poet seems to argue is a barrier to attainment of full liberation which is characterized by freedom, equality and justice. wa Thiongo (1993: 66) observes that after independence “people saw in most regimes dependence on foreigners, grand mismanagement and well maintained police boots.” The tyrannical leader suppresses popular will and expression by using the police as a repressive state apparatus. Mwanaka criticizes leadership for negating the journey towards equality, justice and freedom to despotism and self-aggrandizement which breeds fear and subsequently misery on the land. Tyranny which thrives on use of arms of the state such as the police is hampering the realization of genuine freedom because the people feel that nothing has really changed but that there is a new oppressive class which is black. wa Thiongo (ibid: 65) further observes that:

The age of independence had produced a new class and a new leadership that was not very different from the old one. Black skins, white masks? White skins, black masks? Black skins concealing white settlers’ hearts?

In an environment where the police and other arms of the state do not play the role of guaranteeing a more humane and just society but instead are manipulated to entrench the petite bourgeoisie rule then freedom is pushed to marginal sites and the people are rather acted upon by the leaders who thwart freedom of expression. The poet depicts a people who are denied justice and freedom:

*Uchishandisa zvimwasungata zvako zvaunopa mari
 Ropa mudunhu muno raerera mumaoko ako
 Hapana ahati bufu kuti ubve pazhumu
 Zvino vanhu vava kudemba siku nesikati
 Kuti dai vasina kukuisa panhengenya apa
 Asi musi wauchatsvedza uchidonha ipapo
 Pachava nemabiko anondengendesa ivhu’ri nomufaro. (p.60).*

(You use repressive state agents
 In this land blood is dripping in your hands

No one can challenge you to leave the highest office
Now people regret day and night
That they should not have allowed you to occupy the highest office.
But the day you slip and fall down
People will celebrate your down fall.)

The poet satirises tyrannical leaders who despite the discontentment among the people entrench their positions using state machinery. The poet is arguing that the leader is not legitimate and therefore his forced stay in power is not guaranteed by popular will and hence the people will celebrate his downfall. Mwanaka seems to observe that dialogue or freedom of expression is necessary because a leader who “who fails to engage in critical discussion of issues affecting his or her community is committing a crime against the community because there can be no solution to the ills that affect the community in the absence of such discussion,” Johnson in Gordon (ibid: 255). The poet also argues that such leaders develop dictatorial tendencies and the result of dictatorship is that people are silenced and cannot freely express their ideas. The poet is longing for responsible leadership which is respected and not feared by the people. His is sharp criticism of harmful or injurious leadership. The poet is longing for responsible leadership which serves the interests of the people and castigates harmful leadership which according to West (1994:54) is a mark of moral degeneracy “because for such leadership their selfish ends is the prime reason for getting into power.” Mwanaka bemoans the absence of responsible, credible and effective leadership in Africa. Kariuku in wa Thiongo (1981:84) warned leaders against betrayal of the masses, their faith, their love, their hope in the following words “our leaders must realize that we have put them where they are, not to satisfy their ambition nor so that they can strut about in fine clothes and huge Cadillacs as ambassadors and ministers but to create a new [Africa].” The poet bemoans the sad reality that instead of building a new social order some post independence leadership simply inherit the colonial structures of governance. The poet notes that the liberation struggles are reduced to rebellions. Distinguishing between a rebellion and a revolution Scholz in Harold-Barry (2004:23) notes that “a rebellion replaces one set of individuals with another, while a revolution brings about a fundamental change in the social, political and economic conditions of society. Rebels want to take the place of the rulers they displace, while revolutionaries want to build a new social order.” The poet views the bulk of African leadership as rebels who do not

change life conditions but grab positions from the erstwhile colonizer. Chinweizu (1987: 351) argues that:

Therefore, the very mentality of Africa's petite bourgeoisie, the mentality that determines their choices, dictates their interests and conditions their style of activity, the mentality that is disposed to tolerate the stasis in contemporary African culture, must be seen as the fundamental problem which African culture must solve to survive. It is therefore no exaggeration to maintain that Africa's greatest problem today, the single most formidable obstacle to her final liberation, is the character of her elite.

The following section is a critical engagement with Liberty Shoko's poetry paying particular attention to poems that deal with the subject of African leadership in the context of the search for total liberation.

5.2.3 African Leadership, the African Condition and the Quest for Genuine Liberation in the Poetry of Liberty Shoko in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka*

Shoko's *Dhora* is a chronological analysis of the strength of the Zimbabwe dollar over a decade, 1993-2003. The poem is a comparative analysis of the value of the dollar in 1993 and 2003 in order to expose the extent of deterioration of the dollar over the period in question. To expose the extent of deterioration the poet notes that while the dollar could sustain an individual for three days in 1993 when one could buy all kinds of goodies necessary and adequate to the user, after a decade the same dollar is more of a liability for it has lost its worth. The poet registers the extent of deterioration of the dollar as such:

2003

Nhasi ndenge ndichakurasa kumadhodha bhini
Ukabvarura homwe yangu hauzoigoni kuisonesa
Ndinongombeya newe asi mudumbu makangosvenga
Kukutuma kutenga chikafu nhasi wava kukoma
Kuonekwa wakati pu-u pasi apo hauchanongwa
Ruyamuro hauchina zvino, dhora wazochepa
Ko simba rako rakaendepi zvawati rukutu? (p.75).

2003

(Now it seems logical to dump you in the rubbish pit
Because you have lost value if you tear my pocket you can not mend it
I go around in hunger with you in the pocket
Because you have lost values you can not buy food
Even if you fall down people no longer pick you up

Dollar, you are just useless
What went wrong now that you are weak?)

What the poet seems to underline in the lines quoted above is that the economy has plunged to the extent that it cannot meaningfully cater for the needs of the citizens. A people whose economy can not guarantee the welfare of a people is a recipe for disaster in the sense that such an economy can not nurture productive citizens. Shoko's advocacy for freedom is premised on the demand for political and economic justice. The poet seems to argue that without economic viability the people are susceptible to all imaginable challenges, hunger, poverty, angst, strife, diseases among many others. Shoko is contesting the state of deterioration in the economy which renders the people victims while in the process begins the march to a liberated human condition. In the poem, Shoko contends that 'Africans' are "disproportionately in the ranks of poverty, malnourished...diseased and dying," Gordon (1997: 219).

While the poet grapples with the state of decay that manifests itself in a country that Shoko is writing about he fails to carry the reader beyond the obvious. Mere reflection on hunger, disease and deterioration of the value of the Zimbabwe dollar he does not interrogate the causes of the loss of value to the Zimbabwe dollar. A proper understanding of the forces that are responsible for deterioration of the dollar would have helped Shoko produce good art. Shoko's creative output is narrow because he fails to go beyond mere reflection on the obvious. It is indisputable that the so-called targeted sanctions have had deleterious effects on the national economy among other sectors of the society. It is rather simplistic to explain the deterioration of the Zimbabwe dollar in terms of the internal forces at play for example gross mismanagement of the economy. Such exogenous factors as the devastating effect of sanctions on the Zimbabwe economy would provide the readership with a better understanding of the causes of this decline. It is essential to understand that "the West, led by Britain and the United States, imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe ostensibly to force the country's political leadership to return to democracy, free and fair elections and respect basic human rights," Makaye and Munhande (2008). It is crucial that the writer explains the deterioration of the economy in terms of both the internal and external forces in order to provide critical consciousness for the nation. In 2000 the US came up with the US-Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Bill which became an Act in 2001-Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA). The hyperinflationary environment which

the poet is reflecting on can be explained in terms of the effect of the sanctions imposed by the imperialist Western countries to cripple the economy and further their interests such as the continual control and exploitation of resources as well as regime change in Zimbabwe. Instead of mere lamenting on the extent of deterioration of national currency the poet should unravel the effect of such factors as sanctions which are acknowledged to be a “blunt weapon which attacked economic, social and cultural rights of civilians, while giving the culpable elites against whom the sanctions are designed, even greater economic opportunities and power,” Manheru (2011).

‘Chiuya Tirambane’ reflects on the city as an environment that is largely anti-life. The city is also depicted as a hive of crime, prostitution, insecurity, hunger and many other vices. The poet sees the city as a symbol of suffering where “things fall apart”. The poet seems to be overwhelmed by the harsh conditions in the city and a sense of utter submission to the ontology of defeat:

*Kana iwo maguruvha wakasenga
Vemarokwe ndokukokorodza kubva mativi mana
Muchetura ndokuchirunga zvino heyo mhere
Tsika ndokuchidzikanyanisa sehaka
Harare wakaoma ndapota (p.80).*

(You contain even thugs
You also invite prostitutes from all parts of the country
This results in poisonous concoction
Cultures come into contact
Harare, you are a hive of so many bad things.)

The poet does not see anything worth celebrating or good in the city. As Muponde (ibid: 25) observes of Musaemura Zimunya’s vision of the city:

The city is no home. However, the poet insists that the rural home is still home despite the colonial impoverishment of African life. The city to the poet is a concept that is anti-life. He does not see it as a possible home, because he does not look at it as an illustration of human development.

To Shoko, the city is a symbol of entrapment because the people are depicted as mere fatalities of this colonial creation. In actual fact, it is pertinent to quote Muponde (ibid: 25-6):

The African in the city is a hopeless reprobate- never a subject of change... There is no hint of meaningful struggle in the poetry...The poet does not attempt an analysis of the socio-economic relations that make the majority of the blacks in the city. His becomes poetry of victims but the system behind the creation of this victim society is not adequately interrogated.

While the poet views going back to the rural home as an act of liberation from the city he does not realize that the city can also be home as long as the necessary conditions to improve the welfare of Africans are attended to. However, it can be argued that resigning to the rural home underlines the quest for liberation in the wretched of the city. The following section analyses Greater Mhondera's poetry on the place and role of leadership in the search for genuine liberation.

5.2.4 Greater Mhondera's Poetry in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* as Protest Against Leadership

Mhondera's 'Titsvagirei Mafuro' is a poem in which the poet seeks the intervention of the spirit of a 'departed mother' in view of life that is characterized by intense suffering. The poet is entrapped by the situation and hence seeks the intervention of the spirit to help free the one in agony.

*Izvozvi marwadzo anondidzimba kupfuura mota.
Pamusana pehurombo hwanisungu kuti shwe. (p.89).*

(Now, excruciating pain grips me than a boil can
Because of poverty that has entrapped me.)

The poet captures a human condition which is defined by abject poverty and what invites the poet's scorn is the sad reality that in the same society there are a privileged few (petite-bourgeoisie) who live very luxurious lives which in turn make the poverty very visible:

*Dzimwe mhuri dzinoshaya pokuisa upfumi
Dzinozvimba matama seakarumwa nemago
Dzinofamba semadhakisi, anodeya mumataka
Dzinodya nyama seshumba dzine nzara
Kuzoti dzimba dzavanogara, nhai amai...
Dzine midziyo yakatengwa nematura emari
Idzo motokari dzavanochaira...vasikana! (p.89).*

(Other families are filthy rich
They grow fat cheeks like they were stung by wasps
They walk like ducks in mud
They eat meat like hungry lions
Even the houses that they live...
They contain property that was bought by a lot of money
They drive good cars.)

Mhondera juxtaposes the human condition of the petite-bourgeoisie and the poor and what is evident is that to the majority life is unbearable while the wealth is in the hands of a few filthy rich individuals. To use Freire's words (ibid: 40), "as beneficiaries of a situation of oppression, the oppressors can not perceive that if having is a condition of being, it is a necessary condition for all men and women." Failure to realize this results in both the bourgeoisie and the poor to be dehumanized for "the oppressed do not perceive their monopoly on having as a privilege which dehumanizes others and themselves...For having more is an inalienable right, a right they acquired through their own effort," Freire (ibid: 41). By exposing the petite bourgeoisies' greedy the poet is committed to humanizing the impoverished people of the world as well as the bourgeoisie in order that a just world characterized by economic, political and social justice and prevails. The poem is therefore a scathing attack on the disease that has gripped some individuals namely greedy. The poet exposes greedy as a malaise that has to be fought in order to guarantee improved life conditions for every citizen. This amounts to economic terrorism and as "such the localization in Africa of the present economic terrorism goes largely unchecked, is under-reported and hence, under-exposed to the rest of the world," Ushie (2008). The longing for a liberated identity is captured in the following lines:

*Somufudzi ane zvipfuwo zvake zvaanoda
Zvipfuwo zviri kudzunaira mugwenga
Zvine mbabvu dzinooneka mimvuri
Zvinokwabaira tsoka dzichiroverana
Titsvagireiwo mafuro manyoro, mai! (p.89)*

(Like a shepherd with his herd
A herd that is wandering in the desert
Which are visibly malnourished
Which are also visibly weak
Mother, please find greener pastures for us.)

The poet exposes the extent of impoverishment among the majority. Poverty is depicted as a disease that is afflicting society and Mugabe (2001:114) describes poverty as “Africa’s and Zimbabwe’s chief enemy.” The poet visualizes a better world which is characterized by abundance and satisfaction (*mafuro manyoro*) as opposed to adversity which the poet views as life threatening. The poem therefore is a “search for *ufuru*.” Kahari (2009: xi) defines *ufuru* as “one such pastoral imagery which emanates from the Shona or Zimbabwean idea of both veld and domestic freedom and liberty to graze (*kufura*) anywhere (*kumafuro*) or to overflow like froth (*furu/furo*) from the limited confinement of the container, with relative freedom and liberty, *ufuru*.” However, Mhondera is preoccupied with fighting internal oppression to the extent that her struggle for freedom does not transcend geographical boundaries of individual nations. While it can be argued that fighting internal oppression is an act of humanizing and harmonizing both the oppressor and the oppressed the struggle is limited to the immediate surroundings of the poet. Like Mwanaka, Mhondera’s view that freedom is given by the leader is rather misleading. It must be reiterated that freedom is wrested. The poet tends to objectify the people instead of humanizing them.

‘Marwadzo Anongobaya’ reflects on the plight of a former freedom fighter who is a victim of colonial violence. The former freedom fighter is saddened by the fact that despite dislodging the colonial regime and sustaining leg and hand injuries as a result of an explosion in the war independence has largely become meaningless because instead of transforming life for the better it seems independence simply means the change of name of the country. Ellis (1996: 3) observes that to the majority “independence is thought to be the beginning of the golden era where political freedom and expression, freedom of association, free enterprise, economic prosperity, less ethnocentrism, responsibility and accountability of each and everyone prevailed.” This poem is an instance of protest against the leadership which the poet accuses of failing to bring about fundamental change. In a short story entitled ‘First Street-Harare’, in his short story anthology, *Masango Mavi*, Chiwome also grapples with the plight of a freedom fighter who is psychologically affected by the war and the failure of the government to rehabilitate the former freedom fighters at independence. The former freedom fighter in the poem observes that the nation is gripped with euphoria at the birth of a new nation only and the euphoria is short lived for there is no concrete change of the human condition:

*Takashaya pokutsika nomufaro kuti tichagarika
Tichizvirova zvipfuwa kuti takarwadzirwa zviripo
Asi tinongogutsikana nokushanduka kwezita renyika
Savana vanorwadzikana naamai wavo vakagukuchirwa. (p.93).*

(We were exceedingly happy that we would have a good life
We boasted that we struggled for a worthy cause
But we are only satisfied with the change of name of the country
Like children who share the agony together in their mother's hands.)

The poet is attacking responsible authorities for the prevailing state of affairs in which nihilism is the pervasive mood. The poet is saddened by the extent of betrayal which transforms a fighter in the war into a victim in the post-independence period. Fanon (ibid: 169) observes that the majority is saddened by independence because nothing has really changed in their lives:

Now it must be said that the masses show themselves totally incapable of appreciating the long way they have come. The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil, and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly coloured though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives.

Instead of bringing with it freedom and justice independence seems to imply the replacement of the white skin with the black skin while the system of government remains intact. wa Thiongo (1993: 65) notes the following with regards to the majority's conceptualization of independence:

To the majority of African people in the new states, independence did not bring about fundamental changes. It was independence with the ruler holding a begging bowl and the ruled holding a shrinking belly. It was independence with a question mark.

The poet contends that the former freedom fighter is a victim of both the colonial period and the so-called independence period for independence has not brought about fundamental changes to the lives of the people. It is Cabral (1979: 241) in Vambe (2004) who reminds us that "people did not fight for ideas, but freedom, justice and equality." The poet seems to argue that having sustained injuries as a result of colonial violence the freedom fighter is bearing the brunt of a failed independence hence '*marwadzo anongobaya*' (we still feel the pain) and what this implies is that independence came but freedom was not there, to use Nyamubaya's words. It is the urge for genuine freedom that compels the former freedom fighter to at least remind the responsible authorities that independence has failed to bear any meaning.

While the poet is reflecting on the stasis that grips the independent nation, Mhondera joins the bandwagon of writers who see independence as something as good as the colonial period itself, an understanding which as observed earlier on is wrong. Political independence opened up fundamental opportunities to the formerly colonized people. This seemingly developing trend in literature where juridical independence is viewed as meaningless warrants interrogation. To suggest that “*tinongogutsikana nekushanduka kwezita renyika*” (independence simply means change of name) is to suggest that juridical independence is as good as the colonial period. By so doing, the poet is siding with both the colonizer and the neocolonial powers that confuse the African to think that juridical independence is meaningless. Instead of defending the sovereignty of the nation the poet is actually on the side of the oppressor. The poet fails to satisfy Sankofan Approach as a principle of Afrocentric thought and praxis. The poet does not draw on the “African past functionally, anchoring efforts in that past—gleaning the most instructive and constructive information from the African past...,” Gray (2001:102). The following section deals with the portrayal of African leadership by women poets who contribute poems in *Ngatisimuke* in the context of the struggle for true liberation.

5.2.5 Zimbabwe Women Poets, African Leadership and the Search for Total Liberation: Critical Reflections on *Ngatisimuke*

As indicated above, this section discusses the reflection on African leadership by women poets in *Ngatisimuke*. The study holds that while the poets in *Ngatisimuke* are committed to the total liberation of women they also reflect on African leadership. *Ngatisimuke* is an awakening and like *Hakurarwi* the title shows that the “battle line against hunger, against ignorance, against poverty and against unawareness ought to be ever present in the muscles and intelligences of African men and women,” Fanon (1968: 203). The mood undergirding the title is the “awakening of the people’s intelligence and the onward progress of their consciousness,” Fanon (1968: 188). The title captures resolve, dedication and unshakable commitment to struggle for the betterment of humanity. In this thesis, it is maintained that it is the quest for freedom, equality and justice that gives impetus to the awakening and subsequent struggle for a liberated identity.

In 'Nzara yegore reESAP 1992' Miriam Kajekere reflects on hunger and sorrow which is brought about by the government's adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). While the poet is able to capture the challenges posed by ESAP such as shortage of food and unemployment the problem with the poem is that it does not go beyond mere exposure of the challenges faced by the people. The forces behind ESAP are not adequately explored. Mere exposure is not enough. The forces behind ESAP are not given literary attention. While the poet is lamenting the effects of ESAP on the people the poet does not signal the direction that people must take. The poem is limited to mere exposure of the harsh conditions brought about by ESAP but the attitude of the poet to the issues is not clear and therefore fails to take the reader beyond commonsense. The poet reflects on the severity of hard times under which the people are living as follows:

*Harikanganwiki irero gore ra1992
 Kudya, mabasa, upenyu zvakakwira makata
 Vanhu midungwe tapa tapa kubuda mabasa
 Vakuru nevadiki hero jemedzanwa
 Vapwere usva-a sva-a kubvutirana
 Vachema-chema vanhu upenyu hwaoma
 Igoreiko iri nhai veduwe-e
 Ratambisa pfungwa dzevanhu vose chamupidigori?*

*Hongu, akamboveko makore enzara
 Gore reChiwaya, neNdongwe, NereKenya-1947
 Asi ose anokanda mapfumo pai pana 1992
 Zvinhu zvose zvakutanga kushomeka (p.73).*

(1992 is an unforgettable year
 Food, jobs and life in general was difficult
 Many people lost their jobs
 Both young and old cry foul

There is scramble for the little that is left
 People complain because of hardships in life
 What kind of a year is this?
 That has confused a whole people

Yes there were other years of hunger
 These include the years of Chiwaya, Ndongwe and Kenya-1947
 But none of them surpass 1992
 When all this are scarce.)

The poet expresses concern over the harsh realities which threaten the very fact of survival. While it can be argued that the poet is longing for life which is defined by abundance of food, satisfaction and enjoyment the poet does not help the reader understand that ESAP is a programme which was adopted by the government and later turned out to reward the foreigners and impoverishing the indigenous people. On the more, Kajekere fails to note that it is inadequate to simply reflect on social issues without signposting the direction that things must go. As a poet she falls short of being a pathfinder. wa Thiongo (1981: 75) observes that while relevance of literature to society is important it is crucial that writers understand that “whether or not the writer’s imaginative leap to grasp reality is aimed at helping in the community’s struggle for a certain quality of life free from all parasitic exploitative relations-the relevance of literature [lies] in our daily struggle for the right and security to bread, shelter, clothes and song, the right of a people to the products of their own sweat.”

In the poem, ‘Chokwadi Ndiwe Here Zimbabwe’, Katerere is saddened by the state of deterioration that Zimbabwe is going through. At independence the poet is pleased by the state of affairs where there is profound hope for the future while the present state of affairs is rather demoralizing, disturbing and unpleasing:

*Ndaiti ndikakutarisa uchangozvarwa
Ndainzwa hana kuti tibvu, tibvu
Asi nhasi ndikakutarisa
Hana yangu yangoti tonho
Chokwadi ndiwe here
Zimbabwe? (p.5)*

(At independence
I was filled with hope and satisfaction
But at present
My esteem is at the lowest
Really, are you the one
Zimbabwe.)

The poet longs for the good old days when everyone wanted to experience the beauty of nature symbolized by *nzizi* (rivers) and the joy, peace and tranquility that prevailed (*uchi nemukaka*) Like in Chirikure’s ‘Mushonga wekurutsa’ the poet wonders whether it is as a result of friends that Zimbabwe has deteriorated:

*Asi nhasi washanduka
Ishamwari here nhai Zimbabwe
Inga ndakambokuyambira wani
Kuti dzimwe shamwari dzinoparadza.(p.5).*

(But today you have changed
Is it because of friends, Zimbabwe
But I warned you
That some friends are destructive.)

What boggles the mind of the poet further is that Zimbabwe is very popular but for the wrong reasons. All in all, Zimbabwe is characterized as a nation that has plunged from glory to a poorfare state which is defined by unemployment, hyperinflation, squalor, high death rate, diseases and all other threats to a welfare state. The poet therefore is saddened by Zimbabwe's plunge from a welfare state to a poor fare state which is characterized by the equal distribution of poverty. Chinweizu (1987: 345) observes the following of a poorfare state:

A welfare state without a proper emphasis on abundant production can only become a poor fare state. In an unproductive economy, equal distribution of wealth would result, not in prosperity for all, but in an equal distribution of poverty.

It can be argued that what motivates the writer's imagination in poem is commitment to the restoration and reconstruction of the country to a welfare state- a state which guarantees humane survival and prosperity. The poet shows a quest for liberty by emotionally engaging in the reconstruction and restoration that must be done.

*Mhosva yawakapara ndeyei Zimbabwe
Inokupa kuvengwa netusvava twose
Inokupa kusemwa, inokupa kusvipwa
Nepwere netusvava?
Chokwadi Zimbabwe wandinyadzisa.*

*Douya pano Zimbabwe
Swedera zvako pedyo
Unyatsondirondedzera
Rwako rungano
Rwakanyatsoti twasa
Chokwadi NDIWE HERE ZIMBABWE?*

(What crime did you commit, Zimbabwe
That which makes everyone including infants your enemy
That which makes all people look down upon you
Including young children and infants
Really Zimbabwe you have embarrassed us

Come here Zimbabwe
Come closer
And tell your story
Which is straightforward
Really are the one Zimbabwe.)

The poet immerses herself in the burning issues of the society by inviting the people of Zimbabwe to deliberate on the issues bedeviling society with a view to contribute to the rebuilding that must be done.

In 'Chokwadi Ndiwe Here Zimbabwe,' Katerere seems to blame Zimbabwe and in a sense this implies the leadership and the people. Furthermore, the poet also tries to explain the suffering in terms of so-called friends. Like the poet the reader is also left in confusion as to exactly what has resulted in the suffering as well as the negative image of Zimbabwe. By any measure, the poet's offering is "compromised by [a] simplistic and unscientific vision," Muponde (2000:26). The negative image of the country that Katerere refers to in the poem can be attributed to the role of the propaganda machinery of the capitalist imperialist countries. Instead of lamenting on the negative image of the country as the poet does, good literature must provide critical consciousness to the audience in order to help extricate them from their immediate problems. Mere exposure of issues tends to entrap because as Osundare cited in Na Allah (2003: 470) argues, a writer in African "is a person that people look up to, in whose work people are trying to see how they relate to the social, cultural and political problems that we are facing in Africa." Katerere is lacking in this regard. It is essential that the poet rises above the readership in order to shape the reader's vision and action. A more tough-minded exegesis of the politico-economic relations of the West and African nations would have carried the reader beyond mere lamentation. To quote Gono (2009):

...the gist of the matter though is that any sanctions against Zimbabwe and from whatever international forum, and however disguised, will only lead to more suffering of the already suffering ordinary people. It seems to me irresponsible that the United Nations Security Council should even bring itself to entertaining such moves whose only

impact would be to widen and deepen the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe at a time when the United Nations should be at the forefront of solving the very same crisis in a non partisan manner.”

Furthermore, the poet does not see that international news agencies such as BBC and CNN were and are still used to tarnish the image of Zimbabwe and other countries that are suffering under Western hegemony. Overall, instead of merely reflecting on the suffering without a clear attitude towards fighting internal oppression and foreign domination, the poets in *Ngatisimuke* lack a scientific approach that can allow them to better understand that the relationship between the West and Africa is a relationship of domination and exploitation in which the west is the beneficiary. To end at mere exposure can not humanise dominated and objectified peoples of the world. Other than women poets in *Ngatisimuke* another poet who writes about leadership is Ignatius Mabasa and the following section is a critical engagement with the poetry of Mabasa.

5.2.6 The Quest for Total Emancipation, Africa Leadership and the African Condition in Ignatius Mabasa’s Poetry in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka*

Mabasa’s poetry in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* is committed to writing against imperialism. He is an active member in the anti-imperialist struggle. Mabasa depicts imperialism as an impediment to total liberation. However, this thesis maintains that while Mabasa captures the social malaise engulfing society he is an existential nihilist whose poetry risks sinking people into oblivion because of the hopelessness and despair that is dominant in the poetry. The argument maintained in this section is that, while Mabasa depicts the quest for total liberation in his poetry he strips the people of the energy to struggle to transcend the hopelessness and despair because he does not situate his art in the existential philosophy of the people he is writing for, a philosophy premised on hope and struggle. This study holds that Mabasa is a nihilistic existentialist because, as Crosby in Gordon (1997: 176) observes:

He judges human existence to be pointless and absurd. It leads nowhere and adds to nothing. It is entirely gratuitous, in the sense that there is no justification for life, but also no reason to live. Those who claim to find meaning in their lives are either dishonest or deluded. In either case they fail to face up to the harsh reality of the human situation.

Mabasa’s poetry is therefore characterized by pessimism, helplessness, negation of action and surrender to the ontology of defeat. All in all, Mabasa’s poetry is devoid of hope necessary for struggle against the neocolonial human condition which is defined by intense suffering and

social disappointment as a result of bad governance. Mabasa views independence as a non-event because life is meaningless as a result of the various ills that bedevil society after celebrating independence. While Mabasa manages to expose the malaise in society it is his attitude towards life which is of concern. Mabasa's poems which are discussed in this section are 'South Africa', 'Chandinomirira Handichizivi', 'Ndinodei', 'Dai Makatiudzawo' and 'Contract Nhai?' In these poems Mabasa preaches the gospel of Afro-pessimism. His art is more of a long jeremiad which does not help much to liberate the people from internal as well as external domination.

In the poem 'South Africa', Mabasa writes about South Africa at its independence. Using the metaphor of beasts grazing in a yard to denote the family of independent African nations South Africa is born into this family. In the poem Zimbabwe warns South Africa of the possible pitfalls lying ahead because despite profound hope to develop into welfare states at attaining independence the other politically independent nations realize that independence has largely remained meaningless because evidence in Kenya, Zambia and Malawi among many others, reveals that they have degenerated into poorfare states:

*Vese vamwe vauri kuona vari muno mumafuro
Ana Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, nevamwe
Vaisimbova neruvara ruzere upenyu
Vese vaive nenjere nemazano.
Misoro yavo ichirema nezvinangwa
Vaida kufura uswa hwese
Vaida kuguta vorara mumumvuri
Vogozeya vachitonhorerwa*

*Asika chimhandara tarira uone
Tichakupawo nguva yako uzvionere
Uzvionere kuti rusununguko ijee.(p.24)*

(All you see in the graveyard
Kenya, Zambia, Malawi and others
They once appeared hopeful and promising
They all had brains and ideas
They were full of objectives
They hoped to enjoy all from their land
They wanted a life of abundance and satisfaction
They wanted to rest and enjoy

But look
We will give you time and see for yourself

That independence is a joke)

Zimbabwe advises South Africa that independence is largely meaningless for it has failed to improve the welfare of the people. The poem shows the quest for genuine independence which is defined by freedom, justice and equality in the following lines:

*Ndaida hupenyu hune munyepfu
Asi hazvina kukwanisika.(p.24)*

(I wanted a fulfilling life
But that was not possible)

The poet attributes the failure of independence to transform the lives of the people for the better to neocolonialism which is defined by Kwame Nkrumah as the highest stage of imperialism which is defined by domination and exploitation of one group by another. Despite waging a struggle to improve life conditions what seems to disappoint the poet is that life conditions have not improved significantly. What disappoints the poet is that despite waging bitter liberation struggles to improve life conditions of the Africans on the contrary the post independence dispensation has not changed the situation much. Cabral (1980: 77) reflects on the goals of the struggle as such:

Our struggle is for our people, because its objective, its purpose, is to satisfy the aspirations, dreams and desires of our people: to lead a decent and worthy life, as all the peoples in the world want, to have peace in order to build progress in their land, to build happiness for their children.

The poet reflects on exploitation as such:

*Simba rangu rakaperera mukurima.
Chibage, nzungu zvinodyiwa nevamwe
Mufaro nenguva yekufura hapana.(p.25).*

(My energy was exhausted in farming
Maize, groundnuts that are enjoyed by others
Freedom and time to enjoy is not there)

Mabasa seems to observe that freedom is unattainable as long as some foreign powers continue to exploit the resources and energy of the formerly colonized because as the poet observes, Africa will continue to produce what it does not consume. Instead, the fruits of its land are

enjoyed on the more by foreigners and the privileged few. Nkrumah in Eze (1998: 92) observes that:

To allow a foreign country, especially one which is loaded with economic interests in our continent, to tell us what political decisions to take, what political courses to follow, is indeed for us to hand back our independence to the oppressor on a silver platter.

The poet seems to argue that imperialism is a barrier to true liberation of the African people because it relegates Africans to servants who produce for the master. While Mabasa manages to expose imperialism and its resultant effect which border on continued enslavement of Africans by foreigners he seems to sink the people into irreparable despondency. Mabasa's poem ends in pessimism because "the nihilistic chasm yawns open with particular force as a conundrum of [African] existence. The [African] stands as an existential enigma," (Gordon (1997: 5):

*Dai waigona waitiza South Africa
Asi unotiza uchiendepi musha uri wako?
Vachakukama kusvikira nyatso dzorwadza
Ukada kupenga ucharohwa ukabuda mututu
Uchashaya nguva nevana vako. (p.25).*

(South Africa, if it were possible you would run away
But where can you run away to
They will exploit you till nipples are painful
If you resist you will be forced
You will fail even to cater for your own children)

Mabasa seems to surrender to the defeatist ontology and his art runs contrary to African existential philosophy which is characterized by "...very ecstatic, life affirming and participatory attitudes toward... existence," Gordon (1997: 14). Like the Euro modernist writers, in 'Chandinomirira Handichizivi' (I Do Not Know Why I Still Exist) Mabasa captures the realities of a society but it is the meaninglessness of life that prevails over the very fact of survival. The poem is characterized by hopelessness, helplessness, negation of action and above all meaninglessness or absurdity of life. To use Mthwatiwa's words in Vambe (ed) (2010: 38):

One of the leading causes of hopelessness and despair in [Mabasa's] poetry is despotism. The dictatorial tendencies of the leaders of postcolonial Africa...and failed leadership more generally, led to the disillusionment, hopelessness and despair of the poet-

protagonist who feels cheated by the new leaders. Political oppression and the vicissitudes of life also conspire to instill a sense of entrapment in him, which in turn intensifies his hopelessness and despair.

‘Chandinomirira Handichizivi’ records the sense of utter despair engulfing the society and in the process the poet exposes the fact that nihilism is a cause for concern because it is a threat to freedom. Mabasa depicts a society that has turned into a centre for social disappointment which is essentially “the failure of the government to do it[s] duty to protect the rights of [the people] and the experience of disappointment that follows,” Lawson in Gordon (1997: 150). Mabasa is castigating the leadership for failing to satisfy the hopes and expectations of the people a situation which has led to disappointment of the masses. Mabasa captures the disillusionment, hopelessness, helplessness and existential anguish as follows:

*Hupenyu hunotyisa
Haunzwisisike, hunenge kurova
Unorarama chaunoraramira chii?
Kuraramira kutya, kuzeza, kusaziva
Kuraramira misodzi, kushushikana
Kutsvanzvadzira makanokorwa kare
Tsvanzvadzire tsvanzvadzire, chii chacho*

Hazvirevi chinhu kwandiri (pp.25-26)

(Life is fearful
It can not be understood
You survive, what is it that you survive for
Surviving for fear, fright, ignorance
Surviving for tears, anguish
Scratching for survival where the privileged few have already exploited
Scratching and scratching for nothing

It does not mean anything to me)

Mabasa presents a situation whereby life conditions seem hopeless and futile. The poet presents a people “caught in the grips of meaninglessness and alienation, it is a self riddled with disappointment, frustration and pain.” Lawson in Gordon (1997:175). While Mabasa’s poem depicts the nihilism engulfing an entrapped society it is the contention of this thesis that depicting life as wholly devoid of any enjoyment is not only unAfrican but anti-life. African existential philosophy challenges us to gain substantial control over the environment and helpless

victimhood is never an option. Instead of immersing his art in African philosophy of existence which refers to “philosophical questions premised upon concerns of freedom, anguish, responsibility, embodied agency, sociality and liberation,” Gordon (1997: 3), Mabasa presents a people who are overwhelmed by the circumstances of life. While ‘Chandinomirira Handichizivi’ is an expression of the urge for more meaningful life conditions the poet presents disillusionment and submission to defeat as options. To use Muponde’s (2000: 115) words Mabasa presents an “environment that saps life; a certain cemetery of hope.”

In ‘Ndinodei’ (What do I Want) Mabasa depicts the malaise that engulfs African life. He depicts African life as life without purpose and resolve. Mabasa draws “largely upon the existential nihilist conceptual apparatus” of such writers as Ayi Kwei Armah, Wilson. B. Chivaura among many other Eurocentrist writers, the pervasive mood in his poetry is that of utter meaninglessness of life. All in all, his poetry is anti-life. In ‘Ndinodei’ Mabasa depicts a version of life which is replete with experiences of social disappointment:

*Chinyowani hapana
Hupenyu hunobhowa mhani
Nyaya dzimwechete mazuva ose
Kumuka, kugeza, kudya, kufamba
Kuswera, kutaura, kuseka, kutsamwa (p.37).*

(There is nothing new
Life is boring
The same old stories everyday
Waking up, bathing, eating, walking
Spending the day, talking, laughing and getting disappointed)

The existential nihilistic modality that Mabasa adopts undermines the African people’s sense of struggle and victorious thought as enshrined in *Njia* as theme. Despite exposing the absurdity of life as a result of despotism, Mabasa’ poetry is not committed to the attainability of victory. This disillusionment finds expression in Mabasa’s poetry to the extent that while he exposes the quest for complete liberation his poetry is also disillusioned to a very large extent. The absence of victorious thought inclines one to conclude that Mabasa follows the “tradition of the Greek tragedies [and that he is] a proponent of dread or pessimistic existentialism.” Gray (2001: 95). In view of this Mabasa is not an Afrocentric writer because the only African that we know is one

who displays victorious thought in his or her writing. This is so because in ‘Ndinodei’ and suchlike, like “...the pessimistic philosophers who insist that life is no use, worth a grain of salt.” p’Bitek (1986:11), Mabasa depicts the meaninglessness of life in a neocolonial environment. It must be stressed that this conceptual modality undermines agency and transcendence necessary to change the scheme of things. While the underlying theme of the poem is not only the longing for a better life but a life with a meaning, the poem lacks profound optimism necessary to turn the quest into a lived experience. Mabasa fails to realize that “meaninglessness apparently is insufficient; it is too negative to realize the [liberated] identity he desires,” Crosby in Gordon (1997:176).

In ‘Ndinodei’ Mabasa depicts life as devoid of any enjoyment and the poem occasions a sense of utter meaninglessness and despair to the extent that the poet sees surrender to the problems as a solution. He says:

Hupenyu indima yasakurwa

Dai hwaitizwa
Maindibata ndasiya ana Nehanda vakaenda kare
Muzvinhambo zvisingaverengeki
Nekuti pano panyika handizivi
Handizivi kuti ndinodei, ndiri kuendepi. (p.38).

(Life is futile

 If it were possible to run away
 You would find me ahead of such figures as Nehanda who have since departed
 By numerous strides
 Because on this earth I really do not know
 I do not know what I want, and where I am going)

In the poem Mabasa emphasises surrender and he ironically fails to draw inspiration from the legendary figure, Nehanda and project victorious thought as a necessity to the betterment of life. Instead, he negates *Njia* as theme and substitutes it with hopelessness and despair which is rather suicidal for it renders people inert objects. Mabasa fails to utilize what Bennett (2011) refers to as “optimism of everyday life.” According to Bennett (2011:11), “optimism of everyday life” performs important psychological and social functions across a broad range of contexts.” Against this background, the researcher argues that Mabasa strips the people of their power and

end up seeing submission as an option. In 'Ndinodei' Mabasa fails to realize that it is by facing the problems head on and not turning into a crybaby that life conditions are improved. It is unAfrican to submit to the ontology of defeat as Mabasa would want the reader to believe because:

An African is one who is willing to undertake the journey of struggle...we must also universalize the African by aligning him or her with the struggle for a just world at large and then particularize him or her to one who searches for change in Africa as well. wa Ngugi (2003:84-85).

Mere exposure of the meaninglessness of life without a positive attitude to life can not help the people transcend the victimhood. While 'Ndinodei' can be regarded as an act of protest against bad governance that results in the meaninglessness and absurdity of life Mabasa is talking about, it is not decorated with profound hope and victorious thought embedded in African worldview. All in all, his is a "defeatist attitude to life, emasculating the will to act in socially meaningful activities," Muponde (2000: 74). Mabasa fails to realize that "...without optimism there would be no families, because there would be no commitment either to reproduce in the first place or to nurture a future generation," Bennett (2011:10). Mabasa has to be reminded that contrary to his nihilistic conceptual modality, "as long as people are alive, not dead, they will always improve their living conditions one way or another," Babu (1981: 166).

Mabasa handles the theme of betrayal in 'Dai makatiudzawo' (If only you had told Us). Using the metaphor of a car the poet notes that while he offers a hand in push-starting the car, the driver does not bother to return to thank those who assisted in push-starting the car. The poet registers the pain associated with such an act of disrespect and inconsideration. It is the contention of this thesis that the car represents the liberation struggle in which the concerned individual participates in only to be dumped after the attainment of independence. Reflecting on leadership, Asante (2009) observes that Africa has often been betrayed by its own leaders who have shown a talent for imitating the worst habits and behaviours of Europe. In this sense African leaders negate the people and turn into capitalists who ignore as well as exploit those who assisted in toppling the colonial regime. The poet registers the pain that inflicts the victims of betrayal thus:

*Ko makadii kutiudza
Kuti tiri kungokubatsirai
Kusunda mota yenyu*

Asi kukwira hataizombofa takaikwira?

.....
Dai makangotizivisawo
Nekuti takasara takamira paye
Tichiitirana nharo
Vamwe vachiti munodzoka motitoravo
Hezvo nhasi tichingori pataive tiri
Kana kuti titaure kuti takakubatsirai
Hatichakwanisa kutaura
Nekuti imi munoti hamuchatizivi (p.27)

(Why did you not tell us
That we were just helping you
Push starting the car
But we would not board the car
.....
Only if you had told us
Because we remained at that point
Quarreling
Some saying you would come back and pick us up
We can not even say you helped us
Because you say you do not even know us.)

The poet exposes the extent of betrayal of the masses which is excruciatingly painful because independence has largely failed to change the scheme of things. In actual fact, ‘Dai Makatiudzawo’ is all about the African elites who betrayed people from various walks of life who played a significant role to the liberation of their countries from colonial bondage. wa Ngugi’s (2003: xvii) ideas on betrayal make interesting reading here:

Revolutions have been hijacked, the people betrayed and slain by the thousands all in the service of trying to bring this elusive word, “change” to bear on their lives. Betrayal is bitter precisely because it comes from a trusted source. The architects of change in Africa, trusted by the people who gave their lives to a vision of freedom, were at the forefront of this betrayal.

The poet is arguing that betrayal reduces people to a state of victimhood and what they are left to do is “express disgust with national independence and the betrayal whereas the ...elite enjoy the perks of betrayal (are in the process) expressing admiration for the colonialist,” wa Ngugi (2003: 66). What irks the conscience of the victim of betrayal is that independence has proved insignificant to the people hence the line ‘*Hezvo nanhasi tichingori pataiva tiri*’ (Nothing has changed) and in the poem, ‘South Africa’ the poet observes that ‘*rusununguko ijee.*’

(independence is a joke) Mabasa also projects a sense of utter meaninglessness of national independence to the extent that his vision is to see change replace betrayal. Independence is conceptualized as an act of fraud because the poet blames the elites for cheating the majority despite the commitment of the masses in the struggle, an unparalleled commitment where the people sacrificed their lives to gain freedom.

In 'Contract Nhai?' Mabasa captures the plight of former freedom fighters who feel independence has failed to improve their lives because what the former freedom fighter 'benefitted' from the war are scars. The milk and honey that was promised during the war has not materialized. The poet exposes and attacks elites who came into power after independence who manipulated the milk and honey to their own good while the rest wallow in poverty:

*Dikita retamburo imbatya dzangu
Sekunonzi handinawo kumboita shungu
Zvino ndakombama sembwa iri padhodhi
Kuhondo kwandakaita makore gumi nemaviri
Ndakadzoka ndisina chandiinacho mumaoko
Kunze kwemadzvanga nemhotsi dzangu
Nhasi uno vanonditi Cde ndotoda kuchema
Nokuti yandakarwira yadyiwa, yapedzwa nemakawa. (p.42)*

(The fruits of my suffering are the clothes I am putting on
As if I was never committed
Now I am old and frail like a dog preying on shat
I participated in the war for twelve years
I came back home with empty handed.
Except the scars and locks
Now those who call Comrade make me cry
Because the country I fought for has been exploited by greedy individuals.)

In actual fact, the former freedom fighter is pushed to the periphery despite suffering under the harsh conditions in the war. The concerned voice in the poem which is the author's voice alludes to the painful reality that the privileged few who are the elites or petite bourgeoisie (*makawa*/jackals) have amassed wealth while the former freedom fighters and the majority are relegated to marginal sites. After suffering the humiliation in the city of Harare where there is no security of anything for example employment and social relationships like courtship and marriage the former freedom fighter resigns to the rural areas but only to realize that drought has ravaged the society for a good four years. What the poet seems to allude to is the fact that

independence is hollow because it has failed “to set afoot a new man,” Fanon (1968: 316). The poet is exposing the sense of entrapment afflicting those who participated in the war whereby they do not have a decent living both in the city and the rural area. The poet seems to argue that a sense of vulnerability and entrapment is defines post-independence Africa. The freedom fighter is depicted as a victim of the neocolonial dispensation where wealth is in the hands of a few. Echoing Fanon (1963:310) Mabasa notes that:

Independence is not a word which can be used as an exorcism, but an indispensable condition for the existence of men and women who are truly liberated, in other words who are truly masters of all the material means which make possible the radical transformation of society.

All in all, it must be noted that while Mabasa manages to capture the social malaise characterising a neocolonial environment he fails to realize that “dire times are not to be accepted or bowed to, rather such difficult seasons are to be challenged and infiltrated with profound hope and indomitable determination,” Gray (2001:76). The quest for liberation that is not situated in African existential philosophy, a philosophy which holds *Njia* (victorious thought) risks sinking the people into irreparable victimhood. It can therefore be argued that while Mabasa’s poetry exposes a human condition resulting from the crisis of leadership in Africa his art does not hold *Njia* as theme which is an essential principle of Afrocentric thought and praxis. To reduce art to a long jeremiad as Mabasa does is anti-life. As noted in the discussion of Mwanaka’s ‘Munyika Yekwedu’ and Mabasa’s ‘Kudya Kwevakuru,’ it is worth reiterating that to view juridical independence as a joke is not only simplistic and wrong but is reflective of the frustrations posed by the period that is informing Mabasa’s work. The line “*Uzvisionere wega kuti rusununguko ijee*” suggests that political independence is just but a mere joke. Mabasa seems to be overwhelmed by the immediate environment which reveals serious existential challenges such that he chooses to ignore the gains of independence. In actual fact, to view independence as a joke as the poet does is rather nonsensical. Stated more bluntly, the reduction of independence to a joke without acknowledging the idea that independence rectified the colonial injustice of foreign rule as well as opening up economic avenues for the indigenous African people Mabasa’s contention is rather misplaced, dismembering and disempowering. While there is still more to be done in order to realize the best and most out of independence the poet is blind to the fact that “...in spite of our formal independence, our relationship with the developed countries is essentially colonial,” Babu (1981:43). These developed countries tend to create poverty in Africa

by devouring on all efforts that are aimed at freeing the Africans and other colonized peoples of the world from hunger, ignorance and disease. For example the Fast Track Land Reform Programme that was and still is aimed at empowering the indigenous people of Zimbabwe was met and continues to be greeted with harsh reactions from the hegemonic powers especially Britain. Gono (2009) observes the following:

Our economy has been under siege for almost 10 years now since the time we began the land identification exercise as a precursor to the land re-distribution programme in 1997. That process (land identification) drew adverse reaction from the West, especially Britain, who went on to adversely influence the World Bank, IMF, ADB, as well as other Paris Club lenders not to support Zimbabwe financially and technically

The net effect of these imperialist tendencies is reduction of the majority into mere victims of the situation. This not to mean that independence is a mere joke but that the attainment of political independence comes with new forms of domination which have to be fought if the best is to be realized out of independence. It can be argued, therefore, that viewing independence as a joke is to imply that those who died during the armed conflict died for a joke. Such writing is rather unAfrican for it does not situate African interests at the centre. It seems Mabasa is preoccupied with pouring out his idiosyncrasies without coming to grips with both the endogenous and exogenous factors that impede genuine independence.

The upshot of the discussion in this section is that the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership in Africa has a bearing on the human condition which borders on suffering and the resultant quest for genuine liberation. The section has noted that while leadership must shoulder part of the blame it is simplistic and uncritical to lay the blame simply and squarely on the leadership. The poets whose poetry has been discussed in this section raise serious questions such as the following; “is Africa’s present elite prepared to do what must be done to bring security of person, resource and culture to a continent ravaged for so long by foreigners? Is this African elite tired of being glorified slaves, tired of being satellites and agents of the West, tired of being generals and leaders of weak inferior powers? Are they hurt and humiliated enough to want to change all that. That remains to be seen,” Chinweizu (1987: 492). The section has revealed that fear of leaders who have turned masters is a factor that affects the realization of freedom, equality and justice. Sadism (or thingification) of the people by the leaders which resultantly lead to self-depreciation or nihilism which is a life characterized by hopelessness and despair as well

as dependency on foreign imperialist powers are the factors that militate against the realization of total liberation. Factors that impede authentic liberation according to informants to this study are aptly summed up by interviewee 2 who is a poet who observes that “it is the usual –leadership crisis, lack of transparency and democracy, oppression, intimidation and fear, unfulfilled promises, lack of sincerity, institutionalization of certain ideas such that they end up being the only ones accepted!” The section has also noted that such poets as Chirikure contend that human agency is indispensable in the march for freedom. The poets seem to argue that the African elites negate the moral duty “to lead the whole continent out of neocolonial capturing and into prosperity and liberation....” Chinweizu (1987: 382).

Instead of simply focusing on endogenous factors as the poets largely do, the section has maintained that in order to attain freedom then poets’ vision must be far-reaching and grapple with both endogenous and exogenous factors that militate against freedom, equality and justice. The argument maintained in this thesis is that global power relations especially between the capitalist-imperialist West and poor nations is a relationship of exploitation to the extent that other than merely blaming leadership the machinations of the West have to be discussed. The section has noted that poets contend that without good political leadership Africa cannot face all other problems with the hope of overcoming them. Good leadership is therefore a prerequisite for facing the problems head on. However, the poets are blind to the fact that the majority of African leaders do not control much because they are militarily and economically weak. In this nuclear age African leaders are dominated over and the effect is that they can not be effective agents of change. The study has argued that the leaders are also victims of western hegemony and therefore the struggle for freedom must allow the people and the leader to unite against the rapacious hegemonic forces. To blame leadership and end there as most poets do is to weaken the struggle. Achebe (2009: 139) advances the proposition that “without good leadership, none of our other problems stands a chance of being tackled, let alone solved.” However, this does not imply that all problems must be blamed on the leadership but that the leadership occupies a crucial position which shapes the human condition. The section has observed that post independence Shona poets are preoccupied with attacking leadership alone without transcending what Babu (1981) refers to as fighting internal oppression. The section has argued that this is a narrow-minded perception of reality because it limits the poets’ vision to internal oppression. Be

that as it may, the section has noted that simple blame of leadership or exposure of the human condition which is defined by suffering is grossly inadequate. This leads to mistaken interpretations Africa's underdevelopment. Exogenous factors to Africa's underdevelopment seem to play a bigger role than endogenous factors. By simply castigating leadership, the poets risk degenerating into agents of imperialism which they seek to topple. "Mistaken interpretations of the causes of underdevelopment usually stem from prejudiced thinking or from the error of believing that one can learn the answers by looking inside the underdeveloped economy," Rodney (1972:30). This section moves away from the myopic or narrow-minded explanation of Africa's underdevelopment which revolve around fighting internal oppression while avoiding the burning issues of global power relations that peripherise the African continent. Rather than focusing on internal oppression alone the exogenous challenges that are associated with Western hegemony warrant interrogation. It has been observed that in the case of Zimbabwe sanctions have been used to destabilize the economy and the resultant effect is suffering of the masses, a factor which none of the poets treats in their writing. It is worth to note that patriotic citizens are also an important fact in attaining freedom from domination. Unity of purpose in Africa becomes the imperative in view of capitalist imperialist forces. Because the section has attempted a critique on domination it is necessary to conclude the section by quoting Ushie (2008) who says:

...neo-liberal capitalism, rather than terrorism or racism or religion, constitutes the greatest threat to humankind. Yet, it is a mistake for anyone to think that the brawn and brains and gold of the advanced economies will continue to keep the rest of the world down; or that the ignorance being cultivated in the helpless nations of the world will thrive infinitely; or that their doubles-speak and 'double acts' will continue to be masked to the rest of the world. To think so is to be ignorant of the history of humankind. The only solution is therefore a relatively fair redistribution of wealth such that the poor will not have to be kept awake by hunger, as their being awake will not allow the rich to sleep.

5.3 Transcending Racism as an Indispensable Condition for Total Liberation: Reflections on Post-independence Shona Poetry

Chapter 4 has revealed that racial prejudice is an obstacle to freedom, equality and justice that was identified by identified key respondents. It is the concern of this section to discuss poetry which views transcending racism as a necessary condition for the struggle and reclamation of the African peoples' freedom, equality and justice. The poetry discussed in this section reveals that poets posit that Africans have to resist racial subjugation if efforts to liberate themselves are to bear fruit. Mazrui's (1978) classification of African literature, especially the third strand namely protest against racial prejudice is insightful to this section. The section discusses poetry that is committed to the fight against racial prejudice. The poets posit that transcending racism provides a solid foundation to the struggle for total liberation. Otherwise, failure to resist racial prejudice is antithetical to the materialization of a liberated identity. In fact, the poets note that Africa must explain itself and transcend the racist notions of the black race which seek to weaken the Africans. To use wa Thiong'o's (1993: 61) words "it [is] Africa explaining itself, speaking for itself and interpreting its past. It [is] Africa rejecting the images of its past as drawn by the artists of imperialism," The poetry discussed in this section posits that racism is a factor which limits the freedom of African people to the extent that it is imperative that it is resisted and dislodged. Racism is a tool of imperialism and exploitation and therefore the poets whose poetry is discussed in this section are resisting racial prejudice which they view as grossly incapacitating to the victims. The poets whose poetry is discussed in this section belong to the race school on freedom "which holds that full emancipation is possible only when racism in all its forms is eradicated," Carew in Gordon (1997: 226). The poets whose poetry is analysed in this section are Nicholas Mwanaka, Liberty Shoko and Greater Mhondera. By resisting racial prejudice, the poets are fighting against domination of one race over another. The following section deals with Mwanaka's poetry on racism and its impact on true liberation.

5.3.1 Nicholas Mwanaka's Poetry and the Struggle Against Racism

'Kudai Waiziva Zvandinonzwaka' is a truly Afrocentric offering which puts Africa at the centre. The poet records his emotional attachment to the continent of Africa. The poem revolves around protesting "Africa's tarnished name" to use Achebe's (2009) words in a chapter by the same title.

The poet seems to observe that total liberation is only possible when African people begin to resist racial subjugation. Total liberation as Mwanaka shows in the poem is premised on dismissing the racist, notorious and distorted images of Africa and Africans. Mwanaka is writing against a background of writers, thinkers and practitioners who project Africa and Africans “as inert, brutal, uncivilized in a word, savage,” Fanon (1963:161). Mwanaka says:

*Kudai waiziva zvandinonzwaka
 Waiona ndichigomera sendinobayiwa netsono
 Pandinoti gunun'unu ndakatarisa ndichishushikana
 Pamusana pokuti unopomerwa uipi hwose hwapanyika.
 Ufungwe mukondombera weAIDS wawodza nyika dzose.
 Wakanyuka kunyika dziri mhiri kwamakungwa
 Unonzi wakazvarwa mutsinga dzako.
 Iri nzira yokukunyadzisa pazere vamwe
 Kuti ushaye chimiro mukati mevamwe (p.45).*

(Only if you knew what I feel
 You would see me groaning in pain as if I have been pierced by a needle
 When I look closely in worry
 Because you are accused of harbouring all the bad in the world
 The HIV/AIDS pandemic that has ravaged the whole world
 Is said to have originated from Africa
 This is just a way of embarrassing you among others
 So that you have no dignity among other peoples of the world)

The poem is an Afrocentric view of the debilitating aesthetics of Europeanism and Mwanaka is committed to recovery and restoration of the dignity of African people which according to the poet is indispensable to the struggle for equality, justice and freedom. Mazama (2002: 219) observes that Afrocentricity, as an emancipatory movement, “...inscribes itself within a tradition of African resistance to European oppression.” In ‘Dai Waiziva Zvandinonzwaka,’ Mwanaka challenges African people to resist any effort aimed at subjugating the African race. The poet reveals the underlying quest for freedom from racial oppression and subjugation as follows:

*Kudai ndaiva nesimba guru kwazvo
 Ndaikufemera mweya uzere zvikomborero
 Kuti iwe nevana vako muve vatsvene
 Mutungamire nyika dzose neuchenjeri
 Zvinhu zvitsva zvinyuke mauri
 Vamwe vose vazopepuka iwe wapatika kare
 Wava nechisimba chinopwanya vose

 Ndizvo zvido zvangu zvinotunga makuti*

*Kuti dai iwe Africa waive chikara
Ndinovimba kwazvo kuti ichasvika nguva yako
Nokuti zvinhu zvose zvine nguva yazvo (p45-46)*

(If I had power
I would bless you with showers of blessings
So that you and your people are holy
So that you lead the world in wisdom
So that all new things emerge from you
So that others awaken when you have already awakened
When you already have power to pacify the world
.....
These are my wishes that are crucially important
That you (Africa) were a superpower
I hope that your time will come
Because all things have their time.)

The poem ends on a high note because the poet is optimistic that Africa can successfully resist the degrading images such as that Africa is a continent of darkness where all the bad comes from. The poet is conscious of the fact that accepting the negative image of Africa is tantamount to accepting an inferior position in the world order. In the poem, Mwanaka urges Africans to challenge distorted versions of Africa and by so doing begin the journey towards a liberated identity. Mwanaka seems to be arguing that political, economic as well as racial equality are indispensable for the achievement of genuine freedom. To the poet, politico-economic as well as socio-cultural power is inevitable to the attainment of genuine sovereignty for without political and economic power Africans are rendered ineffective. Mwanaka's poem is an advocacy for an Afrocentric view of the world which invites the African to self-naming and self-definition. On Africa-centeredness, Chinweizu (1987: 496-97) observes that:

That we must rapidly develop a strong Afrocentric view of the world and of ourselves should be obvious. We must approach all problems and issues from the viewpoint of our own interests; we must hold suspect what the west tells us until we verify it for ourselves.

Mwanaka's poem satisfies the meta-constants-humanising and harmonizing, African audience as the priority audience, wholistic Afrocentric Action as goal and *maatit* argumentation. The poem is aimed at harmonizing the African race as well as humanizing African people in the sense that it resists objectification of the African people by other peoples of the world especially the white race which holds itself supreme. Wholistic Afrocentric action as goal is evident in the

poem in the sense that Mwanaka believes that “the people can be taught and encouraged to act and behave in Afrocentric ways in all situations, all the time,” Gray (2001:101). The poem is instructive in so far as self-definition, self-naming and transcending racism is concerned. Central to Mwanaka’s poem is the fact that Africans “must work to liberate Africa, to create a liberated African culture, and to foster a new global order within which we can stay liberated,” Chinweizu (1987: 505). There is no doubt that Mwanaka is treating African audience as the priority audience because he is clear that the Africans must reassert themselves as equal partners in world affairs. By agitating for resistance against racial prejudice the poet is struggling for social justice in which all peoples of the world treat each other as human. In that regard the poet satisfies *maatic* argumentation as a principle of Afrocentricity. Hope also marks the poet’s vision because he is confident that Africa will rise to the occasion as a viable force in world affairs and as such holds *Njia* as theme.

However, the poet seems to be preoccupied with mere reporting that racism is incapacitating without a solid vision of how things must go. He fails to provide a path out of the world order that subjugates other races on the basis of skin colour. The poet tends to emphasise on the obvious without contributing much to the process of extricating the African race from racial prejudice. It is wa Thiong'o (1987) who notes that “every writer is, and should be a pathfinder” a requirement that Mwanaka fails to satisfy. Mwanaka’s weakness is that he fails to see that the African race is imperilled as a result of its weaknesses. As Rodney (1972: 160) notes, the concept of weakness should be understood to embrace military weakness and inadequate economic capacity as well as political weaknesses [such as lack of unity of purpose among leaders]. The poet is more concerned with exposing the racist myths that only work to subjugate the African without going further to interrogate the factors that sustain the white supremacist system in world politics. In order to be purposeful the poet should have scientifically discussed the cult of racism to reveal that it is a system that is sustained by not only military power but economic as well as political power. Against this background, for the poet to speak of the possibility of Africa being a global power without addressing questions of military, economic as well as political power in Africa is rather grossly inadequate for “white racism in Africa, then, is a matter of politics as well as economics. The story of the black man told by the white man has generally been told to serve political and economic ends,” Achebe (2009: 63).

5.3.2 Liberty Shoko's Poetry, Racism and the Quest for Total Liberation

While the preceding section discussed Mwanaka's poetry on racism, this section grapples with Liberty Shoko's poetry on racism. Dedicated to Nelson Mandela, 'Zvaisava Nyore' (No Easy Walk to Freedom), is a poem which captures the hardships experienced by the colonized by drawing from Mandela's experiences. In the poem, the poet notes that colonialism was characterized by racial oppression among other debilitating issues. The poet is angered by the sad reality that Mandela is incarcerated for the just cause of struggling for equality among races. Shoko captures the gruesome life conditions of apartheid South Africa as life which is defined by angst, sorrow and grief as a result of the apartheid regime's wanton killing of blacks. The poet equates the suffering conditions to slavery and this is evident in the following lines;

*Ko unhapwa hungazokunda apa ndohupi?
Kusuwa munyika izere mafaro
Nzara minda iri mavhu namarara
Kuurayiwa sehwei yechibairo
Kuoneswa nhamo tsvuku sechikwepa
Kuitiswa toi-toi semabhiza pamujaho. (p.72).*

(What kind of servitude will surpass this?
Disappointment in a land full of joy
Hunger in the midst of abundant arable land
A land where people are sacrificial lambs
Intense suffering at the hands of the oppressor
To be abused by the settler.)

The poet exposes the painful "contradiction of poverty in the midst of plenty," Babu (1981: 114). The poet explains African poverty through the lenses of race relations. The poet satisfies Sankofan Approach by drawing lessons from the South African past during the apartheid era. The poet draws from South African history functionally in that he stirs people to struggle on the basis of the history of the very people who are to struggle. The poet uses two heroic figures from South African history namely former president, Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu to legitimize the struggle for freedom of the blacks. The heroic wisdom of Mandela and Tutu provide important lessons to the present generation on the importance of struggle for freedom from white domination. Chapter 2 provided a review of poetry that deals

with race relations in apartheid South Africa and the researcher does not intend to repeat that here. Suffice to indicate that the gruesome experiences of the blacks in apartheid South Africa provide the poet with the leverage to express resistance against the white supremacist world order. Furthermore, the poet fulfils the explicit locational indicators intentionality principle by referring to South Africa as a specific setting for his discussion of race relations in apartheid South Africa. Realizing the plight of the black man at the hands of the colonialists Mandela is inspired by Desmond Tutu to lead a struggle against the regime, a struggle for freedom from ‘slavery.’

*Ndati chemahara mushana
Ndikati rugare tange nhamo
Ndikateerera mharidzo yaDesmond Tutu
Ruoko simu ndakafumba chibhakera
“Viva Azania!
Viva ANC!
Forward with Freedom! (p.73)*

(I said there is nothing for free
Then I noted that poverty precedes good living
I listened to Desmond Tutu’s preaching
I raised my clenched fist
“Viva Azania!”
Viva ANC!
Forward with Freedom!)

The poet seems to emphasise that freedom is only realizable on the basis of struggle. As good as Mandela is inspired by Tutu, Africans and other oppressed peoples of the world need to draw inspiration from Mandela and struggle gallantly to attain the extremely crucial end-freedom. Shoko posits Mandela as a father figure who understands fully well that in order to humanize the African who is a victim of racial subjugation, struggle is not only an option but the only option. In fact, the poem invites people to the battle against any form of imperialism and its attendant effects on the people in order for freedom to long live. In actual fact, to use Fanon’s words (ibid:220) Shoko’s poem “expresses above all a hand to hand struggle and it reveals the need that man has to liberate himself from a part of his being which already contained the seeds of decay. Whether the fight is painful, quick, or inevitable, muscular action must substitute itself for concepts.” By so doing Shoko satisfies *maatic* argumentation and *Njia* as theme because his art is an act of unapologetic commitment to struggle to attain freedom from racial oppression and

his art is marked by profound hope that victory can be had. 'Zvaisava Nyore' is therefore an Afrocentric offering which satisfies quite a number of principles of Afrocentric thought and praxis.

5.3.3 Greater Mhondera's Poetry and the Pursuit of Total Liberation

This section analyses Mhondera's poetry on racism. In 'Usatye Kani Africa' Mhondera belongs to the race school which maintains that freedom is only a reality when people resist racial oppression and subjugation. The poet deconstructs and demythologizes the notorious and racist myths about Africa and Africans which are meant to keep the African in perpetual servitude. Utilizing the Sankofan approach, Mhondera depicts African people as the parentpeople of humanity and parentcivilisation of world civilization.

*Usatye kani Africa
Iwe wakatanga noruzivo rwokurima
MuEgypt mairimwa nouhurudza
Pasichigare nyika dzose dzichakakotsira
Vana vako vaikohwa kudya kwaiyemurwa mativi mana enyika dzose
Vachiwaka dzimba dzairatidza unyanzvi
Dzimwe nyika mhuri dzichigara mumapako. (p.82).*

(Do not be afraid
You are the first to engage in agriculture
Egypt is known for agriculture
In the history of the world when all other parts of the world were uncivilized
The people of Egypt were great agricultural producers
They also produced state of the art buildings
While people of other parts of the world lived in caves.)

The above is an explicit statement on the primacy of African civilization and people. The poet also views Ancient Egyptians as Blacks. Mhondera challenges the tradition of myths about Africa and Africans and from that corpus the following is one notorious proposition by Trevor-Roper cited in Mazrui (2002: 1) who says:

Perhaps in the future, he argued, there will be some African history...But at the present, there is none, there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness...and darkness is not a subject of history.

Mhondera posits fear and self-depreciation as a threat to the realization of freedom by Africans. Nkrumah reminds us that denying a people history is tantamount to stripping a people of their identity. In the poem 'Usatye Kani Africa Mhondera' "anchors her work in the best of the African past," Gray (ibid: 101) She displays "profound knowledge of ancient, continental and diasporan African history." Contrary to Eurocentric claims that Africa was discovered by the Europeans Mhondera contends that "there was a growing consciousness of Africa that existed and was not waiting for discovery by an arrogant western civilization to be named," wa Ngugi (ibid: 75). It is Achebe in Lindfors and Wylies (2000: 17) who surmises that the vilification of Africa by notorious Eurocentric thinkers has had the result that "this tradition has invented an Africa where nothing good happens or ever happened, an Africa that has not been discovered yet and is waiting for the first European to explore it and straighten it up." Conscious of the racist attack on Africa and Africans Mhondera faces such racist accusations head on and dismisses them as misguided, oppressive and stultifying. Instead of accepting the Eurocentric dehumanizing image of Africa and the Africans Mhondera engages in an act of restoration, reconstruction and redefinition of African humanity and in so doing holds the humanizing and harmonizing and Sankofan approach principles of Afrocentric thought. She says:

*Inga utori gamba wani Africa
Zvinhu zvinoshaikwa nevamwe nguva dzose
Chitarisa uone mutsinga dzako zvizere
Une zvicherwa zvakakosha kwazvo
Chiita kuti dzimwe nyika dzipfugame pauri
Wozvitarisawo samambo anokumbirwa navaranda
Mambo anoganza pamadiro muushe hwake
Kuti simba rako rinyatsotinhidza pasi rose. (p.82).*

(By the way Africa, you are a hero
Resources that are not found in other counties
Look all these resources are on your land
You have all the precious minerals
Pacify the world
And consider yourself a superior race
A king who is in total control of his territorial integrity
So that your superiority is known by all.)

Mhondera argues that in order to achieve freedom, equality and justice there is need to elevate Africa to a superior position and play a part in pacifying the world and in view of this Mazrui

(2004: 1) notes that “it is not enough that Africa should find the will to be peaceful with itself, it is also vital that Africa should play a part in pacifying the world.” Mhondera is actually challenging Africans to move away from the marginal sites of world affairs where they have been dislodged to and begin to constitute an indomitable fortitude towards equality and justice. Hers is a struggle for dignity affirming life. wa Ngugi (ibid: xi) puts forth the proposition that “we must seek to not only be in control of our destiny but also to contribute our fair share in shaping that of entire humanity. We must strive to be at the centre of global affairs.” Furthermore, the poet notes that Africa is replete with mineral resources on its soil and therefore is a true master because it can serve itself. The poet seems to argue that Africa has the potential to transcend racial oppression and be a world power only if the resources are used to develop and benefit Africa itself. The poet seems to argue that Africa’s resources do not primarily benefit Africans but help industrialise other parts of the world. On the subject Mazrui (2004:2) holds that:

From Africa’s point of view, the first danger of depletion of resources is tied up with problems of dependency and underdevelopment. Africa is not in adequate control of its resources. Indeed, the net beneficiaries of Africa’s resources lie outside the African continent. Many of its mineral resources help to industrialise the rest of the world without necessarily improving the African condition itself.

Asante (2009) concurs with Mazrui that Africa has the potential to rise to any challenge if the resources in Africa are adequately utilized by Africans themselves. He says;

A continent and a people with such incredible potential can rise to meet any challenge, but our thought must become truly our own thoughts, separated from the enslaving thoughts of those who have sought racial domination.

On the whole, the section has argued that post independence poetry regard racism as a factor that derails efforts to fully liberate the African multitudes. Racism, the poets argue, is an impediment to the potentialities of African people to the extent that it strips the African of the qualities that make them as human as any other race. The poets note that it is crucial that African people transcend racism in order to realize visions of a liberated tomorrow. The poets contend that racism is a threat to the complete and authentic liberation of African people. As wa Thiongo (1993:125) observes, “peace is impossible in a world dominated by imperialism. Peace is impossible in a world guided by the ideology and practice of racism. Hence, the struggle for peace in the world must be a concerted struggle against racism and imperialism.” The poets

concur that Africans must resist racism in order to begin the journey to freedom and justice. They maintain that “no attempts must be made to encase man, for it is his destiny to be set free,” Fanon (1968).

While poetry discussed in this section is insightful to the readership on the necessity of resisting racial oppression, the poets seem to be concerned with psychological freedom on the more. The poets seem to emphasise on psychological freedom alone which is inadequate because as long as the white supremacist system that sustains and legitimizes oppression of the blacks is not dismantled to talk of freedom in that context is to wish for the impossible. It must be reiterated that psychological freedom outside military, political as well as economic power is a delusion. The poets need to understand that in a world besieged with nuclear power racial prejudice can not be eradicated so easily but that the dominated peoples of the world must find strategies to gain military as well as economic power. That is a genuine path to resisting predatory imperialist domination of the white race in world affairs.

5.4 Post-independence Shona Poetry, the Land Question, the Quest and Struggle for Total Liberation

The presentation and analysis of findings from interviews and questionnaires has revealed that partial redistribution of land or outright failure to redistribute the land to Africans after wars of liberation is an impediment to authentic freedom. In Zimbabwe, the land question has received much literary attention in different literary genres and poetry is no exception. The land issue also dominates Zimbabwean politics and it has received wide literary attention. Mugabe (2001: 40) observes that “the land issue continues to dominate and demand our singular attention.” Against this background it is essential to analyse post-independence poetry that deals with land in the context of freedom. The section maintains that the land issue is a platform where the quest for liberation finds expression. It is the contention of the section that post independence Shona poetry attests to the idea that independence minus redistribution of the land is insufficient. The poets contend that while political independence was an adequate condition it was not sufficient in the absence of an equitable distribution of land. In actual fact, the section argues that the quest for freedom manifests itself in the poetry and the poets view the land as a kingpin of all efforts towards genuine independence. Over and above all, the land is viewed as a focal point of the march towards total liberation. In this section Mabasa’s ‘Nhetembo’, Shoko’s ‘Zimbabwe

Ichazovei', Chirikure's 'Mhiko', Mhondera's 'Radambura Musungo' and 'Mukoko Wakaburwa', Mutangadura's 'Mununuri' as well as Chigofito's 'Ndini amai venyu ivhu' are discussed.

In 'Nhetembo' Mabasa contends that one of the most essential functions of poetry is addressing the land question. It is his submission that poetry must not be reduced or limited to reflection on love, expression of discontentment, formalistic arrangement of lines neither is it rhyme or rhythm only but that:

*Zviripo, zvirimo, zvirimo munhetembo
Izvozvo hamuzvioni, asi ini
Ndinozviona, ndinozvinzwa
Ndakamboda kukuudzai nezvazvo
Asi hamuoni*

*Nhetembo ndisekuru kumakura
Mudonzvo uchibaya-baya
Turukweza tusingakure
Vachitaura vega nemavende
Kuti "Ko iro ivhu ratakanzi rinouya
Richauya rinhiiko zvataneta kumirira?" (p.22)*

(There are issues in poetry
That you do not see but I see it
I see it, I feel it
I once wanted to alert you of that which is in poetry
But you do not see it

Poetry can be about an old man in the fields
Poking
Stunted rapoko
Talking by himself "where is the land that we were promised
When will we get the land now that we are tired of waiting?")

In the poem, Mabasa satisfies the principle of Afrocentricity that writers, thinkers and practitioners must view African audience as the priority audience because he is raising an important issue that poetry is a vehicle for expressing important politico-economic and socio-cultural issues. Mabasa's poem seems to be attacking African people in general and leaders in particular for failing to redistribute the land after the war. In fact he is protesting

against Africa itself- at least to the current generation of Africans who celebrate through various forms of writing despite the idea that land has not been distributed. Mabasa exposes the absurdity of celebrating independence when the main reason for going to war has not been fulfilled. In other words, celebrating without addressing the land question is futile. Mabasa seems to challenge both readers and writers to realize that there are “burning issues of the day” that are expressed through poetry one of which is the land question. Mabasa is challenging both readers and writers to transcend formalistic notions as well as focus on sentimental or trivial issues and instead view poetry as a more complex and important platform for treating the important realities of the day. The second stanza quoted above is emphasizing that colonialism, dislodged the African from fertile soil to poor soils – the Tribal Trust Lands. The Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) are very poor and therefore can not feed the people adequately. The Zimbabwe Liberators’ Platform in Harold-Barry (2004: 31) observes that “the Land Apportionment Act of 1931 expropriated fertile land from blacks and confined them to sandy, often arid, soils [while] the Land Tenure Act of 1969 tried to enshrine this division permanently.” The image of the old man poking the rapoko which shows evidence of stunted growth signifies discontentment with the state of affairs that dispossesses the African of his fertile land. Reflecting on the land question in the context of globalization, Mugabe (ibid: 27) observes the following:

The question Zimbabwean patriots face, as put to us by the peasants, is whether a globalised environment will enable them to have a patch of land to till and whether the ugly anomaly which history gave them in respect of land ownership shall be resolved in order to enlarge their own freedom so they can begin to be like the rest of mankind.

Mabasa views poetry as a site for re-negotiating the land question. He seems to observe that poetry is a cultural site that can allow important ideas to be raised and deliberated on. ‘Nhetembo’ is marked by a quest for ownership of productive land which is anticipated to bring with it fuller humanity. What is embedded in the line is the desire to reclaim the land of immemorial possession. What seems to disappoint the old man in the poem is that while “the Zimbabwean Chimurenga was a guerilla war, it was in important ways a people’s war, with land and a sense of dispossession at its centre” Gunner (1991:77), the attainment of political independence does not come with the immediate redistribution the land to the majority up until the historic Land Reform Programme, dubbed the Third Chimurenga. It is Mabasa’s contention

that poetry must be put to the service of humanity and be utilized towards addressing and correcting colonial injustice for example the dispossession and impoverishment of the Africans by the settler regime. The presentation and analysis of findings in Chapter 4 has revealed that respondents largely contend that poetry is just but one way of addressing the burning issues of the day. In separate interviews with interviewee 1 and 2 who happened to be poets it was revealed that they both see poetry as an inevitable and indispensable part of the struggles for progressive change. Interviewee 1 indicated that “poetry is just but one vehicle. Just like in agriculture, one needs many implements to see a crop through to harvest.” In the foregoing quotation, the respondent contends that the fight for social justice is a struggle which involves many players and poetry is one way of doing so. Like interviewee 1, interviewee 2 holds that “poetry is just but one of the pieces of firewood helping start a fire and keep that fire burning.”

Like in Mabasa’s ‘Nhetembo’, in ‘Mhiko’ Chirikure observes that it is not worth the effort if not absurd to celebrate independence and the heroic deeds of the gallant heroes through poetry, songs and photographs as long as the kingpin of the struggle –the land, has not been redistributed to the people. The poet is saddened by ersatz independence that is celebrated with euphoria, when the most central cause for taking up arms against the erstwhile coloniser has not been repossessed by the majority. Fanon (1968) and Malcolm X agree that the land provides the impetus for any revolution. Fanon (1968: 44) contends that:

For a colonized people the most essential value because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.

Malcolm X in Eze (ibid: 106) contends that revolution is always based on land. Chirikure is re-negotiating the meaning of independence and to him ‘independence’ without redistribution of land is not only meaningless but great betrayal of the gallant sons and daughters who sacrificed their lives to regain sovereignty, justice and equality. The poet scorns at what may be termed myopic definitions of independence and as such the poets are protesting against Africa itself at least against the current generation of Africans who are deluded by political independence. Chirikure sees land redistribution as a necessity to bring about the freedom that the people fought for;

Nyembe takatora
Toruka madetembedzo
Toshaura dzimbo
Tonyora mifananidzo
Tichirumbidza magamba

.....

Makombo
Minda
Ivhu rababa
Ndiro raiva mbariro dzemhiko dzemagamba
Zvino tinoimba
Tinodetembei
Tinonyorei
Iyo isakazadziswa (p.14)

(We won the struggle
We now write poetry
We sing songs of victory
We create images
All in the name of praising the heroes
.....
land
land
the land of our forefathers
was the central issue in the struggle for liberation
now we sing
what do we recite
what do we write about
when the land question has not been addressed.)

Chirikure is challenging the people to realize that land is the most essential resource that triggered the liberation struggle and it is only on the basis of repossession of the land that genuine sovereignty, justice and equality is realized. As Adjibolosoo in Chivaura and Mararike (1998:27) observes of the Human Factor (HF):

The [land] is the kingpin of every human endeavour. No human programme achieves its best results without it. No nation can achieve successful democratization without first [addressing the land issue]. Societies that try to pursue democratization without [first addressing the land issue] will be putting the cart before the horse.

Chirikure therefore views the land as the most important resource. It is on the land that Africans can utilize their energy and knowledge as subjects and improve life conditions. Chirikure holds that freedom is only rendered realistic when Africans hold that "... Man's ontological vocation is to be a subject who acts upon and transforms the world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively," Freire (1996: 14). Subjecthood only rewards if people have the land and in view of this Chirikure seems to argue that celebrating independence minus the land is a celebration of objecthood and poverty. In order to be true masters who make their own history and define their own destiny then redressing land issue becomes imperative. Mugabe (ibid: 109) reflects on the necessity of the Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe in the following words:

Our perspective on the land reform programme derives from our struggle for sovereign independence, and the compelling fact that the last and decisive seven years of that struggle took on an armed form that demanded of us the precious and ultimate price of our blood. We died and suffered for our land. We died and suffered for sovereignty over natural resources of which land, *ivhu*, umhlabati, is the most important.

Chirikure therefore echoes the necessity of redistribution of land as the first step towards fuller freedom and castigates independence without land as fake for African people can not realise their full potential without land. Land is therefore, the springboard upon which human agency is practised. Land is life affirming and hence Chirikure and Mabasa are longing for a life where the formerly colonized can regain control of their land and make their own history. Mabasa's 'Nhetembo' and Chirikure's 'Mhiko' are instances of well-reasoned poetry that is committed to the betterment of the life conditions of African people.

In 'Zimbabwe Ichazovei', Shoko assumes the voice of Mozambique who is disturbed by the crisis in Zimbabwe and notes that Mozambican independence can not make any meaning as long as its neighbour, Zimbabwe, is in intense suffering. The poet seems to underline the fact that as long as imperialism is rife freedom of the African multitudes remains a myth. Shoko says:

*Zvingarevei tikati nhasi tine rufaro
Rufaro runoshuwirwa nehama dzedu
Tingafara sei vana veMozambique
Hama yangu Zimbabwe iri muchoto? (p.67).*

(What does it mean to say we are free
Freedom which our colleagues quest for
How can we the people of Mozambique enjoy
When my kin, Zimbabwe is in a predicament.)

Zimbabwe is depicted as a nation facing many challenges and the human condition in Zimbabwe makes independence in other African countries meaningless hence the voice asks “*zvino tingati takasununguka?*” (p.68) (Can we say we are free). What the poet seems to observe is that the angst, hunger and pain that the Zimbabweans are experiencing are a result of internal as well as international struggles motivated by the legitimate cause of redistributing the land to its rightful owners. It is the poet’s view that such a struggle must not be limited to Zimbabwe but must be an African struggle. By viewing the struggle for redistributing the land as an African struggle Shoko satisfies the African Collective Memory-Perception Competence principle of Afrocentricity. Shoko demonstrates awareness that “African people are linked externally relative to our shared historical-experiential journey...,” Gray (2001:113). Shoko contends that the struggle for land is non-negotiable and hence it must be supported. It is a struggle which the poet sees as essentially a struggle for all African peoples for this history of dispossession is an experience shared by many in Africa. The poet is protesting against neocolonial domination by the whites. He utilizes the African past functionally to expose the colonial injustices over the land as well as the necessity of addressing these injustices after independence. In this regard, the poet satisfies Sankofan approach. He says:

*Vakuru vakabvutirwa ivhu nechisimba
Kuitwa isu nhapwa munyika yababa
Chiona vaRozvi vashayiwa pokuisa mbeu
Chisi hachieri musi wacharimwa
Nhasi totora minda yedu yamakapamba*

*Hondo iyi ihondo yeAfrica yedu tose
Mozambique yakasununguka yagarika
Zimbabwe ngaisununguke itambanuke (p.68).*

(Land was grabbed from our forefathers
To be enslaved in our country
And now Blacks have no land to cultivate
Evil always comes out in the open
Now we repossess the land you grabbed from us

This struggle is a struggle for all African people
Mozambique attained free
Let freedom reign supreme in Zimbabwe.)

The poet sees reclaiming the land irregardless of the challenges in the process as the imperative because that is a sure way to eradicating poverty which continues to threaten African humanity. The poet maintains that land redistribution is a necessary condition to “full independence, full sovereignty and the full benefits of national resources given to them by the Almighty in his infinite bounteousness,” Mugabe (ibid: 92). The poet therefore sees repossession of the land as a guarantee to the realization of full independence, full sovereignty and full enjoyment of the benefits of the land. This is because land is not only a source of life but a guarantee to unlocking the potential of the people which is crucial to the improvement of life conditions. It has also been argued that the poet conceptualizes the struggle for land as necessarily a continental struggle. Reflecting on the struggle for land in Africa, Mugabe (2001: 119) observes that the struggle for land must not be seen as a Zimbabwean struggle but a struggle for all peoples of Africa as well as other former colonized peoples of the world:

The land question that we are tracking is more than a national question, it is a regional question. We have within our national neighborhood African countries who share our predicament in so far as the land is under occupation. Namibia has such a situation, so does South Africa. Further afield, Mauritius faces similar contradictions as does many former colonies on the continent and beyond

What is clear is that the struggle for land is posited as a non-negotiable struggle in Zimbabwe and Africa and other former colonies of the world. In fact the struggle of the peoples of Zimbabwe is a struggle for all dispossessed peoples of the world. Shoko sees the land issue as an indispensable birthright crucial to humanise and harmonise the Africans. It humanizes in the sense that it is the source of life and also a unifier. It is clear that Shoko’s conceptualization of the land attests to the fact the Zimbabwean struggle for land must translate into a struggle for all peoples of Africa and other former colonies of the world.

Mhondera’s ‘Radambura Musungu’ revolves around addressing colonial injustices over the land. The poet views land redistribution as an act of justice in the sense that “justice here is understood as redressing past wrongs, but also as empowering, opening possibilities, and lifting the spirit of Africa to become an equal partner among others, in constructing a better world and a more “just”

world order,” Kalouche in Mazrui (2004:457). Mhondera reflects on colonial injustices over the land as follows:

*Nzvimbo dzaifema nokuibva kwevhu
Maingotora muchipanana pachenyu
Tikakushandirai maitipa tumari tushoma
Tumari twounyemu nyemu tunokonzera nyota
Makange makagarika muvhu redu imi vachena*

*Zvino gava radambura musungo
Monzwawo zvino kutonga kwevatema
Nokuti mava kutorerwa minda iye
Mavakubvutirwa upfumi huye
Zvokuba zvapfuka masikati oupenyu
Morwadzikana zvino nokuti zvava panyama yenyu (p.87)*

(Productive land
You grabbed and distributed among yourselves
When we provided labour you lowly paid us
Peanuts that were grossly inadequate
You were enjoying the fruits of our land, you whites

Now things have changed
Now it is your turn to suffer under black rule
Because land is being repossessed and redistributed to its rightful owners
Resources are also being grabbed from you
That which you stole from the blacks has turned against you
Now you feel the pain because you are on the receiving end.)

Mhondera understands that redistribution of the land is restoration of justice and contends that African people are only free when they have adequate control over their land. The poet understands that dispossessing the African of his land only reduces him or her to a beggar. The African is reduced to a worker and stripped of being a maker of history and a master of his own destiny. The poet demands right to possession and free control over land among the Africans. Reflecting on Black struggle Malcolm X in Eze (ibid: 109) holds that:

Revolutions are fought to get control of land, to remove the absentee landlord and gain control of the land and the institutions that flow from that land. He [the dispossessed] has been a beggar economically, a beggar politically, a beggar socially, a beggar even when it comes to trying to get some education.

Mhondera conceptualizes redistribution of the land as a way to correct colonial injustices which dehumanised the colonised. Mhondera utilizes the Sankofan Approach by referring to history in order to justify today's actions aimed at humanizing and harmonizing the Africans. The poet contends that redistribution of land is an act of justice and hence satisfies *maatic* argumentation because the poet is clear that justice must prevail. Mugabe (ibid: 56) posits that "making land available to more people is the beginning of the whole challenge of economic transformation." Echoing Mugabe (ibid: 26) Mhondera views land redistribution as non-negotiable and the only option that will lead to economic and social justice.

In Zimbabwe, and only because of the colour-line arising from British colonialism, 70 percent of the best arable land is owned by less than one percent of the population who happen to be white, while the black majority are congested on barren land. We have sought to redress this inequity through a land reform and resettlement programme that will effect economic and social justice...

In 'Mukoko Wakaburwa', Mhondera uses the image of a beehive to symbolize a nation or rather the land. While the beehive is a source of honey, what boggles the mind of the poet is simply and squarely that all the honey has been extracted. The poet seems to allude to the fact that colonialism was associated with plunder of African resources to the extent that very little is left out. The poet is saddened by the fact that independence has failed to bear significant meaning to the people because the milk and honey promised is not tangible. The poet bemoans the imperialists' plunder of African resources which she blames for the poor human condition in the post-independence dispensation. Expropriation of resources on the land is a debilitating factor to total freedom:

*Miti nouswa zvaivemo zvakaopera kuparadzwa
Nevanhu nemhuka, zvaizvimbira nzvimbo iyi
Zvakaunganidzwa nemabhunu achatonga
Muno muZimbabwe yetabvuta negidi
Munyika yedu yaierera uchi nemukaka
Izvozvi yasara mavara mashoma anoyemurika
Nzvimbo zhinji angova mavanga anotyisa*

*Ndege nezvitima zvaidzvova zvichitakura
Zvichituta pfuma yenhaka yamadziteteguru
Nhaka yaikwekwetwa nechisimba siku nesikati
Vamwe vatema vaishanda vakadzipwa pahuro
Vachikokora rose ropa redu*

Vachipuwa tumari twounyemu nyemu

*Dura renyika ndokusara rakashama
Semukoko warapurwa uchi hwose
Nhasi tiri kungonzva mumativi emukoko iwoyo
Uchi hwose hwakatutwa ndokuenda (p.100).*

(Trees and grass that were on our land was destroyed
As well as people and animals on the land
All were concentrated in one area by the whites
In this country (Zimbabwe) we liberated by struggle
In this rich country
Now there is very little left
Many places are now deplorable

Aircraft as well as trains carried goods out of the country
Expropriating our heritage
Heritage was forcibly expropriated
Black workers were enslaved
Whites expropriated all our energy
They were given grossly inadequate wages

The land was thus emptied
Just like a beehive from which all the honey has been removed
Even now we still rely on the little that was left by the colonizers
All the resources were expropriated.)

The poet casts her authorial gaze on the extent of exploitation by capturing expropriation of African resources as an incapacitating practice. What the poet fails to note is that this exploitative tendency by the imperialist powers did not end at independence but there seems to be continual expropriation of African resources which adversely affect the Africans. There are new forms of imperialism such as structural adjustment programmes that have proved to benefit the West while dehumanizing the African people. In fact, the structural adjustment programmes have brought misery to the African. Mugabe (2001: 117) observes that:

In terms of growth of the economy, there has been very little beneficiation of our raw materials to stimulate tertiary industry. Our predominantly white entrepreneurs would rather export gold rather than trinkets, raw cotton lint than cotton, raw minerals and not processed ones. We have been exporting jobs for our children and metropolitan countries with which our lead entrepreneurs identify, have been thriving at our expense.

What is clear therefore is that expropriation of resources both in the colonial and post independence period is anti freedom because it limits the African people's sovereignty. In actual fact the poet is protesting against alien control both colonial and neocolonial.

In *Ngatisimuke* there are poems that reflect on the necessity of reclaiming the land of immemorial possession in order that efforts to attain fuller humanity translate into reality. Motsi's 'Murimi' revolves around the centrality of the land to people. Motsi views the land as a priceless possession-a birthright and the people know that "they are the sole owners of the soil and mineral wealth of the country," Fanon (1968:192). The poet contends that in order to improve the human condition it is crucial that the people realize that human agency is indispensable. In Motsi's view it is only by productively acting on the environment [land] that more human life conditions are attainable. The poet notes the following on the land:

*Ivhu inhaka yedu
Rishandisei neshungu nesimba.
Simba rinobva mukushinga.
Simba mukaka, rinosisa
Muka mwana wevhu changamuka
Siya tsika yekurara kusvika zuva rati kata
Hope hadzina ndima. (p.34).*

(Land is our heritage
Utilize it productively
Power is a product of resilience
Power will always be in the bodies and minds of people
Wake up son of the soil, wake up
Abandon the tendency of oversleeping
Sleep has no returns.)

What Motsi is alluding to in the above is the place and role of the Human Factor to the betterment of humanity. Motsi challenges African people to be active participants in social processes. It is her contention that failure by the people to utilize their potentialities leads to defeat. In actual fact Motsi immerses her art in African existential philosophy which challenges people to intervene practically in social processes. It is a philosophy of life which is anti-objecthood because it is on the basis of their "daily struggle, hard and heroic," Fanon (ibid: 198) that a liberated identity is guaranteed. Chivaura in Chivaura and Mararike (1998: 1) observes that the Human Factor approach reverses the situation created by colonialism in developing

countries where the colonizer was the creator and the colonized were consumers (or rather the acted upon). Motsi observes that in order for Africans to realize the best out of their land it is imperative that they become creators (active participants) rather than objects (consumers). Cesaire (1959: 551) cited by Chivaura in Chivaura and Mararike (1998: 1) observes that the HP Approach:

Turn[s] the colonized consumer into a creator... and give[s] the historical initiative back to those whom the colonial regime has made it its mission to rob all such initiative.

In 'Murimi' Motsi views human agency as an integral part of the African people's daily struggles for freedom. The last two lines in the quotation from the poem cited above emphasize that "imparting" the spirit of patriotism, commitment, self-appreciation and the realization that none but ourselves as Africans must be the agents, of [freedom] we so much seek to bring about and the beneficiaries of the outcome..." Chivaura in Chivaura and Mararike (1998: 8).

The poet contends that reclaiming the land alone is not enough but that people must act on the land in order to produce food for themselves. In actual fact, the land is depicted as a source of life (nourisher). This means that availability and utilization of land brings about economic transformation and subsequently improvement of life conditions. The poet says:

*Shandisa ivhu iroro rauri kuona
Harina mubhadharo, asi rinopa mubairo.
Mubairo wekugutsa nemari
Shandisa ivhu rikuraramise (p.34).*

(Utilize the soil fully
It is a priceless possession but rewarding
The land is the guarantee to food and money
Utilize the land so that it nourishes you.)

Motsi views the land as the basis for wealth, dignity, well being above all, food. In fact it is a source of life. Mugabe (ibid: 179) succinctly observes the following on the place and role of land to a people's life:

To our Zimbabwean African society nothing is more important than land... Land is the Economy and the Economy is land. Where others might consider precious stones such as gold or diamonds as more important, in our society it is land. This, because for us land is not only one's perpetual heritage and home but it is also one's food and wealth and basis for dignity and well-being.

The poet shows commitment to realization of a liberated identity characterized by wealth, abundant food as well as well as dignity contrary to impoverishment of the people as a result of dispossession of the African majority of their land. Vambe in Chiwome et al (2000: 193) notes that “land is central to all processes of life. It is the giver of life, the protector of lives born and yet unborn, the guarantor of cultural continuity.”

In ‘Mununuri’ (Liberator), Mutangadura praises Mugabe for being insightful and responsible for redistributing the land to the majority; an exercise which the poet says has eradicated hunger and hence guarantees the welfare of the people, peace and dignity. The poet views the leader, Mugabe, as a liberator because he realizes that people are suffering as a result of the poor soil on which the African people were relegated to by the colonialists. By gleaning on the past which is marked by dispossession and violence the poet utilizes Sankofan approach and refers to Mugabe as a hero because of his commitment to correcting colonial injustices on the land issue. The poet notes that this poor land had reached a point where it could not produce anything for the people. It is the leadership of Mugabe that has liberated the people from hunger:

*Racheka nyika zuva
Tikaropota dzimara tanyarara
Tika para-para tichawana chokubata
Dzimara chokubata hapachina.*

*Asi ziso renyu imi VaMugabe
Rakandeya ndeya seziso regondo.
Matambudziko edu mukaaona.
Makatiparira sedunzvi rehuku (p.35).*

(When drought ravaged society
We complained till we could not say a word
We scratched for the few remains
Till there is nothing

But it is your vision, Cde Mugabe
That made you look around like an eagle
That made you understand our problems
And like a hen with its chicks you provided for us.)

The poet is praising Mugabe’s leadership which she says has engineered an overhaul of the system that was meant to keep the black man down by dispossessing him of the land. The poet views dispossession of the people of their land as essentially an act of disempowerment. She

views repossession of land as an act of liberation because the land is a guarantee to food, dignity, well being and wealth. The poet views repossession of land as a legitimate exercise for it begins the path to freedom and well being. Mutangadura views the Land Resettlement Programme as fulfillment of Zimbabweans or Africans' "quest for full sovereignty, our quest to fulfill the wishes of the vast majority of our people...." Mugabe (ibid: 110). Mutangadura views correction of colonial injustices on the land question by way of ushering a new order in which blacks control their means of production as an act of liberation in view of the fact that the land question was the main basis for the liberation struggle. Like in Chirikure's 'Mhiko', Mutangadura views independence without addressing the land issue as "independence with a question mark." It is a complete negation of the crucial motivator for the liberation struggle. It is Mugabe (ibid: 36) who says:

The main basis of our fight with settlers, a fight which began at the very onset of colonialism had been the national question of land. It informed Zimbabwe's entire politics, generated a solid support base for the armed struggle with all its attendant hazards, and spurred our fighters on, right up to the bitter end. Land, land was the cry.

The poet views the leader as a liberator in the sense that he has managed to free the people from all sorts of hazards, hunger, poverty, angst and replace that with abundant food, dignity and welfare. She says:

*Mununuri wedu ndimi Gushungo
Makabata mapfumo mukakunda muvengi
Hutongi hwenyu hukatipa kudekara
Nzara takakunda mununuri wedu. (p 35).*

(Gushungo, you are our liberator
You took up arms and defeated the enemy
Your leadership gave us freedom
We defeated hunger, our liberator.)

Mutangadura utilizes Nommoic Creativity in which she creates terms to describe Mugabe, whom she describes as 'mununuri' (liberator) as well as 'mutekwatekwa.'(a revered person) Mutangadura uses the two in a "sacred manner. That is [they] are used in such a fashion that [they] free, liberate, help and heal African people," Gray (2001:103).

Chigofito's 'Ndini amai venyu ivhu' like all the other poets whose poetry has been discussed on the land issue holds that land is the centre of all life processes. The poet seems to argue that mere possession of the land without proper care or protection of the land is self-defeating. The poet notes that land is a "source of food and ultimately a source of life, abode of the ancestral spirits who exercise considerable control over the living," Stratton in Roberts (1986):11-12). Be that as it may, the personified land says:

*Ko, kana zvakadaro chindichengetedzaiwo
 Ko, miti iyo munotemerei musingadyari mimwe.
 Ko, masango ayo munoapisireyi?
 Hamuzivi here ndizvo zvinotsigira runako rwangu?
 Asika chiri mumusakasa chinozvinzwira. (p.79).*

(If I am that important then why not take care of me
 Why do you cut down trees without planting more
 Why allow veld fires on vegetation
 Don't you know that vegetation beautifies the me
 That which has ears to hear will hear for itself.)

The poet implores people to desist from destructive tendencies on the environment which, as the poet observes, is self-defeating. The poet notes that when properly managed and utilized land makes life more meaningful and enjoyable. In actual fact, natural resources are non-renewable and as such the poet reminds and castigates irresponsible behavior such as deforestation, causing destructive veld fires and wanton extraction of minerals. Chigofito contends that in order for people to enjoy the fruits of their soil, conservation of resources becomes imperative because "the basis of all human communities is the soil, land. Without the soil, without the land, without, nature there is no human community," Ngugi (1981:7).

After reading Chigofito's poem questions of originality and innovation come into one's mind. Chigofito seems to have read Joseph Kumbirai's 'Ndini Ivhu Amai Wenyu' in the poetry anthology *Mabvumira eNhetembo*. In his poem Kumbirai is preoccupied with emphasizing the centrality of land in life processes which is also Chigofito's concern. Chigofito seems to be recycling the theme to the extent that she even imitates the style of writing. The following lines from Kumbirai's poem serve to concretise the lack of innovation in Chigofito's art:

*Chandinokumbirawo ruremekedzo rwenyu

 Kana muchipisa uswa munondipa mbonje*

.....
Moto ndinouzeza sokuzeza kwenyu

Vana vangu regaizve ichi chimwe chinhu
Chokundichera-chera musana nebadza
Kana chokundipara-para musana namakoronga
Musateme nokudzura miti yamasango. (p.72).

(What I am asking for is your respect

 You give me scars when you burn grass

 I am afraid of fire just like you do

 My children leave out this practice
 That of digging the with hoes
 Or that of causing gullies
 Do not cut down tress or uproot trees.)

Instead of grappling with bigger issues on the land issue in Zimbabwe especially the Fast Track Land Reform Programme that started in 2000 Chigofito, like Kumbirai, who is writing during the colonial period does not transcend mere moralization. Chigofito lacks originality and innovation such that her art is rather simplistic and far from bringing the freedom that she, ironically, is seeking.

As the findings from interviews and questionnaires have revealed, failure to redistribute the land is viewed as an obstacle to freedom. Similarly the poets whose poetry has been discussed seem to contend that land is particularly important to genuine liberation. This section has noted that the land issue dominates Zimbabwean politics and subsequently a topical issue in Shona poetry. Shona poets view the land issue as a platform to express the quest for total liberation. They maintain that in order for African people to realize equality, freedom and justice, the land issue is crucial for the governments of former colonies to redistribute the land in order to empower the people. The poets see the land issue as a site for negotiating a liberated identity which is defined by equitable distribution of wealth and redressing colonial injustices over the land which renders the people victims. The poets concur that land is an intergral part of African people’s ontological existence for it is the nourisher as well as an abode of ancestors. The section has noted that Mabasa and Chirikure manage to produce well reasoned poetry while Chigofito seems to be

reinventing the wheel. The poets contend that repossessing the land without proper utilization in the form of conservation and preservation is self-defeating. The poets argue that reclaiming our land provides fertile ground for a welfare state while on the contrary failure to give back land to its rightful owners is tantamount to sinking the people into oblivion for it is the land that was central in the struggle for liberation. The poets contend that land reform is imperative “for the purpose of equitable redistribution and poverty reduction,” Sachikonye in Harold-Barry (2004: 69). In fact, the poets are writing against parochial definitions of independence which imply that independence is simply and squarely dislodging the colonizer without bringing about fundamental changes that guarantee the emergence of a welfare state. Post-independence Shona poets therefore contend that “land reform is political and fundamental in a sense. We have rights to use land as our natural resource and for economic and political use. Land is the final demonstration of our freedom, the emancipation, dislocation and disenfranchisement can be corrected through land reform. It is the final statement. It’s political but it also means economic and political freedom,” Moyo in Bond and Manyanya (2003: 204). Besides the land issue, history and culture are depicted as integral aspects of any struggle for liberation.

5.5 Writing against Alterity: History, Culture and the Search for Total Liberation in Post-independence Shona Poetry

As indicated above, this section explicates the role and place of history and culture in the struggle for total liberation as it finds expression in post independence Shona poetry. The section discusses the history and culture together because of the intricate relationship between them. wa Thiongo (1993: 42) notes that “culture is a product of a people’s history. But it also reflects that history and embodies a whole set of values by which a people view themselves and their place in time and space.” The poetry discussed in this section reveals that Shona poets hold that culture and history are integral parts of African people’s collective struggle for genuine liberation. The poets exemplify and authenticate commitment to writing against alterity. In this section, the researcher argues that the poetry reveals “uncompromising aversion to the ‘epistemology of alterity’ –the ‘othering’ of Africa and Africans-and the advancement of scholarship grounded in centering of African ontological experiences,” Adesina (2008:133). In this section, particular attention is paid to the following poets, Everson Chibanda, Ignatius Mabasa, Chirikure Chirikure, Greater Mhondera Chiedza Musengezi and Ruby Magosvongwe. The section also contends that

a critical interrogation of the reflection on culture and history in Shona poetry helps the current researcher to lay bare the quest for genuine liberation. The study holds the view that the poets' handling of history and culture is ample evidence that post independence Shona poetry is a site where the urge for freedom finds expression. In fact, the poets argue that "the way we live today is intrinsically linked with the way we lived in yesteryear, as culture is passed, albeit in some changed form, from one generation to another. The past remains an important reference point," Kamba in Chiwome et al (2000: 169). The poetry discussed in this section reveals that "[total] liberation and development are enormous tasks. To achieve them we must utilize our culture, world-view, historical knowledge and realities to develop plans, strategies and approaches that are appropriate to our needs and interests," Furusa (2000:3).

In this section the researcher holds that central to the poetry under discussion is wholistic Afrocentric action as goal because the poetry emphasizes that Africans must hold their culture and history in high esteem so that they permeate all facets of life, economic, political, spiritual, among many others. Before discussing individual poems it is pertinent to provide wa Ngugi (2001) and Mazrui's (2004) philosophical propositions on the functions of history and culture respectively. It is anticipated that these views shed more light on the integral role of history and culture to people. wa Ngugi (2001: 32) submits that knowledge of history can be understood to a) rectify the distortions created to serve colonialism and neo-colonialism...b) create a sense of pride as with Black Consciousness Movement, to create a consciousness of the self and of the collective (c) history is a revolutionary tool and this is where it is most potent. History is used to unlock the contradictions of the oppressed as well as those of the oppressor. On the other hand, Mazrui (1990:7-8) identifies seven (7) functions of culture namely; a) lens of perception and cognition, b) providing motives for human behavior (spring of motivation), c) criteria for evaluation (standard of judgement), d) basis of identity, e) mode of communication and f) basis of stratification, g) system of production and consumption. It is the contention of the section that post-independence Shona poetry expresses commitment to cultural and historical rootedness to achieve freedom. As the discussion reveals, alterity is castigated as a malaise that stifles African people's struggle for a liberated identity. As indicated earlier on, Weil (2001) maintains that to be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. However, the poets seem to concentrate on protesting against the current generation of Africans' failure to uphold their cultural values. This section argues that, poets need to understand that the people are

victims of the foreign dominating powers who wield political, military as well as economic power such that to blame the people is rather misdirected attack. Poets need to understand the forces at play particularly in the global power relations and how politics, economic relations as well as military power impact on culture. In fact, the poets whose poetry is discussed in this section fail to understand cultural imperialism within the context of world politics. In fact, in some instances the poetry is marked by heavy moralization such that the poets concentrate on the internal dynamics of culture without a far reaching and scientific understanding of hegemony and its attendant effects on the dominated group.

A reading of post-independence Shona poetry reveals that besides the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership and its attendant hazards on realization of freedom, failure to address the land issue, among many other obstacles, African people's grapple with history and culture is also depicted as a determinant factor to attainment of total liberation. Chinweizu (1987: 187) observes that "if we are to do a good job of reconstruction, it is important to understand the dynamics of our past and how they have burdened us with our present." This section contends that the primacy of an African audience as the priority audience, *Njia* as theme, Harmonis as mode, Sankofan approach and Nzuri as Invitation and Standard are some the Afrocentric principles that are satisfied by the poets in their discussion of the importance of history and culture to Africans. In our discussion effort is made to unravel the extent to which the poets' conceptualization of history and culture is an expression of the principles above. The section argues that post independence poetry expresses the quest for freedom as the poets' treatment of history and culture are regarded as integral or indispensable aspects of a people's life to the extent that any effort towards the attainment of freedom must be situated in them. Findings from interviews and questionnaires show that disrespecting African history and culture is a factor that impedes total liberation. Against this background, this section presents and critically interrogates poetry that grapples with history and culture in the context of the struggle for freedom. In actual fact the poetry discussed in this section reveals "an unapologetic and relentless commitment to Africa," Adesina (2008:148). The section maintains that the poetry of poets discussed in this section reveal relentless combating of alterity and extroversion and affirmation of endogeny (Adesina 2008). The section provides a critical engagement with commitment to affirming endogeneity which, as Adesina (2008) observes;

...requires an uncompromising refutation of the epistemology of alterity which has shaped modes of gazing and writing about Africa and Africans. Such a negation of alterity is the beginning of the journey to affirmation, a method of scholarship rooted in the collective self and speaks to it without the anxiety regarding what the Western Other thinks or has to say.

5.5.1 History, Culture and Struggle for Authentic Liberation in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka*

Chibanda's 'Munodzisemei' revolves around acculturation which the poet castigates with utter contempt. Mazrui (1978: 23) defines acculturation as "the process by which an individual or a group acquires the cultural characteristics of another through direct contact and interaction." Chibanda is saddened by the irony that while Africans disregard their culture wholesale they hold the culture of the foreigners especially the whites supreme. Chibanda observes that "culture is becoming more and more cut off from the events of today," Fanon (1968:217). He says:

Dzedu tsika semarutsi munodzisemei.
Pamadziona, sendove yedhongi munodzinyenyeredza,

Kuri kudokwairira dzavamwe tsika.
Dzenyu tsika dzavanoosema semarutsi
Dzavo muchidzifarira semanhanga (p.18).

(Why do you despise our culture
 You despise your own cultural practices like dung

 In preference of foreign cultures
 Ironically foreigners despise your culture
 While you celebrate foreign cultures.)

The poet notes that Africans have lost their "ancient and traditional cultural ideals and approaches," Gray (2001:98) which sustained them for centuries. In the above quoted lines the poet is saddened by the wholesale loss of African culture. In fact, Chibanda notes that despite attainment of political independence the "culture of independent Africa is still colonial [and] this should prompt us to investigate what is the matter with the African petit-bourgeois elite who have permitted that pall of stasis to settle upon Africa," Chinweizu (1987:351). Chibanda notes that these include folktales and riddles as a result of contact and interaction with the Westerners. He says:

Ngano nezvirahwe zvoise mbombombo
Kubva zvadzama semadora

Mbakumba nengororombe zvitsvagei muzvione
Zvamedzwa nechisingarutsi chirungu
Chirungu chekuuya nechirungurira (p.18).

(Both folktales and riddles are lost
To go extinct like Mopani worms
Look around for traditional dances such as mbakumba or ngororombe
All have been lost due to westernization
Westernization brought problems with it.)

In the lines quoted above Chibanda views acculturation as a disease that is seriously affecting African people. It is a problem that has crippled the African people's self definition. Chibanda seems to refer to what wa Ngugi (ibid: xix) refers to as 'cultural genocide'. Chibanda bemoans the death of African ideals and approaches to life which reduces the African to a slave of borrowed culture. The poet notes that contact and interaction with the West has resulted in the loss of vital ideals which enabled the Africans to freely define themselves. Chibanda seems to observe that liberation is only possible on the basis of a culture which gives liberation efforts the impetus. Asante (2009) observes that Africa has often been betrayed by the ignorance of its own people of its past, consequently, the most betrayed of contemporary humans. On the role of culture in social transformation, Kamba in Chiwome et al (2000: 169) observes that:

Progress itself has to be understood in the context of culture. It would be impossible to achieve real progress if such progress was at odds with culture. The riches of our cultural heritage –those customs, values and beliefs which have been passed on to us by those who have gone before us, can themselves be the vehicle for transforming our societies, for bringing about betterment of life in a variety of ways.

Chibanda views acculturation as a threat to self-definition and identity because it means separation from the true self. Willey in Willey and Treiber (2002) observes that alienation is understood to mean a separation from the true self, much as it was used by pioneers in the field of psychiatry: an alienated individual is one who is not a whole personality. The poet notes that there are aspects of African culture that are worth celebrating and relevant, values that sustained a civilized people for centuries. Like Mazrui (1990) Chibanda associates celebration of one's culture with freedom. Mazrui in Bemath and Mazrui (2005:10) observes that "the power of culture is sometimes a protective shield for freedom." The poet seems to note that instead of discarding ancient and traditional ideals and approaches to life wholesale it is essential to tap the best practices from that past and synthesize them with the best from the contemporary

dispensation. The poet sees no moral justification why African culture must be holistically relegated to the dustbin of history. The poet goes down memory lane to reflect on the beauty of traditional African culture, the beauty of dances, story telling tradition, traditional food and that Africa was a healthy society. In view of the foregoing the poet asks:

Zvino dzedu tsika munodzisemei?(p.18)

(Why do you despise your culture.)

What is clear in the poem is that Chibanda is of the view that it is non-negotiable that Africans must situate themselves in the best of the African past while also tapping the best from the contemporary dispensation. It is Chibanda's submission that cultural imperialism is anti freedom. The poet presents the culture of independent Africa as "a culture without economic autonomy or strength; a culture without political power; a culture with no flowering of the arts or intellect; a culture of pastiches, of juxtaposed incongruous parts, of incomplete synthesis; a culture without inner unity; a mongrelized, extroverted, foreign-dominated culture ; a culture without respectability," Chinweizu (1987:351). Furthermore, Ajaji in Chinweizu (1987: 354) reflects on the centrality of the African past in the following words:

Leaders who plan for an African future but consider knowledge of the past irrelevant can only be presumed to be harbouring the colonialist view of the African past. It was the wisdom of our fathers to emphasize that each present generation owes obligations and responsibilities to both the ancestors and the generations yet unborn.

Harmonious synthesis of the beautiful aspects of the past and present become the imperative and on the contrary celebration of Western culture alone is enslaving and incapacitating. wa Ngugi (ibid: 70) says, "you cannot adopt, assimilate, be part of a culture that not only negates you but dominates and oppresses as well." In actual fact, complete disregard of African values limits or stifles, the people's potential. People can best create as agents on the basis of their culture. Furthermore, Chibanda holds The Way of Heru as a principle in the sense that he is confident that "African people will realize again-and are even now in the complicated multifaceted process of realizing again- their traditional sanity, stability and excellence as a people," Gray (ibid: 97).

However, Chibanda's projection of African beauty must not blind the reader to an idealization of the African past. In fact what is clear is that what is good in the African past can be put to the

service of humanity by synthesizing that past with the present in order to shape and determine the future. Chinweizu (1987: 303) pontificates that:

We should all heed Césaire's warning that copying our past is not enough. We should also realize that a sterile worship of any tradition, not excluding European, will bring cultural death, not renaissance.

What Chibanda is agitating for is a concerted effort to "free culture from Eurocentrism" to use wa Thiong'o's (1993) words. In freeing culture from Eurocentrism the African people are also liberated from being objects or consumers of a foreign culture into creators of their own culture, creators who know what is best for them. Instead of regarding African culture as barbaric and useless the poet is noting that "to truly borrow from another culture, as we must, to truly learn from another culture, we must be independent, but from our neocolonial beds we are further sinking into a state of cultural genocide," wa Ngugi (ibid: 58). Chibanda therefore contends that in as much as Africans should move with the times the reality that "... traditional African influences must be brought to the centre to feed and mold the vitality of any modern African art" Chinweizu (ibid: 303), can not be overstated. Africans must put African culture as well as history at the centre of their lives in order that they are liberated from the debilitating aesthetics of western culture which asphyxiates African peoples' creative potential. It is interesting to quote Senghor in Mutiso and Rohio (1975:597) who emphasizes rootedness using the Russian and Chinese examples;

The Russians and Chinese themselves, though Communists, are no less Russian and Chinese. They are, perhaps, more Russian and Chinese than anything else. They have exhumed and exalted, along with their great historical figures, the permanent values of their national civilization, I say: of their race.

It is apparent here that the poet is concerned with rootedness in one's culture to realise the best out of life processes. However, as Muponde (2000: 45) observes of Musaemura Zimunya's poetry Chibanda's:

...vision of life is that of conserving tradition, reforming morality, and a general discomfort with the modern world with its culture and technology. He has the tendency to see the black man in Senghorian terms-as a man of the eternal dance who is destroyed by the man of technology...the clear lack of a dialectical vision of life, the entrapment within the limiting, transient, *Zeitgeist* of the epoch, a monolithic conception of cultural nationalism, the conception of revolution in cyclic terms (as endless beginnings), the search for refuge in things past and a heavily moralistic approach to life clearly undermine the potency of his [poem].

The poet is more of a traditionalist than anything else because he seems to contend that the freedom of African people is locked somewhere in the past. The poet seems to emphasise culture alone and fails to grapple with hegemony and its debilitating effects on culture. The poet fails to see that the people whom he is attacking for adopting another foreign culture are victims of a dominating power. This domination is sustained and nourished by military and economic power to the extent that to emphasise culture alone is tantamount to fighting a losing battle. On the basis of political, economic as well as military power the West can impose its culture on the rest of the world and the people whom Chibanda is castigating for failing to be rooted have little, if any, choice. Instead of simplistically blaming the people as Chibanda does, it must be understood that the hegemonic capitalist project of Western expansion takes many forms, military, political, cultural as well as economical. Furthermore, Chibanda fails to realize that no people can live outside the context of global politics. He seems to contend that culture is static and in order to realize the best and most out of society, people must work towards harmonious synthesis of the best out of their traditions and the useful aspects from other cultures. To wish for sterile worship of some imperilled culture as the poet does is rather incapacitating. In order to survive people must move with the times and be purposeful agents of change. Cultural imperialism can not be fought by hiding behind the past but by purposeful rootedness and synthesis of tradition and contemporary cultural dictates. The poet therefore fails to fulfill harmonious as mode which is an Afrocentric principle which emphasises on harmonious synthesis of the best out of one's tradition and contemporary experiences. The poet seems to overemphasise rootedness without noticing the necessity of other races in the whole process of shaping African culture.

Mabasa's 'Chairman' in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* is a satiric poem which criticizes leaders who turn into dictators when they get into power. The poet attacks such leadership and reminds the leaders to heed African philosophical or cultural projections on leadership. African existential philosophy holds complementarity between the leader and the people as a virtue among the African people. The poet is saddened by leaders who negate the worldview of Africans which is premised on the proverb that *munhu munhu nevanhu/umuntu ngubuntu ngabantu* (A human is human because of other humans). The poet reminds African leadership that in order to be relevant and functional the leader must abide by the teachings of African culture. Furusa in Mguni et al (2006:20) observes the following:

To be human, therefore, is to be cultured. It follows that every people have a culture, a system of beliefs and social principles that they use to socialize and bond their people into a collective community... African wisdom also teaches us that a person is not a tree that he or she would be self sufficient or self complete.

Mabasa castigates leaders who are not cultured for they think they are self-complete and self-sufficient. The poet notes that instead of drawing strength from the people the leader views himself as a know-all. Mabasa contends that it is progressive for African leadership to immerse their efforts in African culture in order to guarantee a welfare state. The poet captures the leaders' dictatorial tendencies as follows:

*Nei? Ngauchirega kuve mubvunzo
Nekuti kuvamwe vanhu
Chikonzero hachina basa
Nyangwe nepakambenge pavimbiswa
Chinyi, ngarichingovewo shoko
Rinorema, rinorwadzira mukati sebayo. (p.43).*

(You should not ask why
Because to other people
There is no need for justification
Even where there were promises
What must just be word
A word which is not easy to utter.)

Mabasa emphasizes that leaders who do not situate their leadership in African culture end up degenerating into individualists in the sense that it is their own ideas and interests that prevail over the people's needs and wants. Fanon (1968: 170) observes the following:

The living party which ought to make possible the free exchange of ideas which have been elaborated according to the real needs of the mass of the people, has been transformed into a trade union of individual interests.

Mabasa castigates leaders who treat people as objects who are to be acted upon by the leader. Instead leaders and people should complement each other in order to fulfill the aspirations and needs of both the leaders and the people. The poet says:

*Asi chinhu chinoda kuzivikanwa kuti:
Munhu munhu nevanhu
Nyika ndini newe
Ndiripo nekuti iwe uripowo*

*Tese tiri vana vevhu, venyika
Zvatakati iwe ndiwe Chairman
Hatina kuti chawareva hachikanukwi
Nekuti ticharega kukuudza kuti
Chair yawakagara haina rimwe gumbo
Dzoke wodonha uchitiwira, tokuvara tese (p.43).*

(But people must know the following;
We are the sum total of our relations
I exist because you also exist
We are all sons of the soil
When we said you are the Chairman
We did not mean you are invincible
Because we will not tell that
The chair you are sitting on is one legged
Then you fall on us then together we are injured.)

Mabasa is challenging the leaders to realize that they have an existential philosophy that dictates that leaders “govern with the people and for the people,” Fanon (1968: 180). The poet seems to argue that dictatorship and outright disregard of the people reduces people to onlookers while risking the downfall of the leader. The leader who takes the people for granted ironically destabilizes the strong base which sustains the leader. By reflecting on African existential philosophy which puts complementarity at the centre the poet begins the march towards the humanising both the leader and the people. The poet satisfies the Sankofan approach in the sense that he puts the African past to the service of African humanity by posing the African past as functional and also discussing the question of leadership on the basis of African people’s philosophy of life which the poet notes is helpful even in the neocolonial dispensation. Mabasa is challenging the leaders to “take up again the heritage of the past and to bring it to culmination,” Fanon (1968:213).

Chirikure’s ‘Tosangana Wadzoka’ in *Chamupupuri* also satirizes leaders whose leadership is not situated on the cultural tradition of the society. Like Mabasa, Chirikure reminds leaders that by dislodging and pushing the people to marginal sites they plot their own downfall. Chirikure holds that a leader is only a good leader because of the people and failure to observe this reduces the people to victims of the dictator. Chirikure notes that the people legitimize and strengthen the leader’s stay in power only if there is complementarity between the leader and the people. He says:

*Wati zomba kumanhenganya ikoko,
Zviri pano pasi hauchakwanisi kuzviona
Isu mazwi ashoshoma, kuedza kukusheedza
Tiri kuona mujuru uri kuno zasi kwatiri
Uri kumunya mapango emanera augere. (p44).*

(You are comfortable at the top
You can not see what is happening at the bottom
We are almost losing our voices trying to call you
We see termites at the bottom
Termites which are destroying the ladder you are sitting on.)

Because the leader has decided to go it alone his leadership is endangered because the vital role of the people has been ignored. Chirikure presents complementarity as a healthy practice that helps improve the life conditions of both the leader and the people. The poet seems to observe that acculturation has resulted in a crop of African leadership who negate the concept of *unhu/ubuntu* and pursue individual interests. Mazrui (2004:5) indicates the following of acculturation:

The crisis of acculturation, creating an African leadership still imitative of the West, groping for new ideologies and new sense of direction, basically depends in outlook- this cult of acculturation has also undermined Africa's capacity to innovate.

Like Mabasa, Chirikure views acculturation as a threat to good leadership. Disregarding important lessons enshrined in the past such as *munhu munhu nevanhu/munhu vanhu* (A human is human because of other humans) and also *Ishe vanhu* (The king is a king because of people). Chirikure and Mabasa argue that failure by African leaders to immerse their leadership in African existential philosophy is a threat to total independence. Mabasa and Chirikure concur that:

...in a nation it is better to respect leaders than to fear them. Yet respect is a two-way process. Two or more people can respect each other. If one of them ceases to respect the other, they also withdraw their respect for him. Nyerere in Eze (1998:80).

All in all, Chirikure is searching for a cultured leadership which is respected by the people in order that equity, freedom and justice reign supreme. Acculturation of leadership is depicted as a threat to harmony and peace in Africa. Ironically, the poet notes that by instilling fear in the people irresponsible and uncultured leadership is committing suicide. Chirikure emphasizes that African leadership is suffering from acculturation and this is a phenomenon that seems to reduce

African people to victims. Chirikure presents cultural rootedness as a necessary condition to the freedom of African people. In fact African culture teaches us to respect but not fear them. Acculturation has resulted in a new kind of leadership which is feared by people. Chirikure and Mabasa emphasise the importance of unity of purpose between the leader and the people in the struggle for authentic freedom. Chirikure and Mabasa's success lies in their realization that a leader, the people, and Africans in general cannot be human alone, a fact Chibanda especially in the poem, 'Munodzisemei', discussed above fails to notice. Achebe (2009: 166) observes that:

Our humanity is contingent on the humanity of our fellows. No person or group can be human alone. We rise above the animal together, or not at all. If we learned that lesson even this late in the day, we would have taken a truly millennial step forward.

'Chivanhu Chasvava' (Wither African Culture) is a poem which depicts African culture as a culture which is dominated and down trodden by imperialist cultures. In the poem, Mhondera views cultural imperialism as an incapacitating factor to the attainment of a truly liberated identity. Mhondera is a thoroughgoing Afrocentric poet in as far as she holds sacred African cultural traditions as not only relevant but crucial to the present dispensation. This poem is an instance of literature of detached observation of culture contact and the process of culture change referred to in Chapter 2. Assuming the voice of a mother in law the poet says:

*Chivanhu chako chagezwa
Chasukwa netsika dzemusanganiswa
Wangosara ganda dema chete mukwasha (p.98)*

(You have lost your culture
Lost as a result of culture contact
What is only left is the black skin.)

The poet is saddened by the fact that African people, who are symbolized by the son in law have lost their culture as a result of coming into contact with other cultures. In view of the loss of culture the poet moralizes as follows:

*Ukaona rusvisvi munhenhera ruchitungira
Kana mvura yezhizha yanaya
Runenge ruchikura kubva padzinde
Dzinde iroro rinoramba riripo chete
Rikadzupurwa uswa hwafa.
Ndizvo zvakaitawo chivanhu chedu mukwasha
Chine dzinde guru kwazvo pasi pasi*

*Tose tinokura mutsika kubva ipapo
Kana tikadzipura chete unhu hwedu hunofa
Kuremekedzana matiri kwobva kwapera
Toita semhuka dzedondo dzisinganyari (p.98).*

(If you see a shrub growing from a stump
When summer comes
The shrub grows from the stump
The stump remains there
If the stump is uprooted then the shrub dries out
That is exactly the situation with African culture, son in law
It has a rich tradition
Our culture is given impetus by that tradition
If we lose our tradition we also lose our culture
And we also lose respect among us
Then we behave like wild animals.)

Mhondera is emphasizing that African tradition is the core of African culture and is challenging the people to glean on their tradition so that it can help them shape the future. Asante (1988: 104) articulates that:

The two fundamental aspects of the Afro centric project are *innovation* and *tradition*. Both are essential to ... humanising the world. The generation of the new, the novel, is basic to the advancement of cultural ideas but [so] also is the maintenance of the traditional. Innovation permits us, indeed requires [of] us, the promotion of new themes and designs founded on the traditional motifs. Afrocentricity is the operative theory upon which we hand our innovation and tradition. [emphasis his]

Mhondera therefore seeks to revitalize African tradition so that Africa can build on that tradition and realize visions of a new and better future. Mhondera's preoccupation in 'Chivanhu Chasvava' is that Africans have to reclaim their past and utilize it to guarantee a more humane future. To use wa Thiongo's words (1972: 45) "to gain belief in our selves that Achebe talks about [Mhondera] realizes that [Africans] must ... "reclaim their past." In fact, the past signposts the direction for the people as they venture into the future as well as understanding the present. Mhondera is committed to decolonising the African mind and aims at "transforming spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men," Fanon (1968:36). Mhondera views tradition as an obligatory aspect of African people's

experiential exigencies from which all life processes draw meaning and value. While change is inevitable, the poets maintain that tradition signposts the course of action for the future hence “*tose tinokura mutsika kubva ipapo.*” (as we get into the future we are informed by tradition). In this regard Mhondera upholds endogeneity which refers to “an intellectual standpoint derived from the rootedness in the African conditions; centering of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one’s intellectual work,” Adesina (2008). Chinodya (1999) in Hurley et al (1999: 331) observes that:

The role of the arts must no longer be merely to preserve traditions for the edification of the uninitiated-but to reinvest, rediscover, reappropriate our culture, to adapt to keep pace with dynamic changes. We should therefore abandon static forms. We should not be afraid to borrow from within and without. To steal even. Perhaps the only true history of the world is about the endless cycle of cultures pirating one another.

Therefore, Mhondera posits that tradition holds everything together. It is the nucleus that energizes efforts towards a more fulfilling life in the present dispensation as well as the future. Total disregard of African tradition leads to the demise of African people. Mhondera seems to note that drawing from the best of tradition is a guarantee to genuine political, economic, cultural and psychological liberation. She utilizes the Sankofan Approach which instructs Africans to extract the best out of the past in order to realize the best out of the present and the future. Mhondera holds that “to evolve lasting meanings we must be rooted in something.” Mafeje (2000: 66) and to her this ‘something’ is African history and culture. On the whole, the poet is committed to “combating... alterity and extroversion and affirmation of endogeny...” Adesina (2008).

As indicated earlier on, Mhondera seems to discuss culture outside the context of economic, political as well as military power relations. Any serious writer on cultural imperialism must not let his or her art degenerate into empty rhetoric which is of very little value to the readership. Instead of simplistically bemoaning loss of culture the poet must interrogate the forces at play, forces that render the culture of the dominated people ineffective. Hegemony thrives on political, economic as well as military power to the extent that to moralise on the importance of culture without a critique on hegemony and its debilitating effects on the dominated cultures is rather inadequate. The poet engages in heavy moralization and commitment to addressing the big social issues of world politics is rather marginal. The people who the poet is writing for and to are

entrapped in the dominating culture of superpowers to the extent that they become consumers of a foreign dominating power.

Mabasa's 'Zvichida' in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* is an expression of disillusionment that engulfs society despite attaining political independence. Mabasa utilizes Zimbabwean history to show that while political independence was a necessary step it is grossly inadequate. The poet maintains that political independence alone can never be a substitute for freedom. The poet contends that while Nehanda realized the necessity of struggle and told Sororenzou Murenga and Kaguvi to take up arms and fight to regain sovereignty, political independence is meaningless because the situation is largely as bad as it were when Nehanda inspired the revolution. The poet utilizes the history of Shona people by referring to the legendary figures who inspired a struggle for liberation. Mabasa refers to the legendary figures namely Nehanda (legendary figure), Kaguvi (a nationalist leader in pre-colonial Zimbabwe Shona rebellion (1896-1897) and Sororenzou Murenga (legendary Shona ancestor from which the word Chimurenga is derived). He says:

*Dzimwe nguva
Nerimwe zuva
Muchagara pasi
Mumumvuri
Mugodzikisa pfungwa
Mukarangarira
Mbuya Nehanda*

*Avo vakati
Kuvana vevhu
Kuna Sororenzou Murenga
Kuna Kaguvi gamba
Simukai, torai zvombo
Tarirai varungu vatirozva
Honai varungu vatishora!
Ngatirwireri ivhu redu! (p.32)*

(Sometimes
One day
You will sit down
In a shade
And seriously think
And remember
The legendary Nehanda

Who said
To the sons of the soil
To Sorenzou Murenga
To Kaguvi, the hero
Rise and take up arms
Look, the whites have dispossessed us of our heritage
Look, the whites look down upon us!
Let us fight for our land.)

Mabasa is saddened by the idea that while the Zimbabwean liberation struggle was premised on the restoration of humanity, the stasis that grips society is disturbing because very little has changed. The poet challenges people to look back in history and draw the spirit of resistance from the past in order to engage in yet another struggle to bring about total independence. In the above quoted lines, for, Mabasa, like Nyamufukudza in *The Non-Believer's Journey*:

History... is essentially linked to the land, because of both the traditional dependency of the local people on the land and their dispossession by the colonizers. Dandy in Jones and Jones (eds) (2002:95).

Mabasa uses history to expose the extent of decay in the so-called independent nation. In fact “the Garden of Eden is in decay” to use Mazrui’s words. Mabasa utilizes the Sankofan Approach which demands that African writers situate their work in the best of the African past. By referring to the legendary and resistant Nehanda, Mabasa is conscious of the fact that “efforts [towards freedom] come forth from some history, from some guiding story,” Gray (2001: 102). Mabasa depicts post independence Zimbabwe as follows:

*Zvino tarirai nhasi uno
Handiti makore awanda masungunuka
Kana zita raNehanda matokanganwa
Nekuti chimurenga chakapfuura
Kana kuti aive ani, makanganwa
Kana kuti akafira chii, muchaziva?
Nhasi Zimbabwe iya yadhogodha
Nevasvetasimba vadvinyiriri
Zvave zvimwechete zvakafira Nehanda (p.32).*

(Now look at the present situation
It is many years after attaining independence
And you have forgotten about Nehanda
Because the war is over
You have forgotten even her role in the struggle

You have forgotten what Nehanda died for
Now Zimbabwe has rotten
Because of exploiters, the oppressors
It is as exactly the same as what Nehanda died for.)

Mabasa utilizes history to awaken the people and to concretize the necessity of struggle. As indicated earlier on, Mabasa presents a gloomy picture of Zimbabwe which is said to be in decay (*yadhogodha*). Mabasa seems to argue that deterioration can only be met with active struggle for a better human condition. Mabasa says:

Zvichida
Dzimwe nguva
Muchagara pasi
Manzwa rinokanga
Modzikisa gejo repfungwa
Mukarangarira
Mbuya Nehanda! (p.33)

(Probably
Sometimes
You will sit down and think
And seriously think
And remember
Nehanda.)

Mabasa contends that history is reminding the present that the initial goals of the struggle based on the land and ultimately a welfare state have largely not been met. Mabasa immerses the Zimbabwean people in their history so that they extract important lessons from it, lessons that can lead to a liberated identity which is defined by well being of the people, justice and freedom. wa Ngugi (2003: xxi) aptly observes the following on history:

Understanding history, our history and indeed the history of other oppressed peoples is important if we are not to remain stagnant and blind to our strengths and weaknesses... But this history can only become relevant alive and potent, an instrument of change when we throw ourselves in its midst and energy and put it in the service of change.

History therefore, is an instrument of change. It is also crucial to note that Mabasa utilizes the Explicit Locational Indicators Intentionality principle when, for example, he explicitly refers not

only to Harare as the place where Nehanda was hanged but to a known tree where Nehanda was hanged. Mabasa says:

Nehanda
Uyo akasungirirwa nevarungu
Pamuti urimo muHarare nhasi
Ndokufira rusununguko
Akavaudza varungu
'Mapfupa angu achamuka' (p.32).

(Nehanda
Who was hanged on a tree by the whites
A tree that is still there in Harare even today
And died for freedom of the blacks
He told the whites
'My bones shall rise')

All in all, Mabasa puts history to the service of humanity and views struggle as the only option because Zimbabwe is faced with neocolonizers (*vadzvanyiriri*, *vasvetasimba*) just as good as the people were oppressed in the colonial period. Mabasa is longing for genuine change in view of the fact that the reason why people took up arms was to reclaim not only their land but dignity and freedom. By utilizing the Sankofan approach and the Explicit Locational Indicators Intentionality, Mabasa's 'Zvichida' is a truly Afrocentric offering which invites people to extract important lessons from the past. Mabasa seems to echo Mazrui (2002: 4) who says "any society, or any culture, must have a historical background, in the sense of past events which lead to its present dimensions."

The poet seems to be not very clear on the causes of the decay that he refers to. Going by the argument that by *vasvetasimba* or *vadzvanyiriri* (neocolonisers) he is referring to internal oppression alone without reference to external forces that exacerbate decay, Mabasa can be criticized for failing to explain the cult of neocolonialism in its multidimensionality and variousness. Other than the more powerful group in the independent nation there are forces that stem from global politics that are attributable to the decay that he refers to in the poem. To simply attack leadership alone as the new colonizers is grossly inadequate. A far and wide look at the circumstances under which African leadership operates shows that they are tied to the

imperialist economies as appendages to the extent that the effectiveness of their policies is rather threatened by the imperialist powers. Mabasa is wrong to perceive Zimbabwe as rotten. To characterize Zimbabwe as a rotten nation is rather unAfrican for it paints a gloomy picture of that great nation. Instead of viewing Zimbabwe as rotten, the poet is blind to the glaring reality that “it’s the system that is rotten; we have a rotten system. It’s a system of exploitation, a political and economic system of exploitation, of outright humiliation, degradation, discrimination...,” Malcom X (1992: 47). The poet lacks precise engagement with the forces at play. The system that is rotten is a system that African nations find themselves in relation to the West as well as developed other developed parts of the world in that they have been reduced to client states. Nkrumah (1968: 8) observes the following of client states:

A state can be said to be a neo colonialist or client state if it is independent de jure and dependent de facto. It is a state where political power lies in the conservative forces of the former colony and where economic power remains under the control of international finance capital.

Mabasa therefore does not look deeper into the system that is rotten and only works to impoverish the people. The system is rotten because, among many other things, “local agents, selected by the colonial power as ‘worthy representatives’ are ...presented to the people as champions of independence, and are immediately given all the superficial attributes of power: a puppet government has been formed. By the very nature of its essential objective, neocolonialism can only flourish in a client state,” Nkrumah (ibid: 10). A rotten system of domination and exploitation is at work in which former colonies are the victims and to suggest that it is the country (Zimbabwe) that is rotten rather wrong.

Chirikure’s ‘Europe Vakomana!’ exposes the sad reality that Europeans produced distorted, racist and false images of Africa. Chirikure notes that Africans are denied history and in the event that there is some version of African history that the European came up with that so-called history only works to keep the Africans down. The poet notes that the Europeans produced a tradition of African humanity which is defined by chaos as a result of ethnic conflicts. In fact Europeans viewed (and some still do view) Africa as uncivilized and a land of all imaginable bad things. The poet notes that these myths about Africa were a subject of study and in the process the African was taught to despise anything African. The poet exposes the debilitating aesthetics of Eurocentrism. Chirikure seems to argue that the writer has a serious duty to rewrite history

and contribute to the reconstruction and restoration of African humanity. wa Thiongo (1981: 22) observes that African people did not hear of culture from the Europeans but that they had a culture, poetry and dignity even before the coming of the white man. He says:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry, and above all they had dignity.

Chirikure captures the Eurocentric distortion of African humanity which is premised on presenting Africa as a continent of chaos and uncivilized yet the truth is that the Europeans “were the last branch of the human family to emerge into that arena called civilization,” Clarke (1994: xv). The poet is protesting against racial prejudice which paves way to neocolonial domination. Like the poets protesting against racial prejudice discussed in Chapter 2, Chirikure registers discontentment with the white supremacist system as follows:

*Maitidaro neikowo nhai vakomana?
Kutinyorera here ndima parudzi edu!
Hanzi zvakabvira kare zvicharamba zvakadaro
Iri dzinza neroro dzinza kusangana, kutatsurana
Vakomana here! (p121).*

(Why did you do that to us
To write about us
That it started long back and will remain like that
There are ethnic conflicts
It is deplorable!)

Chirikure exposes that Europeans view Africa as a continent where chaos reigns supreme. The Europeans depict “Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril,” Achebe (1988: 12). In view of this distorted version of the African past, Chirikure sees the role of the poet as that of deconstructing the myths while in the process reconstructing and recreating African humanity. He contends that decolonization of the African mind is the imperative. Onyeweunyi in wa Ngugi (2003: 29) observes that “the Africa that is portrayed in books by Western ethnologists and historians is the Africa of the savage Africans who did nothing, developed nothing, or created nothing historical. There are the stereotyped racist conceptions about Africa-the propaganda angle of the Christian missionaries, learned historians, ethnographers, and explorers.” The poet emphasizes the necessity of resisting racial domination and rewriting history as follows;

*Chimbopedzeranai madaka enyu ikoko
Isu kuno tichirondedzera njere nezvinyoreso
Tiwane kusiira vana vedu nhoroondo
Nhorooondo yakarongetedzwa pasina ugube
Ndizvo mangwana vagoziva kupa Nehanda bute (p.121)*

(Settle your conflicts among yourselves
While we write our own history
So that we leave the correct history for our children
History which is free from the racist distortions
In order that they know their traditions.)

The poet and suchlike are engaging in a process of decolonization by way of re-writing history because as Chirikure seems to argue, in order for the Africans to liberate themselves from European domination psychological liberation is a first step. Chirikure is of the view that Africans have to be liberated from the inferiority complex before anything else because “for instance European and American [strategies] tend to confuse African people and paralyze their will to act,” Furusa (2000: 34). Decolonization as the first step to full freedom is also evident in the Black Consciousness Movement whose main aim as articulated by Biko (1978:21) was:

to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity; to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth.

In the same fashion, Chirikure is agitating for psychological liberation of the African so that on the basis of that psychological liberation total political and economic liberation is made possible. The poet views re-writing history as a necessary first step for liberating the African. The poet seems to argue that Africans need to decolonize the mind to unlock African people’s agency, necessary to attain other forms of liberation for example economic and political. Chirikure’s message is very clear that “we must reject denigrating images, reification and self-depreciation,” Birt in Gordon (1997: 211). Chirikure is a voice of “Africa explaining itself, speaking for itself, and interpreting its past. It was an Africa rejecting the image of its past as drawn by the artists of imperialism. wa Thiong’o (1986: 2.) On the whole, Chirikure is agitating for sovereign equality between African nations and Western nations.

Instead of crying foul as a result of white supremacy, Chirikure sees re-writing history as an integral step to achieve liberation. David (2000) cited by Furusa (2000: 34) observes that:

Therefore, we must recapture our heritage and our ideals if we are to liberate ourselves from the bonds of white supremacy. We must launch a cultural revolution to unbrainwash an entire people.

Therefore, 'Europe Vakomana!' is an act of demythologization and deconstruction of myths created on and about Africa and Africans and by so doing reconstruct and recreate African humanity. In fact, decolonization of the African mind is an act of psychological liberation which provides fertile ground for real political and economic independence. Furusa (2000: 34) is more to the point when he observes that "people who strongly believe in their world view and culture and affirm them have enough motivation and inspiration to liberate and develop their societies." Chirikure contends that imperialist cultures, especially Western culture, are aimed at annihilating African people's creativity and liberation.

However, rewriting history is rather a means to an end and not an end in itself. Such writing should be complemented by political will in the African continent to work towards moving Africa from victim of hegemony into a great power. The poet sees writing as part of the struggle for equality, freedom and justice between Africa and other peoples of the world including the dominating powers (USA and its allies). The poet can be credited for restoring African humanity by observing that "Africans are people in the way the Americans, Europeans, Asians, et cetera are people. Africans are not some strange beings with unpronounceable names and impenetrable minds," Achebe (2009:126). However to end at observing this without a more practical approach to how the Africans can grow into a great power is not enough. In order for poetry to be functional it must signpost the direction in which things must go and hence the weakness of Chirikure's poem lies in the fact that he does not transcend mere reflection on distorted African history.

5.5.2 History, Culture and the Quest for Total Liberation: Reflections on *Ngatisimuke*

The poem 'Kuda umambo' by an anonymous poet in *Ngatisimuke* satirises leaders and aspiring leaders who ironically spend all their wealth on consulting traditional healers and spirit mediums while in the process inviting all sorts of problems for their children. The poet satirises leaders for failing to understand African cultural ideals such as 'Umambo vanhu'. The poet observes that democracy which is a measure of freedom is enshrined in African philosophical traditions. The poet is arguing that in order to be purposeful and relevant, leaders and aspiring leaders must

observe such cultural teachings. The poet satirizes leaders for negating the basic cultural principles of good governance which guarantee harmony and complementarity between leaders and people. The poet notes that African existential philosophy has important moral lessons to leaders as enshrined in proverbs. The poets castigate leaders for engaging in different practices such as consulting traditional healers forgetting that leadership is guaranteed by the people. The poet says:

*Umambo vanhu, hunogadzwa navanhu
Ugotonga vanhu vachikukudza (p.9)*

(One is a chief because of his subjects
A chief rules over people who respect him.)

The lines emphasise a moral lesson enshrined in African experiential exigencies that complementarity between the leader and his/her people is a virtue. The poet notes that it is always empowering and liberating to situate all aspects of life (including governance or leadership) in African history and culture. Immersing governance in African historical and cultural knowledge helps to create a just world. Ajaji in Mazrui (1978: 743) is quoted thus on the vision of a new life:

The vision of a new society in Africa will need to be developed in Africa, born out of the African historical experience and the sense of continuity of African history.

The poet places African existential philosophy on leadership at the centre and hence views it as a philosophy which guarantees democracy and freedom. By allowing people to express their will as subjects who respect and not fear their leaders the poet challenges the leaders and people to learn from their past. Nkomo (1998) in Chivaura and Mararike (1998:196) observes the following of 'today's leadership':

The problems that we encounter in establishing authenticity in leadership are enormous. Succession systems nowadays, are unstable. They are subject to political maneuvers and dirty tricks. It is not what the leader can offer the community that matters anymore. It is, instead what the community can benefit the leader into leadership. Democracy in the Western sense has made leadership cheaper. Rather than leadership being a calling requiring [Human factor] HF characteristics such as commitment, skill, capability, ability and accountability, leadership today has been turned into marketable commodity ... while recognizing western democracy, our policy of harmonization seeks to maintain a traditional anchor at the grassroots level.

Nkomo (ibid: 196) emphasizes that it is invaluable to situate, traditional structures of leadership at the centre so that modern democratic structures complement that because “in any case, any development, if it is anything, must begin with the people and with people and with a recognition” of them hence the following proverb in Ndebele:

Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu

Or in Shona

Kunzi mambo ndimambo, vanhu/umambo vanhu

(A chief is one because of his subjects.)

What seems to emerge from the above discussion is that in order for leadership to serve the interests of African people, then lessons from the traditional past are relevant today. African philosophy of life emphasizes shared responsibilities between people in the affairs of the society and Nkomo (ibid: 191) states that “shared responsibility is the driving force that challenges us to do certain things in certain ways, to achieve certain goals and, as leaders, to provide conducive environments within which those we lead should perform to the fullest of their capabilities and aspirations. The success of this anonymous poet lies in the fact that unlike poets such as Chirikure and suchlike who simplistically blame leadership here the poet sees unity of purpose in struggle between the leader and the people as a necessity. Instead of pitting the people against the leader the poet in question sees unity in struggle (between the people and leader) as the way forward. The poet satisfies harmonious as mode in as much as she/he displays necessity of centering African people’s existential philosophy on leadership and contemporary lessons on leadership.

Chiedza Musengezi’s ‘Kuzvirukira’ projects human agency as an integral aspect of African people’s ontological existence. Furthermore, the poet argues that unity of purpose is a necessary factor to the realization of real independence. The researcher maintains that the title, ‘Kuzvirukira’ suggests Africans’ resolve to be makers of history and masters of their own identity. Central to Afrocentricity is the idea that Africans must view themselves as subjects and not objects of history and Musengezi seems to contend that fuller humanity characterized by satisfaction with and enjoyment of life conditions is only a reality to active subjects. The poet

also observes *Njia* as theme as the discussion will reveal. Musengezi reflects on subjecthood in the following way:

Tine chipo
Chokusagara takaunganidza maoko
Ngatitorei miseve neshinda
Tizvirukire upenyu
Hwakanyorovera, huna mavara anoyevedza
Hunotigutsa nyama nomweya. (p.26)

(We are gifted
Gifted in the sense that we are subjects/agents
Lets take our needles and strings
And define our course of life
Comfortable and beautiful
Which is satisfactory to our needs.)

In the poem, Musengezi is emphasizing that African philosophy of life demands that Africans be creators who are able to act with will and intent to improve life conditions. Musengezi deconstructs the notorious, racist and Eurocentric myth that “Europe is the prime and indispensable actor and everyone else is the object that stands deprived of agency,” Gwekwerere (2009: 9). Musengezi emphasizes that Africans must transcend subjugation and objectification which are oppressive tools used by the whites to keep the African in perpetual servitude. In view of the oppressive character of the West it is pertinent and non-negotiable that Africans regain belief in themselves and turn into an indomitable force. This is made possible by utilizing their energy and wisdom to transform society. What is clear in the lines above is that Africans are bestowed with energy and ability (*chipo*) to engage in what Fanon (1968) refers to as a hand to hand struggle to liberate themselves. The poet notes that in their quest for full sovereignty, agency becomes indispensable first step towards that end. The line ‘*tizvirukire upenyu*’ emphasizes active participation to shape humanity. Gordon (1997: 15) observes the following on agency:

The human capacity for self consciousness points to our existence as ego-centred subjects who are capable of experiencing ourselves as finite sites of agency in relation to the surrounding world.

Musengezi emphasizes that unity of purpose in the struggle for fuller humanity is crucial. Using the image of *chirukwa* (knitting) to symbolize life the poet observes that, in order to produce a good product then the needles and the string must correspond. Musengezi is observing that

shared objectives or interests (unity of purpose) among Africans are crucial to achieve sanity and real independence. She emphasizes unity of purpose as follows:

*Asizve chirukwa chakanaka
Hachisi nyore kubudisa
Miseve ikakoresa, shinda ikave nhete
Tinozvirukira upenyu huzere maburi
Shinda nemiseve zvikanderana
Maoko akaramba kuregedza
Tichirwa nokukakata shinda
Tinozvirukira kachipenga koupenyu hunogomera
Tikatadza kusanganisa shinda
Tinozvirukira upenyu huno ruvara runotyisa
Tikamanyira kupedza, tichidohedza masitichi
Hapanazve zvataita
Hupenyu hwacho hunorudunuka (p.26)*

(But then nice knitting
Is not easy to come up with
If needles are too thick and the string is too thin
The resultant human condition is pathetic
If there is conformity between the needle and string
If one continues to pull the string
The result is a life of adversity
If we can not match the strings
We will produce an ugly knit
If we rush
There is nothing we have done

We will produce an ugly knit
If we rush
There is nothing we have done
Life is not guaranteed.)

Musengezi situates her art in African existential philosophy which values unity and complementarity between or among members in society. Individualism and selfishness are regarded as unAfrican and incapacitating. What motivates Musengezi's poem is the longing for a more meaningful life characterized by unity of purpose between men and women of African descent. It is collective struggle premised on trust that guarantees fuller humanity. Musengezi holds *Njia* as theme because her poem carries victorious thought. The following lines attest to this:

*Kukonewa hakufaniri kutiodza mwoyo
Chikuru kuedza*

Totoruma muromo wapasi
Pasinazvo tinozvimba mabvi
Kupanga upenyu hwakatinakira (p.26).

(Failure must not lead us to hopelessness and despair
It is crucial to act
We have to struggle
Failure to do we will suffer
In our quest for a more fulfilling life.)

Victorious thought and struggle are characteristics of African worldview which disregards hopelessness and despair. Musengezi is emphasizing that profound hope is a necessary attribute of any struggle to realize real independence. Musengezi underlines the idea that Africans “will not gain [total] liberation by chance but through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it,” Freire (1996:27). The image of “*kuruma muromo wepasi*” (purposeful agency) underlines resilience and commitment to struggle for good life. Furusa (2000: 31) holds that the problem with African people is that they no longer uphold unity of purpose:

The factors that held us together and gave us a sense of unity and peoplehood were broken and disintegrated. We now accept this social barrenness and sterility with its individualism and conflicts as our philosophy of life. We no longer visualize our condition as a group condition. We view ourselves as separate, individuals and fragmented communities. We forget that African people are pieces of each other...

Musengezi therefore holds unity of purpose and struggle supreme. She contends that, these are unapologetically necessary to the realization of fuller humanity. Musengezi’s success lies in the fact that her art is embedded in profound hope and optimism necessary to any effort towards bringing about change.

Magosvongwe’s ‘Dama Rangu Ndiwe’ revolves around the question of cultural centeredness and self-naming. The poet seems to argue that freedom is attainable on the basis of self-definition and she is concerned with the question of identity where she is noting that, a people who cannot define themselves and situate themselves in their family, clan and nation at large can not be truly liberated. Magosvongwe is emphasizing rootedness in social institutions which she rightfully notes are important for nurturing a liberated personality. The poet implores the people to be ambassadors of their families, clan and nation wherever they are so that they define themselves and defend their institutions and nation. Defending one’s motherland is an important step

towards a liberated identity. In fact patriotism is posited as an important aspect of any people's wish and struggle for freedom. She is protesting against Africa itself-at least against the current generation of Africans who are not patriotic but rather degenerate into sell-outs. Gono (2009) observes that any responsible citizen must always stand by his country whether times are hard or otherwise. He contends that he wants to be counted as one of the:

...patriotic sons of the soil who was there for my country, stood for and by my country and countrymen/women at Zimbabwe's hour of maximum danger, its hour of maximum need and not one who hid behind a finger or heap of lies, or under the desk when the country needed men and women to uphold its laws, preserve and promote peace and stability through whatever modest efforts I am able to make, and contributed to the preservation of the Nation's legacy as defined by our present and departed heroes and heroines of our liberation struggle.

Magosvongwe is writing against succumbing to pressure which moves Africans from their platforms to the periphery and instead of defending national interests Africans become agents of imperialism. She is writing against the current generation of Africans who are puppets of the hegemonic powers in so far as these puppets serve the interests of neocolonisers:

Achazove aniko mumwe
Achamirira mhuri yekwako?
Achazobvepiko mumwe
Achamirira dzinza rekwako?
Achazove aniko iwe
Achamirira rudzi rwekwako
Achazove ani, ndiudze
Angamirira nyika yekwako? (p.11).

(Who will that be
Who will represent your own family
Where will that other person come from
Who will represent your clan
Who will that be
Who will represent his race
Who will that be, tell me
Who will represent his country.)

Magosvongwe seems to observe that African people can only "affirm their humanity in resistance to the forces which demoralize them. Moral, intellectual and physical resistance is absolutely indispensable," Birt in Gordon (1997: 210). The poet challenges African people to learn from the history or tradition of resistance against domination which characterizes Africans

so that they can defend their nation, clan or family against enemies. Central to Magosvongwe's poem is the call to defend the sovereignty and integrity of their individual families, clans and nations. The Zimbabwean people are reminded that they are "the guarantors of Zimbabwe's territorial integrity and sovereignty," Mugabe (ibid: 43). To the poet defending one's integrity is non-negotiable. Magosvongwe holds that any responsible and dedicated citizen must observe that freedom is guaranteed by defending the interests of our nations not to leave that to outsiders. Magosvongwe is conscious that any effort towards genuine freedom requires people who value their national interests and move forward as purposeful citizens. This is where Magosvongwe's success lies because a fragmented society cannot organize any meaningful struggle. The poet is aware that collective resistance and upholding national values and interests is the imperative. Defending national interests and integrity is the way forward. This is an instance of well thought poetry because Africa is plagued by puppet regimes that serve the interests of the imperialists and therefore resistance becomes a necessary step against domination and exploitation.

The section has noted that African history and culture are indispensable to the realization of full freedom. The poets contend that efforts towards genuine liberation characterized by democracy, freedom and justice come to naught if such efforts are not rooted in the history and culture of the people concerned. Furusa (2000: 34) rightly observes that "real independence and development can occur through a systematic reorganization and reinstatement of the cultural life of the people concerned." As the discussion has shown, history and culture signposts the direction to be followed by society because a people's history and culture are the repository of the people's experiences from which vital lessons for the present and future are extracted. The poet holds harmonis as mode as well as Sankofan approach. The section has revealed that the poets whose poetry is analysed in this section are against total disregard of the African past. It must be noted that the poets do not simply engage in idealization of the African past but rather regard it as a repository of wisdom necessary to the present. The poets therefore, observe that Africa has suffered cultural genocide among other types of genocide which include political as well as economic. On the role of the past, Nkrumah in Eze (ibid: 93) observes that:

When socialism is true to its purpose it seeks a connection with the egalitarian and humanist past of the people before their social evolution was ravaged by colonialism, it seeks from the results of colonialism those elements [like new methods of industrial production and economic organization] which can be adapted to serve the interest of the

people, it seeks to contain and prevent the spread of these anomalies and domineering interest created by the capitalist habit of colonialism it reclaims the psychology of the people, erasing the colonial mentality from it and it resolutely defends the independence and security of the people.

Post-independence Shona poets therefore observe that total disregard of African culture and history is self-defeating because it is the solid foundation on which the present and future are constructed. The poets concur that in order to be totally free African people and other oppressed peoples of the world must utilize the best from their past to gain complete freedom. African world view and culture and never European and American culture must inform liberation and development efforts. As Furusa (2000:32-3) observes:

European [including American culture] world-view, knowledge systems and development models cost African people their lives, dignity, freedom and humanity. It made us lose sight of our origins and our purposes awaiting burial. They distorted our world out made it dysfunctional. They placed our own world-view, with its emphasis on balance, harmony, integration, collectivity, participation and involvement in social projects into intensive care. What we lost and bring back is the notion of the world organized and structured on the basis of African world-view and culture. A people who totally disregard their history and culture are doomed.

The major argument pursued in this section is that history and culture are indispensable in the materialization of total freedom. Poets argue that it is only by immersing their efforts towards genuine freedom in the best of African history and culture that equality, freedom and justice are a reality. The section has noted that in order to fulfill the wishes of the people, regain full sovereignty and integrity, then “we must utilize our culture, world-view, historical knowledge and realities to develop plans, strategies and approaches that are appropriate to our needs and interests,” Furusa (2000: 33). The poets contend that history and culture are like glue which binds or unifies the people and unity is crucial to any liberation effort. While Cabral (1973: 43) views revolution “as an act of culture”, the poets discussed in this section submit that the struggle for total liberation is also essentially an act of culture. This implies that a struggle that is not situated in the history and culture of the people is a sure way to defeat. To use wa Ngugi’s words (2001: 24) the poetry discussed in this section contends that “to heal, we need to use history to act on the present in order to change our future. History is at its best when used as a tool for emancipation.”

However, the section has noted that mere reflection on the centrality of history and culture in total liberation without addressing questions of political, economic and military power is inadequate. A serious poet must go beyond simple protest against Africa itself especially against the current generation of Africans to understand the forces that are at play that pit the culture of the poor African people against that of the rich hegemonic nations. wa Ngugi (2003: 24) rightly points out that “we need to be able to learn from history not to hide behind it, forever cleaning our wounds.” These poets need to understand that it is on the basis of purposeful organization among Africans to wield economic, political as well military power that their dominated cultures can be revitalized. A mere attack on the people or mere wish for respect for rootedness is meaningless outside the context of addressing military, political as well as economic domination of the West. The inadequacy of the poetry has been identified as failure to go beyond mere protest against the current generation of Africans. Furthermore, in the majority of cases the conceptualization of culture and history lacks depth. While this section has discussed the centrality of history and culture to complete and authentic liberation, the following section pays particular attention to poetry that deals with the subject of education in the context of total liberation.

5.6 Post-independence Shona Poetry, Education and the Search for Genuine Liberation

Education is a subject in post independence Shona poetry through which the quest for total liberation is expressed. The poetry expresses profound importance of education to the total liberation of people. In actual fact, education is depicted as of grave import in the sense that it “... becomes the ‘practice of freedom,” Habte in Mazrui (2004). The poets whose poetry is presented and discussed in this section hold the view that education is “a ticket to good life-power, money, prestige and influence,” Habte in Mazrui (2004:695). However, the poetry discussed in this section is marked by heavy moralization and largely does not carry the reader beyond the obvious. The section maintains that to simply indicate that education is important as the majority of the poets do is inadequate. Against the background that findings from interviews and questionnaires identify lack of education as a debilitating factor to freedom, this section is a presentation and discussion of poetry that deals with the subject of education in the context of struggle for total liberation. Therefore, the section problematizes the poets’ contention of the subject of education in the context of the search and struggle for freedom.

Mukudu's 'Dzidzai Vanangu' in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* revolves around the idea that education opens floodgates of African creative potentialities and opportunities. Mukudu also views education as a tool for empowerment of the black community. He surmises that education equips the black community with skills, jobs and power to face the white man head-on. Therefore, education is used to decolonize the African mind so that Africans resist and defeat the white man who oppresses and exploits the African. Mukudu holds that education enhances "our ability to create and control political, cultural and economic institutions that serve our needs," Furusa (2000: 30). Mukudu views education as a tool to impart African norms and values. These norms and values help produce a more responsible and productive citizen who can freely act towards betterment of humanity. Mukudu sees education as a means to regain our cultural freedom, challenge and defeat the white supremacist world order. Mukudu says:

Shingai vana vangu
Mugokunda ivo vanonzi varungu
Muchikoro zvese nemumabasa
Ganda jena harishamisiri
Nechikoro tichavakunda chete
Mazwi angu ayo, zuva nezuva(p.125).

(Be strong, my children
And defeat the whites
In education as well as at work
The white skin is not superior
We will defeat them on the basis of education
Those are my words, daily.)

Education is depicted as a necessary tool for the liberation and progress of African people especially in the context of the white supremacist world system. In the poem the poet contends that education leads to a liberated consciousness. On the role of education in social change, Habte in Mazrui (2004: 698) argues that:

As an agent of development and social change the educational systems in Africa are called upon to do more than just pass on values and knowledge to the younger generations. They must transform the thinking and attitudes of both individuals and groups in ways that facilitate the creation of conscious citizens, productive and dynamic workers, and the movement of African societies towards achieving goals of progress, justice and liberty.

The poet is longing for education that is tailor- made to help Africans impart cultural values that help unify them for unity is essential to any struggle for emancipation:

*Tsika nemagariro ndaivaudza
Kukudza vakuru nevabereki ndaikohomedza
Zveumbavha, unzenza nehunhunzvatumzva.
Shanje, kurwa neutsinye, nemi kwete
Ndomatama andaivapakurira, vedu wee. (p.125).*

(I told them about our culture
I emphasized respect for elders
Theft, promiscuity and notoriety,
Jealousy, fighting and cunning are castigated
These are the words I shared with them.)

Furthermore, Mukudu sees the role of education as that of creating a more humane society. It produces a society which is characterized by harmony and unity- a just society. Mukudu notes that life is made more meaningful and enjoyable as a result of education. He notes that when he fell ill the doctor who attended to him indicates that the services were free, on his way to Mutare he is offered a lift by his former student and is taken to Mutare for free, and in Mutare he got into a shop owned by one of his former pupils and is given goods for free. All this is meant to emphasize the idea that education brings fulfilment and pleasure to the people. The poet says:

*Ndakati ndonanga kumhatso kwaMutare
Ndiye n'anya muneimwe hambautare
Imariyi mwanangu kusvika kwaMutare
Ndingori musvuuganda sendere
Isu tudhara kungochemawo zvenhando futi
Ticha mota ino haina fee,
Rifiti iyi iri 'free'
Maindidzidzisa mumazororo enyu 'for free'
Saka kwirai zvenyu 'free' (p.126).*

(On my way to Mutare
I boarded a car
I asked how much is it to Mutare my son?
I am a poor man
We old people always complain for nothing
My teacher, you can board for free
The lift is free
You taught me during the holidays for free
So you can board for free.)

In 'Dzidzai Vana'ngu' the poet moralises to the young children so that they value education because it is a ticket to a more fulfilling and enjoyable life. To abolish oppression especially by whites, Mukudu views education as playing a crucial role of liberating the consciousness of the people. Birt in Gordon (1997: 211) observes the following:

There can be no liberation of consciousness separate from the total struggle for the social liberation just as there can be no radical transformation of identity without an entire struggle to radically transform the social order. And no radical transformation of the social structure is possible [nor would it have a purpose] without the transformation of identity- the self creation of a new kind of human beings. It is this creation and renewal that is the aim of all effort.

The poet's handling of the theme of education lacks depth because the poet simply refers to education without noticing that education can be used as either a means of emancipation or oppression. As observed in the discussion of Chigofito's 'Ndini amai venyu ivhu,' Mukudu is bogged down by heavy moralization. Typical of Zimbabwean poets writing during the colonial period, Mukudu is obsessed with moralizing. There is no innovation as well as a more profound grapple with the politics of education, a feature which was denied colonial writers. The poet is preoccupied with didacticism and lacks depth in his conceptualization of education. The poet avoids more challenging themes in the period informing his art. Instead of simplistically moralizing on education the poet fails to notice that education is only useful if it is designed to serve the interests of the Africans. In other words, to advocate for education without spelling out what kind of education is necessary for liberation is grossly inadequate. Education for the sake of education can not liberate the people and hence Mukudu is still tied to the incapacitating definition of 'good literature' as dictated by the colonialists. Mukudu fails to notice that education is only useful to the African if that education is properly Africanised so that it can lead to the decolonization of the mind (psychological liberation) which can lead to other freedoms. Mukudu seems to be preoccupied with recycling themes that dominated poetry set in the colonial period to the extent that his art is rather simplistic for it lacks depth because he does not go beyond mere parroting. Furthermore, while Mukudu views education as a condition necessary not only for psychological liberation but the whole personality he uses forced rhyme as is evident in the use of 'free' and 'fee' to the extent that the poet is preoccupied with displaying his prowess with handling literary techniques. It seems the poet is more interested in displaying his mastery of literary devices such as final linking than the meaning of the poem. Formalistic

concerns are not useful to the whole process of struggle for change and hence Mukudu is influenced by the colonial tradition of poets who write from a formalistic point of view in which the major concern is the arrangement or structure of the artistic work. Mukudu's art is not only apolitical but marked by heavy moralization.

Chirikure Chikure's 'Watswanya *Development*' in Chamupuri attacks leaders and others who abuse their 'education.' Chirikure notes that instead of utilizing education to improve life conditions there are leaders who instead display what Chinweizu (1987) calls 'mis-education' to the people. Chirikure celebrates leaders who say what is relevant, where it is relevant and when it is relevant. Chirikure seems to observe that education is more meaningful and worthwhile when it is put to the service of humanity. Chirikure is castigating leaders who do not utilize their education to improve the life conditions of their people. What seems to sadden the poet is de-contextualization of education which he views as anti-progress. Chirikure castigates parroting leaders and celebrates leaders who manipulate their education for the betterment of life conditions:

*Kana mukati-kati meurozvi hwako
kungwarira nekushinga uchikuti vigilance
kushanda zvine mukoho uchikuti production
kufambira mberi kwezvinangwa uchikuti progress
kubudirira kweruzhinji rwedu uchikuti development
hapana kuna chimwe chatingashoropodza pauri
inga ndiko saka taitanya tichiti uwane dzidzo. (p.27).*

(If deep down your mind
you refer to wisdom and resilience as vigilance
productive work as production
forward moving with programmes as progress
the progress of people as development
there is nothing we can despise
that is why we sacrificed for your education.)

On the contrary, Chirikure seems to contend that in order for their education to be purposeful and meaningful to humanity leaders and other educated peoples of Africa must employ it where it is relevant. Chirikure views misplaced education as futile and incapacitating. Instead of decontextualising education, Chirikure is longing for a properly contextualized education that can guarantee liberation and progress:

*Kana pakati-kati pebasa rako rawakagoverwa
parufu, uchiti vigilance pamberi pechembere
pagungano uchiti progress pamberi pepovho,
pandari, uchiti development pana nyakubereka.
zviri nane udzokere kuchikoro utswananudzwe-
handiti kutaudzana kunongavapo muchinzwana? (p.27).*

(If in your job
you say vigilance before old people
you say progress before a gathering
you say development at a beer party in the presence of your parents
it is better to go back to school to be reeducated
people only communicate when they understand each other.)

Chirikure observes that such display of ‘mis-education’ or what wa Mutahi in wa Ngugi (2003) calls *edudazement* is anti-freedom in that it is not put to the service of change. wa Mutahi observes that contrary to *edudazement* universal education, is a way of addressing class inequalities in society. He observes the following of *edudazement*:

Edudazement arises when the students so educated are not equipped with knowledge to help them cope with the contradictions that exist in society today, with the resultant effect of the educated turning out to be dazed out and alienated by the same education. It is as a result of such faulty education that a huge proportion of the so-called educated have retained the official settler/colonial mentality whereby they see themselves as masters over their own people. Effective and progressive education inculcates in the mind of everyone the virtues of modesty and inclusion.

Chirikure is writing against education which transforms the leader into master who acts upon the people. To him, this education which pushes people to marginal sites is anti-liberation of the Africans. Chirikure is arguing for education which is fashioned to benefit Africans. Chirikure attacks and advises edudazed leaders to go back to school in order that their minds can be straightened up hence ‘*zviri nani udzokere kuchikoro, uswatananudzwe*’ (p.27). (it is better for you to go back to school). Central to Chirikure’s poem is the quest for relevance of education to the needs and demands of African people. Chirikure reminds such leaders and other mis-educated people that dialogue is only possible when parties involved in the dialogue can understand each other. Chirikure maintains that education which is not properly Africanised is harmful to the liberation of African people because it is self-defeating. Failure to fashion education in such a manner that even the common man and woman can understand relegates the Africans to objects who are acted upon by the neo-colonial masters:

Kusadaro, isu vane nzeve dzekunzwa tinoti:
Wakonewa *vigilance*,
Wabvoronga *production*
Wasvodzesa *progress*
Watswanya *development!*(p.27)

(If you do not do that we reprimand you as follows
You have misunderstood vigilance
You have distorted production
You have derailed progress
You have thwarted development.)

‘Watswanya *Development*’ therefore is protest against leaders and mis-educated Africans who fail to observe relevance of their education and actions to the people. His poem expresses the quest for relevance of our education in order that it is functional to our society as we struggle to create a humane society. Instead of grandstanding or rather parroting leaders must observe that:

The more the people understand, the more watchful they become, and the more they come, to realize that finally everything depends on them and their saliation lies in their won cohesion, in the true, understanding of their interests, and in knowing who their enemies are.

Chirikure views edudazement as an inhibiting factor to the attainment of justice, freedom and equality. Edudazement or mis-education only works to confuse the people and sink them into further disillusionment. The quest for relevant and empowering education as opposed to mis-education is a manifestation of the quest for liberation from an education which confuses and subjugates the majority peoples. Therefore, the poet is agitating for a liberating education which unlocks the people’s creative potential and not an education which is decontextualized to the extent that it confuses the people.

Chirikure is protesting against the current generation of Africans, particularly leadership who whose rhetoric on development does not translate into practice. Instead of leading the people to development the leader actually confuses the very people. The poet castigates the current generation of leaders who can not translate rhetoric into meaningful results. Sen (1999: 3) has this to say on development:

Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as, tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of

public facilities as well as intolerance or over-activity of repressive states. Despite unprecedented increases in overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary freedoms to vast numbers-perhaps even the majority-of people.

Chirikure's success lies in the fact that his is a call to leaders to move away from mere talk to practice because it is practice that can change life conditions for the people.

Mutendereki's 'Mwana wechikoro' is heavy moralization to the young children on the importance of education. The poet emphasizes to the young children that education is of grave import to their lives. The poet views education as some form of inheritance from the parents. The poet warns the children against taking education for granted. She moralizes as follows:

*Shinga mwana wechikoro
Imbofuratira mafaro enyika
Kuitira kuti ramangwana
Ugozofara kwoupenyu. (p.22).*

(Be brave, you school child
Concentrate on your education and desist from being playful
So that in the future
You are eternally happy.)

Mutendereki sees education as a guarantee to a more enjoyable and fulfilling life. To the poet, education is a guarantee to a better life because it prepares the child to the demands of that very society. The poet sees education as a necessary condition for the struggle for a more fulfilling life. As Malcolm X in Eze (1998: 109) observes, a more liberated human condition is made possible because education creates persons:

...who not only know what they want but also what they are supposed to have. And they themselves are creating another generation that is coming up that not only will know what it should have, but also will be ready and willing to do whatever is necessary to see that what they should have materializes immediately.

Mutendereki is of the view that education enlightens people and on the basis of that enlightenment people can be able to discern what is good and best for them. The poet seems to observe that total liberation is only possible on the basis of a strong educational foundation. It is crucial to note that while the poet reflects on education she fails to note that education can be manipulated to entrap or oppress a people as is the case with colonial education. The poet fails to note that in order for education to be meaningful and liberatory it must be fashioned to meet the

agenda of the African people. On the relevance of education to African people, Mazrui (2004: 699) indicates that:

Modern authentic education should be designed and implemented in the context of permanent life-long education, available to all and aimed at developing aptitudes and behaviours which make them active agents of their own futures and contributors to social evolution.

Rather than simplistically referring to the importance of education without emphasis on what type of education, the poet seems to fall in the same trap as Mukudu and Chigofito in as far as their poetry lacks innovation and depth. Mutendereki's poem is characterized by heavy moralization but lack a scientific vision necessary to production of good poetry.

'Dzidzo Inhaka' by anonymous poet is also moralization to people to value education. The poet views education as a ticket to good life. The poet equates reckless drunkenness to invitation of poverty while on the contrary education is a symbol of a more enjoyable and fulfilling life. The poet says:

*Hama yangu endawo kuchikoro
Hauzivi hupenyu hwamangwana
Hauzivi chinounza upfu
Hauzivi chakakodza nguruve
Ukaita ushamwari nedoro wakoka nhamo neurombo
Ushamwari nebhuku wakoka rugare
Dzidzo inhaka (p.64).*

(My friend go to school
You can not predict your future
You do not know what will bring freedom and abundance
You do not know what will sustain you
If you drink beer you are inviting poverty
If you befriend books you invite freedom and peace
Education is heritage.)

The poet is arguing that education has the power to transform society and provide critical consciousness for the nation. In actual fact, no society, has ever meaningfully struggled for freedom on the basis of ignorance. The poet therefore posits that education is a guarantee to the welfare of the people. On education wa Ngugi (2003: x) observes that "education could be used

to raise society to higher modes of living or conversely to drain it of the mental nutrients of a healthy one.” The poet contends that in order to improve life conditions Africans must struggle against poverty and one such instrument of defeating poverty and suffering is education. The poet conceptualizes education in “terms of the type of person it hopes to develop. This new person is deeply rooted in the African environment without being isolated from the wider human cultures and experience conscious of his or her political, civic and family responsibilities in the economic, social and cultural development of Africa,” Mazrui (1978: 697). The underlying quest for total liberation is captured in the following lines which emphasize the importance of struggle to the welfare of the people:

*Kufa kwemurume kubuda ura
Mashura anotanga mberi, zviito mumashure
Ita uchirwa neurombe hamawe-e!
Dzidzo inhaka yako wega (p.64).*

(A person submits to something after a struggle
Bad omen precedes the actual thing
Struggle against poverty
Education is your personal heritage.)

The poet challenges people to intervene practically and put education to the service of humanity in the fight against poverty. Education unlocks the people’s creative potential and empowers the people’s struggle for full freedom defined by abundance of food. The poet contends that the liberation of the whole personality is only possible on the basis of a properly educated mind. As observed in the discussion of other poems on education ‘Dzidzo inhaka’ is characterized by heavy moralization. The poet seems to be bogged down by moralization, a tradition that marks poetry set in the colonial period. The poet simply imitates the Shona poets who write during the colonial and fails to notice that this literature was channeled by the colonial authorities. Instead of addressing more important and challenging themes, the poet in question simply moralises. This is rather art for art’s sake because it falls far short of bringing about fundamental change.

This section has noted that post independence poetry reveals a trajectory of thought which is based on the idea that education is an inevitable and inalienable part of any struggle for total liberation. Education, the poets seem to argue, unlocks the people’s potential necessary to the struggle for total emancipation. The section has argued that the poetry on the importance of

education is marked by heavy moralization to the extent that this poetry lacks well thought grapple with the role of education in liberation. Cognisant of the fact that properly Africanised education is the first step and deep humus upon which emancipation from the harsh conditions posed by the neo-colonial environment this section has reiterated that to end at moralizing on education is grossly inadequate. It is now the poetry of women poets in *Ngatisimuke* and the search and struggle for true liberation of women that now turns.

5.7 Post-independence Women's Poetry, the Quest and Struggle for Women's Genuine Liberation

The section is concerned with the metaphysics of the human condition paying particular attention to women. The section argues that Zimbabwean Women poets fail to realize that poverty and suffering among many other challenges are not only a condition of women but rather a group condition. Instead of viewing African men and women's experiences as a group experience, they view men and women as separate. It must be indicated at the outset that despite attainment of political independence in 1980 post independence poetry especially the *Ngatisimuke* – is an expression of entrapment that defines women's condition. The title, *Ngatisimuke*, suggests a people who have resolved to rise to the occasion and struggle for total liberation from the limiting patriarchal society. In this section, the researcher holds that *Ngatisimuke* is feminist protest literature which expresses a quest for liberation of women. In pursuing the quest and struggle for women's total liberation the section simultaneously discusses the inhibiting factors to the realization of a liberated identity for women. The section is premised on the idea that in Zimbabwe "...colonial rule resulted in a transformation of patriarchal authority. Old measures of control therefore were gradually replaced by new forms of patriarchal control – both African and European – that not only were compatible with, but actually enhanced capitalist economic development," Schimdt (1996: 6). This implies that while traditional African societies were patriarchal colonialism never eradicated the system but changed the forms of control to suit the capitalist economy of the colonial establishment. In fact, "while the forms of patriarchal control were to change under colonial rule, the core of male dominance remained," Schimdt (ibid: 15). Be that as it may, it is crucial to note that before colonialism women were not necessarily relegated to the periphery but had complementary roles to those of men. This complementarity and unity of purpose between men and women ensured that there was no competition between men and women. Auret (1990:98) aptly observes that:

Prior to advent of colonialism there was no role competition between men and women. Each had roles and functions which were complementary to the other...This flexibility and balance was evident in sex roles in all aspects of the society, but particularly in the economic system. As a result, women did not feel subordinate to men, nor did they feel that they occupied positions of lesser importance to society.

In the quotation, Auret is emphasizing that men and women had specific sex roles. Before colonial encounter, African societies are therefore defined by a dual sex system. Kamene Okonjo propounded the dual-sex gender theory in 1976. Musiyiwa in Mguni et al (2006: 153) says:

...dual-sex theory sees Igbo society as based on separate and parallel political roles for men and women accompanied by a gendered system of checks and balances. This system was based on complementarity of the roles of men and women in everyday experience.

The attainment of political independence is thought to bring fundamental changes to whole society including women. On the contrary post independence Shona poetry especially the two anthologies, *Ngatisimuke* and *Inkondlo* present entrapped people (women) who bear the full brunt of patriarchy. It is the contention of this section therefore, that women poets note that the end of colonialism does not usher a new dispensation characterized by freedom equality and justice between sexes. The section maintains that despite protesting against injustices in society the poets do foreground their literature in the history and culture of the Shona society – a society which emphasizes harmonious complementary role playing. The poetry therefore is feminist in ideological orientation. The study argues that while the poets celebrate feminist notions of gender relations, they fail to realize and must be reminded that westernized way of life is not a panacea to problems affecting African women. The researcher argues that it is on the basis of what Mazrui (2004) refers to as cultural reorganization that women's emancipation is made possible. Adopting and utilizing westernized notions of gender and activism stifle efforts towards harmonious existence between men and women of African descent which is an integral part of the struggles of African people for total liberation.

Ngatisimuke was published by Zimbabwe Women Writers (ZWW) which “was formed in 1990, ten years after the attainment of political independence, [and] its aim was to provide a platform for women to express their concerns through the use of literary images,” Kandawasvika – Chivandikwa in Mguni et al (2006:182-183). Kandawasvika-Chivandikwa provides a succinct

background of ZWW and the present researcher does not intend to repeat that here suffice to indicate that “what unites these women despite their ethnic and racial differences is their perception of women as “oppressed” irrespective of race, culture and class,” Kandawasvika in Mguni et al (ibid:183).

Interestingly Matambirofa in Mguni et al (ibid: 88) observes the following with regards to women’s writing in Zimbabwe and elsewhere:

In the context of Zimbabwe and elsewhere we take it for granted that the broad agenda is one that espouses the spirit of women’s solidarity and/or emancipation in furthering locally what ultimately is a feminist global project to create space for women.

This study maintains that *Ngatisimuke* is a feminist project which fails to situate women’s problems, quest and struggle for liberation in the historical and cultural experiences of Zimbabwean and African women in general. The present study contends that Africana womanism is a better approach to both writer and critic because:

To the womanist, therefore the vital unity of people evolving a philosophy of life acceptable to both men and women is a better approach to the woman palava than a debilitating and devastating political struggle for women’s liberation, independence, and equality with men, to prove a feminist point Ogunyemi cited in Nwajiaku in Emenyonu (ed) (2004:55).

The presentation and analysis of findings on women’s liberation in Chapter 4 reveals that the respondents largely reason from a feminist point view and the following are the factors that are identified as militating against women’s liberation; men, marriage, culture, women looking down upon themselves and lack of education. It is now the presentation and discussion of findings pertaining to the complete liberation of women as reflected in *Ngatisimuke* that now follows. In doing so, critical judgements are passed on the poems that deal with women’s liberation in the light of descriptors that constitute and define Africana womanism.

Chimhanda’s ‘Hondo Yamadzimai’ (Women’s Struggle) challenges women to deconstruct the myth that men alone are the ones who can write. The poet views the pen (*pfumo*) and book (*chibhakera* / fist) as crucial instruments to the struggle for women’s self-definition and self-naming. To use Uko’s words in Emenyonu (2006: 92), “contemporary women writers in Africa deconstruct and recreate the hitherto contemptuous stereotype of the voluptuous and sexual African woman, the stereotype that justified her exclusion in serious matters and credible

activities.” Chimhanda challenges women writers to expose cultural practices that are oppressive and criticizes writers who invest their energy in stereotyping women. The poet challenges women to transcend the thinking that writing is a preserve of male writers such as Shona male writer Hamutyinei. Chimhanda notes that writing provides a platform for women to express themselves while in the process challenging women to move away from the spectator role to be active subjects who write about themselves. To the poet self-expression is a measure of freedom of women. The poet seems to argue that as long as African male writers speak on behalf of African women through writing then women’s freedom is moved further afield:

*Nyorai, musatye kana kuneta
Tsoropodzai vanyepi
Vaudzei chokwadi
Musataurirwa semusina miromo
Musati VaHamutyinei ndivo vega
Ini ndati tumbukai
Budai pasi pevhu tikuyevei (p.27).*

(Do not be afraid to write
Criticize all the liars
Tell them the truth
Do not let others speak on your behalf as if you are dumb
Do not think the likes of Hamutyinei are the only poets
I reiterate that you should come out in the open
Rise so that we emulate you.)

The poet challenges women to rise to the occasion and actively participate in writing which she views as of grave import to equality between sexes, justice and freedom. The last two lines quoted above suggest an urge for self-redefinition and self-evaluation which ultimately quickens women’s liberation. To the poet, writing is particularly important in women’s search for a liberated identity. However, Chimhanda’s definition of women’s freedom is rather elitist and as interviewee 2 observes, “to a very large extent...female poets... tend to speak for the educated urban women. If they are dealing with cultural issues they gloss over the real issues affecting their kin in very difficult situations in the rural areas.” Chimhanda seems to be speaking to and on behalf of educated women who can read her poetry to the exclusion of rural and illiterate women who may not have access to the poetry. The struggle that she refers to is a struggle against men who the poet describes as liars (*vanyepi*) and enemy (*muvengi*). Chimhanda views men as the cultural “other”. The poet therefore understands that the biggest impediment to

liberation is patriarchy which pits the ‘oppressor’ (men) against the oppressed (women). Informed by feminist notions of gender relations, the poet views men as an enemy (*muvenzi*) who the woman has to fight in a battle (*hondo*). Chimhanda fails to note that “it is almost impossible for women either in the West or in Africa to claim total liberation from men,” Eboh in Eze (1996:335). Chimhanda’s poem is marked by man-hating. Men are blamed for pushing women to the margins of society hence this invites protest from women:

*Vasikana handei kuhondo
Vamwe vachafa
Uku kusabudirira
Tikanyora eduwo mabhuku tararama
Hondo iyi yakonzwerwa nomuvengi
Musvori muvenzi wedu
Ndiye anoti madzimai havanyori
Zvino musvori tatokunyadzisa (p.27).*

(Ladies, lets go to war
Others will die
If this ignorance remains
If we write our own books we have survived
This war has been caused by our enemy
He is the one who says women can not write
Now we have embarrassed the one who looks down upon us.)

Contrary to African existential philosophy which recognizes harmony and co-existence of men and women (complementarity and unity of purpose), the poet views men as oppressors. In the poet’s view women are under siege and risk extinction as a result of assumed men’s inhumanity. The poet can be regarded as a hater of men who blames women’s condition on men alone. The poet’s understanding of the condition of women is rather simplistic in the sense that she does not go beyond blaming men. Interviewee 10’s response in an interview makes interesting reading here, that, “Zimbabwean female poets are suffering from the dilemma of a neocolonial ghost of failing both to be western or African in cultural terms. As such they are guided by whimsical emotions that result from some crippled type of radical feminism and a jumbled type of feminism.” Instead of simplistically blaming men, a profound understanding of how the history of colonialism as well as neocolonialism has affected gender relations would have helped the poet to explain the condition of women in terms of the impact of history on gender relations. This is to say that foregrounding the condition of women in the harsh realities of the neocolonial

environment becomes the imperative. This would have helped the poet to transcend the simplistic blame game. Auret (1990:101) observes the following on the Victorian society:

The settlers that came to this country, the missionaries, government officials, miners and farmers were for the most part products of a middle class Victorian background, where men dominated both the private and public spheres. Women were regarded as being the centre of the home and were not expected to work outside it.

Colonialists dislodged indigenous men of their power and resultantly pushed women to the margins. Therefore, to conceptualise liberation of women as essentially a struggle against men and not cultural reformation is parochial. Auret (ibid: 101) further notes that “early contact with the black people of this country, was necessarily through the males, who exercised all public authority especially in interactions between the domestic and public spheres.” Chimhanda’s quest and struggle for freedom excludes men who the poet wrongly views as the prime enemy of women. On the contrary, Kolawole (1997:36) observes that African men must not be vilified and excluded because African society is marked by non-excludability and non-rivalry:

The African woman seeks self-fulfillment within this plural cultural context. The average African woman is not a hater of men, nor does she seek to build a wall around her gender across which she throws ideological missiles. She desires self-respect, an active role, dynamic participation in all areas of social development, and dignity alongside men.

Chimhanda blames men for women’s condition. She does not interrogate the socio- historical factors that create an environment which pushes women to subordinate roles. Instead of viewing men as a partner in struggle, the poet adopts an anti-men stance and launches an attack or struggle against them. On the contrary, African world view on gender “calls for dialoguism and seeks interactive perception while repudiating absolutism and dogmatism,” Nwajiaku in Emenyonu (ed) (2004:56). As Furusa in Mguni et al (2004: 3) observes Chimhanda fails to notice that:

Colonialism bracketed the Zimbabwean woman into restricted roles of wife and mother. Her performance space was the home, with her major staging area as the kitchen. She had restricted access to colonial education, and when she was lucky to get an opportunity, she was channeled into academic programmes...

African philosophy of existence demands that any serious writer must explicate the impact of colonialism and its emphasis on economic, political and cultural genocide on gender relations. By blaming men for the condition of women this researcher observes that Chimhanda, and many

other poets in *Ngatisimuke* are “cultural westernized women,” Mazrui (1998: 93). The poet does not see African culture as a lens of perception of the condition of African women. Chimhanda’s weakness is that she is more of a mainstream feminist and she does not only exclude men in struggling for improvement of women’s condition but is against men. The Africana womanist, instead holds that African women must always be in concert with males in struggle. The poet is westernized and as Hudson-Weems (2008:61) observes:

Unlike the mainstream feminist, whose struggle is characteristically independent of and oftentimes adverse to male participation, the Africana womanist invites her male counterpart into her struggle for liberation and parity in society as this struggle has been traditionally the glue that has held them together and enabled them to survive...

Because Chimhanda is writing from a feminist point of view she tends to fight against the wrong enemy because instead of viewing the male counterpart as a partner in struggle she ironically views men as an enemy. In fact, Chimhanda does not know the enemy and fights the wrong enemy. On the whole, to view men as enemy is tantamount to weakening the struggle and putting barricades to the march towards freedom. Furthermore, by viewing men as the “other” the poet simply and squarely blames women’s problems on men. Davidson in Hudson-Weems (2008: 61-62) observes that “the feminist perspective imposes one-dimensional interpretation on all aspects of human life, namely, that evils of the world can all be traced to men oppressing women. It generates female chauvinism and sex-hate mongering.” Chimhanda’s struggle for freedom seems to be limited or fixed to the pages of the anthology. Writing alone without practical action is rather inadequate and the poet also seems to be engaging in an elitist struggle which tends to exclude illiterate women.

Mataranyika’s ‘Ndaizivei’ handles a topical issue- domestic violence and in the poem she depicts the plight of a woman who is a victim of domestic violence. Mataranyika also handles the theme of domestic violence in a poem entitled ‘Matsenganzungu’ in *Tipeiwo Dariro*. The poet notes that despite the deceptive love and care of men at the early stages of courtship the poet is saddened by the chameleon nature of men for they can change at any time. In the poem, the poet blames the husband for disintegration of the family. Mataranyika presents a wife who is innocent and upright while the husband is guilty and wild. The poet also observes that lobola or commercialization of the marriage institution reduces the individual freedom of women. The poet notes that domestic violence is a disease that hits women most. While the poet discusses the

debilitating effects of domestic violence on women she fails to note that this violence is a result of the harsh neocolonial environment which like the colonial environment usurps men of their power. This study argues that domestic violence is a manifestation of frustration with the harsh life conditions posed by the neocolonial environment and for the poet to see men as monsters is to miss the point. Furthermore, the poet does not realize that domestic violence is not uni-dimensional in which men are the perpetrators and women are the victims. Men are also victims of domestic violence to the extent that to blame men alone for domestic violence is parochial. The poet does not attempt an interrogation of how government policies affect gender relations. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of 1991, for example, adversely affected the social fabric to the extent that the harsh conditions motivate frustration and subsequently violence. The poet sees men as perpetrators of violence without noticing that men are also victims of the system that is so corrupt to the social fabric. It is the contention of this study that violence is a manifestation of misdirected anger or frustration. To the poet freedom means running away from the male counterpart or husband and this is rather delusional. However, such a conceptualization of freedom is rather feminist and unAfrican. Mataranyika fails to satisfy the descriptors of Africana womanism, especially the African woman as self-definer and self-namer, family-centredness and in concert with males in struggle. In 'Ndaizivei' the poet is longing for a better life, a life free from men or husband. Mataranyika views marriage as a form of imprisonment in the sense that payment of lobola entraps the woman between her husband and the parents. This is typical of feminist criticism because the poet is female-centred rather than family-centred. Her quest for freedom degenerates into an individual quest to the extent that the struggle that the poet is engaging in is for the liberation of part of a group. Hudson-Weems emphasizes that:

A chief feature of the Africana woman is her family-centrality as she is more concerned with her entire family rather than her self and her sisters...while the concern for the survival of her family, both personal and collective, are of utmost importance to the Africana womanist, the mainstream feminist (of which Mataranyika is one) is self-centred or female-centred, interested in self realization and personal gratification.

The poet presents the experiences of the wife in an abusive marriage as such:

*Paakatanga kundirova nekundishusha
Kundinyadzisa nekundifumura kuvanhu
Vakuru voti, rinonyenga rinohwarara*

Rinosimudza musoro rawana
Ndaizivei kuti ndokuparara kwemba yangu (p.39)

(When he started beating me as well as violating my rights
Embarrassing me before other people
Elders say that which is courting conceals its true qualities
It only reveals itself after marriage
I did not know that this was disintegration of my family.)

While domestic violence is an acknowledged problem in the marriage institution it is rather feminist and inadequate to blame men alone for that. What is indisputable is the fact that African people have mechanisms and strategies to curb family disintegration among other things. In fact, dialogue plays an important role to social progress among Africans. Chivaura (2000: 22) observes that:

In a collective or cultural progress, dialogue between men and women encourages unity of purpose. It looks forward to everyone's participation in social life. The dialogue is based on the individual's capacity to be creative and contributive to the collective good. It operates at all levels and enriches all involved.

'Ndiri Parumananzombe' by anonymous poet also deals with domestic violence which is a menace bedeviling society. The poet reflects on a woman who like in 'Ndaizivei' is victimized by her husband. The poet depicts a wife whose life is characterized by misery as a result of domestic violence. Like Mataranyika, the anonymous poet blames her condition on the cultural practice of lobola which she blames for her entrapment or encasement. In such a society the woman is not a free subject who can meaningfully contribute to progress and liberation. The anonymous poet presents a situation of serious vulnerability and closure which strips the woman of agency and sinks her into a state of helplessness and existential anguish. The poet presents a situation of utter vulnerability as follows:

Pane kwaangabve akasazvambura
Wangove mutambo kurohwa
Matsito chaiwo kusviba
Makwande segarwe muviri wose
Achapera here pandiri mavanga

Ndoudza ani zvose izvi?
Nhunha dzemumoyo mangu dzangova

*Vakainzwa iyi vangu vabereki
Vanoti garako yake pfuma takaitambira
Zvino ndoendepiko ini? (p.40)*

(He beats me up when he comes from wherever
Being beaten is now a game
I am now as dark as charcoal
My skin is now as rough as a crocodile's
Will all the scars finish off

Who must I tell all this
I am worried that
If my parents hear this
They will say stay there because we accepted lobola
Where will I go?)

In the poem suffering is attributed to cultural practices such as payment of lobola. The poet exposes a sense of utter vulnerability which tends to pose a threat to the very fact of survival. The poet presents a situation where African women are in intensive care as a result of the brutality of men. The anonymous poet yearns for liberation from such an oppressive society where lobola functions as a catalyst to the subjugation of women. What the poet is emphasizing is the fact that “woman is fundamentally manacled by the legacy of cultural domination and thralldom. Viewed essentially as a mere object, woman is grossly marginalised by a patriarchal culture which assigns her the “sacred and vital” role of wife and mother in the domestic sphere,” Opara cited by Eboh in Eze (1998:332-333). The poet reflects on the plight of the wife thus:

*Dai waiva nehama vangu vabereki
Ndaiendako zvangu
Ndodya ichiyerera pamatama yangu misodzi (p.40).*

(If my parents had relatives
I would go there
I am in intense suffering.)

The poet depicts a woman who is not an actor but is acted upon by the husband. Mataranyika's 'Ndiri parumananzombe' and anonymous poet's 'Ndaizivei' do not go beyond blaming men for the condition of women. Mataranyika and numerous other women poets who contribute their poetry in *Ngatisimuke* present “women who are voiceless, without agency or freedom,

particularly in patrilineal systems. In these a woman can be passed from the authority of her natal male relatives to ownership by her husband's family without ever acquiring autonomy," Cousins in Emenyonu (2004:104). For example, in 'Ndiri Parumananzombe' and 'Ndaizivei', Mataranyika and one anonymous poet respectively, do not view marriage as an important social institution which is life affirming and necessary for nurturing responsible citizens but rather see it as a symbol of entrapment or a prison which stifles the woman's individual freedom and self-expression. The two poets feed the readership with the plight of women in a patriarchal society which is the hallmark of feminism. It can be argued that perceiving marriage as a prison from which one has to escape is unAfrican. Instead, Schimdt (1996:16) reminds us that:

Of all, relationships that determined women's status, marriage was a social act, the primary purpose of which was to create bonds between kin groups and to produce children for the husband's patrilineage. As such it was not a contract between individuals but between two kin groups.

The poet fails to understand that while domestic violence is a fact of life the "varied problems of African women emanating from within and outside African race have to be solved on a collective basis within African communities," Mguni in Mguni et al (2006: 43) Communalism is very important among the Shona and because their notion of gender is but "accommodating, far embracing and not separatist," Nwajiaku in Emenyonu (2004: 67). Contrary to the two poets conceptualization of the family or marriage as particularly oppressive Sofola cited by Mguni in Mguni et al (2006: 43) notes that:

The world view of the African is rooted in a philosophy of holistic harmony and communalism rather than in the individualistic isolationism characteristic of European thought...If one is cut off from his community, one is considered dead (Ehusani 1991:92). The individual belongs primarily to a context and within it he / she moves and has his or her being.

The anonymous poet is female-centred rather than family-centred. Instead of seeing the family as the hub of relations, to her the family is a symbol of entrapment. Furthermore, the poet fails to notice that any struggle for liberation demands that African men and women move together in harmony as purposeful agents to change their life conditions in which case women are in concert with males in struggle. African women are strong and in this particular poem, the poet displays pessimistic victimhood and inaction which is anti-freedom. It is essential that the poet goes past the stage of helpless victimhood. Contrary to the anonymous poet's depiction of the African

woman Hudson-Weems (2008: 65) notes that “generally speaking, the Africana womanist comes from a long tradition of psychological as well as physical strength. She has persevered centuries of struggling for herself and her family.”

In ‘Ndodzungaira’ Chateuka is protesting against marital rape, social disappointment and an overdrinking husband. The poet attacks the husband who in the poem is essentially a source of disappointment and a violator of basic human rights of the wife. The title of the poem, ‘Ndodzungaira’ suggests existential anguish which to the poet defines African womanhood. Chateuka expresses the quest for liberation from rape, wife-bashing, verbal abuse among other forms of abuse. In fact, the husband is a symbol of all imaginable bad things. All in all, the poet is protesting against domestic violence perpetrated by men which is a cause of misery, agony and angst. The poet maintains that in order to free herself from such violence then a struggle (*hondo*) is inevitable. The line, *Ndozotura femo hondo yacho ndaikunda* (p.48) (I will only rest after winning the battle against men) underlines the quest for freedom of women which to the poet is only a possibility on the basis of the deep humus of struggle. The poet regards men as a source or symbol of misery and trouble and never a lovable partner who makes life complete, meaningful and productive. The poet captures the extent of psychological and physical violence as follows:

Tsamwa ndoridza kashanu kashanu

*Chibharo kwave kudya kwezuva
Wazvindikitwa, mashoko saga nehafu
Rudo rwuya yangova hundi yoga yoga
Museredzero unotouwana chete
Munhukadzi, ndakaparei? (p48).*

(I am bitter

I am raped daily
I am beaten up as well as verbally abused
That love is now meaningless
There is always a crime against women
What sin did I commit)

In the poem, the poet is concerned with awakening women from assumed passiveness so that they regain belief in themselves and struggle for their freedom. The poet laments the sudden

change of events from a loving relationship to violence which is orchestrated by the husband. The poet expresses commitment to face domestic violence head-on. Chateuka also views marriage as oppressive for, at least according to the poet, it is a hive of all forms of abuse-physical, psychological as well as sexual. In fact, Chateuka's 'Ndodzungaira' is "a concomitant negative portrayal of the African male..." Uko in Emenyonu (2006: 86). Chateuka intends to move women from the gutters of society to the centre in order that they freely create as subjects. She emphasizes on women's agency as such:

*Ingozi rudzii isingarapike
Kana riri botso ini ndazvipira kutanda
Ndipei masaga kana mashanu
Ndidzungaire zvangu neZimbabwe
Ndodaidzira, "Rusununguko! Rusununguko
Kumunhukadzi."
Ndaruwana wangu muromo tiba (p.49).*

(What kind of sin this which can not be appeased
If it is curse for beating up a mother I am committed
Give me even five bags
So that I go round Zimbabwe
And I shout, Freedom! Freedom to women
If I get it I close my mouth.)

The poet is an active member in struggling for liberation of oppressed African women. In the quotation above, the poet is underlining the necessity of women's struggle for freedom from the oppressive male dominated society. To use Uko's words in Emenyonu (2006: 86) "this act of writing ...therefore moves African women from the margins to the centre, that is from being and feeling victimized and neglected to actually becoming the prime actors in all spheres of life in the society." The writer[']s vision is to give brains, critical sensibility and voice...to [Zimbabwean and] contemporary African women." Chateuka is protesting against the subjugation of women by men. Hers is contempt of the oppressive patriarchal society. The poet emphasizes complementarity between men and women in the following words:

*Kodzero haina zera kana rudzi
Yako ndakupa, ndipewo yangu
Ini ndicharamba ndichishamatata
"Rusununguko! Rusununguko!
Kumunhukadzi"
Ndaruwana wangu muromo tiba (p.49).*

(People of all ages have their rights
I have given you yours, give me mine
I will continue shouting
“Freedom! Freedom!
To women”
If I get it I close my mouth)

African history and culture teaches us that in patriarchal Shona society women are structurally subordinate to men. The poet seems to contend that the attainment of independence has failed to meaningfully improve women’s life conditions. The poet therefore is protesting against men who are largely the wielders of power and by so doing work towards change the scheme of things. In the words of Schimdt (1996: 20) Chateuka maintains that like in the precolonial period men have power while women have very little (if any) power:

Men have power, the capacity to define and enforce the rules by which society is governed. This power allows them to control the valued resources of society. Male power is institutionalized, embedded in the political, economic, and religious organizations of society. It is thus legitimated as “authority.” Influence, in contrast, is not institutionalized. Rather, it represents the strategies of those without formal power to limit the power of others and the ways in which that power impinges upon their lives.

In ‘Ndodzungaira,’ Chateuka emphasizes the importance of unity of purpose between men and women. She contends that as long as society takes women for granted the struggle for their freedom remains a myth. Chivaura (2000:25) observes the following on unity of purpose and complementarity:

Nothing short of true complementarity and sincere unity of purpose in the relations between men and women of Africa and her diaspora can keep them together and bring harmony between them so that they can work together and achieve human development and social progress for their families and also themselves as individual persons. This is the lesson African culture insists on teaching us through orature.

While Chateuka’s ‘Ndodzungaira’ is an act of protesting against male domination, it can be argued that the poem does not go beyond blaming men or creating the impression that men are bad if not monsters, at least according to the poet. The world is replete with men and women who harmoniously coexist to the extent that this study holds Chateuka’s world of men and women suspect. While it is acknowledged that African societies need not only political and economic reformation but cultural reformation to cater for improvement of life conditions for

women, the poet seemingly perceives reality through the lenses of western notions of gender. The struggle for freedom that Chateuka intends to engage in is not a struggle against a system that has pushed women to gutters of society but men. Chateuka and suchlike simplistically view the condition of women and concludes that men are responsible for the plight of women and this is essentially feminist. Zimbabwean women poets in *Ngatisimuke* can be criticized for separating African women's emancipation and African liberation. Rather than struggle for the whole African race irregardless of gender, the poetry is rather separatist because it seeks to liberate only a part of the African race. It is essential that poets realize that "for the African womanist, the double allegiance to woman's emancipation and African liberation are inseparable," Eboh in Eze (1996: 335). Theirs is contempt of men. The poetry in *Ngatisimuke*, especially on freedom of women therefore can be characterized in Uko's (2006:82) words who says:

These trends involve such features as iconoclasm, the deliberate repudiation of all arch symbols of traditionalism and orthodoxy, as well as women's prescient critique of female subjugation, psychological brutality, individual inferiorisation and exclusion on gender lines. They also entail a vehement challenge to the female obdurate naivety and congenital passiveness that hither has dominated the configuration of African women in literary works.

Rusike's 'Handina Changu' exposes the absurdity of *kugara nhaka* (inheritance) through a wife who despite hardworking is dispossessed of the property she struggled to get together with her late husband. Rusike's poem revolves around exploitative tendencies of relatives of a widow's late husband who victimize the widow. What disappoints the widow is that despite enduring different challenges such as hard labour in the fields, harsh weather conditions as well as taking care of the children in the absence of the husband, the late husband's relatives literary prey on the widow. What attracts the poet's scorn is that inheritance is only aimed at dispossessing the widow of the fruits of her labour. The woman laments:

Handina changu
Handina changu
Ndaita zvese zviru pamusha zvivepo
Mave kuti hapana changu. (p57).

(I do not have anything
I do not have anything
I made it possible that all that is here be here
Now you are saying there is nothing for me)

The poet is emphasizing that a woman is a victim of such cultural practices as inheritance in the sense that despite working for the betterment of her life she is dispossessed of that which is a product of her labour. The poet holds that inheritance reduces women to slaves who work for the master (members of the husband's family). The title of the poem, 'Handina Changu' suggests victimhood and vulnerability of the widow. Rusike depicts inheritance as a practice which impoverishes women. She says:

*Imi veukama, ndimi motora
Mombe, munda nemari
Zvamusina kushanda
Ndave rombe pano
Hapana changu (p.57)*

(It is the relatives who are taking everything
Cattle, land and cash
Which you never worked for
I am pauper here
There is nothing for me.)

The poet contends that dispossession of widows of their belongings reduces women to destitutes. Kandawasvika-Chivandikwa in Mguni et al (2006) observes that stories such as "Please say Yes" in the *English Anthology No.1*, 'Waiti Zvichazodii' and 'Munhu Wenyama' "assume that African culture is oppressive to women." In the same vein women poets in *Ngatisimuke* such as Rusike "depicts Shona culture as condoning the greed of surviving male relatives in the event of a husband's death. The [poem] ignores the fact that Shona society has supportive structures whose major objective is to take care of widows and orphans." (ibid: 191). While the poet rightfully presents greedy as an impediment to women's freedom and autonomy she fails to unravel the forces behind the concept of greed. Rather than simply blame men for vulturous behavior this study maintains that the neocolonial environment is anti-life to the extent that it can not nurture good citizens. Therefore, greed is a manifestation of the harsh economic conditions that characterize post independence Africa. This was expressed by interviewee 10 who indicated that:

The concept of greed is at work. Educated women use the chances they get to speak for women emancipation and general upkeep to enrich themselves. The other thing is women, especially in Zimbabwe have been shoved to the periphery of nation building which centres the struggle for independence. The parroting exercise has roots in some whimsical emotions which lead women to lose the avenue to women's freedom and success.

Nwajiaku in Emenyonu (2004: 58) posits that Akande (1999) in a study on the female and the political sphere in Nigeria declares that Nigerian women as well as “men are suffering from the downward plunge of the economy and disregard for human rights and the rule of law. This has in turn resulted in a climatic worsening of the human condition.” Rusike fails to realize that both men and women are affected by the harsh conditions of the neo-colonial environment in which both sexes are immersed. The poet presents a woman who is weak and vulnerable to men. On the contrary African women are not helpless victims but strong and active subjects who struggle to change and improve life conditions.

Peldah Hove joins the bandwagon of poets who depict cultural practices such as *kugara nhaka* as absurd because she views inheritance as an act of demeaning the woman. To her, the practice is meaningless to her in as far as it works against the autonomy of women. To the widow in the poem, freedom means transcending the assumed barriers brought by inheritance. She castigates inheritance as such:

*Chirikadzi handimbatya inogohwa kana kunongwa
Varunyana, vazukuru bvirai kure.*

.....
*Ko murunyana kana muzukuru aizoita chii pandiri?
Ndakadzamisa pfungwa pavanhu ava
Kuda ini here kana kuti ruchiva?
Ipfuma here inodiwa kana ini pachangu?
Itsika here yakaroverwa pachivanhu?
Kundishora here kuti, handizviraramisi?
‘Musazvinetse, ndichaedza kuzvibatsira’
Zvakavakahadzisa zvakavasvota (p.59).*

(A widow is not a cloth that is given or inherited
You uncle and nephew get away

.....
What would my uncle or nephew do to me
I pondered over these people
Is it genuine love for me or mere envy?
Are they after wealth or myself?
Is it a declared cultural practice?
To look down upon me and think I can not be self dependent
Do not bother me I will help myself
They were surprised and bored)

The poet castigates inheritance and views it as an expression of greed. She is protesting against the obnoxious *kugara nhaka* (wife inheritance) which she sees as only aiding the dispossession of the widow of that which is rightfully hers. The poet reduces inheritance to mere absurdity and protests against viewing the woman as property. The poet seems to go by Ogundipe-Leslie cited by Eboh in Eze (1996:334) who argues that “the woman as daughter or sister has greater status and more rights in her lineage. Married, she becomes a possession, voiceless and rightless in her husband’s family except for what accrues to her through her children.” It can be argued that the poet fails to see that the greed that defines the late husband’s relatives is a manifestation or symbol of greed that characterizes the neocolonial environment. To use Mguni in Mguni et al (2006:55) words Hove and suchlike:

...seem to undermine African institutions without offering viable solutions to the very problems that African women face. What appears to be lacking is a genuine exploration of African cultures. Women oppression and liberation take place in the context of culture, and a genuine examination of the African cultures to determine the specific ways in which they oppress and liberate women can go a long way in positively transforming the lives of women.

The urge for liberation is evident in the sense that the widow is committed to autonomous existence. The poet is saddened by this practice which at least according to the poet, reduces the woman to an object or property which has to be given to someone after the death of the husband. The poet expresses a quest for a more central and meaningful position in life. Uko in Emenyonu (ed) (2006:93) notes the following of contemporary African women:

It is remarkable to note that contemporary African women writers are not only establishing the new woman who is free to love and express love, they also essentially turmount all sexist depictions and capture these in very succinct and picturesque portrayals. They show that though the woman may be said to be situated on the fringes, the borders, the margins, her strength and resilience keep her in control of the centre. Of paramount importance is the process deployed by the marginalized to transcend the peripheral positions and roles and actually occupy the centre to be relevant in the scheme of things and take control of crucial events.

The line ‘*Musazvinetse ndichaedza kuzvibatsira!*’ (Do not trouble yourselves I will take care of myself) emphasizes that the widow in the poem has regained belief in herself and hence can be a master of her own destiny. The poet underlines the fact that women are committed to freedom from the exploitative tendencies of the partriachal society. wa Ngugi (2001: ix) argues that:

Freeing the African woman will not only enable her to participate fully in the struggle itself but will also create an enabling environment for the rearing of children, one that will allow them to realize their full potential in a context that is devoid of the mental vestiges of colonialism and neocolonialism.

As indicated earlier on, Hove, like the other poets blames African culture for the condition of women. She fails to realize the fact that such practices as inheritance played an important role among the Shona. The present researcher submits that in this case the problem is not with the inheritance practice but the time in which it is practised. Furthermore, the poet fails to realize the importance of complementarity and unity of purpose between or among African men and women. Therefore, to simplistically view cultural practices as impediments to freedom of women is grossly inadequate. Chivaura (2000:28) pontificates that “every man and woman has an element of the other in him or her as an essential part of his or her wholeness. Both must recognize, accept and respect the other as inescapable dimensions of their personalities, humanity and identity.” The poet ends at castigating inheritance without exploring the problematics of the practices especially in the context of HIV/AIDS. The poet falls short of understanding that it is not the practice that is bad but the time in which it is practised as well as that such practices are abused because the motivations are largely capitalistic. A more acceptable attack on inheritance is necessary in the context of a world ravaged by HIV/AIDS because such practices seem to have outlived their usefulness or there is need for a paradigm shift in the reasons for upholding such practices. The poet fails to notice that such practices as inheritance had an important function, for instance to provide protection to the families of the deceased. The poet seems to be dewomanised and decultured to the extent that she views all things African as bad. She fails to satisfy the descriptor of Africana womanism, namely that the Africana womanist is whole and authentic. On wholeness and authenticity Hudson-Weems (2008:68) observes that:

The true Africana womanist seeks both wholeness (completeness) and authenticity (cultural connection) in her life...As an authentic being, her standards, her acts, and her ideals directly reflect those dictated by her own culture. Hence, her true essence complements her culture, thereby denying any room for an inauthentic self.

In ‘Havapo’ Musengezi handles the theme of HIV/AIDS. In the poem death is the thesis in the sense that the scourge is claiming many lives. The poet challenges widows to regain strength

after the death of their husbands so that they can take care of the family. The poet posits that in, the face of HIV/AIDS hope and human agency are of grave import:

*Zvino ndochiiko munhu mukuru?
Rega kungoita zvichemera
Chema zvine tariro
Waida kuti zviitike kunaani (p.61-62)*

(Then what is that you adult
Do not cry without redress
Be hopeful in dire times
To who do you want the tragedy to befall.)

The poet is against helpless victimhood which to her is self-defeating. Musengezi presents hope as a necessity in realizing visions of a better future. The poet reminds the widow in the poem that the death of a husband is never the end of the world. In the event of the death of a husband the poet views self-sustenance and self-defence as crucial. The poet brings “hope in the midst of despair” to use Wodajo’s words in a book by the same title. The poet says:

*Pukuta misodzi
Idyai mudzore moyo
Idyai, idyai musimbe
Pasi harina kuguma
Zvichengetedze nokuzvidzivirira*

*Hona mutoro uyo
Chengeto ari kuchikoro
Kubasa ndima yakakumirira
Simuka zvako ushangazhike
Uite chingwarire (p.62).*

(Wipe your tears
Eat food in order to regain your true self
Eat so that you are strong
This is not the end of the world
Take care and protect yourself

There is a burden
Chengeto is sill at school
You have to go to work
Rise and act
And be vigilant)

The poet sees agency and transcendence as integral to the improvement of life conditions of the widow. Like in Chirikure's 'Simuka', the poet views agency and transcendence as inevitable. The poet presents pessimism as debilitating to the improvement of life conditions hence challenges people, especially women to rise (*simuka*) and define their own future. Musengezi challenges African women to define their own future and to react in a positive and involved manner "when confronted with the necessity to struggle for their freedom and self-affirmation," Freire (1996:46). Musengezi holds self-naming, self-definition, strength and flexible role playing of African women as indispensable aspects of their own liberation. Despite ill-definition of African women by other races, Musengezi emphasizes the necessity of self-definition of women. She sees African women as strong in facing challenges and responsibilities head-on. More so, Musengezi depicts women as flexible role players because she notes that women have to assume different role in their lives. Unlike other poets who see women as helpless victims the poet sees women as inevitable actors who are masters of their destiny.

In 'Mbuya Eriza', Musengezi views the act of writing as a way to vent out her concerns and leave a legacy for the readership. She contends that writing is a way to dismantle impediments to the freedom of women, teach important lessons to the people and to allow the woman to do as she likes it:

*Ndotoru penzura yangu nebepa
Ndiputse mapundu
Ndiraye, ndiimbe, ndiseke
Ndizuwe, ndiite madiro.
Kukugadzirira nhaka (p.63)*

(Now I take pen and paper
So that I remove the pimples
So that I teach, sing, laugh,
Dialogue, do as like it
All in the name of heritage.)

The poet seems to be writing for educated women and her struggle against women's liberation seems to be limited or fixed to the act of writing. She seems to see writing as an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

Musengezi's 'Kuzvipembedza' challenges African women to struggle for their self-definition and self-naming. The poet invites women together so that they can form a formidable force in defining their own destiny. The poem posits resistance against violence especially by men as the imperative. The poet emphasizes that it is crucial for women to take pride in themselves and become free subjects who can improve their welfare. She notes that:

*Huyai tizvirove zvipfuva tichiti
 Hatibviri kuchengeta mhuri
 Kushanda, kutambarara tichidya zveziya redu
 Tichizvipfekedzawo, kuramba kufa.*

*Chiregai tichiita hwenhiyo
 Kubongomora, kutsviriridza tichiti
 Hatidi kurangwa nokupiswa muromo sehuku
 Kudzorwa netyava saCharuveki iri mumuforo
 Kupondwa musoro semhungu yapinda mumba kwete (p.68).*

(Let's pride ourselves and say
 We are good at taking care of family
 We work, and enjoy the fruits of our labour
 We buy clothes for ourselves, resisting death

 Let us do like chicks.
 We do not want to be reprimanded by debeaking like chicken
 To be controlled by the whip like an ox (Charuveki) ploughing
 We resist violence against women.)

Musengezi is committed to the redefinition of the woman and restoration of the dignity of the woman. Musengezi presents self-conscious women who can question the state of affairs in society. Self-naming and self-definition, agency and resistance to subjugation, are central in 'Kuzvipembedza'. Musengezi is a self-namer and self-definer and Hudson-Weems (2008:58-59) observes that the Africana womanist in realizing and properly assessing herself and her movement must, then, properly name herself and her movement...From a historical perspective, the Africana womanist always managed to eke out a separate, private reality for herself and family, regardless of the fact that she has been ill-defined by others..." All in all, the poet is against self-depreciation which, she argues is incapacitating. She says:

*Huyai tizvikoshese is pachedu
 Kuti ruzhinji rweZimbabwe rwutipe chiremera
 Kana tagumburwa, toramba kuita hwezongororo*

*Kuzvikunga kuita hata yavanogona kusenga
Kana kuzvidambura gumbo segurwe
Kuti masvosve agotimomotera
Rogo ngatiise mudonje kwete kunwa
Parafini tiise muzvibani tivheneke
Tiwone nzira, kwete kuzvipisa, kuzviita vivi (p.68).*

(Let us respect ourselves
So that all people of Zimbabwe can respect us
When angered must not do like the millipede
Which folds itself like a cushion which they can carry
Or to injure ourselves
So that ants can come after us
Lets us use pesticides such as rogor for spraying cotton not suicide
And use paraffin for lighting
So that we enlighten our way not to burn ourselves)

Musengezi writes against self-depreciation which leads to surrender to the ontology of defeat. Unlike pessimistic writers who present women as helpless victims, Musengezi aims to “rewrite and represent women as individuals with conscience, able to question the system that marginalizes and disempowers women,” Onwueme cited by Uko in Emenyonu (2006:86). Musengezi posits that society can only respect women when women can respect themselves first. Musengezi intends to move “African women from the margins to the centre, that is from being outsiders to becoming insiders, from being and feeling victimized and neglected to actually becoming the prime actors in all spheres of life in the society,” Uko in Emenyonu (2006:86).

While Musengezi can be credited for restoring hope and self-esteem in women in order that they define themselves her art rather posits African gender relations as schismatic rather than synergistic. Instead of uniting African men and women to fight together she draws battle lines between men and women. She falls short of realizing that antagonism debilitates liberation of both African men and women. While women empowerment is a necessity for the progress and liberation of any society exclusion of men is rather unAfrican. The poet fails to satisfy the descriptor of Africana womanism, namely that, Africana women are in concert with men in struggle. Genuine freedom of African women is only attainable when men and women fight together to correct past wrongs especially brought by colonialism as well as neocolonial factors that subjugate women. Mguni in Mguni et al (2006:56) aptly observes that “the coming together

of African men and women to forge a collective struggle for survival and human dignity, using their own tools, is a significant step towards harmony and development.” Complementarity and unity of purpose are integral aspects for the liberation of African men and women. Musengezi falls short of situating her art in the best of African history and culture which dictates that there is no competition between men and women but that men and women have roles that are complementary and never competing.

Virginia Phiri’s ‘Madzimai’ revolves around centrality and importance of women in life processes. The poet is against pushing women to the periphery. Contrary to the stereotypical depiction of women Phiri deconstructs such stereotypes and instead depicts women in a positive manner. The poet challenges the myth that women are inferior, useless or rather domestic objects. The poet is writing against the inferiorization of women who the poet depicts as an integral part of the family and society at large. Women are portrayed in a positive way as the poet indicated that women have important roles to play in society some of which are:

Vadzidzisi vekutanga vemwana pahucheche
Vavaki vemisha yenguva yemudyandigere neyokupotera
Vatungamiri vemhuri dzinobudirira pazviito
Vachengetedzi vehutano pamusha nemunharaunda
Vachengetedzi vemitemo nguva yemakakatanwa

Pasi rino haringararami pasina madzimai, ngirozi dza Nyadenga (p.23).

(We are the first teachers of children at infancy
 Builders of homes during both peace and dire times
 Leaders of successful families
 Guardians of health at home as well as community
 Guardians of laws during conflict

 The world can not exist without women, God’s angels)

In view of the various roles of women cited above the poet is contributing to the reinvigoration of the pride and esteem as well as restoration of the dignity of African women. In actual fact, the poet is committed to the “...transformation of hitherto negative stereotypes and stigmas into positive modes of female conception and perception,” Uko in Emenyonu (2006: 93). The poet notes that society cannot function without women. The poet must be applauded for repositioning African women into their central place and role in society. Be that as it may, it must be noted that life is not complete if either men or women exist alone. It is only harmonious coexistence and

unity of purpose that guarantees the freedom of both men and women of African descent. Auret reminds us that;

Women are not merely an aspect of society; they are its very core. They have been the most affected by the society's transition from small scale to large scale society. From a society characterized by intense personal relations to one based on impersonal relations, from a society where the desire for harmonious relations maintained the balance between the formal traditional authority of the male and informal power and influence of women to a society where relations were formalized and codified, and were therefore no longer flexible.

Phiri produces mature art in so far as she realizes that women have to be recognized and respected and also that women are flexible role players. True to the spirit of African womanism Phiri presents a woman who "demands respect for and recognition of herself in order to acquire true self-esteem and worth, which in turn enables her, among other things, to have complete and positive relationships with all people," Hudson-Weems (2008:67).

'Musha Mukadzi' also reconstructs African women's place and role in society. The poet indicates that while the woman is committed to performing her chores the husband is an irresponsible drunkard. The title, 'Musha Mukadzi' suggests that the woman is the centre of the household without which things fall apart. The woman is the hub that holds all things together in the family. The poet indicates that while women are occupants of the margins of society ironically she is the centre of the family. The poet notes that society must accord the necessary dignity and respect to women. The poet seeks to demythologize stereotypical definitions of women which limit them to the domestic sphere. In view of roles such as taking care of children, agricultural productivity and many other household duties what the poet is concerned with is freedom from the stereotypical perception of women to a more respectable and dignified identity which turns them into inevitable subjects who can meaningfully contribute to their own welfare. The poet is therefore "... re-positioning the African women from the fringes of the societal schema," Uko in Emenyonu (2006: 86). Stereotypical perception of women and stigma emanating from the patriarchal society are blamed for the subjugation of women. True to the general spirit of poetry in *Ngatisimuke* Dzuna creates an image of a woman who is very responsible while the husband is a mere drunkard and very irresponsible. The poet seems to be female-centred rather than family-centred because she is largely concerned with herself in the family rather than the entire family. She writes as follows:

Chokwadi Nyadenga matitsvinyira
Kubva kumunda uku
Inga huni hapana veduwee
Ko kutsime kwaendwa here?
Ndiro asuka ndiani hake?
Zvose zvamirira iwe

Muriwo wandakasiya ndasima zvawaoma
Ndima pandakasiyira ndipo pairi nhasi
Baba vanongomukira kundari
'Hamenovachauya vozvionera' (p.24)

(My dear God you have cursed us
 Coming from the fields
 Now there is no firewood
 Has anyone gone to fetch water?
 No one has made an effort to wash the dishes
 All is waiting for your attention

 Now vegetable seedlings I planted have dried out
 No one has bothered to attend to the work I have been doing
 The husband is always in beer parties
 "He will take care of himself when he comes back)

Guided by feminism in her understanding of gender relations, the poet seems to be concerned with herself not the survival of the whole family. She leaves the man to look after himself, hence female-centred. Dzuna's understanding of gender relations is rather tends to divide because she is only concerned with only a part of the family-herself and possibly other female members of the family. Dzuna falls short of realizing that "the African woman has never been restricted to the home and household chores, and her male counterpart has more often than not shared the role of homemaker," Hudson-Weems (2009:63). Dzuna seems to push the male counterpart out of the whole process of homemaking.

Mutemeri's 'Svinura Mwanasikana' is invitation of women to be vigilant and transcend helpless victimhood. The title of the poem suggests that women must regain their collective consciousness which enables them to define their own destiny. Mutemeri emphasizes that unity of purpose among women is an integral part of their struggle for freedom, equality and justice.

The poet is writing against self-depreciation or inferiorization of women which she views as an impediment to the self-definition and dignity of women:

*Huyai timire pamwe
Titi twii takasimudza misoro
Kwete kutsikitsira tichisvimha misodzi
Kutsika tsika setashapira mupeta
Kudii ikoko
Ngatisimuke madzisahwira
Titi twii takabatana pamwe chete. (p.29)*

(Come let us stand together
So we stand tall raising our heads
Not to bow down in mourning
To be unsure of what we are doing like drunkards
What is that?
Let us stand tall in unison.)

Mutemeri's 'Svinura Mwanasikana' is probably where the title of the poetry anthology, *Ngatisimuke* is derived. At the centre of the poem is the woman as self-definer and self-namer. The poet is challenging women to rise to the occasion to become self-definers and self-namers. The poet is committed to injecting optimism into the minds of the subjugated women. Mutemeri holds *Njia* as theme in the sense that she transcends victimhood and replaces it with victorious thought. Furthermore, she recognizes the way of Heru in the sense that she is aimed at restoring confidence and is not doubtful that victory can be had. Mutemeri's 'Svinura Mwanasikana' denotes an awakening among women who fully know that they are masters of their own liberation from subjugation. She posits education as a source of enlightenment. She reminds women that education is not a preserve of men but is indeed important to both men and women. What Mutemeri is aimed at is "...exposing the sexist tragedy of women's history; protesting against the ongoing degradation of women, celebrating their physical and intellectual capabilities and above all, unfolding revolutionary vision of their role," Aidoo cited by Eboh in Eze (1996:336). The poem is an invitation of women to freedom. She says:

*Ngatirovei zvipfuwa takamisa matundundu
Kuti mhuri tinogona kuchengeta
Kana tazvigona kutokwidza mureza
Tipembedzane tibatsirane pamwechete
Kwete kuita hwaZindoga
Uchigaroyeredza misodzi pamatama*

*Muka, svinura, uti kwaku, pfungwa dzipepuke
Uchagara murima kusvika rini nhai mwanasikana?
Endawo kuchikoro uwane zivo nyika isvinure
Kwete kuti varume ndivo vawane zivo chete
Nokuti vachawe madzibaba emhuri misoro yemba
Iwe wakati kwati kwati nemadziro sedzinyu. (p.29).*

(Let us pride ourselves
That we can take care of the family
If possible raise a flag
So we praise and help each other
Not to behave like the loner
Perpetually wiping your tears
Wake up, rise and open your mind
How long will you stay in darkness?
Go to school so that you enlighten the nation
No that men alone must access education
Because they will be the heads of the family
When you remain at the periphery)

Mutemeri is aimed at elevating women to a more fulfilling position in society. While Mutemeri may be applauded for reinvigorating and restoring African women's agency and confidence she does not situate African women in the larger framework of society. By struggling for women's empowerment through education, Mutemeri is committed to struggle for women's freedom.

In view of this, the present researcher argues that while female poets who contribute their poetry in *Ngatisimuke* raise pertinent issues about women's condition in their poetry, their poetry reveals that their grapple with these important issues makes their poetry degenerate into mere activism. Because the majority of them see men as the prime threat or enemy and not the neocolonial system that is largely defined by greedy in which women are some of the most affected it can be argued that their understanding of the condition of women is not gender sensitive but rather feministic in ideological orientation. For example, Mutemeri sees women as a group that should unite among themselves so as to transcend self-depreciation. However, female voices writing from a radical feminist point of view are louder in *Ngatisimuke*. In this poem Chateuka displays maturity and sobriety in handling gender relations. She fails to realize that women's struggle for freedom minus men comes to nought. In an effort to fight for freedom of women, she actually domesticates women in the sense that her measure of women's success does not go beyond the domestic sphere. She says:

*Ngatirovei zvipfuva takamisa matundundu
Kuti mhuri tinogona kuchengeta
Kana tazvigona kutokwidza mireza.(p.29).*

(Let us boast
That we can take care of the family
If possible raise flags)

While Mutemeri is writing against women who think occupying marginal sites in society is normal her conceptualisation of success does not situate African women in the larger framework of African society. In fact she domesticates women because her conceptualization of women's success revolves around the domestic sphere. She fails to understand that women have important roles to play outside the domestic sphere. To her, education is a guarantee to the improvement of life conditions for women especially in the domestic sphere. Her poetry entraps women into the home. Her art is not rooted in African existential philosophy on gender relations:

*Dzidza upenyu mangwana uchave mai vanoyemurika
.....
Wakazvarirwa kubereka bedzi uchitadza kudzidza. (p.30).*

(Be educated so that you are a dignified mother
.....
Are you born to bear children without being educated.)

The poet fails to notice that on the basis of education women can penetrate other more challenging spheres of life namely politics, business and engineering to name just a few. The poem is a signature of resistance against subjugation and inferiorisation of women but her understanding of women's liberation is within the realm of the domestic environment. Instead of creating new avenues for women in society the poet entrenches the domestication of women. Svinura Mwanasikana is an awakening that challenges women to unlock their potential to improve life conditions. The poet tends to entrap peripheries the very women she is aiming at liberating. The poet needs to understand that African women are flexible role-players who are not fixed to the home as the poet would want to suggest. Instead of viewing men as a partner in struggle the poet seems to be fighting for "...separate space for nourishing her individual needs and goals..." Hudson-Weems (2008). The true African womanist holds that women are adaptable.

From the discussion above, it is discernible that Zimbabwean women poets are committed to the struggle for equality between men and women of African descent. Zimbabwean women poets maintain that men are the greatest threat to total freedom. Theirs degenerates into anti-sexist sexism. They contend that it is on the basis of equality between men and women of African descent that true liberation of African women is a reality. Boutros-Ghali (2003:17) observes the following on the equality of sexes:

Equality of the sexes constitutes, in this respect, one of the challenges that no democracy has yet succeeded in meeting comprehensively. And yet that equality is a vital precondition without which democracy cannot be properly achieved. It is also a priority as regards development, given the major role played by women at every stage of the process of democratic development.

The section has revealed that Zimbabwean women poets explain the condition of women in terms of the brutality of men who are blamed for subjugating women. Poets in *Ngatisimuke* also blame cultural practices such as payment of lobola for the deplorable condition of women. They view lobola as an instrument for taming and entrapping women. Furthermore, post-independence women poets also view domestic violence as a debilitating factor to the free participation of women.

This section has been concerned with women poets' expression of the quest and struggle for total liberation of women. The section has argued that Zimbabwean women poets largely write from a feminist point of view to the extent that their understanding of inter-gender polemics is not situated in the best of African history and culture. Because they are writing from a feminist point of view, Zimbabwe women poets largely blame men for their condition. They fail to realize that colonialism and neo-colonialism have played and continue to play a role in marginalizing women. The section has noted that instead of simplistically blaming men for their condition African women must produce art which interrogates the extent to which the history of colonialism and its sequel, neocolonialism shape current gender relations. For example, Gaidzanwa in Meena (1992:119) notes that:

The gender legislation that was passed premised on women's supposedly natural roles as mothers and their resultant dependence on men as breadwinners and is modeled on that existing in the bourgeois democratic countries such as Great Britain.

To use Uko's words in Emenyonu (2006:85) the section has noted that "the inter-gender polemics of women as outsiders in Africa involves such issues as marginality, subjugation and relegation of women. They are marginalized within the praxes of professional, socio-political and economic self-acclaim, they are also subjected to subservient roles and relegated to the performance of their biological roles and a life of domesticity." These constitute the major motivating factors for women writing in Africa." The poetry reveals that the inhibiting factors to genuine liberation of African women include culture, women's self-depreciation, marriage institution as well as male chauvinism. Cultural practices such as inheritance (*kugara nhaka*) are viewed as anti-women's liberty and equality. Marriage is depicted as a symbol of entrapment of women as they are to conform to the dictates of the husband. Payment of lobola is viewed as concretizing entrapment of women in marriage while self-depreciation is a disease which the poet views as effecting women's freedom in the sense that they seem to believe that the domestic sphere is their only domain and men are actors and women are the acted upon. Male dominance is depicted as a threat to women realization of equality, justice and freedom. There seems to be no paradigm shift from the factors impeding women's freedom as is the case in the short story for example in *Masimba* and *English Anthology 1* both published by Zimbabwe Women Writers. The major contention of the section has been that post independence Zimbabwean women poets are largely informed by feminist notions of gender and their poetry is an expression of their hate for men. Be that as it may, the section has noted that the poets fail to penetrate the stifling realities of the neocolonial environment which are antithetical to more harmony between sexes. Because the poets perceive reality through the lenses of feminism, they fail to see that the neocolonial environment is an environment which is characterized by greedy in which the woman is the greatest victim. To use Opara's words cited in Eboh (1996:335) Zimbabwe women poets in *Ngatisimuke* fall short of realising that:

although the African woman is repressed by the normative patterns of her male-dominated culture, she is well-informed of other social and political forces in the society which may take precedence over sexual politics. She would rather identify more with the African man in the struggle for social and political freedom than with the middle class white feminist who ignores the fact that racism and capitalism are concomitants of sexism. Given a society where sexual prejudice consists in the circumvention of female potentials, it is only logical that the African woman should rely on male support in her war against sexism, capitalism and neo-colonialism. She is alive to the fact that her individual freedom is, to an extent, interlocked with the freedom of her continent which is under Western hegemony.

The poetry therefore is simplistic and parochial for it does not understand the condition of women within the larger framework of African reality. The poets who contribute their poetry in *Ngatisimuke* are preoccupied with misguided activism to the extent that their poetry is reduced to protest against the male counterpart instead of the capitalist, neocolonialist system. There is a surface feminist understanding of African gender relations to the extent that they fail to view the condition of African women in relation to their history and culture. The section has noted that instead of utilizing feminism as a theory African womanism is a better approach in so far as the writer “is her own person, operating according to the forces in her life, and thus, her name must reflect the authenticity of her activity, not that of another culture.” Hudson-Weems (2008:57). In order for the poetry to be functional a more focused grapple with not only sexism but capitalism, neo-colonialism and racism is the imperative failure which reduces Zimbabwean women poetry in *Ngatisimuke* to anti-sexist-sexism.

5.8 Conclusion

The upshot of the discussion in this chapter has been that post-independence Shona poets whose poetry has been discussed in this chapter express a quest for total liberation. The chapter has maintained that poets are part and parcel of the struggle for complete and authentic liberation. The study proceeded from the premise that pursuing the quest for freedom provides a platform for understanding Africa’s problems. It has also been observed that the poets are committed to the struggle for social justice, equality and freedom. The researcher first identified thematic frames namely, African leadership, the African condition and the quest for total liberation, transcending racism as an indispensable condition for genuine freedom, post independence poetry, the land question and the quest for freedom, writing against alterity: history and culture and the urge for freedom, post independence Shona poetry, education and the search for freedom and women’s voices and the quest and struggle for freedom.

In the first section the study maintained that post independence Shona poets posit that the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership is an inhibiting factor to the realization of freedom, equality and justice. The study maintains that there is common thread discernible in the primary texts, that, “the present morally and politically bankrupt leadership in Africa, which seems to have temporarily succeeded in highjacking independence, is aware of this potential force, and is causing them many a sleepless night” Babu (1981:2). The section has noted that post

independence poets are preoccupied with “fighting internal oppression” to use Babu’s words to the extent that their understanding of Africa’s problems is limited to internal problems both at national and continental level. The study notes that failure to explain Africa’s problems in the context of world politics is grossly inadequate because Africa is under the threat of Western hegemony. The chapter has maintained that poets must not end at blaming leadership without understanding the construct of hegemony. Western imperialism plays a big role in derailing total freedom of African peoples across the continent. The leadership that poets blame is also a victim of hegemony and hence freedom is only attainable on the basis of complementarity or unity of purpose between the leader and the people. Overall, it has been argued that poets must not only know the true enemy to their liberation but all the enemies. Blaming leadership must not be an end in itself but a means to an end.

Chirikure, Mwanaka, Shoko, Mhondera among other poets contend that selfishness defines African leadership and this is an inhibiting factor to the realization of a truly independent state nation. As the findings from interviews and questionnaires reveal, the serious and deleterious leadership in Africa is also dominant factor in the primary texts selected in this study. The chapter has noted that African leadership can be blamed for the African condition which is characterized by intense suffering. African leadership is blamed for the condition of African multitudes who bear the brunt of the lack of astute leadership. Post-independence poets also contend that self-depreciation is a factor that stifles the potential of African multitudes to change. Self-depreciation or what Freire (1993) refers to as sadism which is a process whereby leaders look down upon the people is viewed as a cancer that grips society and stifle their potential to act as purposeful agents. Self-depreciation coupled with nihilism which is a life condition that is engulfed by hopelessness and despair are viewed as incapacitating. Dependency on foreign superior imperialist powers is another force that militates against the genuine and complete improvement of life conditions. Post-independence poets view dependency as a major impediment to true liberation because it is a recipe for disaster for it is tantamount to opening floodgates of poverty among the Africans. Corruption is also viewed as a malaise that asphyxiates efforts towards progressive change. The poets contend that corruption “has become a cancer that threatens the gains of the liberation struggle...” Moyo (2011). A section has also been devoted to poets who are committed to writing against alterity.

Alterity is another problem that is viewed by the poets as anti-freedom by the poets whose poetry has been discussed under the section on history and culture. A reading of post-independence Shona poetry reveals that to a very large extent African people have been moved from their platforms because they do not situate their historical experiences as well as culture at the centre. These poets contend that heterogeneity is empowering and liberating while on the contrary homogeneity of cultures is viewed as incapacitating and enslaving. It is discernible from the poetry selected for discussion in this thesis that rootedness in African existential philosophy as enshrined in history and culture is of grave import in that it signposts the direction for the present as well as the future. Through art, post-independence Shona poets are agitating for Africans' immersion in their true roots in order to restore their freedom and dignity. The poets contend that aping other cultures, especially Western culture weakens the creative potential of African people and reduce them to mere slaves of other cultures. The argument pursued in this section is that to simply report or indicate that history and culture are important without pointing at practical ways to provide an enabling environment for revitalization of history and culture is not enough. Protesting against Africa itself without a proper grapple with the impact of imperialism on culture does not change the situation. Cultural imperialism is an acknowledged problem in the world to the extent that poets fail to notice that Africa needs political, economic as well as military power to sustain African cultures. Serious poetry, therefore must not blame the people for abandoning their cultures but that an attack on hegemony is necessary. To counter cultural imperialism, Africa needs military, political as well as economic power, a fact that the poets fail to notice.

It has also been discussed in the chapter that racism is an impediment to the complete as well as authentic liberation of the black community. It has been argued that transcending racism is the imperative if liberty is to materialize. Racism is regarded as a tool that is used by imperialist powers to thwart the creative potential as well as the autonomous existence of the Black community. What invites the poets' scorn is that how can a world which preaches the gospel of human rights treat another race as second class. The poets resist second class treatment of blacks. To the poets, transcending racism is a necessary condition for the attainment of freedom because by resisting and overcoming racism Africans "become bolder and more aggressive and [begin] to press for their rights with relentless vigour," Puckrein (1993:3). However, to emphasise on transcending racism without addressing questions of economic, political as well as military

power as the poets do can not help the dominated people because racial superiority is sustained by economic, political and military power. It is essential that poets go beyond parroting and be pathfinders in a world where the power of arms determines the human condition.

It has also been argued that one discernible thematic frame is the place and role of education in truly liberating African people. The chapter has maintained that properly Africanised education is empowering and liberating because it unlocks the Africans' energy and intellect necessary to change life conditions for the better. On the contrary, education which does not situate African sensibilities and interests is anti-freedom. Post-independence Shona poets largely view education as a prerequisite to the struggle for freedom and dignity. The major problem with poets who write on education is that they do not go beyond mere reporting on the importance of education. This chapter has argued that in order to be purposeful and functional, education must be rooted in the historical and cultural experiences of the people. Furthermore, in order to guard against the obnoxious effects of what Chinweizu (1987) refers to as miseducation, proper education must be tailor-made to suit the demands and interests of African people. As good as miseducation affected the colonized peoples of Africa, the same is true of education that is not tailor-made to suit the agenda of Africans in their respective countries after the attainment of political independence. Referring to the impact of colonial education on Africans, Chinweizu (1987: xii) says:

It was a mis-education which under the mystique of 'modernizing' me into some 'civilized' condition, had worked to infect me with an intellectual meningitis that would twist my cultural spine and revet my admiring gaze upon Europe and the West. It was a miseducation which sought to withhold from the memory of our true African past and to substitute instead an ignorant shame of whatever travesties Europe chose to present as the African past.

Factors that affect the freedom of women have also been interrogated. The chapter has noted that Zimbabwe women poets who contribute their poetry in *Ngatisimuke* seem to approach African gender relations from a feminist point of view. They therefore contend that men are greatest threat to their freedom. Violence against women by the male counterpart is also singled out as a major factor leading to the entrapment of women. Self-depreciation is also viewed as a factor that sinks women into perpetual servitude. A lucid look at the work of Zimbabwe women poets' writing reveals that greed is one of the major obstacles to women's dignity and freedom. Furthermore, cultural practices such as inheritance (*kugara nhaka*) are blamed for sinking

women into objecthood and dependency. The chapter has argued that Zimbabwe women poets must explain gender relations in terms of the historical as well as cultural environment that produce their literature. In actual fact, a proper understanding of the impact of colonialism as well as neo-colonialism on gender relations would help produce better art. Greed is an inalienable part of both colonialism and neocolonialism to the extent that a committed and responsible writer must come to grips with its impact on the politically independent African men and women. That is the imperative. This chapter has noted that in pursuing the quest for total liberation post independence Shona poetry is largely an act of protest against Africa itself at least against the current generation of Africans. However, the study has noted that to end at protesting against Africa itself without looking outside Africa and see how Africa is burdened under the yoke of Western imperialism is a disservice to the readership. The following chapter is the conclusion which is a succinct summary of the major findings of the study. In the light of the findings from interviews and questionnaires presented and analysed in chapter 4 as well as the findings of the study in this chapter, Chapter 6 draws summative conclusions based on these findings.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study has been an Afrocentric exegesis of the quest for freedom, equality and justice as it finds expression in post-independence Shona poetry paying particular attention to selected anthologies namely *Chamupupuri* (1994), *Hakurarwi* (1998), *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* (2004) and *Ngatisimuke* (2004). Because it has been oriented and guided by Afrocentricity, the study has largely been a critique on hegemony for, as Asante (2009) observes, all Afrocentric analysis is a critique on domination. This chapter therefore provides summative conclusions on the major findings of the thesis as reflected in Chapters 4 and 5.

Based on the findings from questionnaires and interviews as well as the primary texts selected for this study, the upshot of the study is that a trajectory of thought is discernible in post-independence Shona poetry in which the struggle for total liberation is a topical issue. The study has maintained that the quest for total liberation finds its fountainhead in the incapacitating neocolonial environment. The most commonly identified politico-economic and socio-cultural factors that obstruct the march towards total liberation from interviews, questionnaires and the selected primary texts for the study are the leadership factor, land politics, education as particularly important to the struggles for freedom, greed, failure to situate history and culture at the centre of all contemporary experiences and resisting as well as failure to defeat racism. Be that as it may, the research findings reveal that fear and intimidation, cultural imperialism and dependency on foreign powers are also factors that are identified as impediments to complete and authentic freedom. This also finds resonance in some poems as Chapter 5 has revealed. In the light of the major factors identified by the respondents as well as the major preoccupations of the poems selected through non-probability random sampling, the researcher categorized and interrogated post independence Shona poetry in the context of the quest and struggle for total liberation. A lucid look at the results obtained through interviews and questionnaires reveals that both respondents and poets whose poetry is analysed largely protest against Africa itself. The study observes that poets seem to explain Africa's problems in terms of Africa's internal problems. It is the contention of this study that both poets and other respondents tend to hold a

domesticated vision to the extent that they do not internationalise their struggle for freedom. To a very large extent their struggle is fixated to the African soil and therefore lacking on grappling with the jingoistic attitude of Western countries towards Africa and other peoples of the world. This study maintains that it is problematic to adopt a domesticated vision of the African condition. It is the contention of the researcher that poets and critics need not limit their canvas to African soil because they can not know both the endogenous and exogenous threats to Africa's true liberation. In fact, a scientific and far reaching global outlook is necessary if poetry is to be meaningful in the struggle for total and authentic liberation. This study holds that it is problematic to emphasize on internal oppression alone without grappling with the imperialist and capitalist world system.

Concerning leadership, poets such as Chirikure Chirikure, Nicholas Mwanaka, Liberty Shoko, Greater Mhondera, Ignatius Mabasa, Miriam Kajekere and Gloria Musi Katerere contend that the African condition which borders on entrapment, hunger, disease and suffering should also be explained in terms of the lack of sound leadership which is committed to creating a more habitable environment. The study has revealed that greed is a malaise that defines African leadership to the extent that total liberation is a myth if African leadership does not change its ways. The study has argued that instead of distributing wealth among the people African leadership tends to equally distribute poverty among the majority. For example, the poetry of Chirikure Chirikure reveals unreserved and unapologetic condemnation of the deleterious crisis of leadership in Africa. The poets contend that astute leadership has an important role in building a welfare state. On the contrary, a greedy leadership which does not put national interest at the centre leads to the demise of its own people. The study has argued that in the majority of cases poets fail to widen their canvas beyond the African soil to understand Africa's problems within the larger framework of world politics. This study has maintained that to end at fighting internal oppression is rather simplistic, parochial and inadequate. It has been emphasized in the study that a more complex and scientific vision is necessary if the poets are to fully understand Africa's problems. This study has argued that to blame leadership alone as some poets do is rather simplistic and myopic. Against this background, this study argues that the poets who launch an attack on African leadership seem not only to know the real enemy but all the enemies of freedom. The study has argued that leadership is also a victim of the machinations of hegemonic powers. Therefore to blame leadership without a proper critique on domination is to miss the

point. Drawing insights from Chinweizu (1987) the researcher has reiterated that while poets must expose the failures of African leadership it is inadequate to discuss leadership outside the context of the rapacious hegemonic powers which create and sustain world dictatorships which mass impoverish the people they rule. Furthermore, to simply blame leadership without understanding that the relationship between Africa and the West is a relationship of robbing and exploiting is to miss the point. Poets who contribute their poetry on leadership in *Zviri Muchinokoro Kunaka* and *Ngatisimuke* are writing at a time when Zimbabwe is placed under sanctions but none of the poets refers to the deleterious effects of western sanctions on the life of the people.

The poets who write on leadership largely lack a global outlook in their creative output to the extent that their art is myopic in the sense that it is fixated to African soil. Theirs is a sharp and simplistic criticism of leadership. It is worth noting that poetry that does not transcend protesting against Africa itself especially the current generation of Africans to critique western capitalist hegemony is cheap literature. The study argues that in order to truly humanize and harmonise the oppressed people then poets as well as critics must widen their scope to make the readership better informed. In order to be functional in the crusade against hegemony, Shona poets and critics of the African condition have a serious duty to nurture unity in struggle between African leaders and the people against a common enemy-the capitalist imperialist West, which thrives on robbing and exploiting. Instead of cheaply attacking leadership it is essential that poets and critics understand that in a world besieged with nuclear power African leaders are rendered powerless and vulnerable to Western manipulation to the extent that poets and critics must be more scientific and practical and contribute to regaining political, economic, military as well as cultural power which would sustain national sovereignty and integrity. One of the greatest weaknesses of the poetry discussed on leadership is that poets hold a domesticated vision and such a vision can not bring about the total freedom that the poets are envisioning. A domesticated vision tends to prolong human suffering because one is not able to know all the enemies of freedom, equality and justice. It has also been argued that because poets adopt a largely domesticated vision they are preoccupied with “fighting internal oppression” and minimum or rather inadequate attention is given to the machinations of the hegemonic world capitalist system that are responsible for the entrapment of Africans and other oppressed peoples

of the world. A scientific vision would have allowed poets to dissect Africa's problems in their multidimensionality and variousness. In fact it is self-defeating to limit Africa's problems to the geopolitical boundaries that define the continent. As wa Thiongo (1981) rightly puts it poets and critics of African poetry need to transcend fighting internal oppression and form an essential intellectual part of the anti-imperialist cultural army of African peoples for total economic and political liberation from imperialism and foreign domination.

One major finding of the study from interviews, questionnaires and selected poems is that dependency on any foreign imperialist power is incapacitating. The poets contend that it is only on the basis of full control of Africa's resources that freedom is a reality. It is by controlling the resources of their land that Africans can exercise their agency. The respondents seem to concur with Mazrui (1993) who observes that Africa is free only when all Africa's wealth is truly under Africa's sovereign control-from the Cape to Cairo, from Dar es Salaam to Dakar. Poets who handle the issue of dependency on a foreign power contend that persistence of Africa's dependency and underdevelopment must simply be put at the doorstep of African leadership. In this case poets largely protest against alien control in the neocolonial period. While poets can be credited for protesting against foreign control it seems the voices that protest against Africa itself are louder than those that resist foreign domination despite the fact that the imperialist world powers are responsible for the entrapment of many people in the world. This researcher argues that to a lesser extent poet and critics are correct to attack leadership for that. However, the fact of the matter is that these leaders are not powerful in global politics and hence have very little choice, if any, because the relationship between the West and Africa is that of domination and exploitation. The study argues that with all its imperfections African leadership is also a victim of the expansionist Western system that thrives on impoverishing other parts of the world, including Africa.

Findings from interviews and questionnaires as well as selected poems point to the idea that fear of leaders which results in nihilism or existential anguish is an impediment to total liberation. It has been argued that fear stifles potential to struggle. The poets contend that fear of leadership leads to suffering and misery since fear reduces the majority to objects that are acted upon by the leader. It has been revealed that leadership that rules by fear dehumanizes its people and strips

them of the will power to transform their own condition. On the whole, fear is viewed as antithetical to the process of attaining positive freedom (freedom to participate effectively) as opposed to negative freedom (freedom from control of the colonizer) attained at the end of formal colonialism.

Overall, the leadership factor has been identified as a major factor to the whole process of realizing genuine freedom. The study holds that Rodney (1972) is right when he says the answer to Africa's partial independence is that the operation of imperialist system bears major responsibility for African economic retardation by draining African wealth and making it impossible to develop more rapidly the resources of the continent. Secondly, one has to deal with those who manipulate the system and those who are either agents or unwitting accomplices of the said system. To emphasise more attacking leadership alone as the discussion on the leadership in the poetry under study as well as findings from questionnaires and interviews has revealed is rather simplistic and inadequate. The imperative is to internationalise the struggle and work towards genuine liberation.

Interview and questionnaire responses as well as poems identified and selected from the body of literary texts selected for the study reveal that history and culture are particularly important in signposting the direction in which things must go. The study reveals that interview and questionnaire respondents as well as poets contend that disrespecting one's history and culture renders the people susceptible to enslavement and impoverishment. This study has postulated that post independence poets are writing against alterity and they hold that alterity is incapacitating because it strips people of agency and produces confused individuals who are mere consumers of other people's creativity. In broad and general, the poetry of Everson Chibanda, Ignatius Mabasa, Chirikure Chirikure, Greater Mhondera, Chiedza Musengezi, and Ruby Magosvongwe reveals that the best out of national as well as African history and culture in general plays an important role in shaping as well as determining the course of action. Poets and key respondents hold that history and culture are indispensable tools in the struggle for freedom.

An interrogation of the poetry that deals with the subject of history and culture has revealed that post independence poets are unapologetic with regards to the centrality of history and culture in life processes. This is also evident in the findings from interviews and questionnaires where it

has been indicated that one of the most commonly cited impediments to freedom is disrespecting crucial lessons from the past.

The poetry that has been discussed under the section reveals that total disregard of African history and culture for whatever reason is tantamount to donating freedom and replacing that freedom with inferiority and suffering. The poets contend that history and culture are particularly important to the pursuit of happiness. The study has emphasised that poets who write on history and culture reveal an uncompromising respect for the best out of history and culture because as history and culture are specific to a particular environment Africans must utilize their history to change their own environment. The centerpiece of the discussion on history and culture is that as Senghor in Mutiso and Rohio (1985) observes, is that there can be no freedom in the alienation of oneself that results from colonialism [and neocolonialism]; there can be no freedom if one's original being is stifled; there can be no independence in dependence. However, the study has maintained that poetry that deals with the subject of history and culture is marked by heavy moralization and in the majority of cases the poets do not go beyond moralization. The study has argued that to simply moralise on the importance of culture and history is to produce cheap literature that is of very little use, if any, to the readership. The poets' weakness is that they adopt a simple didactic approach and hence fail to grapple with cultural imperialism at the global level. The researcher surmises that the poetry largely lacks a global outlook and hence is limited in scope. The study has noted that while emphasizing on history and culture as necessary instruments for liberation is essential some poets seem to argue that genuine liberation of the people is locked somewhere in the past. Despite contributing to the humanization of the world by putting history and culture to the service of African humanity it is simplistic and inappropriate for the poets to emphasize on the importance of culture and history outside the context of political, economic and military power. Theirs seems to be a sterile worship of the past. As Nnolim in Emenyonu (2006) observes on African writers, poets need to understand that if the dream of the African writer in the last century was to recapture our lost humanity and re-establish the African personality, the African writer in this century is challenged to envision a new Africa, which has achieved parity (politically, technologically, economically and militarily) with Europe and America. The major weakness of the poetry on history and culture is that it ends at the level of mere reporting on the importance of history and culture. Furthermore, the poetry

lacks depth with regards to what is causing acculturation. One of the major weaknesses of the poets' gaze is that they fail to notice that the people have very little choice because African history and culture is under the heavy yoke of Western hegemony that is nourished by military, political and economic power. It has been observed that the imperative is that poets must go beyond mere reflection and be more scientific and grapple with cultural imperialism. Rather than mere lamentation and moralization poets need to be pathfinders in the process of transcending a culture without economic, political and military power autonomy or strength. Mere lamentation on the importance of history and culture outside the context of Western hegemony does not lead to progressive change.

In the discussion of the poetry on history and culture the researcher has reiterated that it is grossly inadequate for poets to have a surface reflection on the importance of history and culture. A struggle for total liberation that does not address questions of military, economic as well as political power as it has a bearing on the place and role of history and culture is a sure way to defeat. The study has revealed that in dealing with history and culture the poets satisfy Afrocentric principles such as Sankofan approach, meta-constants: humanizing and harmonizing, African audience as the priority audience among others. Furthermore, the poets who grapple with the subject of history and culture largely protest against cultural arrogance of the West, racial prejudice as well as Africa itself. In view of this, the study has emphasized that surface protest against cultural arrogance of the West and racial prejudice as the poets do without concrete practical ways of fighting the system that keeps the Black man down is self-defeating. The research has argued that simple protest against protesting against Africa itself is an act of blaming the victim for a crime because the Africans have very little choice, if any, in the context of Western hegemony.

Findings from interviews reveal that the land question is one of the commonly identified factors that are attributed to partial independence. Data from questionnaires also shows that the land question is one key issue that is raised by the key informants as an impediment true liberation. As the critical interrogation of poetry dealing with the land issue has revealed, the land question is an issue that is receiving significant literary attention in poetry. The key informants who provided data through interviews and questionnaires as well as poets whose poetry is studied

contend that one of the most urgent issues that have to be addressed if total freedom is to be a reality is land redistribution. By and large, poets and key informants contend that land is the guarantee to a welfare state because it is the nourisher- a source, as well as guarantee to the very fact of survival. In the discussion of post-independence Shona poetry, the study discussed the poetry of Mabasa, Shoko, Chirikure, Mhondera, Mutangadura and Chigofito. On the basis of research findings and the poetry under study, it is apparent that land is a particularly crucial resource because it is the springboard upon which life is premised. The poets and key informants contend that Zimbabwean people and other oppressed peoples of the world are only free when they have adequate control of their land and resources therefrom. They are writing against intrusion which is viewed as infringing on the territorial integrity as well as sovereignty of one nation by another. What is echoing in the poetry as well as views from respondents on land is that adequate control of the land is life giving. The discussion of the poetry on the land question revealed that poets are saddened by the fact that while the liberation struggle was primarily based on the land, the attainment of political independence has not led to the immediate address of the land issue. The poets contend that the land issue is non-negotiable and it is essential to regain control over the land as quickly as possible “by any means necessary.” The poets protest against the notion of negative freedom that was attained at independence in which there is freedom from control by the colonizers minus positive freedom which guarantees effective participation of free agents. The study contends that the poets are in search of positive freedom which unlocks the formerly colonized people’s creative potential. The poets underline the fact that land guarantees dignity as well as economic prosperity.

The study has unraveled that poetry grapple with the land question as well as key respondents are unapologetic on the necessity of redistribution of land as an act of economic empowerment and indigenization. In fact, poets and other key respondents contend that control over the land is one of the pillars of genuine independence. On the contrary, independence without land redistribution is retrogressive, disempowering and dismembering. Positive freedom is only a reality on the basis of utilizing the land and adequate control over the resources on that land to guarantee dignity and participation. The poets envision a welfare state that is driven and sustained by utilization of the land towards economic empowerment and development. The study has noted that economic prosperity and freedom is made possible by adequate control of the land

and its resources. The land therefore is a site for exercising human agency as free agents. The researcher argues that poets writing on the land are part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggle. Theirs is revolutionary art, a revolution that will empower the rightful owners of the land. To the poets, independence that does not empower the people through land redistribution is an act of neocolonialism and imperialism. Their art is largely critique on domination. In the light of the foregoing, it can be concluded, therefore, that in writing on land poets are protesting against neocolonial control, the current generation of Africans and against racial prejudice identified by Mazrui (1978).

However, it is pertinent to note that while some poets writing on the land manage to produce mature poetry that is committed to humanizing and harmonizing the Africans through adequate control over their land and its resources, poets such as Chigofito seem to learn from her predecessors writing in the colonial period to the extent that her art is not situated in the burning issues on land politics in the environment in which she is writing. She tends to reduce art to mere moralization. Her reflection on the land is typical of poetry set in the colonial period in which poets are preoccupied with heavy moralization. Poets need to understand that narrow moralisation can not extricate victims of oppression from domination. The poet ignores more challenging issues on land for example struggles over the land such as Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe and beyond. To reduce poetry to mere moralization is tantamount to producing cheap and dysfunctional literature.

Results from interviews and questionnaires revealed that the key informants were of the view that lack of education obstructs efforts towards genuine liberation. In the same vein, an interrogation of selected post independence poetry showed that education is a necessary factor in the march to freedom, equality and justice. The discussion of poetry on education has reiterated that education unlocks African people's creative potential which guarantees originality and creativity. The findings reveal that a properly educated society can determine what is good or harmful. Empowerment through Africanised education for Africans is a necessary condition for complete and authentic liberation. Education is crucial in the sense that it transmits wisdom from one generation to the other while on the contrary education which does not situate national interests, wishes, aspirations or agenda is anti-freedom. It stimulates and sustains purposeful

agency by unlocking the creative potential and hence turns object into subject. Poets, and other identified key informants contend that education is an inevitable pillar of African triumphalism. On the whole, the study has argued that Afrocentred education which puts national interests, agenda as well as African existential philosophy is a necessary step towards freedom. Miseducation or lack of education is annihilating because Africans can only be masters of their own destiny when they develop Afrocentred curricula.

However, the study noted that it is essential that poets carry the reader's imagination beyond simplistic reference to importance of education without discussing what type of education is crucial to the needs and demands of African people. Poets and respondents need to understand that education can either entrap or liberate such that to merely refer to importance of education in a general sense does not help much. The poetry of such poets as Mutendereki and Mukudu is marked by heavy moralization to the extent that their art is didactic and simplistic. Such poets fail to carry the reader's imagination beyond mere didacticism. They do not carry the reader's imagination beyond the obvious and their art is parochial and follows the incapacitating trend of poetry produced during the colonial period which lacks depth and scientific approach to reality. In dealing with the theme of education, the study has noted that it is grossly inadequate for a poet to moralise on education without explicating the ways in which it is empowering. A poet who does not take the reader beyond moralization is a failure while a serious poet must be insightful and be able to carry the reader beyond mere exposure.

One other factor that has been identified by key informants as well as given due attention in poetry is that racism is a barrier to true independence. It is evident from the interviews, questionnaires and poetry discussed on racism that total liberation and development of Africans is impossible in a world oriented and guided by racism. The poets whose poetry deal with racism are largely protesting against racial prejudice and on the basis of that resist alien control in its neocolonial form. Furthermore, the poets protest against cultural arrogance of the alien rulers. Findings reveal that racism and imperialism are enemies of freedom to the extent that a concerted struggle to transcend racism is inevitable. It has been emphasized that racism as orchestrated by capitalist imperialist powers dehumanizes and impoverishes Africans. Racism is castigated by the poets and key informants because it encases Africans and other dominated

racism of the world. The white supremacist capitalist world system is an impediment to the realization of the full potential of African people because it is bent on keeping the African in the margins of the world system. Post-independence poets are therefore concerned with resurrecting the African from a state of subjugation, exploitation and oppression which is a result of the colour bar. The poets emphasise that racism is not a natural phenomenon but manmade. It is created by man to justify oppression, segregation and exploitation. Racism is castigated because it stifles agency and against this background a struggle against racism becomes the only way to free the people from subordination. The study has maintained that poets and respondents are conscious of the fact that racism is a threat to liberation and development. It has been noted that the poets hold *Njia* as theme, Sankofan Approach as well as Meta-constants: humanizing and harmonizing as well as wholistic afrocentric action as goal in the struggle against racism. Drawing lessons from the past, for example that Africa is the cradle of civilization, the poets are optimistic that victory can be had. It is the central concern of the poets to put Africa at the centre of world affairs and resist the incapacitating peripheral position that the white supremacist capitalist world system is bent to relegate Africa to. The section has revealed that racial prejudice is not dead but is an active obstacle that must be fought and defeated to turn the oppressed into free citizens who freely participate.

Be that as it may, against the background that racism is nourished by political, economic as well as military power it is rather shallow and inadequate for poets to simply indicate that people have to resist racism without addressing the question of superpower politics. In fact, it must be emphasized that poets need to adopt a scientific approach to the whole question of racism and go beyond mere protest against Europe and be part and parcel of the struggle to reclaim political, economic and military power necessary to obtain respect from other races. It has been emphasized in the study that while the poets are concerned with dismantling and resisting racism, they seem to discuss racism outside the context of political, economic and political power. Indicating that racism exists without addressing issues of political, economic and military power does not change the situation. Therefore, poets must go beyond mere lamentation because their art risks degenerating into mere parroting. It is inadequate for poets to have a surface understanding of racism in view of the fact that racism breeds a community which has a monopoly of political power and uses that power not only to prevent the other communities from

having any share in political power, but to keep those other communities in a state of social and economic inferiority, Nyerere in Mutiso and Rohio (1975). Therefore, Western hegemony in particular must be faced with resistance in order to restore the political, economic and military power which lays the foundation to the triumph of justice, dignity and freedom.

Central to this study has also been the quest for genuine and authentic liberation in women's writing. Based on the findings from questionnaires, interviews and selected poems in *Ngatisimuke*, the factors that are attributed to women's authentic freedom are the male counterpart, self-depreciation on the part of women, culture, lack of education, the marriage institution among others. The study has discussed women's writing in *Ngatisimuke* and the major findings were that women's writing is largely an act of protest against the male counterpart and this is attributable to the fact that the poets are writing from a feminist point of view. Their art reveals a quest for freedom from a perceived painful grip of the male counterpart. Guided by Africana womanism, this study argued that poetry in *Ngatisimuke* can best be described as sponsored and misguided activism in as far as it does not understand gender relations in the context of African history and culture. It has been reiterated that the poetry is female-centred rather than family-centered. The study has argued that in order to bring about genuine change to women's condition nothing short of true unity of purpose is essential for the collective freedom of women and men of Africa. Despite raising pertinent issues that subjugate women such as domestic violence, self-depreciation, subjugation on the basis of gender and traditional practices such as wife inheritance the poets fail to realise that colonialism and neocolonialism shape gender relations in Africa to the extent that both men and women are victims of Western hegemony. The study, therefore, contends that for women poets to end at blaming the male counterpart as the chief enemy is reflective of a narrow vision of reality. The research reiterated that while poets who contribute their poetry in the anthology, *Ngatisimuke*, reveal a quest for total liberation of women their art is informed by feminism to the extent that their art is not immersed in the history and culture of the very people the poets are writing to and for. Because the poetry in *Ngatisimuke* is guided and oriented by radical feminism it largely degenerates into protest against men. It can be concluded therefore that women are oppressors of themselves to the extent that women must first prove themselves competent and self-reliant if they are to be freed from oppression.

This study has maintained that in order to judge the contribution as well as the weakness of each poet then it is essential to judge him or her in terms of commitment to African philosophy of existence. In view of this, the extent to which poets immerse their art in the philosophy of life of the people who they are writing to and about has been an object of inquiry. The study has noted that a serious poet must decorate his or her art with optimism rather than pessimism. Since the study has been guided and oriented by Afrocentricity it has reiterated that preaching the gospel of Afro-pessimism as poets like Mabasa does is unAfrican. In fact, while poets such as Mabasa and suchlike reveal the state of decay that characterizes the environment that informs his art he seems to be informed by existentialism to the extent that his art is marked by nihilism. The work of such poets as Mabasa is best described in the words of Nnolim in Emenyonu (2006) that it is lachrymal. It is a weeping literature, a literature of lamentation. Poets therefore need to go beyond mere expression of suffering and produce art which can contribute to progressive change. The study has argued poets need to adopt critical modalities that can help liberate the people. Poets who emphasise on existential anguish as Mabasa does limit or stifle the African people's creative potential such that his art renders Africans helpless victims who have to be rescued from that condition. Instead, our writers need to be optimistic and envision a sovereign Africa not dependent on the west for survival. The study has stressed the point that poetry that is marked by embedded pessimism is anti-freedom. It has been reiterated that in literary practice poets must utilize Afrocentred approaches if their art is to be purposeful and functional. Poets such as Mabasa fail to satisfy Njia as theme, an Afrocentric principle that emphasizes on victorious thought. Contrary to Afro-pessimism the study has maintained that embodied agency must be a feature of poetry in the quest and struggle for freedom, equality and justice. The researcher concurs with Chinweizu (1987) who observes that humans have the most important role in the alteration of their own condition. No matter what dire circumstances we may be trapped in, if we do not make the right efforts in the right amounts, we never shall escape them. In the light of the foregoing, poets would have failed if they simply lament in pessimism. Instead of lamenting poets must be optimistic in struggling against recolonisation.

It has been a concern of this study to unravel the extent to which poetry is a necessary tool to the struggle for freedom. Findings from interviews and questionnaires revealed that poetry is just but

a necessary and never an adequate tool in the fight for freedom. It is an indispensable part of the struggle for freedom which is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

Throughout the thesis, it has been maintained that in reflecting on the human condition in which the quest for complete and authentic liberation is the pervasive mood it is essential that poets avoid limiting their canvas to the African soil when searching for causes of Africa's problems and ways of transcending the problems. Poets and other literary workers need to expound both the endogenous and exogenous factors that obstruct Africa's march towards total emancipation. In order for poetry to be relevant and useful in the struggle for freedom poets must be an inalienable part of the crusade against both internal and external despotism. The present researcher goes by Hove's idea in Wild (1993) that African writers have to perform the task of helping to awaken the consciences of the world to the power of the powerlessness in a world where the muscle of arms rather than morality seem to determine the fate of life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide for Poets

As indicated in the methodology, this study relied on interviews and questionnaires as data collection methods. The researcher identified key informants to interview and these included poets (especially those whose poetry is discussed in this thesis), academics (especially those who have studied or teach Shona poetry) and publishers. The following is an example of a discussion with a poet.

My name is Charles Tembo, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is **'Post-independence Shona Poetry, the Quest and Struggle for Total Liberation.'** The study argues that post independence poetry is committed to the struggle to realize full freedom to the extent that Shona poets express the passion to and for liberation. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of filling in the questionnaire. This questionnaire is aimed at collecting data on the passion for liberation in Shona poetry. May you please cooperate and contribute through filling in this questionnaire. Your experiences and opinions could be of immense value to the research. The responses will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the thesis. The information will be used strictly for the purposes of this research. Your effort will be greatly appreciated.

Interviewer: Mr Tembo, What is the major subject of your poetry on this age and time?

Respondent: Mr Ignatius Mabasa, It is hard to say as I usually do not make a conscious decision to write about something. Rather, I write in response to what is happening around and within me!

Interviewer: Is the struggle and quest for liberation in post independence Zimbabwe and Africa in general subjects of your poetry?

Respondent: Yes, very much because the independence we currently have has not made us independent but instead has come with so many problems.

Interviewer: What are the factors leading to the failure to realize full freedom which you express through poetry.

Respondent: It is the usual - leadership crisis, lack of transparency and democracy, oppression, intimidation and fear, unfulfilled promises, lack of sincerity, institutionalisation of certain ideas such that they end up being the only ones accepted!

Interviewer: In your view what is your role and place as a poet in the struggle for total liberation?

Respondent: To keep talking from a personal and collective point of view. To be a watchdog, to remind and conscientise people, to document history and events, and yes to be a pain that

eventually gets attention.

Interviewer: To what extent is your poetry committed to the realization of full freedom?

Respondent: It is the reason why I write - so that something is stirred that generates discussion and awareness.

Interviewer: Is poetry an adequate tool in the fight for full freedom?

Respondent: No. Not everybody can read or access books. Also people tend to associate poetry with the learned. It is just but one of the pieces of firewood helping start a fire and keeping that fire burning.

Interviewer: What is your reaction to the idea that post independence Shona poets largely write against neocolonialism?

Respondent: That is a generalisation which to a larger extent is true but should not just be limited to neo-colonialism but deals with so many other social issues. Post independence Shona poets are dealing with so many issues as the social landscape changes.

Interviewer: In your view what are the necessary factors that guarantee attainment of full freedom?

Respondent: Full democracy and a true commitment to nation building.

Interviewer: If you write about women emancipation in your poetry, what are the major obstacles to the full liberation of women?

Respondent: Fear, lack of education, lack of equal opportunities, culture being used to abuse and silence women.

Interviewer: What is your reaction to the idea that women poets are largely informed by feminism in their poetry to the extent that their understanding of the condition of African women is not rooted in African history and culture?

Respondent: To a very large extent this is true. The female poets who write tend to speak for the educated urban women. If they are dealing with cultural issues, they gloss over the real issues affecting their kin in very difficult situations in the rural areas.

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Academics

Dear Respondent

My name is Charles Tembo, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is **‘Post independence Shona Poetry, the Quest and Struggle for Total Liberation.’** The study argues that despite attainment of political independence, post independence poetry is committed to the struggle to realize full freedom to the extent that Shona poets express the passion to liberate. By passion for liberation, we imply the salient quest for genuine freedom in post independence poetry. The passion for total liberation, it is argued, is the pervasive thematic concern in the poetry under study. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of responding to the questions below. This interview is aimed at collecting data on the passion for liberation in Shona poetry. May you please cooperate and contribute through responding to the questions. Your views could be of immense value to the research because the views will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the thesis. The information will be used strictly for the purposes of this research and your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

- 1 What do you consider to be the major concern of post independence Shona poetry?
- 2 In your view, to what extent is the quest and struggle for total liberation in post independence Zimbabwe and Africa in general a subject of Shona poetry.
3. From your reading of post independence Shona poetry what do you consider to be the factors leading to the failure to realize full freedom?
4. In your view what is the role and place of a poet in the struggle for total liberation?
6. What is your reaction to the idea that post independence Shona poets largely write against neocolonialism?
7. In your view, what are the necessary factors that guarantee attainment of full freedom?
8. Women emancipation is a topical issue in literature (including poetry). In view of this what are the major obstacles to the full liberation of women expressed through the medium of poetry?

9. What is your reaction to the idea that women poets are largely informed by feminism in their poetry to the extent that their understanding of African women's liberation is not rooted in African history and culture?
10. Is poetry an adequate tool in the fight for full freedom?

Bestpoetry.com

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Publishers

Dear Respondent

My name is Charles Tembo, a PhD student with the University of South Africa. The title of my thesis is **‘Post-independence Shona Poetry, the Quest and Struggle for Total Liberation.’** The argument maintained in this thesis is that post independence poetry is a transcript of the passion to and for total freedom. The research also seeks to discuss the major contributions and weaknesses of Shona poets towards the realization of genuine freedom. This questionnaire is aimed at collecting data on the passion for liberation in Shona poetry. By passion for liberation, we imply the salient quest for freedom in post independence poetry. The passion for liberation, it is argued, is the pervasive thematic concern in the poetry under study. May you please cooperate and contribute through filling in this questionnaire. Your experiences and opinions could be of immense value to the research. The responses will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the thesis. The information will be used strictly for the purposes of this research. Your effort will be greatly appreciated.

- 1 What is the place and role of the publisher in the struggle for full liberation which is essentially defined by cultural, political, economic and social liberty?
- 2 What are the factors attributed to the failure to attain full freedom by the poetry you have published?
- 3 As a publisher what is your reaction to the idea that post independence Shona poets largely write against neocolonialism?
- 4 As a publisher how are you contributing to the attainment of full freedom through literature especially Shona poetry?
- 5 What would you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of poetry over other literary genres especially in the expression of the quest and struggle for full liberation?
- 6 Women poets are often criticized for understanding the liberation of African women from a feminist perspective to the extent that their social vision does not situate African women and men in African culture and history? What is your reaction?
- 7 As a publisher what is your perception of the role of poetry to the struggle for liberation?
- 8 Is poetry an adequate tool in the fight for total liberation?

Appendix D: Questionnaire for Publishers

Dear Respondent

My name is Charles Tembo, a PhD student with the University of South Africa in the Department of African Languages. The title of my thesis is **'Post independence Shona Poetry, the Quest and Struggle for Total Liberation.'** The argument maintained in this thesis is that post independence poetry is a transcript of the passion to liberate and for total freedom. The research also seeks to discuss the major contributions and weaknesses of Shona poets towards the realization of genuine freedom. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of filling in the questionnaire. This questionnaire is aimed at collecting data on the passion for liberation in Shona poetry. May you please cooperate and contribute through filling in this questionnaire. Your experiences and opinions could be of immense value to the research. The responses will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the thesis. The information will be used strictly for the purposes of this research. Your effort will be greatly appreciated.

- 1 What do you consider to be the major subject of Shona poetry you have published?

- 2 The quest and struggle for liberation is a dominant theme in post independence Shona poetry. Do you agree? Yes No

- 3 Is the quest and struggle for liberation a thematic concern in the poetry you have published?

Yes No

- 4 If yes, in which anthology or anthologies is this evident?

5 What do you consider to be the factors which motivate the quest and struggle in post independence Shona poetry despite the attainment of independence in 1980?

6 What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of poetry in capturing the realities of post independence Zimbabwe?

Advantages _____

Disadvantages

7 In your view, what is the role of the poet and publisher in the struggle against neocolonialism?

8 To what extent is poetry a necessary instrument to the struggle for full freedom?

Very large extent Large extent Lesser Extent Not effective

9 In your view is poetry an adequate tool for attaining genuine freedom? Justify your response.

Appendix E: Questionnaire for Poets

Dear Respondent

My name is Charles Tembo, a PhD student with the University of South Africa in the Department of African Languages. The title of my thesis is **'Post-independence Shona Poetry, the Quest and Struggle for Total Liberation.'** The study argues that post independence poetry is committed to the struggle to realize full freedom to the extent that shone poets express the passion to and for liberation. I kindly ask for your contribution by way of filling in the questionnaire. This questionnaire is aimed at collecting data on the passion for liberation in Shona poetry. May you please cooperate and contribute through filling in this questionnaire. Your experiences and opinions could be of immense value to the research. The responses will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the thesis. The information will be used strictly for the purposes of this research. Your effort will be greatly appreciated.

- 1 What are the major concerns of your poetry?

- 2 Who do you consider to be your intended readership and why?

- 3 Do you write about liberation and the struggle for it in your poetry?

Yes

No

- 4 If yes, what do you perceive to be the factors that hinder the realization of total liberation in Zimbabwe and Africa in general despite attainment of independence?

- 5 In your view what is the role of the Shona poet in the struggle for full freedom especially after attainment of political independence?

- 6 What do you consider to be the advantages of poetry over novels, drama and short stories in expressing the quest and struggle for liberation?

Advantages_____

Disadvantages_____

7 To what extent is poetry a necessary tool for the struggle to realize genuine liberation?

Very Large extent Large Extent Lesser extent Not effective

8 Justify your response to 6

9 As a poet would you consider poetry an adequate tool for the struggle for full freedom?

Absolutely Adequate Adequate to a Very large extent Adequate to a Lesser Extent Not adequate

10 Justify your response to 7

11 Do you write about women emancipation in your poetry?

Yes No

Appendix F: Questionnaire for Readers

Dear Respondent

My name is Charles Tembo, a PhD student with the University of South Africa in the Department of African Languages. The title of my thesis is **“Post-independence Shona Poetry, the Quest and Struggle for Total Liberation.”** I kindly ask for your contribution by way of filling in the questionnaire. This questionnaire is aimed at collecting data on the passion for liberation in Shona poetry. The argument maintained in the thesis is that there is a seemingly developing trajectory in Shona poetry where the quest and struggle for full freedom is a dominant theme. The study therefore aims at discussing the factors leading to the failure to realize total independence and freedom. Moreso the poets successes and failures are also interrogated. May you please cooperate and contribute through filling in this questionnaire. Your experiences and opinions could be of immense value to the research. The responses will assist the researcher to generate arguments for the thesis. The information will be used strictly for the purposes of this research. Your effort will be greatly appreciated.

- 1 What is your age group? 0-13 14-18 19 and above

- 2 What is your level of education?
Degree Diploma University Student ‘A’ Level ‘O’ Level
Other _____

- 3 Which of the following genres or types of literature do you read most?
Novels Drama Short Stories Poetry

- 4 If you read Shona poetry for what purposes do you read it?
Academic Self-development Leisure
Other _____

- 5 What do you consider to be the major subject(s) of post independence Shona poetry?

Failures

10 To what extent is poetry effective towards the struggle for full liberation?

Very large extent Larger extent Lesser extent Not effective

12 Justify your response to question 10.

13 To what extent is Shona poetry you have read committed to women emancipation?

Very large extent Larger extent Lesser extent Not Committed

14 What do you consider to be the major strengths and weaknesses of Shona poetry on women emancipation?

strengths
