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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Preamble

Any war, the world-over, has rendered writers to try and understand its complexity by spinning battleground horrors into narratives that demand something constructive out of its fragments. Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular have produced war literature which is vibrant. Zimbabwe's last three decades have seen the publication of war literature coupled with several notable memoirs by some of the best-known writers in the world canon, inspired by the Chimurenga War. The discussion of this topic takes into account the fact that liberation war is epitomised by multiple and plural interpretations and readings. The current researcher's position is not the only correct position but an addition to the multiplicity of existing versions of this war. The researcher recognises the fact that most of the selected novels as his primary sources belong to category of celebratory literature which glosses over certain historical facts and processes. In fact, there is a lot of selective forgetting and remembering in the reconstruction of the liberation war history. Amongst this cohort of authors are an unusually high number of soldier memoirs that have been published. In English, two stylised and uniquely organised standout publications in this jam-packed field of writing are Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) and Chung's *Reliving the Second Chimurenga: Memories from Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (2006). Other English novels are cited for supportive evidence in order to bolster my argument in this study. Conaway's comment on war in general best describes why this thesis diagnoses Chimurenga War which has always been a:

...wellspring from which urgent, dramatic storytelling can emerge, and that's certainly the case today.... But in the end, a great book is a great book, and that—the quality and originality and vitality of the work itself—is going to be what makes a book stand the test of time (Conaway cited in Woodward, 2005:1).

However, this study focuses on the emergence of the dramatic storytelling of the Shona novels and Chimurenga war songs in the Shona language. The study's concern is to find out the different ways in which the *Pungwe* (night vigils during Zimbabwe's liberation war) narratives have been imbedded in the Shona novel and some Chimurenga war songs. It should be clearly noted here that *Pungwe*'s carnivalesque elements renders it an institution, a

performance, a public square and many more. It is the purpose of the thesis to show that it can be everything. Again, *Pungwe* is viewed in this study as one site amongst others that suggested counter histories to colonialism. The complexity of *Pungwe* is that in its performance based forms of existence, it also reflected on the conduct of the war and also implied the production of counter hegemonic tendencies that were developing within the liberation forces between the freedom fighters' forces and masses and amongst the masses themselves. In other words, the form and content of *Pungwe* during the Zimbabwe's war of national liberation conceived of social realities as more or less made up by the very components, structural relations and techniques that make up the phenomenon of theatre. This best suits Bakhtin's chronotope which explicates the dialectic of form and content, text and context, in relation to the time and space of their production and reception. An engagement with this dialectic allows the selected Shona novels to illuminate the relationship between freedom fighters' own words and the words of the masses so that the narratives of history enter, as it were, "through the gates of the chronotope" (Bakhtin, 1981: 258).

*Pungwe* arguably and demonstrably became the venue of much vigour, vitality, dialogic variation and a "national resource ... designed in close and on-going consultation with its target audience" ... in order to "empower people through knowledge and to enable them to make more informed decisions concerning their lives" (Kruger, 2006:156). The war was one event where theatre, in the form of *Pungwe*, played and could continue to play a crucial role. The *Pungwe*, in the words of Achebe (cited in Ngongkum, 2011:84) commenting on a related subject "speaks of a particular place, evolves out of the necessities of its history, past and current and the destiny of its people." Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque tremendously benefits the analysis of the Shona novels and songs as repositories of *Pungwe*. Grindon, (1996:148) argues in a very similar way, suggesting that world literature responds to the "spirit of carnival" socially and culturally, mythologically and archetypally. The selected novels provide an echo through which carnival is reflected and refracted in divergent perspectives of verbal art as presented at *Pungwe*. It is this study's major preoccupation to capture the numerous representations of the carnivalesque attributes of the *Pungwe* as illustrated in selected novels' depictions of the dire socio-political experiences of Zimbabwe's Second Chimurenga War. In a related comment on the interplay between literature and carnival, Danow (1996: iv) says:

The remarkable meshing of these two diametrically opposed yet inextricably intertwined facets of literature (and of life) makes for an intriguing sphere of

investigation, for the carnival spirit is animated by a human need to dissolve borders and eliminate boundaries - including, symbolically, those between life and death - in an ongoing effort to merge opposing forces into new configurations of truth and meaning.

It is the thesis' focus to bring to the fore those new configurations by exposing the truth and newer meaning of this war. By expanding upon the issue of carnival that is theorised in the seminal ideas of Bakhtin, this research is geared towards exploring how *Pungwe*, can be viewed as an alternative space providing for one polarity (unofficial culture) to confront its opposite (official culture), much as individuals engage in dialogue. At the *Pungwe*'s political sessions, the theatrical performances manifested the aesthetics of what Freire describes as the 'pedagogy of the oppressed people' (Freire, 1972). At the live *Pungwe* the masses and the guerrillas made this space fit into many of Bakhtin's philosophical approaches to dialogic reality through their interactions on stage. The *Pungwe*'s political and revolutionary sessions brought out contemporary realities through the idiom of the African people's languages expressing their grief and lived experiences under the vulgarities of colonial rule that sow the seeds of discontentment and fear. Besides evoking "pity and terror", Aristotle's (cited in Kaarsholm, 1994: 225) comments relate to the *Pungwe* in that it is theatre that effects "the proper purgation of these feelings" (ibid: 225). This portrayal of *Pungwe* as theatre is akin to an apt description of the characteristics of the spiritual and cultural spaces where:

human beings...see themselves as they are, let them drop their masks, exposes the lie, the spinelessness, the baselessness, the sanctimoniousness; it shakes the suffocating inertia of a materialism, which attacks even the clearest assertion of the senses; and by placing collective groups of human beings face to face with their dark powers, their secret strength, it invites them to assume a heroic and aloof attitude towards the fate which they would never have attained without theatre" (Kaarsholm 1994: 225).

All the different narratives at the *Pungwe* reveal a dialogic imagination which is linked to the people's capacity to use cultural resources to contest hegemonic narratives. It is through novels that nations are defined as "imagined communities" and the selected Shona novels are predominantly concerned with "grassroots movements" and not with "irregular cultural means" (Butler, 1997:110).

Historians, literary and theatre artists and critics have brought their imaginative visions and critical skills to treat *Pungwe* in an allusive and somewhat incoherent manner. These critics willfully deprive Zimbabweans of the *Pungwe*'s splendid gestures against Chimurenga War's monotony and solemnity as shall be evidenced in this academic writing. African literature



from time immemorial has contributed tremendously in revalorising history, traditional values and beliefs in Africa. In Zimbabwean literature, there are contrasting views on the *Pungwe* institution. One school of thought manifests an anti-theatrical prejudice on the institution of *Pungwe* performance's objective and artistic vision. The other school romanticises *Pungwe* as actualised performance in the matrix of the liberation struggle. All these perspectives explore how the *Pungwe* is depicted in Shona literature and analyse it as a mode of cultural representation by way of handling "the act of balancing emotional impulses and loyalty to art as a sacred entity" (Emenyonu, 2008: xii). These contesting views form the core problem which is the locus for this study, as "the invocation of memory as a restraining or transforming agent" (Soyinka, 2010b: 60). *Pungwe* as performance privileged action, agency, and transformation. The *Pungwe* institution is characterised by senses of carnivalesque that, according to Bakhtin, refers to the culture of the Middle Ages which consisted of an official, serious side, related to the power and the imagery of the church, and an unofficial under-belly, linked to the practices of carnival and its popular festive imagery. Laughter at *Pungwe* is of central importance to this popular festive imagery, linking together the Zimbabwean masses and the fighters for freedom, the banquet, the lower stratum of the body and the grotesque. In *Rabelais and His World* (1984b), Rabelais' work is identified as the summit in the history of laughter. It is in this context that written literature could easily be used to communicate the aims, goals and ultimate vision of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, where the *Pungwe* institution carried with it forms of cultural capital that provided a communication model between the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) forces and the majority of the people. The thesis draws from the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the relationship between history and literature even though it is "situated ... in the vast mine-pitted terrain of realism" (Chreachean in Ngongkum, 2011:83) where writers, literary critics and historians concur that both fields interrelate. This study typifies Ngongkum's (2011: 83) observation that:

... African literature serves as a framework for a discursive understanding and analysis of the continent and its past, as well as its contemporary history ... Literature becomes an interesting premise for investigating 'counter histories that make apparent the slippages, cracks, faulty lines, and the surprising absences in the monumental structures that dominate a more traditional historicism.

The Zimbabwean contemporary history's relevance, authenticity, acceptance and integrity are entirely dependent on certain aesthetic and critical standards by which the *Pungwe* institution should be judged.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The interpretation of African history through written literature is taken for granted as providing the only “system of meaning production shared by [both disciplines that] distillate ... historical experience of a people, a group, a culture” (White, 1987:47- 8). For many years, liberation war literature and history were always presented from the vantage point of the victors, leaders and great names of literature and history. The colonial administration was opposed to the cause of popular liberation wars and tried unsuccessfully to violently block the coming of independence or alternatively, bring their own mode of liberation. The bulk of colonial literature depicted Africans as people devoid of any reasoning capabilities at all. And yet, in reality, in the context of the liberation of Zimbabwe, fighters for freedom and the masses created a political and cultural institution they called *Pungwe* as space to communicate the aims, goals and vision of the struggle. *Pungwe* was also used for conscientising processes. Ironically, *Pungwe* reproduced new forces of hegemonic discourses in which there were unequal relations of power among the guerrillas, between the guerrillas and the masses and among the masses themselves. These contradictory articulations through which the *Pungwe* authorised its modes of existence have not been sufficiently theorised.

Representations of *Pungwe* in both the selected Shona novels and in oral interviews bring problematic and paternalistic views on what the *Pungwe* was all about. One view is that it was mainly a place of violence and another view depicts the *pungwe* idealistically as a place only where the cementing of harmonious relations between the fighters for freedom and the masses to place. This study argues that the live *Pungwe* was a complex amalgam of different narratives. It further posits that when the *Pungwe* is now represented in the Shona novels and Chimurenga war songs, the ideological values that the *Pungwe* reveal in its new and literary form are dependent on the ideological vision of Shona authors and singers emerging from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Rather than suggesting that these differences of background diminish the status of *Pungwe*, this study argues in a different direction that suggests that the more there is fiction in the Shona novels and songs

narrativising the *Pungwe*, the greater the ideological richness on the perspectives and functions of the *Pungwe* in real life and in the novel or musical narrative.

These varied interpretations of *Pungwe*'s basic elements were not present at all times. To say it this way is not at all to claim that violence was the stuff of *Pungwe*. It is to recognise that artists can mistake one aspect of this institution and present it as the whole. In other words, representations of *Pungwe* in the fiction cannot reproduce the institution as it was; fiction also distorts. Nyamfukudza's (cited in Vambe, 2008:94) comment on *Pawns* (1992) is quite incisive in supporting the above corollary when he puts it that:

...the war of liberation can never be one person's story: the scenario was much too complex for that, the sides and realities too various, so that every authentic version that is added is another nuance in the maturity of the flavor of the wine.

This discussion takes into account the fact that the liberation struggle is characterised by multiple and plural versions and readings. The researcher's interpretation is therefore "another nuance in the maturity of the flavor of the wine" which critically rehabilitates African literature by raising a number of pertinent issues of historical importance and relevance to culture and history dramatised at the *Pungwe* in the face of overwhelming denigration. This becomes a very daunting challenge that some African writers need to "fully overcome in their sensitive war-inspired imaginative writings" (Emenyonu, 2008: xii). The study interrogates the role of *Pungwe*'s cultural significance, and how the narratives authorised at the real *Pungwe* as recalled orally and in Shona fiction complicate the views described above.

This present research is therefore influenced by Bakhtin's multi-faceted theory of the carnivalesque. It uses Bakhtin's articulation of carnival and grotesque realism to assess the carnivalesque mode of *Pungwe* in literature and songs as essentially an artistic and creative form that maximises on medieval carnival folk humour. The significant notion of this medieval folk humour in influencing *Pungwe* is imbedded in the rhetoric that informed the war strategies. *Pungwe* like carnival was not chaotically organised but it was a crowd puller through the aesthetic of footlights where "everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (Bakhtin, 1984b:7). Its main explanatory power resides in its recognition that there is need to depart from the literature and history which relied on the story of great men. Subalterns can authorise their own narratives of resistance within the

broad national story. That kind of writing or narratives confirm as well as contest official versions of *Pungwe*, thus depicting the institution as a problematic cultural and political space for identity formation. The idea of carnival is important because fiction is a medley of genres using rhetorical devices that question the modes of representing *Pungwe* with the Shona war novel and oral interviews. It is these cracks, slippages and faults in ways of knowing the institution of *Pungwe* that have not been surfaced in the criticism of Shona war literature.

### **1.3 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to show that *Pungwe* is endowed with carnivalesque qualities. It is also theatre of the oppressed that has managed to sanctify and memorialise its intents, giving birth to Shona literature informed by a messianic, liberatory, or reactive drive, through songs and dances, rituals, political jokes and beliefs on cultural resistance where fighters of freedom and the Zimbabwean people interacted with during and after the war.

#### **1.3.1 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study are to:

- focus on the rise of *Pungwe* as a new political dramatic form that determines and shapes the direction of social change, period of national reconstruction, rebirth and how it constitutes an important source of critical consciousness for the nation.
- show critically how *Pungwe* managed to accommodate shifting and even contradictory political concerns and positions. This would include demonstrating how theatre genres such as skits, music, parody and fiction illuminate the substantiation of the reasons for the war.
- examine the significance of the centrality of Bakhtin's theory of carnivalesque in understanding the different narratives generated at the *Pungwe* and represented in the Shona novel.
- interrogate different representations of *Pungwe* in Shona novels.
- Evaluate the cultural significance of *Pungwe* in nation building dynamics.

### 1.3.2 Research Questions

The research questions are:

- (a) what are the ways in which Shona novelists and singers have depicted *Pungwe*?
- (b) Have the Zimbabwean Shona war writers created credible and complicated narratives of *Pungwe* with the ability to generate meanings which amplify an understanding of the political dynamics in post independence Zimbabwe?
- (c) Why are there narrative and ideological differences in the use of *Pungwe* in the Shona novels and songs?
- (d) What are the implications to the theory of Shona novel of imbedding the oral institution of *Pungwe* in the written form?

In order to respond to these questions more critically, the study brought out the reasons for embarking in the research. It is from the act of rationalising the interface between the written (novel) and the oral (*Pungwe*) that invoked some answers to the questions posed for this study.

### 1.4 Justification of the Study

Theatre existed since time immemorial and it expressed and manifested itself in various forms, “in a wealth of historical romance, travelogue and novelistic fiction” (Kaarsholm, 1994:226). The war of national liberation was violent, tortuous and psychologically traumatic which gave rise to specific “genres of cultural expression, and in which drama again played a prominent part – to fortify bastions of white pride and supremacy on the one side and to mobilise black African people and promote mental decolonisation on the other” (Kaarsholm, ibid : 226). No one has written on *Pungwe* emphasising the dialogic nature of exposing multiple narratives at the same time. That is why this study’s diagnosis of the carnivalesque’s contestive modes of cultural capital of the *Pungwe* institution gives an incisive gaze at the submerged history of ordinary Zimbabwean people. It also underlines the role of *Pungwe* whose existence mirrors a vivid insight into the liminal space depicted in Shona war fiction. Exploring representations of *Pungwe* in oral and written narratives on Zimbabwe’s

Chimurenga War history can manifest knowledge that “has hitherto either been confined to silence or misrepresented in the confident accents of the directive classes” (Said, 2002:523). Literature is a kind of discourse whose languages activity within society is typical of other forms of discourse. The chosen Shona war fiction is not an autonomous pattern of linguistic form far removed from socio-political forces. The choice of the war fiction in this study as discourses is open to interpret and describe the vitality of the cultural functions of *Pungwe*. It is this type of history that Ndlovu-Gatsheni thinks has repudiated academic historiography’s attempts to complicate and question the trajectories of nationalism when in actual fact it shows African writers’ commitment, a concept well-captured by Achebe’s enchanting imagery:

It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant—like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames.

It is on such matters as Achebe’s imagery that requires methodological and theoretical underpinnings which would prove to be significant in this type of literary discourse. The subject on Chimurenga War requires requisite coverage from a materialist theory of social relations and practices which proposes a dialectical relationship between communication at *Pungwe* and society. *Pungwe* created conditions where the masses had to make choices. Choices that were not tied to consensus but to difference that was tolerated and encouraged among the participants by the *povho* and the freedom fighters. Halley (1989:166) added: “This is what carnivalesque is, and radically democratic, in cultural and popular mobilizations: it is the source of the full rationality of their movements: and it is the quality that places the fullness of that rationality in opposition to restrictive ‘rationalization’ by rulers oriented to efficiency in performance”. *Pungwe* created a dynamically expressive cultural resistance, good with many different manifestations focused by common referents, against the dominant colonial administration, as a moment of counter-hegemonic mobilisation (ibid: 167).

It needed a lot of effort to convince the ordinary Zimbabwean people (masses / *povho*) why it was worthy the cause to support the war of national liberation. One major step was to tolerate differences by way of forming identities embedded in the people’s value systems against a totality of colonial domination. Both the *povho* and freedom fighters were to elevate their resistance of domination by reinstating themselves into history through interpreting their everyday colonial experiences into political and cultural resistance. At the *Pungwe*’s carnival,

activities such as songs and dances, rituals, political jokes, folk beliefs and many more practices of resistance were performed.

## 1.5 Literature Review

It is at the *Pungwe* meetings that critical issues were discussed which “include how nationalism as a discursive formation came into being, how the complex processes of making the nation-state and nation-as-people were mediated; how nationalism evolved and developed as an ‘ism’, how violence was mobilised as a tool of stagecraft; how democracy and human rights were conceived within the African national project, and what functions and implications labels such as ‘enemy’, ‘patriot’, ‘sell-out’, ‘puppet’, ‘revolutionary’ and ‘counter- revolutionary’, had in the continuous process of nation-making and unmaking” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Muzondidya, 2011:24).

This study seeks to unravel and correct what other scholars capture as “complexities of contemporary Zimbabwe from various intellectual perspectives, ranging from history, literature and philosophy to language and the media” in order to produce a “land-centric ultra-nationalist discourse”. (ibid: 31, 29). Zimbabwe’s Chimurenga war has generated a lot of interest because this war has assumed the place of nationalism itself. This partly explains why, almost thirty years after the end of the liberation war, there is still great interest in ‘hunting and gathering’ memories of the war rather than in a critical engagement with nationalism as an idea, doctrine, sentiment and ‘ism’ ( ibid:35).

*Pungwe* meetings are a salient feature of the liberation war-oriented historiography which critically engaged with the emancipatory aspects of the liberation struggle. Concentration on the ‘non-revolutionary’ violence and the coercive nature of the liberation war as is Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2011:71) main thrust is a distortion of the Zimbabwean historical reality. Mlambo, commenting on Kriger’s *Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* dismissingly described the book for its “gross distortion of the Zimbabwe reality” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:71) for not accepting that the war of national liberation “was a popular revolution in which peasants voluntarily supported the guerrillas”. For what intentions are these scholars in pursuit of the darker and non-emancipatory aspects of the liberation struggle? This is no little wonder why Cheater (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:71) dismissed Kriger’s book as “badly flawed contribution to the literature on Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle”. This delineation of the liberation struggle usurps the emancipatory potential of nationalism which is imbedded in the *Pungwe*. It is this yawning gap of the liberatory roles of Zimbabwean historiography of

the armed phase of nationalism that this study seeks to fulfill. This gross misconception of dismissing the historical and fictional merits of the treatment of *Pungwe* in literature is absurdity. To this Muponde (2011:82) explains the dangers of narrowly defining Zimbabwean liberation war history when he says:

The critics and writers have reacted from an undefined war cringe and committed the sin of overcorrection by reducing defining historical moments in a nation to predictable functions of generic conventions. What is often costly to critics is that the war narrative is not the nation. The nation emerges in the war narrative. The war narrative is not the history of the nation. It is one of the histories of the nation. The past of the nation is not the war. The war is one of the pasts. But it is a past with an omnipresent afterlife.

It is this perception that Chimurenga War describes “a marking of what is considered to be evidence of the witchcraft of history” (Muponde, *ibid*: 81). This study is a reaction to this “witchcraft of history” on the unfair treatment of the role the *Pungwe* played. Commenting on critics who practice witchcraft on the liberation struggle, Muponde (*ibid*: 81) adds that:

There seems to be ruthless attempts by some critics and writers to find nothing of value in war narratives other than the escalation of trauma and violence in the appreciation of Zimbabwean literature and culture. But counter-intuitively, a heightening of critical attention on trauma and violence alone produces not only a critical fad with far-reaching consequences on creativity, but a competitive and demobilizing meta-narrative of self-doubt, trauma and cynicism’.

Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle against colonialism engaged the attention of intellectuals throughout Africa and even beyond. Anti-colonial expressions in the post-colonial literature contained irrepressible optimism by maintaining the fundamental Chimurenga War dialogue. The inevitability of liberation and potential momentous achievements in reconstructing Zimbabwean history to reflect views of the downtrodden were guaranteed. This thesis is part of the post-colonial literature which conforms to the sphere of socio-political culture where nation building discourse takes centre stage as a significantly popular element in anti-colonial emancipation. From Che Guevara’s *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolution* to Sembene Ousmane’s *God’s Bits of Wood*, from Chairman Mao’s *Yenan Program* to Franz Fanon’s Third World Manifesto, *The Wretched of the Earth*, there is a post-colonial body of literature that delineates failure of nationalist anti-colonial movements stemming from fundamentally new conditions in world politics, economics and culture. The present thesis does not deny the very important critiques of corruption and political oppression that appear in post-colonial culture. With our ascendancy to independence Zimbabwean people’s expectations were



hardly met, instead the political leadership gravitated towards the state in a bid to achieve personal economic and political power. It is such crisis that has signaled the emergence of post-colonial literature typical of wa Thiong'o's (1969: 57-8) anti-colonial expression which confronted the movements from progressive social change when he says:

What does independence mean? For the peasants and the urban workers, this is a period of gradual disillusionment. Independence has not given them back their land... for the elite; however, independence was a boon. Under the banner of Africanization, it grabs at jobs in the civil service and jostles for places on the directing boards of all foreign companies.

Zimbabwe's independence becomes meaningful if the theme under this study is dealt with in detail. Onslow (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:13) made valuable observations on the considerable difficulties of nation-state construction after formal independence in Zimbabwe. After a decade in the post-independence era, Onslow (ibid: 2) rightly pointed out that the late 1990s, ZANU-PF was facing a profound challenge to the legitimacy of its victory, and to the legitimacy and identity of the liberation movement itself. This was so, for the mere fact that the ideology of Chimurenga looked exhausted and "had lost its emancipatory aspect, memories of the liberation war were less meaningful to those people born after 1980 and the national trajectory itself was hit by a ... 'mutating millennial crisis'" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:13). The revival of the ideology of Chimurenga was needed through the re-activation strategy of *Pungwes* in form of *biras* and *galas*. The crisis was very formidable since it was not just about one issue of a one-off historical trajectory but a myriad of deep-rooted political issues. The forms of post-independence *Pungwe* are well articulated by Ndlovu- Gatsheni (2011:12) as follows:

What is also worth noting is that galas and biras were introduced at a time when the society was not at peace with itself- the economy was crumbling and ZANU-PF's political fortunes were declining. During galas and biras, modern music such as 'urban groves' tunes were mixed with old Chimurenga songs so as to seduce the so-called 'born-frees' (all those born after the end of colonialism) into the nationalist project. ZANU-PF thought it was these 'born frees' who supported and voted for the opposition MDC and as such needed to be exposed to subjectivation and interpellated and conscientised into patriotic citizens.

It is strength for any political party to be able to realise its weakness and correct them. Galas and biras in Zimbabwe are an epitome of the public construction and carnivalisation of that national project, utilising the iconography of the country's departed and living patriarchs, matriarchs and heroes as well as the symbolisms of the 1987 Unity Accord and the achievement of independence in 1980. The subject on *Pungwe* is not a highly trodden terrain

of Zimbabwe's liberation war heritage. Overt references from historical perspective show that the liberation struggle received some sustained attention from Bhebe and Ranger as editors (1995, 1996), Ranger (1970) and Shamuyarira (1966) but did not pay particular attention to the *Pungwe*. Kriger's (1995) study focuses on the liberation struggle in Mutoko and Manungo's rejoinder (1991) detail the response of the Chiweshe peasants to the liberation war. It is Col. Gaza's (1985) Honours Dissertation on *Pungwe* at the University of Zimbabwe's History Department that seemed to shed more light on the role played by the *Pungwe* but was not guided by any meaningful theory. When the choice of one's theory is weak, the dissertation is bound to bear those signs of weaknesses. In his opinion, Gaza believes that the inception of *Pungwe* marked the decisive paradigm shift in the framing of the liberation war:

...a mass-based approach implies mutual trust and cooperation. By portraying the freedom fighters as monstrous and amoral beings, the colonial system was setting the stage for undermining this mutual trust and cooperation which is indispensable to the mass-based approach.

*Pungwe* as an instrument of war, the furnace for forging that "mass-based approach" adopted the tradition of the carnival to be a liberatory insurrection and a creative artistic avant-garde within this context of an "indispensable ... mass-based approach." Kaarsholm's (1994:226) argument is that theatre illuminates and articulates "precise needs and aspirations" of the toiling masses in their very critical moments of need. She does not show the theatricality, dialogic and heteroglossic nature of the *Pungwe*. She acknowledges the vital role that theatrical performance played from the pre-colonial era to this post-independence one:

Rhodesia was decolonized in the course of a violent and traumatic war that gave rise to its own genres of cultural expression, and in which drama again played a prominent part- to fortify bastions of white pride and supremacy on the one side and to mobilize black people and promote mental decolonization on the other.

*Pungwe* constituted that genre of "cultural expression" that formed political resistance through consciousness raising and mobilising audiences. Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* considers the political effects of popular practices like songs and dances, folktales, and their role in shaping popular political consciousness (Mbembe, 2001:131). The ordinary people and the freedom fighters represent two fields and two totally distinct units of actions, irreducibly opposed and perfectly contradictory to begin with. Through constant interactions and conscious engagement in political theatre at *Pungwe* meetings, the seriously opposed and irreconcilable epitomes, deployed from within antagonistic canons and moralities were

strengthened into a formidable force that transformed myths and superstitions into reality of political action. To show that differences were tolerated, the Zimbabwean people lived above expectation excluding the capacity for self affirmation and “elevation of certain signs to the status of value- identity markers that serve to validate differences within the mobilization for the rationalizing totality of domination ...” (Halley, 1989:166-7). The markers above assume the form and content which Bakhtin “identifies as the equality-inducing de-stratifying signs of authentic sociality found in the carnivalesque moments of popular life” (Halley, 1989:167).

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

At the root of all research lies the issue of the methods to be employed when harnessing data. The word ‘method’ comes from the Greek term ‘methodos’ which means “the path towards knowledge-gathering” (Grix, 2010: 30). Grix (ibid: 30) further notes that research methods, put simply, can be seen as “the techniques or procedures used to collate and analyse data... The method(s) chosen for a research project are inextricably linked to the research questions posed and to the sources of data collected”. Since research methods come in all shapes and sizes, the present researcher used the qualitative method. This method emphasises analysis of literary texts through the theory of the carnivalesque. To understand key concepts such as the carnivalesque’s modes in the *Pungwe* institution during Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle, we therefore need just the qualitative method of collecting data for more reasons that shall be explained in chapter four.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework: Theorising *Pungwe* through Bakhtinian Carnavalesque’s Lens**

There is no general consensus on the role of theory in research mainly because of the different ontological and epistemological starting points of researchers. In an attempt to explain complex socio-political phenomena typical of the execution of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, as opposed to describing it, there is need for some form of a framework employed to assist in the selection and prioritisation of certain factors over others. Bakhtinian theory exalts war reality for this study to achieve its desired outcomes. Stoker’s (cited in Grix, 2010:104) classic explanation succinctly sums up this viewpoint by arguing that the:

[Theory] helps us to see the wood for the trees. Good theories select out certain factors as the most important or relevant if one is interested in providing an explanation of an event. Without such a sifting process no effective observation can take place. The observer would be buried under a pile of detail and be unable to weigh

the influence of different factors in explaining an event. Theories are of value precisely because they structure all observations.

Since *Pungwe* is a genre of political performance, “buried under a pile of detail” of the liberation struggle, this study heavily derives from what Zenenga (2009: 35) calls “the four Bs of political theatre (Bakhtin, Baraka, Boal, and Brecht) for its major aesthetic forms and performance techniques” (ibid: 35). The *Pungwe* was of the traditional African participatory theatrical performance whose salience is imbedded in the aesthetic engagement inherent in Bakhtin’s, Brecht’s, Boal’s Grotowski’s, Brook’s and Artaud’s theatre. Brecht’s active engagement with audiences’ contestive power of the carnivalesque’s thematic concerns in democratising performance spaces is Bakhtin’s major preoccupation in this thesis. Cunliffe, cited by Zenenga (ibid: 35) comments that in the Eurocentric history of theatre:

Brecht was the first theatre practitioner to appreciate the extent to which all aspects of dramatic production were suffused with ideological significance. Like both Bakhtin and Artaud, Brecht is critical of the way theatre space is divided into two wholly discrete “worlds” separated by an invisible fourth wall. ...Brecht’s critique of the foot-lights of the illusionist drama thus clearly supports Bakhtin’s view that they operate as divisive, alienating structures. To this extent, his invocation to demolish the fourth wall signals a carnivalesque initiative to expose the naturalizing effects of illusionist plots and settings and to enjoin audiences to participate more actively in the theatre event.

This study is a further “invocation to demolish the fourth wall [signalling] a carnivalesque initiative to expose the naturalizing effects” of *Pungwe*. While it is an existing truism that there is no single coherent and consistent theoretical framework that is sufficient to explain the long and arduous history and complex intricacies of the Chimurenga War, the present researcher evokes Bakhtin’s theory to broaden the analytical horizon of comprehending the *Pungwe*. Boal and a few more would be dealt with to a lesser extent. Theorists and activists of varying ideological persuasions consider theatre, of which *Pungwe* are one, as an effective political antidote against colonialism. This provides a new Bakhtinian theoretical lingua franca through the idea of aesthetic revival which informs the politico-cultural production of *Pungwe*. The thesis requires a theoretical framework that has the ability to harness “performance, domination, and resistance in the practice of everyday life ...” (Zenenga, ibid: 14) during the colonial and post-colonial eras. The main reason why this study has chosen the Bakhtinian theory, with its remarkable divergences and convergences, is because:

Bakhtin's entry into the mainstream of contemporary critical thought has occurred at a critical moment in the rethinking of the critical approaches to literary studies, culture, to 'texts', and, once more, in the reassessment of the correlations between art and life, the imaginary and reality, being and language (Diaz- Diacaretz, 1989:3).

The thesis has taken a clear position with regard to the major subjects of contention "in the reassessment of the correlations between art and life" given the various interpretations of particular concepts resulting from the diverging ideological positions of critics. It further examined and redefined the notion of carnival in a bid to contextualise the theory understand and comprehend the current political situation in Zimbabwe. More importantly, it is the Bakhtinian theory's prominences whose "appropriations" and "recuperations" which has brought effect to this thesis. The field of carnivalesque has a role to play not only in our view of the literary studies that are undergoing profound and irreversible transformations in Zimbabwe. But also our post-independence testimony to the direct connection with current changes to everyday life typical of the continued land invasions, as social horizons and professional expectations are altered to suit the specific needs of particular social groups.

Bakhtin's carnival is one of those rare theoretical frameworks that have a broad and diverse range of application that would guide this research. The popular songs like *Seiko Musina Morari* (Why are you not happy) is a fulfilment of the Bakhtinian thematisation of humor and the comic which has made him popular in postmodern critical circles. His studies expand the theory of carnival beyond a single folk event and identify the carnivalesque as a semiotic cultural code, signifying more than just texts which focus on the specific popular tradition in medieval Europe and now extended to Africa. Bakhtin's theory of carnival, manifests in his discussions of Rabelais and "forbidden laughter" in medieval folk culture entitled *Rabelais and His World* (1984b) which is the same illumination that it does to this study's Shona war fiction. The concept of the *Pungwe* is a centrifugal and conceptual movement whose artistic prowess did not end during the Chimurenga war but is becoming more and more apparent after independence. Diaz-Diacaretz (ibid: 2) put it that, in Bakhtinian terms:

This movement seeks to expand and make specific the understanding of literature's place in society and of the function and meaning of the literary critic- who is now becoming more clearly, but perhaps always was meant to be a [literary] of culture.

The relevance of the theory to the *Pungwe* institution assists to “make specific the understanding of literature’s place in society” which is imbedded in folk celebrations which characterised people’s morale at *Pungwe* and allowed for rowdy humour and the parody of authority which offered the oppressed Zimbabwean people relief from the war traumas and created an opportunity for expressing nonconformist, even rebellious views. The carnivalesque spirit that dominated the theatre of the oppressed people, therefore, was/ is a form of popular theatre which celebrates the anarchic and grotesque elements of the Rhodesian colonial administration and of humanity in emphasising Zimbabwe’s own theatrical traditions. Incorporation of folk elements is another highly utilitarian form and appealing way of communicating messages to the intended audience. This effectively enhances the symbiotic and traditional nexus between performer and spectator, an indicator heavily reliant on Boal’s poetics, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979).

Bakhtin saw in carnivalesque humor a social force that allowed a text to enter a socio-political discourse, while enjoying impunity, and thus bring about cultural transformation. Society is not made for the artist, but the artist for society. Literature’s major function is to assist in the development of people’s consciousness and to improve their social being. Literature reproduces life in form of images. The chosen authors are great artists who were able to single out war reality, which is never an accumulation of separate units existing side by side without connection. Literature, therefore, becomes a manifestation of its producer’s culture. The selected war literature reflects both life of a Zimbabwean society and its history though it is not straight mirroring. Art sets out to describe reality and a writer’s duty is not to portray a faithful reproduction of what the ruling class wishes to hear and know. The nationalist ideology hinders the class understanding of the development of social reality. wa Thiong’o (1997: 67) sees the pertinence of the linkage between literature, history, politics and theatre when he rightly puts it that:

A writer’s subject matter is history: the process of a people acting on nature, changing it and in so doing, acting on and changing themselves. The changing relations of production including power relations are a whole territory of concern to a writer. Politics is hence part and parcel of this literary territory.

It is at the *Pungwe* that the subject matter was history and the very notion of individual liberty carried with its implications of dangerous political unpredictability, diversity of opinions, personal autonomy, deviation from cultural norms, all of which potentially threatened to undermine and even subvert colonial social order and control in the then

Rhodesia. In the people's bid to create a newly born democracy, *Pungwe* taught people the full meaning and significance of individual liberty which had to be generally assimilated or appreciated before independence. Democracy as a political reality in the world is to be traced back to the formation of the United States of America as an independent nation. Foley (2001) clearly indicates that in 1776, more than a decade before the French Revolution, Jefferson and the founding fathers produced a Declaration of Independence, and later a Constitution and Bill of Rights, which laid the basis for the world's first liberal democratic states. It is worth reflecting on just how far-reaching and radical the central tenets of the Declaration of Independence are:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness - that to secure these rights governments are instituted among them, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed ... (Foley, 2001: 31-2)

It is Zimbabwe's quest for independence that guaranteed individuals' rights to maximum amount of freedom possible. One of the Bakhtinian tropes is the grotesque which is best considered and understood from its roots in the Gothic and 18th century literature. By definition the grotesque refers to the distortions, ostensibly, of the body, but through metaphorical illumination it also evokes the underbelly of a "civilised" society that must be kept hidden from view because of its undermining effect. The 18th century is characterised in history, philosophy and literature as an age of reason, with the rise of industrialisation and the ascendance of the machine which imaginatively represent order. Against this rather utopian formulaic for order, the human body with all its peculiarities and unpredictability represents an eruption, an insinuation or instability and chaos. It is this which would be put in context of the Zimbabwean *Pungwe* during the liberation struggle.

## **1.8 Scope of Study**

The thesis focuses on carnivalesque modes of the *Pungwe* institution and how it is represented in Shona war literature and Chimurenga War songs where freedom fighters and the Zimbabwean people interacted during and after the war. Very few interviews to reconstruct oral accounts were confined largely to Buhera and Nyanga Districts of Manicaland Province, Chivi and Bikita Districts of Masvingo Province and Lower Gweru and Chiundura as rural environs of Gweru District of Midlands Provinces of Zimbabwe where a lot of *Pungwe*

meetings were performed, though the bulk of the examples were drawn from the selected Shona novels. Minimal collection of information from oral informants was done in Shona language, covering the whole of the Chimurenga War period in Zimbabwe. Both freedom fighters and the ordinary Zimbabweans' exploits in war and on the exercise of mass mobilisation strategies at *Pungwe* teased out the salience of the liberation discourse captured in the chosen Shona literature. This research adopted the qualitative method of harnessing data for reasons that are explained later.

### 1.8.1 Ethical Considerations

Ethics impact on all forms of research. All authors, interviewees and other informants were told of a set of moral principles that guided the researcher's confidentiality, anonymity, legality, professionalism and privacy. Those who did not want to speak were not compelled to do so. Even those who provided sensitive files would still remain anonymous for security reasons. The role of ethics in research, like this current one, has been rightly summed up by Dencombe (cited in Grix, 2010:144) as follows:

At a practical level, it deals with what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. The word 'ought' recurs time and again when ethics comes into considerations and, for researchers, this call for some change in their approach to the process of research. The problem is no longer one of what it is possible or logical to do, crucial to the rest of the research methodology, but one of what ought to be done taking into consideration the rules of conduct that indicate what it is right and proper to do. It calls for a moral perspective on things, rather than a practical perspective.

It is the researcher's duty to respect the people he would be studying. The research interviews were made after getting their explicit permission first and to ascertain the correct schedules of people's routine. In short, the researcher was very clear on how he intended to collect, analyse and disseminate the gathered data. It is of necessity to pay heed to confidentiality and maintained independence from possible attempts to manipulate the results during data collection and even after completion. Key issues and problems met during the research were communicated to the university via correct procedures. A letter of consent was produced to all parties who needed it and so was the research proposal.



## 1.9 Definition of Terms

**Pungwe** : Pungwe is a generic term which signifies any gathering that continues through the night until dawn and very common among the Shona people. These night vigils were appropriated to historically connote conscientisation meetings that were held at night during the war of national liberation thereby providing a therapy to the toiling masses. Besides *Pungwe* being an institution, it is also a public sphere, a performance, a performing art, as it is variously described in this discussion. This multiple characterisation of *Pungwe* engenders a carnivalesque quality of this valuable resource.

**Carnavalesque** : Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnival and dialogism.

**Chimurenga** : Zimbabwe's guiding ideology during the liberation struggle which lives up to today derived from a war hero called Murenga.

## 1.10 Chapter Organisation

Chapter One provides this study with the introductory remark which gives a general overview of the area of study starting from the preamble, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, justifying why the study should see light of the day. This is followed by a brief literature review, research methods that are going to be used to harness data and the theoretical framework that guides this study.

Chapter Two entitled Literature Review critically explores related literature that delves deep into the Chimurenga War's usage of the *Pungwe* institution by way of giving context to this study through the carnivalesque theory developed by Bakhtin. The chapter provides an extended literature review on the nature of *Pungwe*, and how critics have explained *Pungwe*'s existence within the narrative interstices of the Shona novel. The chapter is divided into eight (8) main sections starting with a brief introductory remark to this second chapter. The theatrical repertoire at *Pungwe* is defined and followed by an explanation and review of literature on why *Pungwe* became part of the Zimbabwean ideology of Chimurenga. The different Western perspectives in the forms of theatre's performativity and regarding African theatrical practices that are denigrated as primitive and pagan are examined. This aspect is important because *Pungwe* is a derivation of this African theatrical practice. Another section problematises theorising the interface between *Pungwe* as part of orality and the Shona novel.

Chapter Three undertakes a detailed examination of Bakhtin's analysis of carnival outlining the reasons for choosing this theory and identifying its historical and cultural dimensions to how Shona literature portrays the *Pungwe* institution as theatre for social reconstruction. The Shona literature is analysed with specific reference to Bakhtin and the sociology of *Pungwe*, in relation to Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia, dialogism, the chronotope and other carnivalesque modes applicable to *Pungwe* as theatre of the oppressed. Beyond the text, *Pungwe* theatre is likened to *Rabelais and His World* (1984b), where Bakhtin presents us both with a theory of carnival, and with an account of the historical significance of the carnivalesque which this chapter uses as a point of departure in analysing Shona war fiction. It is argued that Bakhtin's account of carnivalesque provides this study with a potent framework within which to perform a critical analysis and diagnosis of *Pungwe* performances as depicted in Shona novels. This offers a critical exegesis and a thorough interrogation of Zimbabwean Shona literature, and an engagement with, Bakhtin's theory of the carnival. A novel, typical of the chosen Shona novels, writes Bakhtin, occupies "a certain specific place in space [... and] our acquaintance with it occurs through time" (Bakhtin, 1981: 252).

Chapter Four of the study addresses and justifies the use of qualitative methods employed to analyse and present findings on the relationship between *Pungwe* institution on one hand and the Shona novel and popular songs on the other. Very few interviews were conducted to offer supportive evidence to this study.

Chapter five analyses and presents the major findings of this study on the *Pungwe* and how it is depicted in selected Shona war novels including the songs. Pongweni's seminal text, *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982) is used as supportive evidence in this chapter. The themes to be discussed relate to songs in this book, those found in the Shona novels under review and some outside but as long as they were sung during the liberation struggle as offering carnival space during *Pungwe*. This chapter also draws little oral accounts from surviving freedom fighters in an attempt to reveal the socio-political heteroglossic nature of the narratives of *Pungwe*. Chimurenga songs are significantly considered in this study mainly because they are a product of and a creation by the war participants as they also reveal the cultural richness in the repertoire of values narrated at the *Pungwe*.

The fifth chapter marks the shift from written songs to the novel genre which implies that the performative element is compromised even as the song finds new life through the written

mode. This contradiction is highlighted in this chapter as it explores the depiction of *Pungwe* in Shona war novels. The Shona war novels are grouped according to their thematic concern and how they elaborate the goings on at the *Pungwe*. The *Pungwe* institution's relationship with Bakhtin's characterisation of the carnivalesque as is depicted in the selected Shona novels is analysed. The narrations of bombings at *Pungwe*, and its political function of as space of social conscientisation is analysed in order to manifest *Pungwe*'s therapeutic nature in Shona novels. The primary sources are *Vavariro* (1990), *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), *Zvaida Kushinga* (1984), *Nguo Dzouswa* (1984), *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), *Hondo yeChimurenga* (1985), *Chakwasha* (1991) and a collection of short stories, *Masango Mavi* (1998). The *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982) is included in order to provide the primary sources in the form of recorded songs.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study. This is done through picking up of the salient features that came out of the analysis of *Pungwe* as a popular public sphere which exudes numerous carnivalesque qualities that are well recorded in this study. In seeking to understand the agency of popular songs sung at the *Pungwe*, Shona novels, Pongweni's compilation of *Songs that won the Liberation War* (1982) and unrecorded songs would be analysed. Whether *Pungwe* institution was a monopoly of the ZANLA forces would be the major preoccupation in this study. Findings on how *Pungwe* meetings were set up and findings on the nature of the relationship between the masses and guerrillas as is depicted in the Shona novels under review would be examined. The chapter also focuses on the emphasis of semantic variation and ideological fractures experienced between the masses and the guerrillas during Zimbabwe's nationalist struggle. The findings include whether these novels depict the *Pungwe* as a liminal space where multiple narratives were authorised at the same time and experienced as competing for cultural recognition in the narratives on *Pungwe* in Zimbabwe. What would also be expected in the findings of this study would be a value judgment of whether Bakhtin's notion of the carnival space was also significantly appropriated by the Shona novelists during their portrayal of the *Pungwe* institution to allow the ordinary people and the freedom fighters to mock the values of the official in the Rhodesian administration or that these Shona narratives will have outlived their usefulness.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion of the whole study. This chapter therefore ties arguments advanced in the study, and it also provides recommendations for possible future research on *Pungwe*, and the Shona war novel in Zimbabwe.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

This first chapter's discussion takes into account the fact that Zimbabwe's liberation struggle is characterised by a multiplicity and plurality of versions and readings. The researcher's interpretation is considered as "another nuance in the maturity of the flavor of the wine" which critically rehabilitates African literature by raising a number of pertinent issues of historical importance and relevance to culture and history dramatised at the *Pungwe* in the face of overwhelming denigration. As was briefly examined before coupled with detail in subsequent chapters, this study uses Bakhtin's description of a historical phenomenon-cum-literary theoretical framework called the carnivalesque. The theory's tenets apply to the analysis of Shona novels and songs. It is demonstrated that although the depiction of the *Pungwe* in the literature varies between Shona authors, there is general consensus that the carnivalesque elements of the *Pungwe* encouraged a subversion that undermines virtually all categories of social privilege in the chosen Shona novels and the Chimurenga War songs.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has provided the introductory remark to the whole thesis by giving an overview of the ground to be covered in this study. This chapter analytically examines the related literature on Chimurenga War's *Pungwe* theatre and shows how it uses the carnivalesque modes through the lens of Bakhtin for its survival. The chapter provides an extended literature review on the nature of *Pungwe*, and how critics have explained *Pungwe*'s existence within the narrative interstices of the Shona novel. The chapter is divided into nine (9) main sections starting with a brief introductory remark to this second chapter. Theatrical repertoire at *Pungwe* is defined in the second segment by creating a theatre which is a complex interreligious interaction of religion, politics, culture and military mechanisms of the liberation struggle. This is followed by an explanation and review of literature on why *Pungwe* became part of the Zimbabwean ideology of Chimurenga. The fourth segment straightens the flawed colonial position that is emerging from the Western critics who differentiate Western theatre from performance and regarding African theatrical practices as primitive and pagan. *Pungwe* is a derivation of this African theatrical practice. The fifth section views *Pungwe* as a mobilising tactic and theatre for social reconstruction which typified the traditional African milieu whose art forms captured people's war experiences in shaping their political consciousness. The sixth section on *Pungwe* as patriotic history has trajectories of nationalism that are questioned by some scholars as populist proclamations. This section corrects these scholars not to negatively view *Pungwe* as full of violence against peasants identified as 'sell-outs' and traitors. Section seven theorises the interface between *Pungwe* and the Shona novel starting with Bakhtin (1984) who exalts the novel genre. It further manages the reclamation of the cultural potential imbedded in orature in order to forge an idiom of national identity. The eighth segment exposes the gaps that this research seeks to fill and the ninth segment concludes this second chapter.

The literature of war has tremendously enriched contemporary African literature. Besides being a form of art, literature is a vehicle through which cultural issues are articulated as they develop in reorganising reality. The major preoccupation of written African literature and its

criticism have changed focus to look at not only themes connected with colonialism. Most critics of African literature realise the crucial mandate of African traditional cultures as a basis for literary criticisms and this present researcher is quite mindful of the fact that “what we search for in fiction is not so much reality but the epiphany of truth” (Nafisi, 2004: 3). *Pungwe* is a very good source of enunciating the great importance of Africa’s task of self-evaluation. As signifiers of theatre, *Pungwe* is a form of traditional culture of Africa which appreciates the role they play in contemporary Zimbabwean social context. The modernity of the discourse on *Pungwe* is that it could be recalled in the context of the liberation struggle to become both a cultural and political platform on which the values of the struggles were elaborated. In post-independence Zimbabwe *Pungwe* has continued in the form of officially organised *bira*. *Bira* is a healing ceremony or a traditional bereavement ritual performed in honour of the deceased during the night. *Pungwe* performances are adaptations of *bira*, which were performed during Zimbabwe’s protracted Chimurenga War. These performances were used by the fighters for freedom to conscientise Zimbabwean masses and map the way forward. On the whole, this chapter argues that there has not been due consideration given on *Pungwe* as a cultural source of the Shona novel. Those criticism on the relationship of *Pungwe* and the Shona novel have not been handled anywhere hence the need for this thesis to look at a more systematic schematisation of the *Pungwe*’s salient features by incorporating key elements of orature such as liminality. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a critical review of the various attempts by the selected Shona written discourses at the “stabilization of flux in oral tradition” (Miller, 2012:1).

## **2.2 Theatrical repertoire at *Pungwe* defined**

Creation of terminology at *Pungwe* reveals and acknowledges the power of symbolic systems in the socio-political construction of Chimurenga War reality. This war transformed human society and structured its environment by creating ideologies which are embedded in Shona language. Through literature, cultural values are transmitted. The chosen works of art mediate relationships at *Pungwe*; not only relationships of speech but also of national consciousness, ideology, role and class. Defining *Pungwe* without firstly understanding the concept of bases as elaborated by Mazarire (2009:311) would be a directionless and futile endeavour:

Thus when we do inquire about the war in [Zimbabwe], we get more about its theatres, normally landscapes associated with the war of which the ‘base’, so far as the majority of testimonies are concerned, was the main arena where the war was

defined, contemplated, fought and 'won'. The base was a site of all the struggles about the struggle and those struggles within it.

Originally, all-night vigils created theatre for complex interreligious interactions of religion, politics, culture and military schemes reserved for Shona people's rituals associated with ancestral veneration, burials and inheritance. These nocturnal rituals would offer spiritual encounter, community solidarity and liberative empowerment when families or villages would gather to celebrate a deceased person's life. *Pungwe* provided the vehicle for celebrating complex religious convictions and cultural practices.

The contextual form of *Pungwe* as an indigenous religio-cultural practice, where night (period between dusk and dawn) is extremely important time, has been appropriated into Christianity to which Presler (1999:16) asserts:

The *pungwe* is a contextual form of African Christianity... [where] we see the Zimbabwean church flowering as a Shona religious and cultural phenomenon, for the *pungwe* represents a uniquely African contribution made through African initiative and agency.

It is against this background that during the war for national liberation for black majority rule in Zimbabwe, fighters for freedom adopted and adapted the content of the *Pungwe* practice as a crucial medium for education and communication that prompted the promotion of mass mobilisation. The wartime rallies placed *Pungwe* at the centre of popular consciousness. Presler's *Transfigured Night* (1999) comments on the missional work in Zimbabwe but the researcher conceives of the book as an empirically verifiable and sometimes falsifiable description of some aspects of Shona culture which this study seeks to correct by testing through questionnaires and interviews and literary works against Presler's evidence from contrived examples. Of concern is especially his view that it is Christianity that informs African culture where "the guerrillas built on their experience of vigils in the churches" (Presler, 1999: 65):

The Christian dimension has been so thoroughly appropriated into the indigenous religio-cultural context that it cannot be said that *Pungwe* in the churches represent a foreign Christian intruder masquerading in indigenous religion and culture. Conversely, the *Pungwe* in the churches is so authentically Christian that it cannot be said that an indigenous practice has simply absorbed and essentially compromised the immigrant religious impulse (Presler, 1999:16).

*Pungwe* is essentially indigenous and therefore this study takes care of the limitations and rough edges that Presler (1999) has left showing. With the overall successes in the *Pungwe*'s mobilisation role, the war effort required a continual communicative instrument with rural Zimbabweans to be assured of their support politically and materially. The *Pungwe* as an instrument of Chimurenga War assisted in mapping out "a tradition of carnival as a liberatory insurrection... the artistic avant-garde group cum revolutionary organization... [which] rose to prominence" (Grindon, 2011:148-9). The *Pungwe* became an instrument-cum-methodology for the re-engagement with popular masses by assuming spiritual, political and military significance.

Nkomo's autobiography, *The Story of my Life* (1984) is expected to provide reliable information and a fair commentary of Chimurenga War, as it was written by a former Vice President of Zimbabwe, but unfortunately, the role of the *Pungwe* is grossly distorted. The misrepresentations by Nkomo (1984:162) lie in that, the ZANLA forces penetrated into villages in large groups of up to a hundred:

This in itself imposed much greater demands on the civilian population whose areas they crossed, especially when the visiting soldiers demanded meat and chickens from their hosts. They adopted a policy of forced political indoctrination of the local population- in Shona they called it *pungwe*, meaning compulsory all-night mass meetings. ZANLA, in fact, operated as a political force, while ZIPRA had to behave in a strictly military way.

A related objection to Nkomo's book is the notion that ZANLA forces travelled in those large groups of hundred cadres. Even a poorly trained army would not do this for this would compromise their effectiveness. This exaggeration seeks to discredit the role that the ZANLA forces play during the liberation struggle. One biggest weakness "within the genre of autobiography what should be questioned is the claim to the subjectivity of a single voice that accesses a single objective reality" (Vambe, 2009:81). The reviewed literature's depiction of *Pungwe* experience is that a group was composed of between eight and fifteen cadres. Nkomo's political biography has numerous falsehoods rendering it as "a polemical text serving a particular political agenda" whose perception of unpredicability of the thematic concern under discussion "refuses any other way of reading it, of seeing in it different interpretations other than those that the author wishes to promote" (Vambe and Chennells, 2009: 5). Uninteresting though, it is the writer's failure to realise how intricate *Pungwe* as a



revolutionary strategy of peasant mobilisation was. Makanda's (2013:71) diagnosis of this failure by Nkomo, a ZIPRA cadre, is attributable to the fact that this "concept was elaborated at the *Pungwe* and in Zimbabwean liberation war historiography, the *Pungwe* is a distinctly ZANLA creation. The Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the armed wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), did not use the *Pungwe* as extensively as ZANLA did. This point is important to underscore because in any debate on the relationship between the ZANLA forces and the masses, it is the *Pungwe* that mediated and ensured the success of the war." It is the Chinhoyi Battle of 1966 that psychologically boosted the nationalist leadership to formulate a different strategy of the *Pungwe* as a new imperative. This realisation to successfully mobilise the masses in order to conduct a successful struggle came from Josiah Tongogara, the chair of the Zanla's High Command. He had learned in China that this strategy was vital to mobilise the people. The adoption of this new strategy which stipulated that if one wanted to win a revolution it was not only a revolution of the gun but a revolution of mobilising the masses. This is summed up by Mao Tse Tung's words of wisdom that the "revolutionary war is a war of the masses; only mobilizing the masses and relying on them can wage it" (Tse Tung, 1934:147).

As a political strategy, *Pungwe* provided an ideal means to communicate the Chimurenga War political strategies without long exhortatory speeches that repeatedly turned off the villagers. Mlama's research deems worthy of interest the shortened speeches that combine songs and dances reminiscent of the *Pungwe* style which adapts the tune and its accompaniment conveyed through short sketches to which villagers responded with enthusiasm. Mlama (1991:205) avers:

The choice of the people's own theatrical forms of communication improves the people's willingness to express their views on development plans, something which radio, film, television or print have not yet effectively achieved.

The effectiveness of folk media utilisation in indigenous theatrical forms contributes to the liberation strategies. The villagers themselves actively participated as major actors and co-organisers of the events since they would be potential beneficiaries of independence. The skits, songs, dance and poetry at *Pungwe* activated the innate and inherent creativity of the oppressed Zimbabwean masses thereby conveying the people's ideas into realistic forms of the spirit of revolution.

Chinyowa (2004: 2) discusses the renaissance of a vibrant performance culture typical of the *Pungwe*. He examines the aesthetic nature of these to give more emphasis on the problems of the African experience at the expense of the theatrical means by which that experience is articulated. As Chinyowa desired to fill the aesthetic gap by examining the processual elements of African theatre modes especially when applied to contemporary theatre for development practice, he fails to include *Pungwe* as theatre but just looked at the general role played by orature. It is this void that this study seeks to fill and show how *Pungwe* contributed to political transformation of the then Rhodesia to Zimbabwe.

In her book entitled *African Theatre and Politics: The evolution of theatre in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe* (1996) Plastow was greatly fascinated by the ways in which African traditional performance forms have interacted with and resisted some non-indigenous modes of dramatic representation in order to remain what it is today. She has followed the development of theatre and drama against the backdrop of periods of cultural evolution and interaction, stemming from pre-colonial times, right through to the phases of African and European imperialism, to the liberation struggles and newly-won independence of the present. While the book gives a seminal relationship between theatre, society and politics, the author has failed to explain why *Pungwe* meetings were held at night. It was not for fear of the Rhodesian army as she explains it:

Pungwe literally means from sunset to sunrise. It was the term used for the all-night politicisation sessions run by guerrillas in Zimbabwean villages which employed a variety of performance forms. The meetings had to be held at night for fear of the Rhodesian army (Plastow, 1996: 85).

The timing of the *Pungwe* was not a result of fearing anyone as Plastow suggests. Night in Shona is that “supremely important time ... between dusk and dawn ... where people encounter spiritual reality with greater immediacy, power, fear and celebration than at any time” (Presler, 1999:63). A whole host of spirits hovers around in nocturnal possibilities and events by fulfilling their obligations. Community members stand in solidarity against evil. *Pungwe* exemplified the cadres and masses’ unity of purpose. This study shifts the terrain of research on *Pungwe* by exploring how *Pungwe* was constructed outside and inside the novel. The study uses Bakhtin’s thesis of the power of carnival. Bakhtin’s work defies categorisation when he posited that the form, content and meanings of language are constantly shaped by history and culture. The chosen novels prominently highlight

Zimbabwe's Chimurenga War "as an anti-colonial struggle and as a period of political and ethical rapture" whose "multi-dimensional thrust inscribes a variety of narratives that criss-cross in ironic juxtaposition. It is thus a drama of community resistance..." (Wilson-Tagoe, 2003:163) imbued with an African cultural consciousness well articulated in a language that can be comprehended easily. Among Bakhtin's most influential concepts are *heteroglossia*, the idea that culture and its narratives, no matter how monolithic they appear, are comprised of a polyphony of competing voices; *dialogism*, which holds that culture is inherently responsive and interactive, involving individuals acting and reacting at a particular point in time and space; and the key element to this research is *carnavalesque*, a subversive mixing of high and low cultures that undermines social hierarchies and opens the way for change and new connections. Bakhtin's theories, which celebrate the parodic and fragmentary, have provided new ways of reading both canonical and marginalised or neglected Zimbabwean Shona literature. Chinyowa (2004) further buttresses this view-point by citing Obiechina's (1993) seminal study on African oral poetics, who identifies a multiplicity of features responsible for the existing power of indigenous performance genres of which *Pungwes* are part:

They bear the stamp of the African people's collective wisdom and communal approval when placed side by side with new ideas, values and practices. There is a tendency among African people to 'return to the source' of their indigenous poetics for more enduring forms, styles and techniques. The genres are also part of the people's lived experience, and so point beyond the moment to acquire existential value. More importantly, authority is bestowed upon these genres by an epistemological order in which knowledge is acquired and expressed through analogy, allusion, symbol and metaphor. (Obiechina cited in Chinyowa, 2004:2)

While Pfukwa's article entitled "Revisiting *Pungwe*: Recovering Zimbabwean Cultural Capital" (2009) truthfully laments that performances of *Pungwe* have lost their lustre through distortion and appropriation by different players who do it for different reasons, the author misses the point that this unwarranted criticism is not solely coming from the whites. Serious denigration that shocks those who partook in the Chimurenga War is being perpetrated by black African scholars whose nobility of intention becomes questionable. Yes, some white writers know very little about the Zimbabwean culture and they end up describing and always projecting *Pungwe* as an instrument of violence.

Pfukwa's *A Dictionary of Chimurenga War Names* (2012) has some names providing political jokes in the view of Bakhtinian theory of carnival and the carnivalesque where texts

that glorify, mock, parody, satirise, crown or decrown are represented. The author fails to theorise onomastics with a sound hypothesis whose carnivalesque politics provides a cycle that portrays hidden dialogue between the oppressed and their marginalised discourse, and the regime and its dominant autocratic discourse. There are no qualms of doubts that Chimurenga War names provide subversive humour and a rebellious political tone that mocked those in power thereby affecting both social and political changes during the colonial era which the author fails to pick. Pfukwa fails to highlight the fact that at *Pungwe*, Chimurenga War names celebrated Zimbabwe's liberation before we got it. This created a different socio-political framework which challenged the Rhodesia administration leading to the carnival element which Bakhtin (1984b:41) calls "internally persuasive discourse" where official Rhodesian discourse was ridiculed at *Pungwe* meetings through grotesque realism.

The setting of the *Pungwe* has religious and moral authority to the Chimurenga war. It is a word that connotes continuation from dusk through the night till dawn. The metaphorical meaning of *Pungwe* is 'forever' which is why we have the third Chimurenga which is an attitude towards emancipation. Chimurenga is named after Chief Murenga and it captures the infinite nature of resistance. Freedom fighters were like Murenga, who died fighting. This never-die attitude which is forever no little wonder why we have a series of *Zvimurenga* even today. In the word *Pungwe*, the syllable *pu-* would be idiomatically expressed as; *pu pu pu* meaning "spending the whole night" and *hwe-e* or *ngwe-e* means dawn. *Pungwe* would tell a tale of "spending the whole night until dawn" (Presler, 1999: 43). It is quite clear that the word *Pungwe* was in usage socially and ritually since time immemorial. This shows the violent military discourse coupled with a violent aggression *-ngweee-* which is ideophonic and shows consciousness and enlightenment which results in the peasant community and cadres' union. Kaarsholm's (1994) thrust in the Chimurenga War differs with Chifunye who is preoccupied with post-independence theatre's main influences which stem from the theatre developed during the war of national liberation and performed at all-night song-and-dance political rallies. This theatre took its name (*Pungwe*) and form from an earlier genre of performance in Zimbabwe. Presler (1999:299) defines *Pungwe* as "an event in which people intentionally stay up all night, more or less without sleep, for a form of social interaction, the purpose and tone of which may be primarily social, political or religious". *Pungwe*, as a genre of performance, has a long history within Shona culture. The venue for the *Pungwe* was any secluded place whose significant contribution to the history of the carnival should not be underestimated. Carnival festivities with the accompaniment of its comic spectacle which

were ritually inter-connected placed much significance in the lives of the people for it was meant for the public sphere:

Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because it's very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time, life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part (Bakhtin, 1984: 7).

In this similar carnival spirit, Chifunyise's main thematic concern in his article entitled "Trends in Zimbabwean Theatre Since 1980" (1990) is that Zimbabwean theatre since independence has employed the *Pungwe* genre to grapple with challenges that bedeviled "a rapidly transforming socio-economic, political and cultural environment on one hand, and attempts by sections of Zimbabwean society to resolve contradictions created by the long history of cultural and political domination" (Chifunyise, 1990: 289). There is a very good reason why the galas and biras are mainly staged in urban areas.

People celebrated war victories at *Pungwe* and this carnival space became an emancipatory art endowed with redemptive powers which relied on voluntary mobilisation of the masses. It is through political mobilisation that all the energies of the masses are channeled into a meaningful revolution. This was possible at *Pungwe* which raised the political consciousness of the people and made them realise they are the weapon of revolutionary Chimurenga War. Since we are living in an era where weapons and modern armies by themselves cannot bring victory in battle, this prompted Chairman Mao to aver that a "national revolutionary war as great as ours cannot be won without extensive and thorough going political mobilisation." This Maoist stance is further supported by Evans (2007:3) whose understanding of the correct relationship between politics and war assists in complementing political mobilisation quite typical of the *Pungwe*:

The power of the masses must be tapped into or else the revolution will fail. Political mobilization produces revolutionary victory by bringing the people back into the fold of war. Social grievances, foreign invasion, economic oppression, failure of the state structure, ideological fervor etc...have all been referenced as principal causes of revolution. The aforementioned causes are not enough to galvanize a population into full blown revolutionary war. The political power and ire of the people has to be organized and provoked through political mobilization before a successful revolution can foster itself.

Lack of unity amongst the masses make the revolution fail but political mobilisation produces revolutionary victory by bringing the people together and fight for a common good. Liberating violence against the white minority regime was planned at *Pungwe* which Fanon (1963) considered a necessity not only for the colonised's reclamation of their freedom from the colonial oppression but also for the people to re-affirm their humanity and identity.

Chinyowa's *An Aesthetic Framework for African Theatre for Development* (2006) is a milestone in examining a play as a people-centred aesthetic which has the capability of creating spaces for participants to assess their needs and fashion their priorities with a view to changing their circumstances. This is very true of *Pungwe* theatre whose enormous creative force among the people brought fun or joy intermingled with mockery and often associated with plays, wielded the revolutionary political consciousness necessary to move both the fighters for freedom and masses to be transported into different state of being. Multiple political motivation initiatives and political indoctrination techniques were developed and adopted into Chimurenga War formula. Chinyowa's (2006:28) observation is apt when he says:

Once they have attained the sense of freedom created within the play frame, the participants feel liberated from the fears, constraints and obligations of ordinary reality. The consequences of their actions are minimized as their actions are camouflaged within the paradox of play. For this reason, the play frame allows theatre practitioners and participants to address even the most sensitive issues without threatening the social structure.

While *Pungwe* meetings were "created within the play frame" they needed no workshops which Chinyowa emphasises when he puts it that the "ordering and shaping of play through workshops becomes a way of making 'development' come into being. The workshops act as discursive frames for creating alternative realities for participants" (ibid: 28). While it is a fact that Chinyowa's book opens a hitherto unexplored path that leads to some knowledge of theatre for development theory and practice by conceptualising an aesthetic framework that is situated within the people's language of performance, it leaves out a gap which this study seeks to fill. The Zimbabwean masses did not automatically gravitate towards Chimurenga War's political aim of attaining independence but it was through *Pungwe* meetings that the masses patiently and slowly but surely imbibed the political doses in a protracted warfare. We have a proven case where the Soviet revisionists rejected the power of the masses at their peril. Piao (cited in Evans, 2007:6) noted that, "The Khrushchev revisionists insist that a nation without nuclear weapons is incapable of defeating an enemy with nuclear weapons,

whatever methods of fighting it may adopt.” This proposition is rendered null and void because through political mobilisation typical of *Pungwe* theatre by the Zimbabwean people, people can defeat a stronger power with nuclear weapons. It is not technological advancement or nuclear weapons that count to win a revolutionary war. Another clearly stated evidence for this above corollary is the Communist Party of the Philippines’ (CPP) whose lucid description of those revolutionaries who damn patient political mobilisation is captured here:

In the wish to hasten revolutionary victory, spontaneous uprisings of the masses is actually rated higher than steady and solid organizing of a proletarian revolutionary party and other revolutionary forces. The premium is put on sweeping propaganda, street activism, transport paralisation by armed units and other dramatic acts of violence rather than on painstaking mass work (Evans, *ibid* : 6).

*Pungwe* meetings were not always violent like many revolutionaries that believe in the theory of spontaneous masses. ZANLA military strategists have much faith in this theory which holds that the masses will spontaneously arise in revolution after spectacular acts of violence, urban street fighting, terrorism or even peaceful protesting. This is foolish adventurism and wishful thinking contained in fanciful theories of speedy victory which fail to achieve desired results in any revolutionary war. Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle was through a protracted war of the masses. This is enough testimony to the importance of political mobilisation at *Pungwe* meetings during the first phases of Zimbabwe’s protracted war. The Chimurenga War formula can be likened to the French-Indochinese war where, “In the early years, as the political movement of the masses was not strong enough and the enemy’s forces still stable, the political mobilization among the masses had all the more to be considered as the main task, for the preparation of armed insurrection” (Evans, 2007:7). Through *Pungwe*, Zimbabwe’s political and military power base was strengthened via political mobilisation before significant operations against the counter-revolutionary force took place. The momentum of revolutionary war is weakened when the vital stages of political mobilisation are bypassed. The absence of this potent weapon, the *Pungwe*, could have cost the nation so much for the struggle. The Communist Party of Peru (PCP) further adds insightful comments about the pitfalls of adventurism of revolutionaries who deny the power of political mobilisation:

They pay homage to weapons and reject the protracted and systematic political work among the masses (especially the peasantry), favoring guerrilla "focos" for the

auctioning of wandering armed bands. They cultivate spontaneity, initiating the military activities without considering the political conditions and the subjective desire of the masses (acting above the conscience of the masses) (ibid: 7).

*Pungwe* minimised difficulties of communication between guerrillas and the masses. This perpetuated the recruiting processes of more sympathisers through *Pungwe*'s political and nationalistic influences. *Pungwe* traditionally cultivated a glorious and heroic spirit into the audience. A series of attempt by the Rhodesian Front to derail the fighters for freedom's efforts in conscientising the masses were abortive. The *Pungwe*'s revolutionary political capacity for mobilisation of people enabled the creativity of the masses' martial prowess to emanate from their political consciousness. This political awareness did not emanate from the weapons that Zimbabwean fighters for freedom carried. Gonzalo of Sendero Luminoso (cited in Evans, 2007: 3) observed that:

[m]odern weapons are necessary, but their performance depends on the ideology of the man who wields them. The weapon is only an extension of the mind. A soldier with a weak mind will perform poorly no matter what advanced weapon he holds in his hands... A revolutionary political consciousness arms the soldier mentally by increasing his martial creativity and political motivation.

The idea that mobilisation of masses at *Pungwe* was achieved only through coercion is fallacious and misguided. The imbalance of Nkomo's book is worsened by his concentration on ZANU's political discursive space at the expense of charting his own alternative direction and for his party ZAPU. This renders his book to fail to respect "the autobiographical pact between writer and reader- the pact that says that, at the very least, the reader will be told no outright, deliberate lies" in order not to compromise the "truths" of his story to the "fictions" that disadvantages ZANU (Vambe, 2009:89). In some instances, political mobilisation was voluntaristic unlike the negative view, which compromises "truths," held by Joshua Nkomo that ZANLA always coerced people. After explanations of why they were fighting, the guerrillas inspired the adoption of the *Pungwe* strategy into the people's war. A Retired Lieutenant Colonel, Gaza, a former ZANLA combatant summed up the non-coercive nature of the *Pungwe* when he says:

The ideological consciousness of the masses of Zimbabwe, especially the rural peasants, was shaped by their material and feudal conditions as well as the colonial capitalist system that was superimposed, on their traditional set-up....The mass-based approach that the guerrillas employed was a democratic system which involved the



masses for the first time in their history, in the process of analyzing their concrete material conditions... This gave them power and mastery over their own destiny... The freedom fighters won the 'hearts and minds' (to use a popular phrase) of the masses and convinced them of the integrity of their intentions to work with these young girls as comrades-in-arms as they did with everybody else, and not to use them as their 'concubines' (Gaza, 1985: 7-8).

War strategies and political mobilisation were mechanisms crafted at *Pungwe*. This political goal came to fruition and put the Rhodesian Front in a state of psychological shock on numerous defeats. The *Pungwe* provide the masses and guerrillas with a rich form of experience firmly rooted in Chimurenga War's socio-political and cultural realities in Zimbabwe. It is this exuberant deconstructivist's experimentation at the *Pungwe* that testifies to the commitment to restore Zimbabwe's theatrical and cultural identities. *Pungwe* provided the challenge that this theatre presented the survival strategies typical of "hit and run" guerrilla movement. *Pungwe* was not performed at the same space even in one district during the war. Guerrillas and the masses changed locations of *Pungwe* performance. The change of space from one village to another helped spread new consciousness about the war to different masses. This also changed the geography of knowledge of the struggle from merely being a monopoly of the guerrillas fighting with guns to the people who feed the guerrillas relay important information and were also recruited from different places for training cadres, outside and inside the country. Davis' comment that *Pungwe* was "positive art, creative theatre, theatre of purpose, educational theatre, communal theatre, original and relevant indigenous African theatre" (Davis, 1993:151) is very relevant to this study. This long discussion on the pertinence of *Pungwe* can be summed up by the role of political mobilisation in Zimbabwe's revolutionary war with a quote from Lin Piao's speech, "Long Live the Victory of people's War" where it is succinctly stated that:

The essence of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory of army building is that in building a people's army prominence must be given to politics, i.e., the army must first and foremost be built on a political basis. Politics is the commander; politics is the soul of everything. Political work is the lifeline of our army. True, a people's army must pay attention to the constant improvement of its weapons and equipment and its military technique, but in its fighting it does not rely purely on weapons and technique, it relies mainly on politics, on the proletarian revolutionary consciousness and courage of the commanders and fighters, on the support and backing of the masses (Evans, *ibid*: 12).

Political mobilisation brought Chimurenga War as a revolutionary movement from a state of weakness to a state of power by unleashing the positive energy of the Zimbabwean masses. The use of the theatre of *Pungwe* made significant cultural contributions to the liberation struggle. It exposed ordinary people to the kind of theatrical and artistic developments imbedded in African culture. It created a forum where political issue that confronted both people and the fighters for freedom. *Pungwe* incorporated more songs and dances in memorable celebrations of the expected bliss of Zimbabwe's independence.

Muchemwa (2010:512) opinionates that the ruling party ZANU-PF had lost support to the opposition MDC formations and for that reason "the galas migrate from one province to another" propelled "by pragmatic demands of the electoral moment, targeting those places where either electoral support is wanning or there are party factional fights". Whether ZANU PF had lost is not the issue here but the crux of the matter is that the party that had lost resorted to a tried and tested *Pungwe* institution. This is a demonstration of a political party's resourcefulness even when its political fortunes are on the wane.

### **2.3 The Zimbabwean Ideology of Chimurenga**

The liberation struggle 'received prior oracular blessings from spirit mediums during the struggle for independence in the 1970s' (Chitando 2005: 220-239) in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 3). This necessitated the peasants to claim "approval and permanent political legitimacy", as "the carrier of the 'burden of history' bequeathed on it by heroes of the 1896-7 risings. This messianic role received a further boost from the notion of a vanguard political party that led the masses from the front and knew what the people wanted" (Chitando, in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011:3). Literature is a discourse whose rhetorical language is typical of other forms of discourse. The chosen body of literary war texts namely, Choto's *Vavariro* (1990), Chiwome's *Masango Mavi* (1998), Musengezi's *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1984), Chimhundu's *Chakwasha* (1991), Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and Literature Bureau's *Hondo YeChimurenga* (1985) are not an autonomous pattern of linguistic form far removed from socio-political forces. The choice of these novels as discourses is meant to interpret and describe the vitality of cultural functions of *Pungwe*. Chigidi's (2009:24) observation situates the choice of this body of literature into its proper historical perspective when he states that:

The war of liberation in Zimbabwe started in earnest in 1966 with the Chinhoyi Battle and ended in 1979. Thirteen years of war should be long enough for a genre to emerge and develop significantly. Throughout the war, no Shona novels that dealt with the liberation war appeared. However, the enthusiasm and flurry with which fictional works on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe appeared soon after independence raises more questions than one, and questions that call for more answers than have been given so far.

Chigidi's major flaw here is that his usage of the vague phrase "war of liberation" might mean first, second or third Chimurenga. His gross underestimation of the role of the relationship of orature to the African novel has to deal:

...with the complexity of the African oral storytelling tradition in its variety of forms such [as] songs, allegory, folktale, spirit-possession, fantasy and myth, ancestor veneration, ritual, legends, proverbs, fables and jokes amongst others (Vambe, 2004a:3).

It is one's ideological orientation that informs his understanding of the analysis of the linkage between orality and the Zimbabwean Shona novel. The selected Shona writers belong to different categories of age, class and ethnicity "with potentially different ideological sensibilities" (Vambe, *ibid*: 3) which invites all sorts of narrative possibilities and usher in new crucial perceptions in a mythic construction of the Chimurenga war reality. The Shona novels' thrust is that "the literary world could well be a mythical space" (Gikandi, 1991:3) which at the same time "unveils the concrete experience of human communities." This enables writers to generate their own paradigms and myths in a way that is so forceful and liberating to the narratives of national resistance. It is at *Pungwe* where this infernal world of fantasy cauterises socio-political feeling of Zimbabweans to want to join the liberation struggle. In orature's lived contexts, it is not only alive but flexible since the Shona novel is riddled with contradictions in representing war of national liberation in Zimbabwe. To this Vambe (2004a:5) avers:

This capacity for orature/ literature to say one thing and mean another is the allegorical dimension in art. ... it also has the metaphoric quality of literature that enables meanings to transcend the obvious 'surface' meanings of the text that are bound up by particular social contexts within which the text is read.

The presence of folktales, myths and fantasy in the Shona novel helps to construct meaning which embodies and masks certain Chimurenga War aspects of human experiences. Orature has that unquenchable desire to construct and represent reality in a multiplicity of ways

## 2.4 *Pungwe* and the pre-colonial existence of African theatre

The present researcher begins by being “attentive to the ‘morbid symptoms’ that characterise” (Lazar, 2008:54) Africa’s interregnum which has resulted in Western literary and theatre critics continue to ostracise African countries for lacking any form of real theatre until the late nineteenth century. This flawed position emerged because Western critics differentiated theatre from performance and, as Mbowa (cited in Kaahwa, 2004 :82) has observed, they defined theatre as a “formal scripted theatre performed on a proscenium arch stage, an artistic form that was introduced [to Africa] by the colonial educators and missionaries.” Achebe (1995:60-1) warns that anyone who:

...falls for such nonsense, not only in spite of Africa’s so very recent history but, even more, in the face of continuing atrocities committed against millions of Africans in their own land by racist minority regimes, deserves a lot of pity.

Oral traditions operating in present-day African society are still a valuable source of information about a community sense of identity. It is apparent that Dorson’s assertion (cited in Kgobe, 1999: 3) about folklore is quite sufficient to explain theatre as “an echo of the past, but at the same time, it is also the vigorous voice of the present. [Theatre] has been and continues to be a reflection and a weapon of class conflict.” In African orature, the past becomes a reservoir where the “vigorous voice of the present” derives its sustenance. The Western distinction between formal theatre and other kinds of performances did not exist in African culture. Connecting *Pungwe* as carnivalesque experience is “the acknowledgement of its discursive embeddedness and address, its cultural positionality, its reference to present time and a specific space” (Bhabha, 1995:208).

The motive of colonialism was primarily economic and political. The white settler engaged in massive and often violent seizure of the African’s land. African people’s oral traditions were distorted, mocked and declared anachronistic. According to some colonial historians, “colonial conquest was a philanthropic move to ‘civilise’ the ‘raw African’ ” (Taviringana, 1994:59). There developed a false argument that proclaimed the Whiteman’s superiority over the colonised African people whose culture was regarded as atavistic. Finnegan (1970: 516), whose knowledge of African orature was undoubted, postulates in *Oral Literature in Africa* that:

...with a few possible exceptions, there is no tradition in Africa of artistic performances which include all the elements which be demanded in a strict definition of drama, or at least not with the emphasis to which we are accustomed.

Finnegan's view is representation of critics of a Western persuasion who approached African theatre with negative images derived from their cultural matrix that what is not written is not true art. The biggest tragic flaw of this impressionistic approach to analysis of orature is that "it tends to obscure rather than reveal the true nature of dramatic activities involved in traditional art forms" (Kavannagh, 1983: 44). African theatrical practices, of which *Pungwe* meetings are part, were viewed as primitive, pagan and unchristian. The ideological framework for African education had its genesis based on the minority racist and paternalistic view that the education of blacks was an exceptional responsibility of a superior white missionary race and other educationists. Theirs was an unrelenting attack that denigrated African people's history, culture and identity which were viewed as primitive, barbaric and had to be wiped out and replaced by a more civilised Christian culture. This discourse promoted myths and racial stereotypes typical of one missionary's proposal to resolve the 'native' problem:

'Father Biehler is so convinced of the hopelessness of regenerating the Mashonas,' wrote Lord Grey from Chishawasha in January 1897, 'whom he regards as the most hopeless of mankind . . . that he states that the only chance for the future of the race is to exterminate the whole people, both male and female, over the age of 14! This pessimistic conclusion', Grey continued, 'I find it hard to accept' (Zhuwarara, 1987: 131).

This hard, radical and unchristian solution proposed by a priest, Father Biehler is often unfathomable to Africans because it exudes a negative attitude that underscores the depth of aggression which some of the whites had against African religion in particular and African culture in general. It is now that some missionaries have passionately apologised to Africans for any wrong-doing they committed.

In terms of education, most African schools were previously run by missionaries with the aid of the state. The African community found it difficult and strongly denied the creation of a detached and lopsided system of black education rather than a uniform public schooling system for all Africans. The white governments in Africa were so clear that Bantu education was premeditated to teach African learners to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for a white-run economy and society, in spite of one's academic prowess, dexterity and

aspirations. In an example of what are now iniquitous words from a theologian and the architect of Bantu Education himself, the then Minister of Native Affairs, Verwoerd, explained the government's new education policy to the South African Parliament:

There is no space for him [the "Native"] in the European Community above certain forms of labor. For this reason it is of no avail for him to receive training which has its aim in the absorption of the European Community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of European Society where he is not allowed to graze (Behr, 1988:36).

In sharp contrast to Verwoerd's view of Africa, African traditional theatre is participatory where there is no distinction between actor and audience. Western aspects of theatrical conceptions are supported by the Aristotelian poetic tradition which is fiercely attacked by African theatre scholars who favour indigenous non-verbal forms of expression. Rohmer (1999:39) gives a chain of oppositions of popular theatre versus scripted play-text as follows:

<b>Western (Aristotle) Theatre</b>	<b>African Popular Theatre</b>
Product	Process
Script	Improvisation
Written	Oral
Consumption	Participation
Dialogue	Music / dance
Individual	Communal
European language	Indigenous language
Elitist	Popular
Oppressive	Liberating

The table above helps to expose biased Western criticism where the critics expect traditional theatre to kowtow to English standards. In South Africa, like in any other African country, the conditions that were created for African education constituted a threat to the maintenance of the myth of the White man's superiority. Verwoerd (cited in Hirson, 1979: 45) further expounded his racist rendition on the guiding 'philosophy' that shapes the state's perception of the subaltern education, reminiscing all African states, as it is rooted in their Apartheid manifesto by stating that:

When I have control of Native education I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them. People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for the Natives. Education must train and

teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live.... When my department controls Native education it will know for what class of higher education a Native is fitted, and whether he will have a chance in life to use his knowledge... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd.

It was to be borne in the African's mind that both "their opportunities in life" and "the sphere in which they live" are defined by the oppressor. This perspective creates a frame of reference where the oppressor makes choices for the oppressed. These distortions were part of the colonial agenda of oppression especially by the colonial missionary factor that developed a strong negative impact in traditional African theatre. In the words of Nzewi (2007:5):

After the bombardment of the invading tornados of fanciful knowledge, the indigenous lore of life will yet revive with innately refurbished shoots and fulfill again the human mission of the musical arts in original Africa, and edify Africa's mental and human prosperity.

Western parameters emphasise costume, specialised scenery, non-participatory audience, and many more. The removal of this Eurocentric straight jacket shows the existence of pre-colonial African theatre, the present researcher is calling performance, did exist, in the form of traditional ceremonies, festivals and popular epics. These ceremonies and festivals were an apprenticeship space which constituted sacred rituals encapsulated in performance aimed at teaching both young and old men and women the art of living. The traditional, popular performance of epic involved a communal cultural practice both highly structured and yet spontaneous, open for improvisation and generally participatory (Mbowa cited in Kaahwa, ibid 82). This communal aspect of traditional life was disturbed by colonialism when "the rain started to beat us". *Pungwe* as a carnivalesque festivity was enthusiastically celebrated during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. As part of the restoration process of the assaulted African psyche, both cultural and psychological attacks were to go. This is rightly pointed out by wa Thiong'o (1986:16) who observes that:

To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others... For colonialism this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer.

The *Pungwe* provided the carnival space that disputed and mocked the colonial regime's so-called normal rules of order and morality through subversive songs and political rhetoric. *Pungwe* as performance provided the form of topsy-turvy inversion where the generality of the masses as lower class people imitated the highly regarded white supremacy with their mocking satirical songs like "*Smith unonhuwa gwembe*" (Smith you smell a disease called rabbies). The *Pungwe* as part of African philosophy upholds values of working together thereby promoting unity and solidarity that facilitated stability during the war in particular and society in general. This quest for consensus in traditional African culture, reminiscent of Latin American explosion in a riot of colour, music and dance is evident in Gyekye's thought (cited in Ramose, 1999:141) when he says:

The communal ethos of African culture necessarily placed a great value on solidarity, which in turn necessitated the pursuit of unanimity or consensus not only in such important decisions as those taken by the highest political authority of the town or state, but also in decisions taken by lower assemblies such as those presided over by the heads of the clans, that is, the councilors.

In contrast to the communal ethos emphasised in the passage above, Western literary and theatre critics' view the African continent as that which lacked any serious form of real theatre. The adaptation of these traditional performances and their later co-existence in the liberation struggle to form *Pungwe* theatre dispels the misconceptions that there was no African tradition of performance before. The performing arts employed at *Pungwe* from the reservoir of African traditions, unlocked the creative energies of the masses and showed its, "revolutionary creativeness when it remodeled its whole system of strategy, broke with all the old rules and traditions of warfare, replaced the old troops with a new revolutionary people's army, and created new methods of warfare" (Lenin cited in Evans, 2007: 4).

## **2.5 *Pungwe*: Patriotic History and the Trajectories of Nationalism**

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011: 5) views patriotic history as a populist proclamation aimed at the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition that has been spearheaded by ZANU-PF cadres as patriots. It is this type of history, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (ibid: 5) thinks, that has "repudiated academic historiography's attempts to complicate and question the trajectories of nationalism." This history's relevance, authenticity, acceptance and integrity are entirely dependent on certain aesthetic and critical standards by which the institution should be



judged. Ndlovu-Gatsheni goes on with his differing perception that there were misunderstandings and “tensions [which] included the purging of the Zimbabwe People Army (ZIPA), the brutalization of younger and more junior ZANLA cadres throughout the liberation struggle; the use of violence against those peasants identified as ‘sell-outs’ and traitors during the course of *pungwes* (night vigils organised by ZANLA cadres) in rural communities...”. However, the *Pungwe* was also an ideologically dynamic and dialectically mobilising tool employed by the ZANLA forces as a tangible physical dimension than Ndlovu-Gatsheni misses. His mode of discourse is resistant to the serious political and social issues said in a manner that underestimates the organization and the integrity of Pungwe institution thereby degenerating into counter-revolutionary. This is being socio-politically negligent and offering an absurd representation of the *Pungwe* which can lead to divisive implications typical of the fissures that existed between ZANU & ZAPU.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni deliberately ignores the best source of empirical data which is the observable recurrences of the *Pungwe* meetings to be gotten from the ZANLA war veterans. The real handicap in this kind of writing is its lack of the evaluative scale which provides inarticulacy in Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s exposition of the ZANLA operations. Hence the critic’s dismal of failure to indicate a logical or derivational order among the Chimurenga War dynamics. It is this study’s major aim to fulfill the purpose of conveying a more nuanced application of carnivalesque theory on *Pungwe* outside and inside the Shona novel. It is quite essential for historians to recognize clearly and to acknowledge openly the influence of the *Pungwe* process during the war up to day. The study, therefore, demands objectivity and impersonality in writing on pertinent socio- political issues about the Chimurenga War. Flaubert’s (cited in Fowles, 1981:111) remarks best suits critics who romanticise the *Pungwe*:

One mustn’t bring one’s own personality on to the scene. I believe that great Art is scientific and impersonal. It is one of my principles that one must not write oneself into one’s work as God is in creation, invisible yet all-powerful; we must sense him everywhere but never see him.

Evidently there are plenty of variables that were at play during *Pungwe*. The argument that attendance was only out of coercion feeds into racist discourse which removes consciousness and urgency from the African identity. Secondly is the layer of the removal of consciousness agency from the peasants (class snobbery). The third layer is the argument which fails to recognise Africa’s communicative and cultural education which is transmitted orally. It is this

education that enabled Africans to develop a political consciousness, political and military agency. The Chinese's fish in water concept blended well with the African tradition, coupled with singing and dancing as a community throughout the night.

Recent studies on peasants in most revolutions generally regard peasant popular support as a prerequisite for success, Kriger's *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* (1995), zeroes on political mobilisation and organisation in Zimbabwe's recent rural-based liberation struggle for independence. Her work's main thrust is the extent to which the fighters for freedom were able to mobilise peasant support, the reasons why peasants participated during the struggle and took part in the mobilisation process. Through her study, she interviewed peasants and other participants about their Chimurenga War experiences and she is able to produce fresh insights into village politics during a revolution. While Kriger's study merely collects and documents liberation war history's oral testimonies of participants, she does not use *Pungwe* meetings to show that the liberation struggle should be treated as a significant weapon of nationalism. Moreso, while Kriger does not rule out popular support she also argues strongly that sometimes this support was given as a result of force or coercion. This is a point that is corroborated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011), Chung (2006) and Lyons (2004). The *Pungwe* exudes the collective will of the people. Some scholars think that:

... this critical discourse of nationalism was beginning to struggle for space within the environment of a re-emerging state-sponsored discourse of emotionally charged and violent official nationalism, premised on a highly romanticized history of the liberation struggle and its memory. This nationalism remained frozen within the 'event' of the liberation war (Ndlovu- Gatsheni & Muzondidya, 2011:37).

These studies' remarkable progress will be registered in 'fracturing' the earlier unilinear inscriptions of the liberation struggle as the meta-narrative of nationalism. What Kriger misses is the mere fact that *Pungwe* treats nationalism as more than just an event of the liberation struggle, but an "official version of national history, where it is rendered in terms of a series of zvimurenga (the First, Second and Third Chimurenga). It is this analytic view that some critics are labelled as "unwitting accomplices in producing hegemonic national histories that run roughshod over pluralities" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Muzondidya, 2011:37).

*Pungwe* necessitated the popular practices and subaltern classes manage to construct more or less autonomous spaces not in the margins, but in the very heart of territories occupied and controlled by state power. Both ordinary Zimbabwean people and the freedom fighters responded to the elite domination by the white settlers by managing to retain some control

over their own actions in a bid to re-appropriate those hegemonic cultural forms that suited their purposes (Mbembe, 1992:127). Neither Kriger nor Ndlovu-Gatsheni were anywhere near *Pungwe* spaces under ZANLA during the war. The critics' arguments are based on secondary sources that demean and distort *Pungwe*. The critics lack first-hand knowledge since they studied *Pungwe* from afar. None of them can therefore be expected to know the dynamics of *Pungwe*. They had no first-hand knowledge of the experience. Their desire to deconstruct ZANU PF history is not nuanced and originates from gossip or hearsay, and not an experientially informed position. Because of these shortcomings, their works cannot be relied on since they are not only biased but are motivated by other unscholarly arguments of regime change. The *Pungwe* therefore should be understood:

...as a way of understanding the process of modern social change. Resistance conceived of a form of life consists of dissensus without conflict, a momentarily detotalizing opposition to the value system of rationalization in favour of the value of life and a jouissance that accounts for the sociality of resistance and its capacity to endure (Halley, 1989:168).

The chosen body of literature in Zimbabwe, in the words of Achebe, "speaks of a particular place, evolves out of the necessities of its history, past and current and the destiny of its people". (Achebe in Ngongkum, 2011:84). *Pungwe* as a zone of activity points to broadening of thought and form which is context bound for it resurfaced in the post-independence Zimbabwe. This study explores the *Pungwe*'s changing contexts and its solidifying cultural formations as witnessed during June 2008 Presidential Elections. The *Pungwe* gave people direction on how oppression can be overcome and black Zimbabwean differences bridged. African literature's burden, the history of colonial violence and repression has led to the African continent to be a signifier that moves between polarities of thought. Nuttal (cited in Frenkel and Mackenzie, 2010:5), in a different but related argument commented that the segregated political system in South Africa, typical of Zimbabwe, has led to the production of 'segregated theory', a bifurcated logic that is undergirded by master dualisms such as perpetrator and victim, oppression and resistance, black and white on both literal and figurative level. It is Nuttal's notion of segregated theory that is particularly interesting in interrogating Zimbabwean liberation struggle's *Pungwe* through the lens of Bakhtin's carnivalesque theory. (Nuttal in Frenkel and Mackenzie, *ibid*: 5). The study's strength is anchored in the Bakhtinian thought, a many layered of imbricated cultural constructions whose efforts to frame Zimbabwe's *Pungwe* is undoubted and suggests the possibilities of emerging with multiple interpretation of narratives authorised at *Pungwe*, and also imbedded

in the novels on *Pungwe*. Bakhtin explores the view that certain worldviews and social realities are shaped by the interaction of space and time, history and location, content and form, which is the case with the Shona war novels in this study. In this very similar fashion, the chronotope as presented in the selected Shona novels reveal different social perspectives composing essential parts of reality, which are then signified through language or other symbolic systems.

Mbembe (2001:102) has historically characterised the post colony (a term he uses to describe societies emerging from colonisation and violence) as a “given historical trajectory.... chaotically pluralistic (with) an internal coherence.” The study is also particularly concerned with the post-independence notion of *Pungwe* in the post colony as “characterized by distinctive ways identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation” (Mbembe, *ibid*:102). The relationship that Mbembe expects is that of conviviality where in Zimbabwe the oppressor and the oppressed cohabit at the same living space. The main aim of the Bakhtinian theory with all its tropes, in Mbembe’s (2001:103) related comments, is that:

... to account for both the mindset and the effectiveness of postcolonial relations of power, we need to go beyond the binary categories used in standard interpretations of domination, such as resistance vs passivity, autonomy vs subjection, state vs civil society, hegemony vs counter-hegemony, totalization vs detotalization. These oppositions are not helpful, rather, they cloud our understanding of postcolonial relations.

It is through *Pungwe* that the so-called passive and subjugated civil society managed to interpret and overhaul their domination. From the above passage, it can be said that Zimbabwean independence, brought about by the *Pungwe*, was to unite people. This idea agrees with theatre of the struggles by the oppressed people’s collective effort to freedom. This has a close link with what was happening at the *Pungwe*. At *Pungwe*, typical of Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*, spectators are invited to challenge the role of the acting protagonists (cadres) and, themselves are helped to change the nature of their history by being turned into spectators. Boal says “we tried to show in practice how the theatre can be placed at the service of the oppressed... so that they can express themselves and so that, by using this new language, they can discover new concepts.” *Pungwe* created a number of participatory forms of theatre where the communities in Zimbabwe took it upon themselves as community theatre practitioners who identified problematic political and socio-cultural issues to be acted out as a participating group (Boal, 1979).

The main aim of this study is to show that Chimurenga War has managed “to sanctify and memorialize its intents, producing a literature informed by a messianic, liberatory, or reactive drive, hence a struggle literature...” These phases, however, are hallucinatory projections, or candid attempts to generate a cultural transparency to “see where we have come from, see where we now are; see where we are going” (Jamal, 2010:11). Chimurenga War presents a traumatic history which has to be analysed, remembered and cannot be easily forgotten. Even Coetzee’s *Summertime* (2009:229) portrays the obsession with the political:

We human beings will never abandon politics because politics is convenient and too attractive as a theatre in which to give play to our baser emotions. Baser emotions meaning hatred and rancor and spite and jealousy and bloodlust and so forth. In other words, politics is a symptom of our fallen state and expresses that fallen state.

The *Pungwe* provides an effective home for this base theatre viewed as “merely a character in a novel but a representative figure of African historicity. A determining element of the novel’s structure and development is this the way in which his story is imbedded within an elaborate reconstruction of forms of life in the traditional, pre-colonial culture” (Irele, 2000:5). *Pungwe* meetings are “an elaborate reconstruction of forms of life in the traditional, pre-colonial culture” that provided a mystic unity as a collectivity. The chosen war literature, in the words of Irele (ibid: 1) depicts “an image of an African society, reconstructed as a living entity and in its historical circumstances: an image of a coherent social structure forming the institutional fabric of a universe of meanings and values.” *Pungwe* was communal and therefore formed the institutional fabric of the Zimbabwean people’s comprehension of their Chimurenga War. It involved as many members of the community as was possible. It had a naturalistic representation of the war action coupled with songs and dances. *Pungwe*’s integrity was realisable in performance. The non-literal nature of African cultures enables the *Pungwe* forms to show “a decided predilection for poetic symbolism and the expressionistic method” (Nkosi 1983:20). *Pungwe* became the true idiom of African art during Zimbabwe Chimurenga War which consigned the colonial “ancient regimes” to the dustbin of history (Nkosi, 1983:161). *Pungwe* provided “a correct ideology in which personal freedom and historical necessity are finally reconciled” in order to “form a proper instrument for the liberation of our people. It is precisely in the articulation of such an ideology that writers and intellectuals have an important role to play not only in the sphere of social and political theory but also in the production of artistic work which alone can write the heart and the head” (Nkosi, ibid:161).

## 2.6 Theorising the interface between *Pungwe* and the Shona novel

The selected body of literature was chosen to talk about what Bakhtin called “literary-artistic chronotopes”. Bakhtin developed the concept of the chronotope which resonates very well with this study’s focus via an historical, cross-cultural and teleological study of the novel. Morson and Emerson’s (cited in Ladin, 2010:131) continual espousal of the above corollary note that “the chronotope essay and related writings were part of Bakhtin’s great project of his third period to elucidate and exalt the genre of the novel”. Though Bakhtin asserted that all language is inherently chronotopic, the present researcher concurs fully with Bakhtin and the later chroniclers of the life of the chronotope who have found that prose narratives most readily exemplify those “fusion[s] of [spatial and temporal] indicators” through which Chimurenga War literary “[t]ime [...] thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible” and Zimbabwean Shona literary “space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” ( Ladin, *ibid*:131). The centripetal forces of syntax, character, scene and plot make most “literary-artistic” Chimurenga War prose narratives fertile ground for the emergence of “incidental”, “local” and “major” chronotopes, and dense webs of relationships among them (*ibid*:131).

The Shona narratives incorporate aspects of African traditional metaphysical belief-system as conceptual resources whose dynamism propels the ever changing relationship with other forms of literary and cultural discourse. The novelists’ consistent intention of connecting Zimbabwean literature of Chimurenga War to its roots is quite evident. This syncretic blend of elements from the real, the esoteric and the supernatural are strategic adaptations to the deployment of indigenous resources, meant to create a will-to-identity in African literature in general and the Zimbabwean one in particular. The study shows that the dialectic of the chronotope which literally refers to time and space. Traces of this indigenous cultural resource-base are evident in the way the chosen Shona writers constantly employ “episodic narrative structures and mythic landscapes” (Whittaker, 2006: 1) that expresses a flexible play of writers’ artistic imagination on the war material available in African culture. Amongst all of the Zimbabwean writers of fiction to emerge in the 1980's, it is this selected body of literature which is most evidently indebted to the oral folkloric strategies and traditions of the Zimbabwean culture as shall be exposed by this study. One of the defining debates in critical and theoretical writings on African literature has centered on the relationship between Africa's indigenous oral traditions and its literary practices. This relationship cannot literally

be that of intertextuality for the mere fact that the semiotics of a culture does not always require prior textualisation but interdiscursivity. Previous critics have vilified orality as contaminating the novel and an incapacitated art form which is unable to grapple with thematic concerns like history, culture and politics. Karin Barber is one influential theorist who has been critical of the tendency for idealised, essentialist approaches to oral cultures in much African literary criticism, where they are often regarded principally as unproblematic signifiers of “authenticity” and “authority”:

In Africanist literary criticism, romanticism still surrounds the notion of 'orality'. Even in post-colonial critical discourses informed by a destabilising irony, 'orality' sometimes remains the last unexamined, essentialist concept, projected as an imagined antithesis of writing. It is a highly value-charged term, which can be accorded almost talismanic authority. The mode of orality, underlying and breaking through into written, Anglophone or Francophone texts, is what is said to give such texts their distinctive Africanness [...]. It is treated as both a source - the origin and precursor of 'modern' literature - and a resource - a rich heritage or fund of themes, motifs, images, and techniques upon which the 'modern' author can draw (Barber, 1995:6).

Barber's analysis can be seen as a reaction against a general tendency amongst critical approaches to African literature, often prevalent in the 1970s and early 1980s, which portrayed modern African writing as having simply incorporated, or evolved out of, an oral discourse that is redolent with arcane cultural signifiers which embody the historical weight of traditional cultural identities. Barber alerts us to the inherent dangers of theoretical models which either attempt to delineate “a universal cognitive and cultural divide between the “oral” and “literate” ” (ibid: 7) or which define the relationship between the two as somehow symbiotic and unproblematic. She instead suggests that a resolution to these complex questions may partially lie in a number of recent interventions in the theory of orality and literacy which have:

offered accounts of specific, localised cultural configurations which show that reading and writing, like oral production and reception, take historically specific forms, and that almost everywhere, oral and written forms of discourse interpenetrate, sometimes antagonistically and sometimes in a mutually constitutive way (ibid:7).

This segment of the study's task is to extend earlier African readings by Irele, Quayson and others that focus on the African literary tradition. Orality positively lays bare the inherent contradictory modes of literary tropes to the Zimbabwean Shona war narratives of resistance. This suggests that “postcolonial attention to nation building and wider national realities

prompted the [African] writers under analysis to use the oral tradition ... in ways that ultimately transmogrified the symbology” of the Zimbabwean Shona novels (Hawley, 1999:1076). This use of indigenous materials reflects the tensions and preoccupations at work whose dynamic power is shown in analysing their strategies in incorporating oral traditions. Quayson’s *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing* offers a study of the anxiety of influence on the African continent. According to Hawley (1999:1076-77):

The dynamic that runs through the analysis is Quayson's notion of "interdiscursivity," wherein a text is imagined as "the prismatic field of interaction between cultural discourses and literary ones," and literature is seen as "not a mere precipitate of culture ... but as a process of meditation upon it." The emphasis on showing the process allows room, nonetheless, for a demonstration that some of the recurring themes in [African] writing center on a shifting sense of the possibilities of individual heroism, ‘an elaboration of liminal boundaries,’ and a recuperation of ‘a sense of self-worth for the African psyche’.

The writers’ work of foliating to indigenous resources fits into a contemporary nineteenth-century tradition that sought to compile collections of ethnographic materials to articulate a cultural nationalist impulse. It is this impulse that dominated until the late 1930s, from which the form of the folktale was re-worked. This study is furthering the exploration of possible contemporary *Pungwe* meanings in the movement from the African oral tradition to the written, and suggest, in Soyinka’s phrasing “a continental mythopoetics that could contest traditional European realism” (Hawley, *ibid*: 1077). This insight, according to Quayson, “represents the indigenous resource-base comprehending its own hybridity and discursive eclecticism” while “hinting at its potential discomposition” (Hawley, *ibid*). The selected Shona novels are recognised in this study as a unique example of a hybridised interface between Zimbabwe’s pre-colonial orality and African literary modes of discourse. It is the study’s preoccupation to assess Chimurenga War narratives’ preservation of a particular relevance in this present day age amidst postcolonial cultural theorists, in contemporary notions of liminality and identity in the colonial and post-colonial eras. To this, Bhabha says:

Liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white [...] the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. The interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Bhabha, 1994: 4).



Fantasy, in the selected body of literature, stands as the ideal genre for exploring Zimbabwean socio-political issues. The genre of the fantastic in art is endowed with literary qualities of fluidity, instability and luminality which exalt the internal imaginative realms of orature (Vambe, 2004a:4). Within fantasy's tracing of "the unsaid and the unseen in culture" (Vambe, *ibid*), the societal ethos were manipulated to benefit a privileged view of the margins, where the generality of the Zimbabwean masses and the fighters for freedom were defined by the colonialists as non-existent. A liminal figure can therefore be given a voice without sacrificing the integrity of the narrative with fantasy (Firman, 2010:55).

## 2.7 The gaps in scholarship that this research ought to address

The Zimbabwean masses fighting both colonialism and post-independence black leadership carried over the *Chimurenga* concept where the *Pungwe* sense should be understood within the context of the liberation struggle during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The idea of the *Pungwe* institution, just like *Chimurenga*, as a part of everyday politics is a trans-historical phenomenon that acknowledges its own internal instabilities while narrating the equally unstable Zimbabwean nation. In this similar fashion, there are critics who limit the *Pungwe* phenomenon to violent war platforms where sell-outs were murdered and female being raped. It is therefore the main function of this research to maintain, consolidate and contest "hegemony of values that define particular social formations" (Vambe, 2004a:11). This parochial view has led individuals like Wrolson (2009:10) to erroneously misrepresent the *Pungwe* institution in very negative terms when he describes this cultural creative process thus, "Pungwe performances are a type of bira, but it is maybe more accurate to think of them as adaptations of the bira during Zimbabwe's civil war used by the rebel armies to conscientize rural populations and inform them of the war effort," a phenomenon that is false, fostered, and individualistic. *Pungwe* is presented in this study as an example of collective history, born out of conviction and the values underpinning a new nation. Wrolson (2009) could not define what *bira* is but claims to be an authority on Chimurenga discourse thereby discrediting *Pungwe*, a dynamic indigenous form, by simplifying its complex performance style as "crudely simplistic propaganda theatre" (Kerr, 1991: 54). The major gap to be filled in by this research is that in reality, the *Pungwe* institution was not just one thing, but like the adopted ideology of *Chimurenga*, it is articulated through "multiple histories that depend on the subject positions and varied experiences of the actors involved" (Turino, 2000:17).

This research focuses on Mikhail Bakhtin, the author of *Rabelais and His World* (1984b), a Russian theorist in the 1930s and is an often cited scholar in contemporary thought. It is within the escatological writing of Rabelais wherein lies the necessary evidence to discover the practical insights into Chimurenga war history. The immediate goal of *Rabelais and His World* is to uncover the peculiar language and practices of the carnival environment. Bakhtin is quick to distinguish the carnival culture of old from the holiday culture that exists now. The carnivals that exist today are pale in comparison to the unbridled lust, crazed bingeing, and even physical mutilation that occurred in the carnival environment of days past. The carnival that Rabelais wrote about is resemble very much the *Pungwe* carnival, as shall be shown in subsequent chapters. In fact, so similar are they that they share a lot more than just their common name.

The Chimurenga war *Pungwe* resembled the Renaissance carnival culture which involved the “temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men ... and of the prohibitions of usual life” (Bakhtin, 1984b:15). The fighters for freedom and the Zimbabwean masses experienced and lived the carnival which immersed them in the risky dangers of the war, frolicking physical mutilation, bingeing and primordial gaiety typical of what the carnival was. The term carnivalesque refers to the carnivalising of normal life. Bakhtin divides the carnivalesque into three forms: ritual spectacles, comic verbal compositions, and various genres of billingsgate or abusive language. During *Pungwe* meetings, this was the order of the day. The carnivalesque traditions were meant to mock the Rhodesian administration’s authority and parody official ideas of the Zimbabwean society, its history, destiny and fate as unalterable. *Pungwe* was equally for festive pleasure, the world turned topsy-turvy, destruction and creation; it was a theory of war time and history and destiny; it was utopia, cosmology, and a war philosophy. Carnivalisation thus “makes it possible to extend the narrow sense of life” (Bakhtin, 1984b:177), or as Foucault observes, it helps to “extend our participation in the present system” of the Zimbabwean post-independence era (Foucault, 1992: 230). This research bridges a big chasm where the aspiration of the carnival, according to Bakhtin, (1984b:9) is to:

...uncover, undermine - even destroy the hegemony of any ideology that seeks to have the final word about the world, and also to renew, to shed light upon life, the meanings it harbours, to elucidate potentials; projecting, as it does an alternate conceptualisation of reality. Dialogism is a fundamental aspect of the carnival - a plurality of 'fully valid consciousnesses, each bringing with them a different point of

view, a different way of seeing the world. Bakhtin argues that by being outside of a culture can one understand his own culture.

This process is “multiply enriching” (ibid), it opens new possibilities for each culture, reveals hidden “potentials” (ibid.), promotes “renewal and enrichment” (Bakhtin, 1984b:271) and creates new potentialities, new *Chimurenga* protest voices, that became realisable during the pick of the liberation struggle and for future post-independence dialogic interactions. Thus the outsideness of the Zimbabwean masses who were marginalised by a colonial dominant ideology within non-carnival time not only gain a voice during carnival time, but they also composed *Chimurenga* war songs and created myths about the ideology that seeks to silence them.

This *Chimurenga* musical genre created cultural space that was marked by the double movement of containment and resistance that was expressed as strengthening Zimbabwe’s chosen political ideology. Thus two voices intersected in a free and frank carnival communicative realm which necessitated “lines of alliance as well as lines of cleavage” (Hall, 1994:456), although “each retains its own unity and open totality they are mutually enriched” (Bakhtin, 1984: 56). Pungwe carnival and its accompanying components represent a theory of resistance, a theory of freedom from all colonial supremacy. Like the *Pungwe*, “Carnival is the place for working out a new mode of interrelationship between individuals... People who in life are separated by impenetrable hierarchical barriers enter into free and familiar contact on the carnival square” (Bakhtin, 1984b: 123). *Pungwe* carnival provided a motivational factor during *Chimurenga* war time to create a form of human social configuration that “lies beyond existing social forms” (Ibid: 280). Thus Bakhtin’s carnival theory offers a diverse guerrilla war tactic, a lot of sense that may be implemented and sustained wherever there is a dominant and hegemonic regime.

## 2.8 Conclusion

The selected novels and songs testify that Zimbabwean war writers and singers have developed a very strong tradition of revolutionary literature which draws its deepest responses from the Zimbabwean public that literature speaks not only of freedom, but is itself, in the choices it makes and the techniques it employs, the clearest exemplification of that freedom. Zimbabwean war literature has drawn war issues from the reservoir of the colonial period where writers explore the advert of imperialist forces, through to the entrenchment and people’s desire to witness the liquidation of all colonial forms of

oppression. The study sets out to establish how *Pungwe* theatre produced the pedagogical interactions during the war which no other critic has done.

This study's quest for an aesthetic, the carnivalesque which is capable of dealing with the war novel, requires no justification. It is this aesthetic that reinforces the communication process of the *Pungwe* institution by advancing the frontier of African literary knowledge and arouses the Zimbabwean people's psychic and material consciousness. The Bakhtinian theory of the carnival becomes a potent and lethal weapon for the structural sophistication which constitutes the fertile soil upon which a rigorous and balanced account of the *Pungwe* will sensibly yield a high germination rate. It is the seed of national consciousness that the chosen writers capture "the depth, sharpness, breath and vividness peculiar to that way of seeing..." the Zimbabwean Chimurenga War as a "revolution in structuring of the artistic image" (Bakhtin, 1981:30).

Bakhtin's aesthetic is relevant to the novel for it assists this study's sense of representation and engagement with the liberation struggle's history. His major thrust is on the novel's "great and serious contemporarity [which] requires an authentic profile of the past..." derived from the inconclusive present which as "it moves into the future, the more tangible and indispensable its inclusiveness becomes" (ibid: 30). It is Bakhtin's theoretical frame that situates this study into the most penetrating context of African cultural processes of the *Pungwe* which will form the basis of the following chapter. The third chapter's analysis within this Bakhtinian frame demonstrates the variety of the carnivalesque modes inherent into the *Pungwe* institution.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter critically explored related literature that portrays *Pungwe* meetings during Chimurenga War. While recognising the number of trajectories of African literature's scholarship, this study chooses an approach that embraces the descriptive detail on how to grapple with the chosen body of literature through the carnivalesque theory. The aim of this chapter is to provide an alternative approach to redefining socio-political commitment through "a range of traditional art forms and contemporary mutually allusive heteroglossic dialogisms" manifested in the chosen Shona literature (Mhlambi, 2012:9). In this chapter, the different elements that make the theory of the carnivalesque unique are identified and appropriate for the purpose of analysing the depiction of *Pungwe* in the Shona novel and Chimurenga songs. It is shown that theoretically, the role of the carnival spirit, typifies the *Pungwe*'s revolutionary potential which had enormous power "to consecrate inventive freedom, and to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted" (Bakhtin, 1984a:34).

As pointed out above, this chapter uses critical insights from the carnivalesque theory elaborated by Bakhtin in his books entitled *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) and *Rabelais and his World* (1984a) as seriocomic genres that provide carnival laughter. Bakhtin's carnivalesque laughter and elaborates significant new strains in Bakhtinian (1984b:106) thinking because:

A literary genre, by its very nature, reflects the most stable, "eternal" tendencies in literature's development [but]... Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre. This constitutes the life of the genre. Therefore even the archaic elements preserved in a genre are not dead but eternally alive... Genre is capable of guaranteeing the *unity* and *uninterrupted continuity* of this development. For the correct understanding of a genre, therefore, it is necessary to return to its sources.

The *Pungwe* characterise the form and content in the selected carnivalesque narratives. Kristeva adds to the concept of the open-endedness of literary genres and notes that:

Academic discourse, and perhaps [African literary] discourse in particular, possess an extraordinary ability to absorb, digest, and neutralize all of the key, radical, dramatic moments of thought, particularly, *a fortiori*, of contemporary thought (Kristeva, 1983:12).

The important markers of genres are its capacity to “absorb, digest” and anticipate radical values that can enrich the explanatory values of the theory of the carnivalesque. Put differently, the complexity of *Pungwe* as liminal spaces where new identities are reconstructed can only be explained dialogically by a theory that recognises the multiple forms through which the ideas created in the process of interpretation.

### **3.2 The Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival**

Theories provide a method of understanding the major concerns to be diagnosed. A theory should therefore be read, understood and comprehended in certain ways that enable theorising on the part of the users who in turn would be able to unlock the mysteries of the literary texts. Literary study, criticism and appreciation will go on unimpeded. The Shona novel genre is chosen in this study in order to tap Bakhtin’s carnivalesque’s modes to “its stylistic multi-dimensionality, which is linked with the multi-linguaged consciousness realized in the novel” (Moraru, 2001:209-10). This consciousness’ heteroglot configuration takes into consideration Bakhtin’s seminal assimilation discourse of othering especially in the case of the chosen Zimbabwean war literature, namely Chiwome’s *Masango Mavi* (1998), Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), Makari’s *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), Musengezi’s *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Chimhundu’s *Chakwasha* (1991) and Choto’s *Vavariro* (1990):

The prose writer as a novelist does not strip away the intentions of others from the heteroglot language of his works, he does not violate those social-ideological cultural horizons (big and little worlds) that open up behind heteroglot languages – rather, he welcomes them into his work. The prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions, to serve a second master. Therefore the intentions of the prose writer are refracted, and refracted at different angles, depending on the degree to which the refracted, heteroglot languages he deals with are socio-ideologically alien, already embodied and already objectivized (Moraru, *ibid*: 209-10).

The Bakhtinian ‘other’ was closely examined in subsequent chapters. Criticism was not only corrective, censorious, prescriptive, moral and ideological but it is the reader’s reaction to the reactions to the chosen body of Shona literature that will transform the works of art into a war event by assigning meaning to it. The war reality of the Shona novel is “only one of many possible realities; it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it bears within itself other possibilities” (Bakhtin, 1981:37). Respect should be given to the authors’ ways of treating their subject matter. The opening of another possibility was the development of a paradigm shift from hermeneutic to a semiotic method of inquiry which was deemed a “triumph of theory” that obliterated literary criticism:

For what was at stake was the capacity of theory, not merely to describe, not even to control and correct, but to dictate practice, to prescribe it in the fullest sense of the word. And by the end of the decade . . . the battle had been all but won, the triumph of theory assured. Theory, that is, had established itself as not only a legitimate literary-critical activity, but its guiding light (Frye, 1957:28).

Bakhtinian carnivalesque came to rescue this theoretical lacuna in literature. It is not common to find research studies in literature without the grounding of theory. Literary theory and criticism have, over the ages, come to play a key role in the academic study circles. The theories’ diversity and often apparently contending or irreconcilable approaches, perspectives, and modes of inquiry that continue to flourish today under the generic label “theory” have brought most scholars to a rude awakening at the same time to a welcome awareness of the significance of major concerns in critical practice. Some of these critics would claim that theory is not necessary, because research should be focused on answering specific questions that would more likely appeal to literary critics and practitioners. Nevertheless, theory-driven research has advantages for the development and growth especially of the discipline of African Literature. Bakhtin’s work defies categorisation when he posited that the form, content and meanings of language are constantly shaped by history and culture. The chosen novels prominently highlights Zimbabwe’s Chimurenga War “as an anti-colonial struggle and as a period of political and ethical rapture” whose “multi-dimensional thrust inscribes a variety of narratives that criss-cross in ironic juxtaposition. It is thus a drama of community resistance...” imbued with an African cultural consciousness well articulated in a language that can be comprehended easily (Wilson-Tagoe, 2002:163).

Among Bakhtin's most influential concepts are *heteroglossia*, the idea that culture and its narratives, no matter how monolithic they appear, are comprised of polyphony of competing voices. *Dialogism* is another feature of the carnivalesque which holds that culture is inherently responsive and interactive, involving individuals acting and reacting at a particular point in time and space. The *carnavalesque* is a subversive mixing of high and low cultures that undermines social hierarchies and opens the way for change and new connections. The *Pungwe* became platforms where ordinary people and fighters for freedom were disciplined without fear or favour and examples will be furnished in subsequent chapters. This judicious application of Bakhtin's theory to the Shona novels celebrated the parodic and fragmentary forms during Chimurenga War. These Bakhtinian terms helped the researcher to reveal how the Shona novels form parodies or are parodied by *Pungwe*. This provides new ways of reading marginalised or neglected African literature, in particular Shona one. One cannot recuperate stable and unadulterated versions of *Pungwe* in the novel due to the ideological view of the authors in question. The chapter obliterates the current theoretical paralysis that surrounds studies in African literature by conceptualising the Bakhtinian theory in which terms the current researcher used to examine the efficacy of *Pungwe* meetings. The research articulated an underlying theory for this study to be meaningful. A consideration of prominent literary theories typical of Bakhtin's carnival, demonstrates the power of theory-based research like this current study.

### **3.3 *Pungwe*: Theatre for Social Reconstruction**

When Bakhtin developed the first of his global novelistic concepts of the chronotope, it was to illuminate the concept of time and space in the artistic realm. By chronotope, it literally means, "time space." For Bakhtin, artistic works typical of the chosen body of Shona literature are an embodiment of certain spatial and temporal postulations. He writes in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics" that, "every entry into the sphere of meanings is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope" (Bakhtin, 1981: 258). It is within this framework that Bakhtin maps the linkage that exists between humankind and literary time and space, with the observation that each major historical epoch's works, like this chosen body of literature; reflect, exude and reify a certain perception of humankind's existence in the spatial / temporal realm. The Shona novels depict an historical period during Zimbabwe's protracted liberation struggle, which in



Bakhtin's view of the novel in general, got its prominence as a form when it firstly welcomed real historical time over prior fragmented and disjointed representations.

This research offers a possible alternative avenue to explore during the performances of the improvisational forms, such as *Pungwe*, which is closely related to the critical work of the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. His model of theatre and the new novel on one hand, and an appreciation of the global concepts contained therein on the other, provide a positive guideline for what spontaneous theatre like *Pungwe* is and does, rather than what it is not and does not in comparison to the scripted sphere. The carnivalesque modes of the chronotope, prosaic and dialogism all provide insightful observations into the potential energies of an otherwise often looked-down-upon indigenous form of performance. Though developed originally as descriptive apparatus for the contemporary novel, Bakhtin's powerful lenses provide a new way of seeing and appreciating improvisational theatre like the *Pungwe*. Furthermore, an application of these suggestive modes to the site of *Pungwe* will not only enrich an understanding of this radical political form and its core values, but also places it firmly and appropriately in a Chimurenga War historical tradition of improvisational community-based theatre forms. It is through this research that a refocused Bakhtinian novelistic investigation will necessitate an image of a politically charged theatre to emerge from the war.

While this research posits that most African playwrights like, Wa Mirri, Wa Thiong'o, Soyinka, Osofisan and Community Based Theatres "are attracted to the German playwright's dramaturgy in large measure because it parallels certain aesthetic structures found within their own indigenous culture" and that they are employing dramatic techniques comparable to Brecht's, Richards nonetheless warns against "the automatic assumption of influence and imitation" and insists that their creative source is stylistically indigenous. Awodiya agrees in full consonant with Rotimi in arguing that "[a]ll of the salient determinants of Brecht's epic theatre were already in vogue in traditional African theatre practice" (Awodiya 210). Through the carnivalesque modes of the *Pungwe*, this institution will prove to be the most vibrant and distinctive African indigenous theatre qualifying to be the body of work that has come to be known as Theatre for Development, where the Brechtian tradition is an offshoot. This is no little wonder why Awodiya (cited in Crow, 2005: 259) appreciatively quotes Rotimi's "Much Ado about Brecht" to the effect that:

... the features which define epic theatre are not singularly of Brecht's genius, as they are being glibly made to appear in the African world. Rather, it is clear that those features had existed in our African theatre tradition long before Brecht was born in 1989.

This research further asserted the predominance of traditional African dramaturgy, proposing that to ascribe Brechtian influence to *Pungwe's* dramaturgy is to overlook the Zimbabwean people's artistic genius and patrimony. In this very similar vein, there are significant differences to take note of between the aesthetics of traditional African *Pungwe* performance and Brecht's epic theatre. Since *Pungwe* was live theatre which was entrenched firmly in the there and then, it therefore unavoidably flirted with both the present and the future with participants both on and off the stage sharing in the performance process. Ukala's (2003: 39) conclusion commenting on Osofisan is strikingly similar to *Pungwe*, where it; "... dramaturgy is therefore, not a perpetuation, but a subversion of the European or Brechtian aesthetic hegemony in Africa. Subversion is the cornerstone of the politics of aesthetics required to totally free the African mind from the cultural shackles of colonialism". It is this research's ironic twist of critical reception, which Ukala further asserts that "the European practitioner / theorist whose name is synonymous with the subversion of bourgeois aesthetic practice must in turn be rejected / subverted so that African artists and audiences can gain their full liberation from European (or "Brechtian," in a curious polemical elision) cultural hegemony" (ibid, 39). Through *Pungwe* culture acted as a unifying force, which manifested itself through a political forum in form of an organised movement whose philosophy was to overhaul an unjust system of governance in Zimbabwe. This philosophy must of necessity register people's participation at *Pungwe*. Kavanagh (1985:164) rightly says:

Essentially the theory of the theatre of Black consciousness followed the same pattern as the strategy that the movement had evolved for the resistance of cultural domination and liberation in general – withdrawal from association with whites, the ration of new structures and the conscientisation of black people.

Ordinary people needed to be conscientised into why fighters for freedom were fighting. It is this conscientisation that the *Pungwe's* mobilising tactic sought to achieve and it is clearly revealed through Manaka's key tripartite issues of relevance, survival and freedom:

At this point in time, the dispossessed are destitute. They are very desperate for the realism of their aspirations. They are in quest for freedom. They need no entertainment that shall make them oblivious of their state of subservience. They

need no entertainment that shall make them submissive to their state of poverty and servitude. They need no entertainment that will be irrelevant to the black man's bone of contention. They need no entertainment that shall not respond to the call of freedom's cry. But they need realistic entertainment that will give them courage to survive and forge ahead. Entertainment that will bring hope for freedom in their life-style (Davis, 1993:161).

At *Pungwe* the "dispossessed" were "in quest for freedom" and this space provided entertainment that brought "hope for freedom in their life-style". The nature, form and content of the *Pungwe* typified the traditional African milieu with art forms capturing people's lived experiences in shaping their political consciousness. It offered new powerful strategies to people's understanding of the dynamics of the theatre of the people and by the people subverting colonial restrictions that were imposed by the white officials. *Pungwe* elevated African orature to a prestigious status where "it is the incontestable reservoir of the values, sensibilities, aesthetics, and achievements of traditional African thought and imagination...[while serving ] as the ultimate foundation, guidepost and point of departure for a modern liberated African literature. (Chinweizu cited in Muwati and Mutasa, 2009:1).

Muwati and Mutasa's (2009) paper appreciated the significance of oral art forms but zeroed on just one novel *Mapenzi* by Mabasa. They embed the crucial role of oral art forms such as songs as part of the indigenous intellectual resources where African people derive the best of their day to day life from. However, the novel does not dwell on the *Pungwe*. Their comment on the nature of the discourse to be employed in order to win the conscience of the people is very valid here because "[m]obilization of human consciousness and the national human factor element requires the adoption of discourses that are unassailably linked with the people's live experiences and their exigencies of existence" (Muwati and Mutasa, 2009:4). *Pungwe* sought to bring about a mental transformation of the human condition through oral forms to equip people with a transcendental outlook. Morrow (cited in Ebewo and Sirayi, 2009:54) believes that social healing needs creativity and change:

Transformation is a code word not for some kind of miracle cure but for a direction of travel. It puts on old war opposite a new future and works to resolve the very real dilemmas and tensions which emerge through real practical steps. It asserts that we are partners not enemies and builds a real change of permanent pilots, a culture of learning and shared risk between communities and between public, private and voluntary action.

Conscientisation of people led to mental transformation which is a strategic weapon for self-renewal and construction of a positive self-image from the agony of imperial humiliation, mutilation and dehumanised life of oppression. It is significant to find whether or not the

chosen novelists “fully plumbed the depths of political dysfunctionality and national malaise with the same consistency and intensity”. Nwankwo (2008:7) argues that the sheer fact that:

War produces a pathetically lame and rudderless polity in which all manners of shameless treachery and scams and skullduggery become a way of life. The whole marl landscape in its deracination and its encouragement of whole scale subversion of justice anticipate the present national circumstance of [Zimbabwe] in its amorality and aconscient insensitivity.”

The writers portray evocatively and the relevance of the marvelous ambience of the transformative role of the *Pungwe*. To end the British colonial rule’s mercantile and imperial adventures, a war was necessary. A war whose veritable indices provide an explanation of the instability and volatility that *Pungwe* sought to normalise:

The war is there as sudden catastrophe which tears friends and families and consequently the entire nation apart... the war through which the nation unraveled was a war whose causes go back to the faulty foundations upon which the nation was built... war is only a symptom of general malaise with roots that are most times deeper than the adventitious eruptions associated with ethnic differences. War is a useful index because it highlights other problems (Nwankwo, *ibid*: 8, 9, and 13).

The passage above suggests that the war disrupt social relations and that they tore apart relationships where friends and families are disintegrated. What is implied, therefore, is that, *Pungwe*’s capacity to gather, rally and mobilise different people was akin to construct communities that were threatened with shattering by the war. Besides being a mobilising tool, *Pungwe* sought to dismantle the ground created by the Rhodesian forces in socio-cultural instabilities and their political apostacies. *Pungwe* became a venue where the people endured their psychological injuries during the protracted Chimurenga war hostility. Communal sacrifice is evident at *Pungwe* as people’s ability to confront emerged because of the exigencies of Chimurenga war. This sacrifice is further evidenced in the literature’s portrayal of the communal feeding of the fighters for freedom. No doubt, communal sacrifice becomes a pertinent human factor in the liberation struggle’s efforts for survival. *Pungwe* became the embodiment of the foundation which sustains the superstructure of communal sacrifice constructed on the solid bedrock of individual patriotic sacrifices. In order to prevent enemy infiltration Zimbabwean village communities, voluntary vigilant groups and individuals mounted numerous checkpoints also demonstrating a manifestation of personal sacrifices and dedication to the war.

Ncube's (2010) thesis about state-society relations in Zimbabwe employs Gramsci's language of hegemony in order to examine the role of civil society in Zimbabwe in legitimating and resisting state hegemony in the context of the struggle for democratisation. Ncube (ibid: 12) cites Gramsci (1971) who objected to this positivist view of history. He argued instead that history is a product of a conscious 'organised collective will' by a people through hegemony in the superstructural sphere. *Pungwe* was and still is one moment of such popular agency. If the superstructural sphere is dialectically linked to the base, Gramsci argued that to remove the active role of people in the authorship of history is to deny Marxism the dialectical component that Marx (and Engel) recognised when they argued:

In every epoch the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, that is, the class that is the ruling *material* power of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* power. The class having the means of material production has also control over the means of intellectual production, so that it also controls, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of intellectual production.

The above passage represents orthodox Marxism. In reality dominant ideas are challenged by ordinary people as what happened at the *Pungwe*. At the same time, the dominant ideas about social reality in a given period can be accepted but not without some modifications based on the people's conscious appreciation of how their own ideas are historically developed through human action. In other words, ideas have a dialectical relationship with human activity in history. Thus Gramsci (1971:465) argues that "[t]he philosophy of praxis [Marxism] is rigid, absolute "historicism," and reductive". This study is testament to the continued espousal of the implicit relationship between literature and history which is powerfully delineated by Vambe (2008) who puts it that:

...historical narratives are also social constructs that order and rearrange human experience, and hence influence the meaning and interpretation of historical process in the way they narrate events... Zimbabwean literature has the ability to generate meanings which change with time but nonetheless, have equal claim to producing credible narratives of historical memories of the war, whose claims are not beyond contest, but narrative true to life and make up significant aspects of different people's lived experiences.

From this passage "interpretation" of *Pungwe* "change with time" so that no single view of it is "beyond contest." The form and content of *Pungwe* manifested itself in different ways hence Vambe (2008:88) added:



That literature has its own protocols of representing reality through image should not be taken to mean that it is totally an invented social construct without any relation to social existence. The materiality of metaphor/metonymy in fiction carries with it different, and sometimes conflicting temporalities of time, a fact that suggest that different ways of narrating the war can emerge from a body of texts originating in the same country.

This study clearly shows the transition between *Pungwe* as performance and *Pungwe* as depicted in the novel. In showing these two different ways of representing this same *Pungwe* Vambe (ibid) adds:

In other words, however seemingly “full” or “complete” a literary text appears to be, it is always based on a selection of material that excludes other “histories” or memories of war. The “real” is drawn into the Text and becomes the text in paradoxical way since “real life can never be truthfully represented as having the kind of formal coherency, met within the conventional, well-made or fabulistic story.

The study of *Pungwe* both outside and inside the novel offers “various versions of the war, and competing modes of representing the history of the liberation struggle” but this study interrogated how this body of literature “constructs its narratives of war and history and compares to other Zimbabwean literary texts, [bringing] out the multiplicity of the war narrations within them ...” (ibid: 88). While it is true that fiction distorts reality, it must aim to adhere to ideals of conventional historians whose guiding principle is that “fictional narratives... grow in respectability the nearer they approximate historical narrative” Chennels, cited in Vambe, 2008:89). African writers have a huge responsibility of transforming societal consciousness. In wa Thiongo’s (1981:72) ideal literary mode:

A writer’s subject matter is history: i.e. the process of man acting on nature and changing himself. The entire changing relations of production and hence the changing power relations consequent on mutable modes of production is a whole territory of a writer’s literary concern. Politics is hence part and parcel of this literary territory.

The selected literature’s “subject matter is history”. The official nationalist myths portrayed the fighter of freedom’s relationship with the Zimbabwean masses as always positive and on the other hand depicting the Smith’s Rhodesian Forces as perpetually cruel.

Brindle’s Doctoral thesis in English literature entitled “Epistolary Encounters: Pastiche in Postmodern Victorian Fiction” examines the significance of fictional letters and diaries in postmodern-Victorian fiction. She attempted a study grounded in and informed by the carnivalesque theory of Bakhtin, whose discussion of heteroglossia coincides with theories of diary form’s dialogic double-voicedness. This aspect is important to my study because it

revealed how *Pungwe* institution affirmed positive African agency at the same time reinforcing stereotypes of leaders as the only people who understood the direction of the struggle. Patriarchal and generated politics were also played out at the *Pungwe*. Brindle's concentration on how framing texts as documents help to fashion a pastiche structure leaves a yawning gap that this research filled by questioning if this evidenced a postmodern pledge to provide a decentred view of history. While this study offered practical insights into the interface between orality and the Shona novels, her thrust is on epistolary voice which actively revisions neo-Victorian fiction's favoured marginal, unrepresented, rejected, or 'other' figures which is based upon theories of parody and pastiche built on Hutcheon's work on historiographic metafiction.

Wilkinson's theme of her thesis is "Thomas Hardy and the Carnavalesque" which involves an examination of Hardy's use of such carnivalesque concepts as the choric element, the Wild Man, Devils, the "woman on top," masking, music, feasts and the grotesque, all of which require an in-depth knowledge of both folk culture and socio-historical and socio-anthropological approaches to carnival. The biggest disparity with this study is that her thesis required an examination and application of the carnivalesque theories of many scholars such as Phythian-Adams, Peter Burke, David Gilmore, Natalie Zemon Davis, Barbara Babcock and Terry Castle including Mikhail Bakhtin who is the sole theorist under this study.

No other critic has used the theory of carnivalesque to reveal the ways in which *Pungwe* is given 'permanent' written narrative form in the Shona novel. This study makes use of the elements of such carnivalesque referring to Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, carnivilisation and carnivalesque which he introduced in order to:

...describe and interpret a socio-cultural mechanism and custom that is subversive, disruptive while also regenerative and constructive. The carnival time was/is a very unique period of revelry and merrymaking which functioned/s as a safety valve that allows for venting all the tension that the customary world order generates. It involves the duality of the death-life cycle and as a result it is most characteristically a comic-grotesque phenomenon (Toth, 2011:1).

The novels and songs' various versions in portraying what was happening at the *Pungwe* create a comic-grotesque image which helps us understand the nature and dynamics of *Pungwe* in the Shona novel. This approach is complemented with interviews carried out with key informants who participated at *Pungwe*'s, the ex-guerrillas, particularly, ordinary combatants and the female guerrillas whose views on *Pungwe* may be different from guerrilla leaders. At *Pungwe*, the *Mujibhas* and *Chimbwidos* were very powerful. Surviving groups of

these people will be interviewed. This sets apart this study from previous anemic attempts that have tended to focus either only on *Pungwe* outside the novel, or only on *Pungwe* inside the novel. This study merges the two and theorises what happens when a performance genre is captured and hypostasised in the form of images in a novel.

### 3.4 Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia

The Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia refers to the incorporation of various stylistic traces within a language. Above all, the heteroglossic principle privileges a contextual placement of meaning in a language as it unites within a plurality of socio-ideological contradictions of the colonial period in Zimbabwe so that “every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear” (Bakhtin, 1981:292). It is the acknowledgement of meaning as contextual that is of paramount importance, hence Bakhtin (1981:428) says:

At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions – social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under other conditions.

In later chapters, *Pungwe* as material space and also as symbolical space is interrogated especially how interpretations were multiplied in these spaces. Also of interest will be how *Pungwe*'s performative dimension is compromised by being hypostasised. In addition to this, *Pungwe*'s too many oral versions guaranteed permanent existence in the written mode which captures the Shona orature's performance in order to validate “the new existence of orature within the extended literary form of the novel” (Vambe, 2004a : 29). *Pungwe* presents language that is not only so esoteric to the Chimurenga War but whose heteroglossic nature is well recognisable. The claim that language is an evolving entity whose form and meaning are constantly molded by history and culture makes Bakhtin reject the rigid systems of thought that could not account for what he termed “heteroglossia”: the polyphony of languages and perspectives that make up modern society and are reflected in its art—most strikingly for Bakhtin in the novel. Heteroglossia speaks to the multiplicity of languages, language forms, language varieties, language styles, and many more idiosyncratic tendencies that existed during the War within Shona language. In his discussion of the novel, for example, Bakhtin (1981:262 -3) argues that:

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of authorities, of



various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphases)—this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as genre.

Bakhtin's major preoccupation is not engaged in some simplified notion of "celebrating diversity" or the mere co-existence of languages but refers to the political tension. Building on this notion of heteroglossia, fighters for freedom and the masses learnt specific socio-political languages tied to specific communicative tasks and functions in the war. In turn, these political tasks and functions were tied to specific discourse communities, socio-political practices, interests, norms, and cultural values. A detailed analysis of "this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence" typical of this Chimurenga War, marks "the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as genre", no little wonder why this study examines this chosen body of novels.

### **3.5 Bakhtin's theory of carnival / carnivalesque**

Bakhtin's theory of carnival as it is developed in the two seminal studies *Rabelais and his World* (1984a) and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984b) had unavoidable historical underpinnings. Bakhtin's fundamental premise is that carnival, understood as the "sum total of all diverse festivities, rituals and forms of a carnival type", (Bakhtin, 1984b:122) was a historical and cultural phenomenon of incalculable importance for the development of European comic narrative from classical antiquity onwards. He speaks of the "determining influence of carnival" on literature (ibid: 122), and uses the term carnival to describe particular features that the literary war genres and of the serio-comical and actual festival forms have in common. In the chosen Shona war literature, the various kinds of comic writing which translate into carnivalesque modes continue the carnival tradition and are "saturated with a specific carnival sense of the world" (ibid: 107).

For Bakhtin, carnival is a manifestation of folk laughter and folk humour defining carnivalesque laughter which embodies a popular, folk based culture which is defined by its irreverent antipathy to the official and hierarchical structures of everyday, non-carnival life. This irreverence is found in songs that won Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. Bakhtin claims that in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance a "boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal

culture” existed. He characterises carnival as “the people’s second life, organized on the basis of laughter” (Bakhtin, 1984a:8), insisting that the laughter which gave form to carnival rituals freed them “completely from all religious and ecclesiastical dogmatism” (ibid: 7). In the chosen Shona novels, folktales were told to undermine colonial forces and this way assisted to free the masses’ imagination as they thought about independence. Carnival laughter is for Bakhtin an assertion of freedom; its function is to bring about a “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” (ibid: 10). Rather than just “temporary liberation” each *Pungwe* session in real life as in fiction was different, it increased the consciousness of the masses making the resolution to eject colonialism more permanent. Lachmann’s (1988-89:124-126) informative article entitled *Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter Culture*, more effectively performs an essential role when he writes that:

In laughter there occurs a “second revelation” a “second truth” is proclaimed to the world. [...] The truth of the second revelation is the truth of the relativity of the truth, the truth of crisis and change, the truth of ambivalence. [...] This is the crux of Bakhtin’s approach: he formulates a myth of ambivalence that denies the end by sublimating death in and through laughter. Thus by ridiculing death and finiteness, folk culture, which is the bearer of this revelation, embodies the refusal to acknowledge the authority of those official institutions which, by taking death and the end into their calculations, seek to exert and extend their hegemony. [...] The concepts of materialism and of ambivalence, which are constitutive for Bakhtin’s argumentation, help clarify his utopian ideas and lend new contours to his approach.

The phrases; “second revelation”, “second truth”, “relativity of the truth”, and “the truth of ambivalence” clearly indicate that there is another world outside the one projected by the Rhodesian oppressors as is depicted in the Shona novel. The irony contained therein might mean that guerrillas sometimes possessed superior spiritual powers than the masses despite the mere fact that guerrillas depended for food and information on the masses. This second truth is further elaborated in later chapters. Bakhtin (cited in Lachmann, 1988-89:124 -126) also:

...resists the emphasis placed on the purely spiritual and takes a decided stance regarding the irreconcilable contradiction between hyle and pneuma that has always marked the history of Western philosophy and religion. Bakhtin’s answer to the traditional revulsion towards the material and the corporeal, which is expressed in particular in gnosticism but also in medieval asceticism and mysticism, is to propound a celebration of matter and the body that seeks to suspend the dualism of mind and matter and that travesties the “victory” of the mystical and the ascetic over the body. Bakhtin’s promise of salvation lies not, as gnosticism teaches, in the spirit being freed from its bodily shell and seeking salvation through individual stages of purgation, but

rather in the grotesque body as the hyperbolization and hypertrophization of corporeality.’

Bakhtin does not entirely divorce spiritualism and materialism which in a big way is in accordance with *Pungwe* as lived experience and narrativised in the chosen Shona novels.

Lachmann (1988-89: 124 -126) adds:

The material and corporeal are namely the manifest as such, what is really “real”: what matters for Bakhtin is matter. According to Bakhtin, stereological teachings and ascetic practices rejecting the body cannot be utopian because they are oriented toward the “end” of manifest materiality and reality.

These Bakhtinian thoughts provide tremendous amount of insights to the analysis of this research. This long quotation explains very clearly the salient features of Bakhtinian carnival laughter. It is not a matter of simple laughter but on the contrary, it is an affirmation of freedom whose function brings “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from established order” which “marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions” (Bakhtin, 1984a:10). This suggests that the *Pungwe* was also a space of spiritual communion between villagers and the guerrillas. Bakhtin’s underestimation of the spiritual dimension opposed to materialism is challenged by the chosen Shona novels. As evidence of the seriousness of this laughter of the carnival in Shona literature, it bears philosophical marks. This laughter “has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forms of truth concerning the world as a whole [...] the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when is seen from the serious standpoint. Therefore, laughter is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter” (ibid: 66).

From this liberating, regenerating and festive side of carnivalesque laughter, we deduce that; a) it is a new truth, an authentic revelation that argues against the traditional Aristotelian view of the coexistence of soul and body in a human being, and b) promises a salvation through the hyperbolisation and hypertrophisation of corporeality. As rightly pointed out by Lachmann (1988-89), Bakhtin’s carnival is a sort of new creation based on regaining the true nature of matter, a nature that was unknown before his discovery. Lachmann further highlights some other features of Bakhtin’s carnival: c) it marks the deletion of the boundaries between “I” and “we” in the grotesque body of the carnival (Bakhtin 2008: 349) and d) permits participants to reach an “earthly collective immortality” (ibid : 322). As a matter of fact, the

grotesque body, which consists of “excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices” present “another, newly conceived body” (Lachmann, 1988-89: 148)?

### **3.6 Carnavalesque, the *Pungwe* and the Shona novel**

A reading of the selected Shona war literature and liberation war songs using Bakhtin’s theory uncovers the subversive elements in the colonial Rhodesian administration as is portrayed by the artists and highlights the semantic and semiotic codes of cultural exchange between Rhodesian authority and the marginalised Zimbabwean populace. The *Pungwe* tradition constituted primarily of political ideas well captured in selected literature, economic thought and the historical knowledge of Zimbabwe. The *Pungwe* meetings’ political performances’ multiple meanings invoked, as Dayan (1998: xvii) argues, a “project of thought,” with the “intensity of interpretation” which embodies the ontological and epistemological character of African people.

As shall be evidenced in the subsequent chapters, the story of *Pungwe* meetings is depicted from a carnivalesque perspective in two ways : First, the language of heteroglossia is evident at *Pungwe* as portrayed by the selected novelists, viz; Chiwome’s *Masango Mavi*, Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), Makari’s *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) , Musengezi’s *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Chimhundu’s *Chakwasha* (1991) and Choto’s *Vavairo* (1990). These selected novels are giving voice to multiple and contradictory points of view expressed across a broad spectrum of people involved in the war, fighters for freedom, masses and the Rhodesian forces. All these different actors in the war are employing different dialects, from high to low, from stylish and euphemistic language to direct and physical means. The exploited masses’ voice as the sub-class is clearly heard while it is embodied in the fighters for freedom. Secondly, the spirit of revelry, mockery, and defiance underlies the entire Chimurenga War narrative and is not limited to the night of drinking and merry making. These aspects shall come out vividly in the detailed analysis of songs and novels later in the coming chapters. The comic element appears as the subtle strategy of the numerous oppressed Zimbabwean masses represented in the selected songs and war literature. This comic view also offers explanations to several puzzling political elements in the song text and in selected works of art’s usage of language that satirises the colonial masters’ conduct. *Pungwe* encouraged the masses and the fighters of freedom to soldier on and were urged to a possible way to political independence in which both sides considered

Zimbabwean history not just as the narrative of events to be recounted but instead as perhaps the most important frame for self-examination during the war.

Bakhtin's theory of carnival, manifesting in his discussions of Rabelais and forbidden laughter is inherent during Chimurenga War's *Pungwe* celebrations which allowed for rowdy humor with mocking scenes and the parody of the Rhodesian authority's oppression of the masses (Bakhtin, 1984). This dialogic imagination emanates from the varied strands of the carnivalesque. It is the theory's ability to mean so much that is articulated through "multiple histories that depend on the subject positions and varied experiences of the actors involved" (Turino, 2000:17) that it was chosen in this study to try and capture *Pungwe*'s depiction in war literature. These Bakhtinian ideas reflect the war fiction's location in culture. This literature's cultural force at *Pungwe* derives its central activity in that it is a special kind of entity which is not distinct from ordinary communication.

*Pungwe* rituals promoted African-Christian melodic messages in a new way which provided "the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white" (Bhabha, *ibid*). The relevance to the theory of carnivalesque to the understanding of *Pungwe* in its lived oral context and written fiction in Shona is that quality of social movements is the recognition of what Halley (1989:1) calls "dissensus without conflict" referring to the significant indices that unite people together in spite of their divergent modes of being. However, to complicate Halley's phrase is the fact that the context of *Pungwe* sometimes spilled into irreconcilable differences that led to someone being killed. All forms of *Pungwe* had levels of conflict which did not lead to rapture or conflicts that were deadly. These inherent contradictions in the novel as in the *Pungwe* will be dealt with in latter chapters.

It is therefore very healthy to use dialogism in this study in order to understand *Pungwe*'s divergence of ideas amongst masses without serious conflicts that undermined the war. No one has adopted this approach that views *Pungwe* in lived experience and in the novel though, the absence of substantial literature on these carnivalesque events of the *Pungwe* is rather worrisome. Theatre undergoes a dialectical development which gives rise to new cultural practices of performance in form of *Pungwe* whose birth marks "the inception of a particular political, social, artistic movement's liberating design through a communality of some sort" (Diaz-Diocaretz, 1989:13). This calls for the researcher's attention "to an intrinsically political aspect of mobilization", one that is part of the capacity of popular

culture to sustain what Habermas calls the “formation of a public will’ without reducing participants to mechanisms of a fixed principle of unity” (ibid:163). *Pungwe* as lived experience simultaneously affirmed masses as at the same level and lower down the guerrillas. This double identity of the masses made them subjects and sometimes objects of war discourses.

The idea that mobilisation of masses at *Pungwe* was achieved only through coercion (Nkomo, 1984; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2010) is fallacious against the backdrop that it was also a voluntary activity. After explanations of why guerrillas were fighting, this inspired the adoption of a *Pungwe* strategy in order to cement the Chimurenga ideology into the people’s war. A Retired Lieutenant Colonel, Clemence Gaza, a former ZANLA combatant summed up the non-coercive nature of the *Pungwe*:

The ideological consciousness of the masses of Zimbabwe, especially the rural peasants, was shaped by their material and feudal conditions as well as the colonial capitalist system that was superimposed, on their traditional set-up....The mass-based approach that the guerrillas employed was a democratic system which involved the masses for the first time in their history, in the process of analyzing their concrete material conditions... This gave them power and mastery over their own destiny... The freedom fighters won the ‘hearts and minds’ (to use a popular phrase) of the masses and convinced them of the integrity of their intentions to work with these young girls as comrades-in-arms as they did with everybody else, and not to use them as their ‘concubines’ (Gaza, 1985:7-8).

To reveal how public will is produced from what Benedict Anderson describes as “imagined community” that is both coherent and fissured language in the war fiction is anchored in symbols. It is the powers of symbols that make people think they are one through a deeply communal laughter at the *Pungwe*, whilst at the same time thinking that they were not together when sell-outs emerge. The formulation of carnival as both coherent and fractured allows this research to explain the betrayal of masses in the novels. It is these fissures that cause laughable incoherencies whose joyful degradations introduce social inversions like blacks fighting each other or blacks being pitted by whites. Habermas shows that there was political consciousness that was shared through songs, theatre, political narratives and appealing to spiritual powers. It is not true that the masses just listened to the freedom fighters, but they participated in reporting to the freedom fighters on their other comrades’ bad conduct like rape. Masses were therefore not passive. *Pungwe* illustrates the fact that for Africans in the then colonial Rhodesia, the continual flux between control and agency, and motion and change demonstrates dialectical relations which refutes / resists the idea that, “...

we must resist all attempts to persuade us that our future lies in the hands of an ungovernable fate ” (Marx, 1965 :751). The country’s history, inclusive of the *Pungwe*, is analysed in relation to dissent, resistance and social change. The study extends Bakhtin’s theories of the dialogic and carnival paying special attention to polemic and resistance imbedded in *Pungwe*. Bakhtinian theory is:

...particularly appropriate when reconsidering the peculiarities of social movements, specifically the artistic movements of the avant-garde or others critically engaged in society, which conceive art as both resistance and a form of life. (ibid: 14).

Of special concern is the diversity of motivations, ideas, perspectives and approaches all profoundly subversive of the established Rhodesian colonial power. Social and moral restraints that Africans are renowned for disappeared during *Pungwe* meetings. Just as the carnival is a philosophy of communication so is the *Pungwe*.

### **3.7 Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope**

This study has been enlightened by a strong affinity to the historical materialist perspective in which the dialectic between collective consciousness and agency and social structures constructs socio-political reality. Bakhtin saw it necessary to create in the chronotope an “historical poetics” that could realise and portray certain socio-historical epochs and genres. The chosen novels is a war genre whose portrayal of the colonial socio-historical era is succinctly put across by Holquist when he says that the chronotope is an “optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system” (Holquist, 1990: 426).

The selected body of Zimbabwean Shona novel was chosen to test the validity and applicability of the Bakhtin’s “literary-artistic chronotopes”. The term chronotope is a combination of etyma that signifies time (chronos) and space (topos) which are quite indispensable to observe at the onset that Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope (even of the novelistic chronotope) engrosses more than representation of time and space. The study examines narratives, particularly prose narratives and presents the subversive power of humor and carnivalesque cavalcade with the assistance of the comic-grotesque songs narrations at *Pungwe*. Bakhtin developed the concept of the chronotope via a historical, cross-cultural and teleological study of the novel, and as Morson and Emerson (cited in Ladin, 2010:131) note, “the chronotope essay and related writings were part of Bakhtin’s great project of his third

period to elucidate and exalt the genre of the novel”. The selected Shona novels have managed to show resemblance between Chimurenga war’s everyday lifestyles and novelistic chronotopes to which Bakhtin confirms that he speaks of literature as “assimilating real historical time and space” and also of articulating “actual historical persons in such a time and space” (Bakhtin, 1981: 85) and he adds that “Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in the work (in the text)” (Bakhtin, 1981: 253). He further asserted that all language is inherently chronotopic and that prose narratives most readily exemplify those “fusion[s] of [spatial and temporal] indicators” through which literary “[t]ime [...] thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible” and literary “space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” (Ladin, 2010:131). The centripetal forces of syntax, character, scene and plot make most “literary-artistic” prose narratives fertile ground for the emergence of what Ladin (ibid:131) has called “incidental”, “local” and “major” chronotopes, and dense webs of relationships among them. *Pungwe* formed dense webs of cultural and political communication between masses and the guerrillas.

### **3.8 Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism**

Bakhtin is noted for his “reader-involving techniques” in studies of the relationship between language, popular culture, and the history of the novel as a literary genre. His dialogic appropriation of the other-voicedness that is evident in chosen Shona texts namely, Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), Makari’s *Zvaida Kushinga* (1984), Musengezi’s *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Chimhundu’s *Chakwasha* (1991) and Choto’s *Vavairo* (1990), make the theory very appropriate to this study. To Bakhtin, language is both a cognitive and social practice this is why it is often referred to as “politics of representation” (Waghmare, 2011:3). The heteroglot elements within these novels assist in encoding and decoding the semiotic and Chimurenga’s ideological frame of otherness. This provides the most cogent interpretive force for the reader which according to Lodge, locates:

...meaning in the dialogic process of interaction between speaking subjects, between texts and readers, between texts and themselves [because] no utterance stands absolutely alone, that every utterance must be understood in relation to that which provoked it, and shapes itself in anticipation of a future response that is also true of literary texts (Lodge, 1990:86).

Bakhtin’s theory proposes that all discourse is in dialogue with prior discourse on the same subject, as well as with discourse yet to come. His dialogic criticism would view the chosen



Shona novels not merely as a verbal art but as a socio-political phenomenon which is centered on the plurality of the texts and the plurality of independent unmerged war voices. The Shona novels are constituted by a multiplicity of divergent and contending socio-political voices as shall be dealt with in subsequent chapters. Bakhtin's account of carnival, dialogism and the grotesque continues to be an indispensable instrument for analysing the relationship between the high and the low in Zimbabwe's contemporary culture. The grotesque refers to the use of bizarre, absurd, irony, laughter and excess, dealing with the dichotomy life and death. *Pungwe* possessed all these carnivalesque qualities especially when the "grotesque expresses not the fear of death but the fear of life" (Kayser cited in Bakhtin, 1984b:50). Bakhtin goes into a lengthy discussion of the carnival roots of the polyphonic novel, touching on a subject he expounds upon further in *Rabelais and His World*. Bakhtin felt the genre of Socratic dialogues grew out of:

Folk-carnival "debates" between life and death, darkness and light, winter and summer, etc., permeated with the pathos of change and the joyful relativity of all things, debates which did not permit thought to stop and congeal in a one-sided seriousness or in a stupid fetish for definition or singleness of meaning -- all this lay at the base of the original core of the genre. (Bakhtin, 1984b:132).

Carnival and the grotesque question the notions of utopia and dystopia. By introducing this theory into everyday life, the carnival is a period where hierarchies are temporally lifted (Bakhtin, 1984a:10) although narrative disappointments are experienced by some people. Some traces of the carnival and the grotesque can be found in our culture, in reaction to the process of repression. Carnival and the grotesque are anti-hegemonic mechanisms that were adopted by the Chimurenga War strategists to escape the Rhodesian administrative hierarchy whose capitalist power impoverished the Zimbabwean masses. They were temporally and spatially determined transgressions performed at *Pungwe* followed by the restoration of the socio-political order.

The carnival was the dream of a free world where Zimbabwean people would not miss anything socio-political. "The suspension of all hierarchical precedence during carnival time was of particular significance" (Bakhtin, 1984a:10). *Pungwe's* atmosphere of joyful relativity was characteristic of a carnival sense of the world, enabling a free and familiar contact among fighters for freedom and the Zimbabwean masses. Bakhtin's carnival does not primarily serve as a form of liberation and empowerment for the lower classes but as a practical method

supported by the Zimbabwean for defusing the frustrations of the lower classes, thus squelching real Chimurenga spirit of revolutionary fervor.

Bakhtin considers 'voice' to be "the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness", and this voice is not synonymous with the character, neither is it limited to this novel. The voice becomes an embodiment of a multiplicity of voices leading to the concept of double voice which was evidenced at *Pungwe* meetings during Zimbabwe's Chimurenga War. Nehanda's voice becomes metaphorical to refer to the variety of utterances that furthered the ideology of Chimurenga. Even Chimurenga War names exemplify the figurative use of 'voice' thereby legitimately appropriating Bakhtin's conception of dialogism often referred to as speech genres. Because of their pervasiveness in nature, speech genres assume various forms since:

...the category of speech genres should include short rejoinders of daily dialogue ... everyday narration, writing ... the brief standard military command, the elaborate and detailed order... and the diverse world of commentary (Bakhtin, 1986:60).

This research is heavily dependent upon Bakhtin's theory whose concept of dialogism is a name for a bundle of theoretical and epistemological assumptions about human action and communication. Communication during the war was oriented towards the Zimbabwean people's shared knowledge for example in Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), Musengezi's *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Chimhundu's *Chakwasha* (1991) and Choto's *Vavairo* (1990). It is important especially on the idea of utterances during the war as the "real unit of speech communion" (Bakhtin, 1986:67) as a sharp contrast to sentences being used as the unit of language. If language and its units are observed as abstractions that are far removed from the real acts of communication, they cease to be contextual. Speech genres coalesce around Chimurenga War's *Pungwe* discourses.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to offer the theoretical grounding of the study. The chapter discussed the carnivalesque's modes and selectively highlighted certain points such as laughter, grotesque, multi-linguaged consciousness, heteroglossia, creation of new connections and possibilities, dialogism, parodic, fragmentary ritual practices. These are key issues to the analysis of *Pungwe* as lived experience and as is depicted in the chosen Shona

novels. The carnival spirit survived in Zimbabwe's Chimurenga War where the novel's uniqueness is radiated for continued self-renewal. This chapter presented a coherent account of the different modes of Bakhtin's thought including the interrelatedness between his conception of carnival and his ideas in connection with language and literature.

The chosen body of Shona literature offers a carnivalesque aura which best suits the Chimurenga War era. The carnival forms, transposed into the language of literature become powerful means of artistically comprehending life, they become a special language, the words and forms of which possess an extraordinary capacity for symbolic generalisations, that is, generalisation in depth. Many of the essential sides, or, more precisely strata of life, and profound ones at that, can be discovered, comprehended and expressed only with the help of this language (Thomson, 1996). The foundation of dialogism is rooted on the dialogue between individual and the socio-political, text and context which manifest standards of intertextuality in life.

For Bakhtin, while socio-political forces are always in conflict, a language appears dialogically responsive to issues that have been said before and in anticipation of things that will be said in response. It presupposes a sense of immediate presence where meaning is firmly grounded in socio-political discourse. This includes non-verbal communication. A language's limitlessness and multiplicity of contexts represents many voices and the ideas which the language contains and communicates are dynamic, relational and engaged in a process of endless re-descriptions of the world. Dialogism, which is sometimes the equivalent term to deconstruction, implies a polyvocality in which various registers and languages interact and respond to each other. One salient characteristic of dialogism is its persistence on dynamics, change, tensions and progression. Yet this view of Bakhtin's work also underscores dialogism's resistance to "being confined to any exclusively 'literary' application". Indeed, according to Holquist (2002:107) "the fixity of boundaries between 'literary' and 'extra-literary' discourse is precisely what it questions".

All research contains theory in some form, and literary research is no exception. This particular research is clear about the theories that are going to be used, and the ways they would be applied within the formation of the thesis. Theory will manifest itself to some degree in the theoretical approach itself (which is the basis of this chapter), the arguments

about what might happen, the approach to the fieldwork or data-gathering (the methodology which marks the following chapter) the analysis and synthesis of the findings. This chapter has therefore shown that theory often arises out of a value position, and this is apparent within literary research in its attention to anti-oppressive or emancipatory practices. In the next chapter, focus is on methodology that this study uses.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter undertook a detailed examination of Bakhtin's theory of the carnival outlining its major tenets, identifying its historical and cultural dimensions. The aim was to emphasise the theoretical insights of carnivalesque that are of critical relevance to this study. This fourth chapter describes the research methodology used in this study. This description includes the geographical area where the study was conducted, the study designs, and the population and sample size. The chapter decides exactly on how the researcher is going to achieve this study's stated objectives. This means defining what the activity of research is, how to proceed, how to measure progress and what constitutes success. This is done through clearly spelling out the new data needed to shed light on the research problem that has been selected. Research methodology furnishes this research with an advancement of a rich human knowledge, tools of analysis when carrying out the research and tools that assist the researcher in analysing manifestations of *Pungwe* in Zimbabwe's Chimurenga War. The researcher's critical awareness and scientific attitude during the data collection process is aided by adopting major steps that constitute the "methods section" of this research. It further describes instruments that were employed to harness data which includes methods suggested to maintain validity and reliability of the research instruments.

#### 4.2 Research approach and design

Study designs are processes that give guidance to researchers on how to collect, analyse and interpret observations from the data collected. Mixed methods designs are deemed a powerful tool of illuminating directions for socio-political action, thus supporting the causes of the liberation struggle. Perry (2009:235–236) argues that:

The traditions of intersectionality and mixed methods research have a shared commitment to holistic inquiry . . . are equally committed to assessing the interplay between human agency and systemic structures, and center the tensions and contradictions of our lived experiences in their assessment of social and behavioral realities.

This study tremendously benefitted from this most avered practice of “intersectionality and mixed methods research”. Recent studies emphasise the instrumentality of mixed methods that are a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In support of the above view, Leech (2010: 261) quotes Greene’s who argues that research in humanities is:

...moving towards some kind of convergence. Some kind of settling of difference ... and will emphasize a technical level of methodology. It will be about technique—step one, step two, step three—it will be that kind of technique... the wonder that is possible in mixed methods will be reduced to procedures and techniques.

Mixed methods can bring a diversity of sampling tools but they are not always appropriate in every research situation. For the purposes of this study, the choice is largely focused on qualitative method. Mixed methods model are appropriate for analysing complex phenomena such as the Chimurenga War. This is so because there is a more fluid relationship between political and philosophical paradigms (assumptions about the socio-political world and nature of war knowledge), methodology (the logic of inquiry), and methods (techniques of war data collection).

### **4.3 Qualitative method**

However, this study uses the qualitative methods whose essence is grounded in subjective interpretation of literary texts to yield diverse meanings. Trochim (2002:38) avers that unlike quantitative studies, qualitative methods are “...sensitive, nuanced, detailed, and contextual”. This study’s goal tackles a research challenge of the Chimurenga War from a qualitative angle. Qualitative research method which is a method which would be used to collect *qualitative data* (i. e. data in the form of text, images, and sounds) that are drawn from participatory observations, interviews and documentary evidence, that is analysed with the use of qualitative data analysis methods.

Qualitative perspective tends to offer tremendous benefits. For example, the first benefit is that it results in a stronger design and explains more fully the richness and complexity of Zimbabwean masses at *Pungwe*. The second benefit is its powerful way of demonstrating valid and reliable elements of Chimurenga War experiences, people’s value judgment, and socio-political choices during the colonial era. This study has realised that the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher’s confidence. This interpretation in context-specific situations is characteristics of qualitative research. While there are a

variety of conceptions of qualitative research that do exist, there are competing claims as to what constitutes as good quality work. Rather than opting for the criteria promoted by one variety, “paradigm,” “moment,” or school within qualitative research, this study has learnt valuable lessons from each one. Tapping such wisdom was of necessity because research in literature is just like social research which is a craft skill, relatively autonomous from the need to resolve philosophical dispute (Seale, 1999:465). As a qualitative method, textual analysis aims to study the meanings of words and expressions.

Furthermore textual analysis is a suitable methodology to analyse the Shona novels and its agentive capacity to carry on *Pungwe*. Textual analysis enables this research to place value judgment to the ways in which the Shona novels and singers depict *Pungwe* in their works. Qualitative approach has been chosen over quantitative approach because it is first hinged on the belief that there is no one objective ‘reality’ which can be observed and neutrally quantified (Lemon in du Ploy, 2001:33). This is also underscored by Morrison (1989:24) who describes or defines qualitative approach as a descriptive research tradition for things that cannot be instrumentally measured, such as feelings, behaviour, speech, thoughts and culture. Secondly, researchers using a qualitative approach do not believe that human beings are homogenous and they can be simply categorised. Thus, the researcher chose this approach in order to explore how the heterogeneous nature of human beings in interpreting Shona novels and songs. In a nutshell, the study takes an interpretive approach to the study of the Shona novels and Shona oral songs written down. Interpretive social sciences as Wimmer and Dominick (2000:103) say aims “to understand how people in everyday natural settings create meaning and interpret the events of their world...” The study makes extensive use of secondary sources to help explain and argue the case of the manifestation of *pungwe* in the Shona novels and the Shona oral songs. Secondary sources also provide a perspective from which it is possible to analyse how the novels and oral songs encode rhetorical devices that writers and singers use to bring new understanding of the liberation struggle from the perspective of the *pungwe* institution.

#### **4.4 The power, significance and relevance of the qualitative method to this study**

A qualitative study is a “...process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in natural setting” Leedy (1997:105). The qualitative method

provides findings with descriptions that are meant to accurately reflect the case under study. The suitability of the qualitative method to this study is aptly captured by Denzin and Lincoln (1994:17) who observed that a “qualitative research is multi-method in its focus involving an interpretive, naturalistic method to its subject matter.”

#### **4. 5 Novels to be analysed**

This study is carried out from a selected body of literature which includes Raymond Choto’s *Vavairo* (1990), Vitalis Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), Charles Makari’s *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) and Gonzo Musengezi’s *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) a collection of short stories *Masango Mavi* (1998) by Chiwome and Pongweni’s *Songs that won the Liberation War* (1982). Western novelistic tradition has denigrated African art from left, right and centre, and necessarily conceptualised it as the oral *other* which lacked in the literary complexity. This means that this study is of necessity and is required to lay claim to validity of an African collective worldview depicted through the narratives of *Pungwe* found in selected Shona written forms. The presence of these written forms in this study invalidates the proclamation of the dominant and hegemonic Western epistemological thinking. This study seeks to address the hybrid heritage of the Shona novels based on their exposition of Chimurenga War reality of the fusion of its African oral antecedents and the Western novelistic tradition. The detailed portrayal of the *Pungwe* institution showcases how African novelists have domesticated the novel form through their utilisation of indigenous oral literary and cultural elements and proposes that “ a thriving relationship exists between the African novel and African folkloric and cultural forms, which gives the African novel its oral flavour, cultural particularity, and authenticity” (Tsaaior, 2009:1).

Whereas interviewing guerrillas who participated in the Chimurenga War allows for the witness as evidence to speak of their war experiences, the novels are pure invention and they use metaphor that can suggest certain things and meanings that people at the *pungwe* may not have been aware of at the time of the performance. Novel narrative allows reflection of past experience and is achieved through the carnivalesque theory. For Bakhtin, carnival customs gave rise to what he variously calls a carnivalesque “style of expression,” which is a “rich and original idiom of ...forms and symbols,” a “system of images” that have characterised this selected body of Shona literature (Bakhtin, 1986:17). It can be interrogated or verified as these Shona narratives thematise space and memory. But guerrillas may give answers



coloured by the new political affiliation. Interview is oral and can be open-ended yet it is not entirely reliable. Some people can change narrative of the same *Pungwe* experience. To consider writing on Chimurenga War's *Pungwe* institution as an enduring process of becoming confirms that there is no ideal language that can provide the exact means for the representation of this war as a certain fixed idea, memory, or experience. As an alternative, imaginative writing of the selected novels generates and incorporates many interpretations of the same *Pungwe* phenomenon.

This art of writing broadens the horizon of what is possible instead of trying to represent what is absolute or predictable. Literature offers an essential theoretic of space, typical of this study, one that, like many critical space studies, implicates the production of space in the everyday, in the Zimbabwean social life, but that unlike many space theories suggests the relevance of the carnivalesque aesthetics, of “the literary mode of knowing” for understanding the intermeshing of the *Pungwe*'s spatial and the social. Space and memory have been significant themes that have influenced the selection of this body of literature that offers a critical narrative aesthetic. It is made up of a plurality of languages that are exchanged among multiple subjects. In the first pages of his book on literature, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze (1997:1) explicates that:

To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete....Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experiences. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman becomes animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming imperceptible. These becomings may be linked to each other by a particular line...

The emphasis by Deleuze here is on the process of writing as one that entails becoming, an unfolding of new potentialities in the present post colonial Zimbabwean era. The Shona novels' assured place in this study establish their centrality in Chimurenga War's discursive history as the principal agent of rendering the image of carnival which illuminates a sense of creativity. For Deleuze, (ibid: xvi) the major preoccupation that literature does is closely connected “not to the question of its textuality, or even to its historicity, but to its ‘vitality’ that is, its ‘tenor’ of Life”. The vitality of the *Pungwe* institution, as depicted in the Shona

literature, asserts the predisposition of Shona cultural values and practices to shape, influence, and indeed even persuade behaviour change, conduct, and thought.

Derived from the foregoing, this study views the act of writing novels as a skill of representing the war, a way of tracing the contours of *Pungwe* experiences. In this study, both writing and survivors' testimonies can unfasten a plethora of possibilities for life. In this similar fashion, this is why Bakhtin's conception of "reality as we have it in the novel is one of many possible realities; it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it *bears within itself other possibilities*" (Bakhtin, 1986: 37). So the novels focus on documented war experiences where it affords, the critic time to reflect on the metaphors that are fixed in the form of images. Bakhtin stresses that "the language of the novel is a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interlamine each other" (ibid, 1986:47). His description of the language of the novel is that of a system of intersecting planes, mutually informing readers about the *Pungwe* institution and providing resonance with each other. A novel does evoke some atmosphere of sounds, colour and mood through words, but guerrillas who participated in the struggle can recall certain songs sung at the *Pungwe*. Also, novelists are of different ages, generation, class though all can be black. Educational background and influence of Christianity can influence how they write about *Pungwe*, where others sanitise certain elements while other authors present the gruesome reality of violence, fun, mobilisation and political conscientisation. All this is contrasted with the views of interviews.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This study uses textual analysis to explore the depiction of *Pungwe* in selected Chimurenga war novels. The qualitative method provides findings with descriptions that are meant to accurately reflect the case under study. The suitability of the qualitative method to this study is aptly captured by Denzin and Lincoln (1994:17) who observed that a "qualitative research is multi-method in its focus involving an interpretive, naturalistic method to its subject matter." This study uses interviews minimally because the thrust is to explore how *Pungwe* is represented in the Shona novels and songs. This is a task which requires qualitative analysis. The next chapter is a presentation of findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the methodological issues to be followed when harnessing data on how to explain the *Pungwe* institution. This chapter offers a presentation and analysis of the depiction of *Pungwe* in the Shona novels and Chimurenga war songs. *Pungwe*, a performance as articulated in the novels, is a negotiation of several paradoxes of life which includes degraded elevation, restrained self-determination and deceiving truth-telling. The chapter presents the nature of the theatrical sensibilities of *Pungwe* and further elaborates on Bakhtin's theory of carnival to the *Pungwe* institution. The chapter will present and analyse the link between *Pungwe* as carnivalesque elements of parody, absurdity, satire and *Pungwe* as space of forging a discourse of resistance to domination whether by the Rhodesian white settler government or oppression of the masses within black communities during the struggle. The chapter also critically explores the aesthetics of exaggerated depictions of the positive agents of the African people at the *Pungwe* which were meant to appeal to the generality of the Zimbabwean masses to rally behind the revolutionary cause for political independence.

The chapter argues that the tenets of carnival theory developed by Bakhtin allow one to present and analyse the depiction of *Pungwe* in the novels and the songs in a systematic way. It will be demonstrated that the carnivalesque theory encourages freedom, of thought among people, and that through its subgenres of elevating the eccentric, carnivalistic mesalliances and profanation, the theory can explain the paradoxical representations of *Pungwe* found in the Shona novels and Chimurenga war songs. These Bakhtinian categories are relevant to the lived Chimurenga war experiences as is embedded within the selected Shona literature. Bakhtin (1984a:101) avers that:

The carnivalesque categories are not abstract thoughts on equality and freedom... No these are concretely sensual ritual- pageant "thoughts", experienced and played out in life itself, which have taken shape and survived over a period of millennia in the broadest masses of the peoples. They were therefore able to exercise such an immense formal, genre- determining influence on literature.

The combination of these carnivalesque elements highly charged the revolutionary socio-political agenda at *Pungwe*. The carnival's revolutionary spirit, as manifested at *Pungwe*, results in a totally accepted belief among the literary critics that "it posits popular culture as a site of resistance and struggle" (Humphrey, 2000:149) It conscientised and encouraged masses, both young and old to develop fresh ideas about the direction of the war. The novels portray, as Eagleton (1981:148) rightly articulates it "the 'fictive' foundations" of the socio-political Chimurenga War reality of a different world through *Pungwe*. At this *Pungwe*, people are temporarily transferred into a utopian world (Bakhtin, 1984a:276) a world elsewhere, which has to be lived in carnival and partly resided in the realm of theatre.

This chapter presents data gathered using qualitative methods. Very minimum interviews are used in this study in general and in this chapter in particular. The idea of minimising interviews is justified in the sense that this study is textual analysis. However, as argued in the introduction of this study, the analysis of selected songs and selected novels in Shona and a minimum of interviews introduce diversity of perspectives to the theme of *Pungwe* depicted in the creative works of art. Carnival refers to an umbrella term for numerous ritual practices and events. The selected novels explore popular festive materials dramatised at the *Pungwe* in the live context of its existence. However, since Shona novels and songs re-appropriated the *Pungwe* institution and constituted it as part and parcel of the written narrative, important is important to compare oral and written perspectives on the *Pungwe*. To further complicate the argument of the study some songs that were popular in the actual historical *pungwes* but are not included in *Songs that won the Liberation war* (1982) are also discussed in this study. The argument here is that it is possible that these unrecorded songs that are silenced by the fact of them not being canonised in the written form may further introduces different meanings about the *pungwe*. Lastly, the chapter uses critical voices of scholars who have written on the *pungwe* to tighten the argument of the study. These critics range from ex-combatants who have become academics to armchair academics who did not participate in the liberation struggle at the war front as freedom fighters. It is hoped that their different experiences can further enrich understanding of the *Pungwe* that is written in the Shona novels and Chimurenga songs, whether these songs are recorded or not.

## 5.2 *Pungwe* as popular public sphere

The concept of popular public sphere is a reformulation of Habermas's theory whose notion of *popular transculturators* was a product of Rama's theory of narrative transculturation. Habermas's conception of public sphere is a perception of "dominion or the assemblage of spaces of social life where public opinion is formed" (Remedi, 2004: 9). *Pungwe* as public sphere becomes "a zone or space where cultural activities take place" (Remedi, *ibid*: 9). This *Pungwe* carnival has remarkable affinities with the Bakhtinian features which took place in an 'island' outside of official space and time. The *Pungwe* setting preferred mountainous areas and thick forests meant for cover. Dialogue at *Pungwe* with discussions that ensued on such gatherings resulted in a space that formed a public. The songs and other forms of entertainment at were crowd pullers in the construction of a public and a sphere in which public political suggestions were collectively created. Theatre of the oppressed became the means of communication with all its inherent dramatic techniques. *Pungwe* as theatre enabled spaces of negotiation between masses and freedom fighters. At *Pungwe*, there was creation of spaces and forms of public expression through songs and dances, political sermons and many more.

## 5.3 The depiction of the setting up of the *Pungwe*

This section discusses the ways the Shona novels depict how freedom fighters entered into African communities to establish military bases and develop *Pungwe* sessions. Some critics such as Manungo have painted a simplistic picture that suggests that the relationship between the freedom fighters and the masses was harmonious spontaneously. Others like Kriger (1995), adopts an extreme view of the ushering of freedom fighters in African communities even arguing that the relationship was from the start characterised by hostilities. These views have been contested and modified by Makanda's (2013:71) study when he states that:

*Pungwes* were not the first strategy to be used to forge links with the masses. Initially, clandestine meetings were held. As the war intensified and grew there was then a need to gather and collectively perform a number of activities that enabled both the guerrillas and the masses to manage the war.

Firstly, Makanda writes as a witness, having been a freedom fighter himself, so it is arguable that his voice carries the authority of one who was present. Secondly, he suggests that *Pungwe* was a military strategy used by a guerrilla army which by itself very nature is a

‘weak’ army fighting against militarily strong army. Thirdly, the critic dismisses the idea that freedom fighters were always readily accepted by the villagers. The depiction of the introduction of freedom fighters entering African communities seems to be close to the views shared by Makanda. The *Pungwe* uses the metaphor of “the fish and the water” to describe the philosophy underlining the initial contact between freedom fighters and the African masses. In this metaphor, the masses were to become the water or the battleground on which the “fish” (freedom fighters) were to execute the war of national liberation. Elaborating on this concept of the “fish and water” used to signify the relationship between the freedom fighters and the masses; Makanda (2013:71) has this to say:

The setting up of *pungwes* became the responsibility of both the masses and the guerrillas who followed the dictates of the guerrilla warfare that relied on the Maoist notion of the water and fish. This metaphor of the ‘water and fish’ meant that the masses were the water and the guerrillas were the fish. Each needed the other to operate optimally in the struggle against colonialism. The ‘water’ or the masses provided shelter or cover for the fish (fighters) during the war.

Although Makanda is correct to suggest that the masses and the freedom fighters needed to work “optimally” there is, in his invocation of a nature metaphor, a sense and worrying view which is that at the initial contact, the relationship was a smooth one and that even in the future of the struggle that relationship would remain uninterrupted. This view is not entirely endorsed in the novel *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) by Makari. To begin with, the novel is about Mr Mberikwazvo, a headman, whose support for the liberation struggle cost him all that he had gathered in life but he never looked back. During the struggle, people had been promised total empowerment. They had been told that everyone would have access to fertile land and good jobs among other things. Independence was the focus to a memorable event for both freedom fighters and masses as it granted the new government a chance to reverse all the colonial injustices and try to implement and fulfill promises that people had anticipated. In this novel, the initial contact between the freedom fighters and the villagers was marked by fear, trepidation, and uncertainty on the part of the villagers as the following exchange between Comrade Shingirirai Tinotonga and headman Mberi demonstrates:

*Ko zvaita sei nhai baba? Musatya zvenyu. Hapana chakaipa chatinokuitai. Tiri vana venyu. Dzikamisai zvenyu hana. ‘Handisi ku... ku ...ku ...u... Ndino ...’ Rurimi rwavo [VaMberi] rwakakakwa zvakasimba vakatadza kubudisa izwi ravo (Makari, 1985:14).*

(What is the problem father? Don’t be afraid because we are not here to harm you in any way. We are your children. Calm down. ‘I am no... no... not... no... no .... I am ...’)

Mr Mberi's tongue was so tied up and could hardly talk thereby rendering him speechless).

From this encounter, Comrade Shingirirai Tinotonga, the leader in this group is confident and appears like an 'invading' force while headman Mberi is depicted as confused and frightened. He behaves as if his power as headman has been undermined. The incoherence of this response exudes a carnivalesque glee. This portrayal of carnivalesque modes of subversion and inversion in a seemingly strained relationship between the masses and headman Mberi is symbolically confirming the inverted power matrix in the African community in which the young but heavily armed freedom fighters have taken over power to re-organise politics at both the village and national levels from the older generations of Africans. This portrayal of more carnivalesque elements is also revealed in *Vavariro*, a novel by Choto (1990:7 -8).

Briefly stated, Choto's *Vavariro* (1990), is a novel presented through the third person narrative, containing a story of the experiences and efforts of both the freedom fighters and the masses during the struggle for independence and what they ultimately got out of it. Choto's journalistic research skills are demonstrated in coming up with both the constructive and dreadful gains of the liberation struggle through his naming technique. The plot revolves around a headman called VaChimoto and other parents together with freedom fighters and the *mujibha* and *chimbwido*. In this novel, Mr Chimoto and his wife also display a sense of fear when they stumbled upon a group of freedom fighters while they were cultivating their green fields. The irony of the depiction of the freedom fighters in *Vavariro* is that they are projected as fearless, to a point where they request Mr Chimoto to take them to the village headman: "*Mangwana ndipo tichada kuti vanhu vazive kuti tiri vana ani. Tichatanga taona sabhuku, ndiye achazokoka vanhu vake*". (It is tomorrow that we will introduce ourselves to the villagers. We will first of all see the headman, who in turn will invite the villagers to a *Pungwe*). This statement by one of the freedom fighters indicates that the freedom fighters followed a certain protocol that was meant to show respect to the village leadership. In turn, showing respect to the village leadership was calculated to create the basis of a harmonious relationship during the course of the liberation struggle.

According to Makanda (2013:71), the presentation of the freedom fighters and the masses as equals would in the course of the struggle make the "setting up of *pungwes* became the responsibility of both the masses and the guerrillas..." This evaluation of the depiction of the freedom fighters and the masses in the actual war and just as in the Shona novel is supported

by Sherman (1980:86) who quotes Cliffe who describes the organic link between the masses and the freedom fighters in the following way:

There was a tiered structure: the guerrilla detachments and units, with direct roots among the people anyway; the mujibas who were a supporting cadre and the main liaison with the community; people's committees. The middle stratum, the mujibas, was not only highly effective but represents an original and significant contribution that Zimbabwe had made to the tactics and strategy of people's war

In short and as is expressed in the passage above, there were different categories of people in the village whom the freedom fighters had to secure confidence and trust from before setting up the *Pungwes*. Put differently, the novels analysed in this section suggest that there are silences in the historiography on *Pungwe* which the novels simultaneously affirmed as true and contested as distorted. In fact, the actual interaction between the freedom fighters and the masses took on uneven and sometimes contradictory dynamics as the novels analysed in the next section show.

#### **5.4 The relationship between the masses and the guerrillas at the *Pungwe***

To begin with, Chimhundu's *Chakwasha* (1991) is a historical novel that portrays the gains of independence where blacks have been accorded the opportunity to proceed with their education, something that colonialism did not guarantee. Chimhundu acknowledges that people were quite happy to achieve political independence but incompetence and self-centredness of blacks like Moses have joined the bandwagon of corrupt leadership.

Musengezi's (1984) novel, *Zvairwadza Vasara* portrays a balanced account of the liberation struggle where freedom fighters were normal human beings who could be eaten by crocodiles and could be killed at close combat like Comrade Gaba's death at St Augustines Mission during the war (Musengezi, 1984:109). The novel contains a song that depicts how the freedom fighters introduced themselves to the masses at the *Pungwe*. In the novel, the song "Mhoroi mose mose" sung by Comrade Gaba greeted the masses and its lines exhibit the elation that the freedom fighters manifested when they were reforging contact at the first *Pungwe* meeting. The words of this greeting song went as follows:

"Mhoroi mose mose!  
A iye iye,  
Makadii?  
A iye iye,

Greetings to you all  
A iye iye  
How are you  
A iye iye



Norufaro,  
A iye iye  
Tonosangana kuZimbabwe...”  
(Musengezi, 1985:99)

With hapiness  
A iye iye  
We will meet in the independent Zimbabwe ...

This song was sung in order to establish political and ideological rapport and strengthen trust between the freedom fighters and the masses. The song also acknowledged that the freedom fighters were sons and daughters who had gone for training and had come back to fight colonialism with the masses. This evaluation of the song is supported by Makanda (2013:71-2) who argues that this song could not be talking of the alleged violent nature of the freedom fighters but instead they revealed their quest to establish a stable, a workable, pragmatic but harmonious interaction with the masses.

Beyond the initial greetings at the *Pungwe*, the freedom fighters spelt out the different roles that the masses were to play in the struggle. For example in Choto's (1990) *Vavairo*:

*Rakazoti zuva rava masikati, Tumirai akaudza Jeri kuti andodaidza vanhu vomuraini rokwaCharira, Simbi, Chivhinge, Chitengu nevekwaKamwanda kuti vauye kumorare... Vanhu vakaenda kugomo vachimhanya. Tumirai vaimuda somwana wavo, vaimukudzazve somutungamiriri wavo. Nyaya dzose dzainetsa vanhu dzaizopera dzaiswa mumaoko aTumirai (Choto, 1990:130).*

(When it was in the afternoon, Tumirai told Jeri to summon all people in the neighbourhood of Charira, Simbi, Chivhinge, Chitengu and Kamwanda so that they could join in the morale boosting activity at Pungwe. People went to the hill in their numbers. They loved Comrade Tumirai fondly as if it was their real child. They had faith in him that Tumirai could solve all their worries).

From this passage, the author depicts three things that reveal the ease with which the *Pungwe* meeting place became the space where the freedom fighters and the masses gelled. Firstly, the fearful image of freedom fighters as mad people that *Zvaida Kushinga* initially portrayed is reversed when in *Vavairo* (1990:31), Jeri willingly accepts his new role as a mujiba and visualises himself as a cadre when he says; “*Tichaendawo, [kuMozambique] unoti tingaperere paujibha chete? Hazviiti...*”. (We will finally join the liberation struggle in Mozambique because we cannot remain mujibas till eternity). Secondly, the passage above also depicts the freedom fighters and the villagers as having established a familiar code. Such a depiction that assumes a cordial relationship between the freedom fighters and the masses has led the Zimbabwean historian, Manungo to support this in his own research on the peasant – guerrilla relationship in Chiweshe. Makanda's views are corroborated by one

informant called Kembo (cited in Manungo, 1991:156) from Chiweshe Communal areas who remembered vividly how the guerrillas introduced themselves to individuals and thereafter garnered their support:

...they came through Chaona, down there. When they arrived they met the parents and told them we are your children, we are fighting for freedom, we want to remove oppression. We started talking to the enemy long ago but have failed to reach an agreement. We have guns which we want to use to fight the white man, to remove the white man's oppression. They began to teach the people about oppression and politics. Some parents were able to understand, they understood that the aim of their children was to liberate the country. They agreed with the children and supported them by giving food. The boys stayed at Chaona and called the youth and taught them.

Manungo's thrust in the above passage exposes the existence of consensus and harmony between guerrilla and the masses in phrases like "they understood", "they agreed", "supported them", "reach an agreement" and many more words suggest that mass mobilisation at *Pungwe* went on quite smoothly. The *Pungwe* necessitated the socio-political context of popular organising and controlling consciousness during the liberation struggle. *Pungwe*, as a performing art, strengthened theatre's capacity to consolidate and sharpen dialogue. The best way of presenting Chimurenga war's socio-political reality is to adopt Bakhtin's dialogical form where multiple voices and divergent viewpoints intersected at *Pungwe* meetings. Manungo's thrust is to project *Pungwe* as a space of harmony. Although Manungo did not participate as a cadre, his views on *Pungwe* are shared by Makanda's inspirational explanation of an eye-witness who participated fully during Zimbabwe's liberation war as a fighter at the war front. Some respondents say that *Pungwe*'s organisation was quite varied depending on the socio-political context of the area. In support and a further elucidation of Manungo's views, Makanda (2013:71), a war veteran succinctly puts it that:

*Pungwes* were not the first strategy to be used to forge links with the masses. Initially, clandestine meetings were held. As the war intensified and grew there was then a need to gather and collectively perform a number of activities that enabled both the guerrillas and the masses to manage the war. The setting up of *pungwes* became the responsibility of both the masses and the guerrillas who followed the dictates of the guerrilla warfare that relied on the Maoist notion of the water and fish.

Makanda highlights a very important enthralling and revealing dimension that before the intensification of the Chimurenga war, *Pungwes* had not yet been recognised as a potent and lethal weapon of mass mobilisation. Villagers needed didactic approaches to this war.

*Pungwe*'s adoption, as Makanda (ibid: 71) explains, "enabled both the guerrillas and the masses to manage the war" through shortened speeches which were interchanged with songs and dances. This engrossing and engaging view by Makanda is further augmented by Pfukwa's (2009:63), revelation and compelling summary as another war veteran and critic, who adroitly sums up the intriguing fact that the idea of having *Pungwe*:

...derives its essence from the traditional and cultural sense which predates the liberation struggle. This ancient tradition was used by the guerrillas as a tool to mobilize the peasants. *Pungwe* was used as a deliberate effort to sell the struggle to the people. It was through such an ideological tool as *Pungwe* that guerrilla outwitted Rhodesian forces despite the latter's technological superiority which was incomparable to that of the guerrillas.

As a people's tool to express their views, concerns and political analysis, *Pungwe*'s main function as a performing art was to offer psychological stability in building its participants' identity, sense of belonging and self-confidence through a participatory and interactive process. The masses became major actors and co-organisers of this *Pungwe* event. It is through this political conscientisation of the masses that raised their critical class consciousness through analytical political questions. *Pungwe* became a highly political theatre whose participatory and dialogic nature were portraying carnivalesque qualities.

One respondent, a war veteran who runs butchery at Senga Business Centre in Gweru pointed out in an interview that "the first thing upon getting into an area was to consult the spirit mediums of the area for guidance. Secondly, what followed was mass mobilising at a *Pungwe* where we taught them why they should support the war of liberation. The cadres would introduce themselves and spell out the Maoist ideology of the fish and water metaphor". This stance is supported by most informants consulted.

The Zimbabwean people's loss of their land and dire effects of colonial rule became pertinent issues that led to peasant support for cadres in the struggle for independence. Male ex-combatants in general agree that they did not force the masses to attend *Pungwe*. One, male ex-combatant from Buhera said that at first coercion was necessary because we could end up without support if we started by pleading with them. Other respondents from Mutasa area of Manicaland Province agree with the above sentiments that guerrillas mixed strategies, coercion plus voluntarism. On the other hand, female ex-combatants believe that female participation at *Pungwe* was in most cases through coercion. However, there is the common

view from war veterans as respondents that they had to convince the masses beyond any reasonable doubt why they were fighting the Rhodesian soldiers as enemies. These oral testimonies on the nature of *Pungwe* and its function in the struggle are corroborated by other ex-combatants who have become academics. For example, Pfukwa (2009:63) is of the view that “Pungwe was used as a deliberate effort to sell the struggle to the people.” He explains the agency of the *Pungwe* institution in the following ways:

While many would like to believe that the Liberation struggle was an act of coercion, it took a lot of persuasion and Pungwe was one of those powerful instruments of persuasion. The idea was to win the hearts and minds of the population. Pungwe had a political address normally from the political commissar punctuated by song and dance.

From this passage above, the themes that emerge are that both coercion and persuasion were employed during the struggle. These coercive and persuasive techniques were not used as a way of forcing people into doing something they did not want. Makanda (2013:70), another ex-combatant also argues that:

Using *pungwes* as a communication philosophy proved to be a very efficient and effective way of reaching the generality of the masses... The use of indigenous languages created good ties that then transcended the ordinary communication by calling upon the intrinsic values of ubuntu, the humaneness of the Bantu people that fed on relational approaches.

This was meant to lure the masses’ support in every respect. This is also closely intertwined with the representation in selected literature. That agreed perspective by many respondents on the organisation of the *Pungwe*, pointed out how guerrillas meticulously planned their groundwork by approaching and sending young boys who were herding cattle as their errand boys. These ‘messengers’ would take word to a specific designated person like the (sabhuku) kraal-head, whom the freedom fighters would have chosen. There is a general consensus between the oral respondents and the critical voices of excombatants who have theorised *Pungwe*. The idea that serious socio-political issues were discussed at *Pungwe* is extended by Nyawaranda (1985:68) in *Mutunhu Une Mago* when Comrade Muchaparara remarked that, “*Izvo tichasara tichironga nepovho yacho. Tinogona kuvaudza kudaro patichasangana navabereki vacho papungwe yatichaita navo mangwana*”. (We will sort out that crucial issue with the masses. We can discuss that when we meet them during tomorrow’s *Pungwe* meeting). *Mutunhu Une Mago* by Nyawaranda, (1985) shows that by colonising Africa and alienating the people’s land, whites had courted for themselves trouble. In most cases, the

guerrillas and the masses are presented as a resourceful people and cleverer than the enemy who is usually depicted as stupid, naïve and cowardly. The author's work deifies freedom fighters whom he hardly shows as capable of being defeated.

However, Manungo's romanticised and idealised characterisation of the peasant – guerrilla relationship as always smooth and without any potential conflicts is modified, complicated and significantly contradicted in *Zvaida Kushinga*. For example, the peasants are depicted as fearful and even suspicious of the presence of the guerrillas in their villages as revealed below:

*Vakuru ava vakambofunga kuti vasangana nebenzi kana kuti bhinya... Vasati vapedza kufunga zvakawanda ndipo pakati vamwe vashanu fashu vachibuda mumakwenzi. Vakanga vakazadza miviri yose namagidi uye zvombo zvisina kana mukare mumwe akanga azviona... 'Asi isu matiziva here nhai baba?' 'Kwete vanangu'. 'Zvitsvene baba, isu tinonzi makomuredhi. Vamwe vanotidavidza kuti vakomana kana kuti vanamukoma. Tiri vana venyu vakauya kuzopokonyora kubva kuvavengi Zimbabwe yavakatibvutira. Takabuda muno munyika tikandofundira nzira dzokurwisa vapambipfumi. Tichava nemi mazuva mazhinji saka tichida kuti tizivane'* (Makari, 1985:14).

At first instance, this old man thought he had encountered a lunatic or a potential murderer... Before he even was deep in thought about many issues, five more men came out the bush from nowhere. They were carrying an assortment of weaponry never seen before, wrapped all over their bodies. 'Have you known us father?' 'No my children'. It is in perfect order, we are comrades. Some call us boys or brothers. We are your children who came to liberate Zimbabwe that was taken away from us by our detractors. We went out of this country for training in guerrilla warfare in order to topple these imperialists. We are here to stay hence the need to introduce ourselves so that we know each other.

The central phrase "*matiziva here*" (have you known us) has multiple connotations that can hardly be depicted as unproblematic. First, on the surface level the phrase establishes a biological and racial identity between the freedom fighters and the villagers as black people who could be father and son to each other. However, at a deeper and ideological level, the passage's central question "*matiziva here?*" might point to a possible ideological dissonance between the masses and the freedom fighters.

Manungo (1991) hints at this seemingly unequal relationship between the freedom fighters and the masses when he argues that the "... guerrillas gradually gained the upper hand, and which was instrumental in their prevailing in the end [even when] the successes of the guerrillas were easily traceable to the activism of the peasantry against the settler state in avenging bitter grievances which had time and again been voiced at the *Pungwes*" (Manungo,

1991:156). This argument is further supported by Kriger (1995), for whom there inter and intra-conflicts between the freedom fighters and among the conflicts over the ideological direction of the war. Shona novels affirm and contest the depiction of the war and the *Pungwe* as only entirely conflict-ridden.

The characterisation of the *Pungwe* is given positive agency especially in the novels that deal with the space of the *Pungwe* as a space used for conscientising the masses about the necessity of the struggle. In *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), the ordinary people provided food to the freedom fighters and this food was prepared by the young women called *zvimbwidos*. The Mujiba and courier boys carried the weapons, gathered information on the whereabouts of the Rhodesian soldiers and passed this information to the freedom fighters. The masses also provided clothes apart from the important fact that it was from the rank and file of the masses that the freedom fighters continued to recruit the cadres for the political nationalist movement. Proof of that support is clearly portrayed in Nyawaranda's (1985:50) novel:

*Imba yoga yoga yaiunza upfu pamba paSachigaro pachu. Asi nokufamba kwenguva sadza rose rakanga robikirwa kubhesi kwacho nanachimbwido. Vabereki vaingopa upfu nomuriwo chete. Uyu muriwo waisambovanetsa nokuda kwamakabichi avaindotora kumapurazi.*

(It became a requirement that each and every household brings mealie-meal to the headman's house. With the unfolding of time, all meals that were meant to feed the guerrillas were prepared by the *chimbwidos* at the base. Parents provided just mealie-meal, meat and vegetables. Meat was not a challenge because of the well-fed cattle (cabbages) that they took from nearby farms).

From this passage, it is insinuated that as part of subverting the colonial system, freedom fighters encouraged the masses to steal cattle (cabbages) from white farms, and these well-fed cattle were often eaten at the *Pungwe*. These are the cabbages being referred to above and will be dealt with later in this study. In Choto's *Vavariro* (1990:65-7) the assistance rendered to the freedom fighters is spiritual in the form of the advice given by Shona departed ancestors would guide, protect and guarantee their survival, hence the need to approach the (*svikiro*) ancestral spirit. VaChimoto leads a delegation of elders to consult with the female spirit medium whom they implore to protect them from enemy bullets:

*Tauyawo kuna ambuya kuzovazivisa kuti tasvika mumusha mavo. Tati hatingashandi tisina kuvaudza... Tauya kuzokuudzai kuti tiri muno mumusha menyu, tava kuita basa redu* (Choto, 1990:33).

(We have come to consult you our traditional healer that we are in your neighbourhood. We felt it would sound disrespectful to continue with the liberation struggle without requesting spiritual protection from you. You are our guardian).

Consulting an ancestral spirit (svikiro) socio-culturally constructs a reality that is determined by the guerrillas' socio-political identity. This admixture of the mundane and the esoteric language of the spirit world is part and parcel of the carnival languages in which the symbolical powers that drive the liberation struggle are vested in the living and the departed. In Shona cosmology the distinctions between the real and the incorporeal are blurred because it is considered that life is fluid. The song, Mbuya Nehanda in *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982), is an appeal by the freedom fighters to the spirit of Nehanda to guard them is not an aberration; that appeal affirms the belief in the indestructibility of African culture in the face of an onslaught from colonialism. Thus also, the novel *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), which about the female protagonist, Kudzai who left her family to join the liberation struggle against her husband Andrew's will. Moyo, the author, deliberately intertextualises song, letters and the critical realist narrative in order to emphasise the ways in which each of these forms of conveying messages drew their cultural capital from the sources that are available in the indigenous African knowledge system (Moyo, 1985:135). This view is supported by Makanda (2013) for whom, the liberational struggle and the *Pungwe* in particular were spaces monopolised and privileging the use of oral forms. He says that "The oral mode of communication was hailed for its powerful use of paralinguistic features, such as gestures, body language and its performative capacity. Its strength lay in the power of the voice, used to transmit messages that were memorised, performed and recited" (Makanda, 2013:70).

The performative aspect of orality that is alluded to above is manifested in *Vavairo* when the ancestral spirit (*Svikiro*) instructed the freedom fighters what to and what not to do. This consciousness is gotten as a result of a socio-political intercourse whose spiritual phenomenon renders the freedom fighters in a state of becoming. Says the svikiro:

*Ndinoziva kuti vana vangu vari musango vari kuda kuti titore nyika yedu. Ndinofara kuti vari kuchengeta mashoko angu andakavaudza. Ropa vari kurideurira kunze kwemusha. Ndizvo chaizvo zvandinoda... Mvura iri kuuya, chipararai iye zvino. Vabva kure garai muhama dzenyu dziri pedyo sezvo mvura iri kuuya isina kunaka. Ndinoda kugeza ropa rose rakazara mumusha mangu* (Choto, 1990: 66).

(I know that my children are fighting in the forest so that we can have our country back. I am happy that they are keeping what I have commanded them. Blood is being shed outside my territory. This is what I want. It is about to rain, you may disperse right away. Those of you who came from afar, seek shelter from relatives nearby

because the rains we are about to receive are heavy rains. With this rain, I want to cleanse all the blood that was shed in whole neighbourhood).

Choto (1990:66) shows Comrade Tapera's reverence for and faith in God through (vadzimu) the ancestors where God provides for whatever the fighters for freedom wanted in the bush. The novelist utilises Bakhtin's dialogic techniques to view the role of spirituality during the liberation struggle with a different perspective. Mixing ancestral and Godly worship echoes the carnivalesque tradition which celebrates the paradoxical richness of Chimurenga war life. In carnivalesque terms, the world of the spirits produces its own rationalities, justifications and provides alternative frameworks to capture social-political realities which project the 'second' world outside the limited vocabulary authorised by colonial officials. The spirit world also contained subterranean and subversive narratives which even the most concerted efforts by colonialism to discredit it, did not always succeed in occluding.

It is quite clear from the foregoing dialogic encounter that the relationship between the freedom fighters and the masses was not automatically cordial. It took many sessions of *Pungwe* for there to be some form of trust "*saka tichida kuti tizivane*" (Makari, 1985:14). (this is why we want to thoroughly know each other well). The freedom fighters' introduction as, "*Vamwe vanotidavidza kuti vakomana kana kuti vanamukoma*" literally translated loosely as "some call us boys or brothers". The shift from "*vakomana*" for boys and "*vanamukoma*" for brothers suggests the gendered dimension of the war. Another carnivalesque element is when language is used to mask and disguise Chimurenga war secrets as well. In some cases freedom fighters would have spotted an individual "after a long period of guerrilla reconnoitering of the local people at shopping centres, beer spots, or wherever people gathered freely" (Manungo, 1991:155).

In short, the contribution of the masses to the successes of the liberation struggle as elaborated at the *Pungwe* in the novels analysed in this section went beyond provision of food, clothing and supplying information to the freedom fighters. The freedom fighters also received the much-needed spiritual guidance from the spirit mediums (Lan, 1985).

## **5.5 *Pungwe* and depiction of conscientisation sessions in the Shona Novel**

*Pungwe* had special roles to play especially that of conscientising the masses on the reasons for which the freedom fighters were fighting. There were different motivations and aspiration



that drove Africans to participate in the liberation struggle. The knowledge about the grievances which irked African masses were retold and explained at the *Pungwe* during the way. Shona novels have narrativised these grievances, motivations, aims and aspirations that the ordinary people had. In Nyawaranda's (1985:51-2) *Mutunhu Une Mago* at one *Pungwe* meeting, causes of waging a war are elaborated by Comrade Pasindepedu says:

*Munomboziva here, vabereki, chatakasiyira misha yedu, kuzogara mudondo kudai semhuka? Mumwe musu ini ndakafumozarura mombe nembeudzi ndichibva ndasiya musha wangu. Vabereki vangu havasati vandiona kwamakore matatu kusvika nhasi... Regai ndikuudzei, vabereki. Hapana anoda kugara musango serombe kudai. Tinodawo kugara mumba. Tinoda kufundawo. Tinoda kuyarutsa mhuri yeduwo. Asi takasarudza kusiya misha. Vamwe takasiyira chikoro panzira tichichida. Vamwe takasiya mabasa. Vamwe kutosiya mukadzi mumba achangobva kuchatwa naye! Vamwe takasiya vabereki vachirwara mumba. Vamwe takasiya ngoma ichirira. Ini ndakasarudza zvangu kusiya zvoise izvizvi kuzogara musango kudai semhuka. Ndakasarudzazve nyangwe kufa kuti ruzhinji rweZimbabwe rwuve norugare...Zvakafanana naJesu wamunogaroudziwa nezvake kumasvondo enyu ikoko. Iye akasarudza kufa kuti voruzhinji vapinde denga.*

(Are you fully aware parents the reasons why we left the comfort of our homes by getting into the bush and stay with animals? One day, I let out of their pens, my parents' livestock and I deserted my homestead. It has been three solid years without seeing my parents to date... Let me advise you parents that no one wants to stay in the forest like we are doing. We also want to be comfortable in our houses. We also need to be educated. We also need jobs. We also need to fend for our families and see our children grow. But we chose to leave all this behind. We were in school and we left it halfway when we need it. Some left very good jobs. Some left their beautiful wives soon after their wedding. Some of us left deserted our bed-ridden parents. Some parted with the worldly pleasures. I personally chose to all this behind and share this jungle with animals. I also chose to die for the peace and independence of all Zimbabweans. This is typical of Jesus whose sermons are peached in churches that He chose to die for the majority to enter heaven).

This passage emphasises the self-sacrifices that ordinary men and women had to endure when they left schooling, wives, children and enjoyment. However, the author suggests that the freedom fighters left the country in order to serve the generalty of the Zimbabwean people suffering under colonialism. In other words, in this novel, embracing death is viewed as a symbolical gesture that is regenerative. In the words of Russo, commenting on a similar situation in a different context, the essence of the carnival in art and life is that what is asserted is the paradox of "dying and being born at the same time, possessing as it were two bodies" (Russo, 1995:165).

Thus, it is arguable that Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), uses the character of comrade Pasindepedu to mobilise and conscientise the masses. However, comrade Pasindepedu digs into the grievances which many Africans could identify with in their lived experiences under colonialism. Moyo's novel, *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) further clarifies the actual aims for which the freedom fighters took up arms against the colonial settlers in Zimbabwe. Comrade Viva who wrote a farewell letter to her husband on her way to Mozambique to join the liberation struggle cites several reasons why she was pushed to join the struggle. For her, the liberation struggle is a people's war because it gained their support: "*hondo yechimurenga iri hondo ine chinangwa uye iri hondo ine rutsigiro rwozhinji rwavanhu*" (1985:123). (This Chimurenga war is an ideological which has garnered a lot of support from the Zimbabwean masses). The above passage formulates the aims of the war in terms of rejecting a culture that promotes tribalism, nepotism and even reverse racism. But most pointedly, Comrade Viva summarises the aspirations of the people in ways that implicates the necessity to transform the material conditions and lives of the ordinary people:

*Kana nyika yava mumaoko avanhu, munhu wose anofanira kurapwa pachena kana achinge arwara anofanira kugara kana kurima pose pose paanenge achida, anofanira kutambira mari yakawanda. Upfumi hunobva muno munyika hunofanira kuyamura vana vomuno. Tinoda kuti kusava nemisiyano pakati pavapfumi navarombo* (Moyo, 1985:136).

(When we have gotten our independence, everybody will be entitled to free medical care, have access to affordable accommodation, access to a piece of land anywhere that he wants and should be well remunerated. All our natural resources must benefit Zimbabweans first and foremost. There mustn't be differences between the haves and the have nots in a socialist Zimbabwe).

From this passage above there are concrete interests identified as constituting the fullness of political independence. These relate to the need to provide health services, access to decent housing, control of land by the African people, fair compensation for skilled labour and ensuring equitable distribution of wealth-resources to benefit Zimbabweans. This imagined socialist society in a new Zimbabwe is also suggested in the song "Mukoma Takanyi" in Pongweni's (1982:44-5) *Song that Won the Liberation Struggle* (1982). The song Mukoma Takanyi that was sang at *Pungwe* meetings but is now captured in the written form in Pongweni's seminal text has verse three of 'Mukoma Takanyi' listing the wide range of economic, natural and mineral resources. According to Pongweni's song:

*KwaMurehwa tinowana madomasi* Mrewa produces tomatoes;

*Sendekera mukoma Takanyi*  
*KuChiredzi tinowanaka nzimbe*  
*Sendekera mukoma Takanyi*  
*Centenary tinowana chibage*  
*Sendekera mukoma Takanyi*  
*Gokwe tinowana mhazhanje*  
*Sendekera mukoma Takanyi*  
*KuBindura tinowana mapari*  
*Ndizvozvoka mukoma Takanyi*  
*Darwin tinowana donje*  
*Sendekera mukoma Takanyi*  
*KuInyanga tinowana madhumbe,*  
*Sendekera mukoma Takanyi*  
*Bhuruwayo tinowana madora*  
*Sendekera mukoma Takanyi*

Chiredzi produces sugar.  
 Centenary is famous for maize.  
 Gokwe abounds with wild fruit.  
 We get oca from Bindura  
 Mt Darwiin is cotton territory.  
 Inyanga produces the bulbous root (dhumbe)  
 There are lots of caterpillars in Bulawayo.

(Pongweni, 1982:44-5)

Most of the respondents on orature articulated how the Rhodesian Government's propagandistic state-controlled radio broadcast churned out vitriol and even used films as a form of indoctrination of the masses. Some informants remembered an attempt for propagandistic intentions by the state radio programme called *Padare* to win the conscience of the masses. *Padare* is the Shona elders' venue for community meetings. This was meant to tap wisdom from the reservoir of African Shona tradition but all came to naught. Oral art forms are inseparably linked to African people's traditional culture. They express people will, their interactions with nature and instil a sense of confidence and inspiration to cope with the complex daily struggles for existence. A war veteran and Former Minister of Education, Mutumbuka (cited in Kidd, 1992: 132) outlines the role of *Pungwe*:

Our fighters and villagers organized all-night *pungwes* in which the combatants and their supporters put on skits, songs, poetry, and dances as a way of strengthening morale and talking about the issues and problems of the war. The *pungwes* played an important role in revitalizing the traditional performing arts which had been undermined during the colonial era. Even in the most repressive situation our songs, often operating under the guise of religious tunes, served to consolidate the support of villagers for the struggle.

*Pungwe* realised the formidable force of orature in the above passage through "skits, songs, poetry, and dances as a way of strengthening morale and talking about the issues and problems of the war". Theatre being the multi-medial of all art forms, guerrillas' awareness of the importance of oral traditions in peasants' consciousness, meant Chimurenga war and orature were so inseparably intertwined at a *Pungwe* theatre. Songs played a crucial part in the liberation struggle by psyching the collective rhythmic war process possible, light and

pleasurable. People's hopes, dreams and aspirations are expressed and reflected through Chimurenga war songs. The selected body of Shona novels and the Chimurenga war songs portray a war process in Stam's (1989: 96) elucidation, in which "Art becomes carnivalized in those texts which productively deploy the traces, whether absorbed directly, or through intermediate links of carnivalesque folk culture". The productive deployment of synergies of the carnivalesque elements are evidenced in the exaltation of a Shona national spiritual figure through Nehanda's prophecy. Another carnivalesque quality is in the ironic genesis of the song, sung by a Western affiliated church. Ravengai (2013:13), commenting on the song further notes that, "It seems blasphemous in the sense that a Christian spiritual tune, though developed from a traditional secular song, is used to magnify a Shona ancestral spirit".

<i>Mbuya Nehanda kufa vachitaura shuwa.</i>	Mbuya Nehanda died prophesying truly
<i>Kutizvino ndofire nyika</i>	That I am dying for this country
<i>Shoko rimwe ravakandiudza</i>	She told me one thing
<i>Tora gidi uzvitonge</i>	Take the gun and liberate yourself
<i>Mbuya Nehanda kufa vachishereketa</i>	Mbuya Nehanda died so that we
<i>could liberate our country</i>	
<i>Kuti tinofire nyika</i>	That we should die for this country
<i>Shoko rimwe ravakandiudza</i>	One bit of advice was that
<i>Tora gidi uzvitonge</i>	Take the gun and liberate yourself
<i>Wasara kuhondo</i>	Aren't you coming with us to fight?
<i>Shuwa here,</i>	Aren't you really sure?
<i>Tomhanya-mhanya nemasabhu</i>	We are running about carrying
<i>Toto anti-air</i>	sub-machine guns, our anti-air missiles too,
<i>Tora gidi uzvitonge</i>	Take up your arms and liberate yourself
<i>Wasara kuhondo</i>	Are you staying behind?
<i>Shuwa here</i>	Aren't you coming to fight?
<i>Tomhanya-mhanya nemasabhu</i>	We are running up and about carrying
<i>Totora anti-air</i>	sub-machine guns, our anti-air missiles too,
<i>Tora gidi uzvitonge</i>	Take up your arms and liberate yourself

(Pongweni, 1982:26-28)

Nehanda's invocation and consciousness in this song "Tora Gidi Uzvitonge" which means 'take up arms and liberate yourself' shows how orature and legends nourish real life processes and help people confront and forge into the future. This song "celebrates traditional African religion and exhorts blacks to take up the gun and fight the white oppressor, it does so in the very presence of Western aesthetics that it seeks to challenge" (Ravengai, 2013:13). It sensitises people on who Mbuya Nehanda is thereby placing the Second Chimurenga into its proper socio-historical context. Mutswairo rightly puts it that "... the Chimurenga [war] blew like a tornado. Supported by the spirit mediums the battle cries shook Mazoe"

(Mutswairo, 1983:29). Nehanda, Chitepo and the rest of the guerrillas and masses were at the closest verge of dying as a result of oppression but they then encouraged people to take up arms and fight the enemy. This song complemented the guerrillas' mobilising efforts through this famous and formidable Shona spiritual icon who laid down her life for the emancipation of all Zimbabweans. It is her words' magical appeal that precipitated the guerrilla and masses enthusiasm to continue fighting the Rhodesian enemy soldiers.

It is the songs that helped to blow the spirit of the nationalist consciousness during the struggle. In this song, Nehanda's voice of encouragement is clearly visible. Her living word as she promises the Zimbabwean masses is evocative of Bakhtin's (1984a:90) Dostoevsky who "possessed the genius to hear the dialogue of his epoch or, more precisely, to hear his epoch as a great dialogue, to detect in it not just separate voices, but above all dialogic relations between voices, their dialogic interaction". The heroine's heroic status is judged by her amazing exploits both living and when dead. Mutswairo's (1956) *Feso* is famous for its poetic recital which enquired about Zimbabwe's independence, "*Nhai Nehanda nyakasikana, kuchagozova riiniko isu vanyai tichitambudzika*" conscientised people to join the liberation struggle. It is abundantly clear that some guerrillas read some works of art like *Feso* that conscientised them. One such Zimbabwean iconic and political figure who was influenced and inspired by literature is the late Former Vice President of Zimbabwe, Dr Simon Vengesai Muzenda.

The utilitarian value of the *Pungwe* institution would not have been known if it was not of the concepts of heteroglossia and carnival that directly focused on long-standing political issues. *Pungwe* dramatises the tensions and critical slippages through Bakhtin's heteroglossia which is a social fact and not just a literary concept. Heteroglossia is a language condition and not just a literary tool to describe the function of language in literature. As Bakhtin (1981:271-2) notes:

the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a 'unitary language', act in the midst of actual heteroglossia. At every given moment in its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects but also, and for us this is the essential point, into socio-ideological languages: the languages of social groupings, 'professional' languages, 'generic' languages, the languages of different generations, etc.

Bakhtin's influence in the literary Shona works under review in this study has greatly assisted as fertile ground for this research's heteroglossic analysis. It illuminates Bakhtin's concepts

of mixed lexicon in form of “dialogized heteroglossia” at *Pungwe* as the zone of dialogical contact: The Bakhtin sense of dialogue occurs between languages and between varied world-views, socio-political classes and literary cultures they represent. The references to Nehanda employs the usage of dialogic discourses which yields into a significant effect to this Shona literature for the sole purpose that, “dialogic orientation is, of course, characteristic of any discourse – it is the natural disposition of any living word (Bakhtin, 1981:279).

One *Pungwe* meeting at sunset, guerrillas and masses came together in a huge celebration of a victorious battle. They sang in strange tongue but their songs were of praise for their gods of war reiterating Nehanda’s prophecy. The figure of Nehanda is depicted in so many works of art as an epitome and paragon of Zimbabwe’s feminist nationalism through her spiritual temporality which catalyses national history. In Vera’s novel, *Nehanda*, she is depicted as a liminal figure who links her people with the spiritual world of their ancestors. This liminality is shown when she has both dead and living qualities. Nehanda’s prophetic soul that her bones will rise again is clearly enunciated by Chenjerai Hove’s (1996:53) novel *Bones*:

...You can torture me,  
Spread my bowels for the jackals to eat and tear them to pieces,  
Mutilate my body with your anger,  
Throw my brains to the vultures,  
Leave the remains of my body in the playground for your children to play with,  
Cut my ears to decorate your own ears  
Cut my fingers use them to wipe your own sweat.....  
My bones will rise in the spirit of war.  
They will sing war-songs  
With the fire of battle. They will compose new war-songs and fight on  
Until the shrines of the land of their birth are respected once more.  
My bones will rise with such power  
The graves will be too small to contain them  
The ribs of the graves will break when my bones rise,  
And you stare in disbelief, not knowing if your hunger for war  
Can stand up to it. Then the locusts will not be seen again  
And strangers will not think that he who accepts them is full of foolishness....

This song’s sublimated competitive urge capitalises on the inherently dialogic multiple registers which embodies Bakhtin’s potential triumph. Since most songs are in these selected novels, their zones are dominated by dialogue, political narrations, sloganeering, stream of consciousness technique and worship. The novelists’ heteroglot tendencies are consistent with the writers’ carnivalesque and guerrilla war strategy. Most of Bakhtin’s writings referred

to the historical approach of Stalin where the collective ancestral body of the people typical of Nehanda's spiritual recruitment song possessed the carnivalesque qualities of:

... the victory of laughter over fear, over the oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden. It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death. (Bakhtin, 1984b:90).

In the similar vein, Vera just like Mutswairo, represents Nehanda's death as a fulfilment of prophecy but awaiting her reincarnation as beneficial to the nation for she will be a formidable spiritual force to reckon with. Through *Pungwe*, the African people's own culture was renewed in order to boost people self-confidence in their traditions despite the Western denigration and onslaught. Vera (1993:111) avers that:

She has travelled long distances through time to meet this version for the future: she knows that her own death is inevitable, but sees its significance to the future of her people.

In the future, the whirling centre of the wind, which is also herself, has collapsed, but that is only the beginning of another dimension of time. The collapse of the wind, which is also her own death, is also part of the beginning, and from the spiralling centre of the wind's superimposed circles another wind rises, larger and stronger. Hope for the nation is born out of uncertainty, and the young move out of the darkness of their trepidation, into the glory of dawn. The trembling wind asserts its eternal fury, and it will not be dominated, or destroyed (Vera, 1993:111).

A song entitled "*Mhururu tendere mhururu, ndadzoka, Uende kwaMutare, mhururu tenderere mhururu*" (Wherever you go there is morale. Even if you go to Mutare, there is morale) showed how wide-spread the *Pungwe* concept was. Nehanda's spirit medium kept on spurring the Freedom fighters to soldier on with the struggle. She exudes qualities of a courageous and resilient woman whose iconic stature and indomitable spirit inspired the nationalist struggle in Zimbabwe. *Pungwe* symbolised a powerful cultural organisation that represented the masses capacity to organise themselves through the guidance of the spirit mediums. Its very nature as printed material preserves imagined interactions and exposes the dialogic and predictable nature of language as is experienced in this Chimurenga War song's verbal interlocution. This significance of the Battle of Sinoia (Chinhoyi) is viewed as an inspiration to the peasant during the Second Chimurenga. The need to adopt a different approach to the war is well captured by Gaza (1986: 35) who says:

The results of the Chinhoyi Battle of 1966, waged by the heroic ZANLA cadres, were disastrous in [their] effect on the small but growing liberation movement, but

nonetheless it marshalled the first real organised resistance by force of arms. Perhaps the greatest attribute of this battle lies in that it becomes the eye-opener, the basis for the realisation by the guerrilla movement of the importance of a mass-based approach.

Since the ZANLA forces were trained in China, they were taught the tactics to mobilise peasants before they waged a war with the enemy. This war needed political education in the peasants' own socio-cultural gathering contexts. Manungo (1991:153) quotes Joshua Tongogara's emphasis on the importance of mobilising the peasantry while he spoke to the Voice of Zimbabwe Radio Broadcasting from Maputo, Mozambique in 1978, who says:

The movement mobilised the masses, recruited, interpreted policy and also created some nuclei within the areas they were going to operate. So that the first task, which took us, if I remember correctly, ten months, before... were shooting anything. And after thorough investigations and scientific analysis of the situation within the area, it was easier because ZANLA had gained the backing of the masses. So by the time we started waging some battles, it was quite easy, we were now living within the masses, getting our supplies from the masses, that is food wise, clothes and everything, information, we got those from the masses. And co-ordination was easy. So it almost created a situation where we were flexible with all the support, just as revolutionary (sic). When you are waging an armed struggle, you must sink into the masses, you must have the masses on your side, and the masses are always in a revolutionary state. They are regarded as water and the freedom fighters as fish. You have never seen a fish which goes out of water and it survives, it dies.

*Pungwe*, being central to masses' politicisation and mobilisation, generated a sense of belonging through inculcating a spirit of community action and united villagers and the cadres.

## **5.6 *Pungwe* and the peasant consciousness during the struggle as depicted in the Shona novel**

This study assesses the Zimbabwean Shona literature within the context of the social struggles resulting from the framework of the social function of art. The Second Chimurenga of the 1960s and 1970s was a result of the people's desire to remove the yoke of bondage, frustration, depravation and want. Peasant consciousness grew day by day and gave rise to inseparable link between literature and life. Literature therefore expresses man's vision of reality. Literature is "one of the instruments for the sharpening and mobilisation of social consciousness in pursuit or negation of qualitative change, an instrument for the preservation or subversion of the existing order" (Amuta cited in Furusa, 1991:34).



The selected novels act as a revolutionary weapon to decolonise the people's minds against the Rhodesian settle regime. By the 1960s, the anti-colonial struggle aimed at destroying imperialist domination gained peasants' moral and material support. The nationalist movements thought of taking up arms against the Smith's settler regime which can be viewed as "one of the myriad skins the snake (imperialist capital) can put on" (wa Thiongo, 1972:45). *Pungwe*, as "carnival" life, was different from being 'official' through its suspension of social customs and hierarchies. Bakhtin's (1984b:10) explanation on the above corollary is that:

The official is based on inequality, rank, order, stability, unchanging timelessness, the past, values and norms. In contrast, carnival celebrates liberation from prevailing truths and established order. It marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.

*Pungwe* sought to change people's day to day socio-political existence. With the formations of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in 1964 led by Ndabaningi Sithole necessitated a stronger and firmer adoption of the decision to send young militants for military training outside the country. ZAPU and ZANU recruited guerrillas from Zimbabwe and posted them to Zambia, Russia, Cuba, Algeria, Bulgaria and North Korea; and China, Cuba, Tanzania, Mozambique, Czechoslovakia and Ghana.

Conscientisation of the masses took various forms. In Nyawaranda's (1985:53) novel there is a folktale of the donkey and the man. In the folktale, the donkey feeling cold asked the man to afford it some warmth. The donkey was allowed to put its head in the tent. After feeling warm, the donkey requested to have all of it in the tent. In his foolish generosity, the man agreed and the donkey entered the tent. Suddenly there was no space for the two and the man was kicked out of the tent by the donkey. The donkey lived for some time in warmth while the man shivered from the cold outside. The man mobilised the community to drive the donkey out. It chronicles how colonialism came into being. This folktale is a metaphor that casts things in the past but making reference to the present. This is defamiliarisation at its best.

In this story, the donkey can represents colonialism. Firstly, colonialists approached Africa with a bible in hand wishing to carry out what it said was the civilising mission. This meeky approach can be linked to the donkey's initial request in the folktale. At another level the

donkey represents the violence of colonialism in the manner it displaced people from their lands something akin to how the man in the folktale was displaced from his tent. In the folktale, the man is initially depicted as foolish by accepting strangers in his home and whose motives he does not understand. Through this man in the folktale, the myth of Africans as generous people is exposed as empty and dangerous to Africa he mobilised the community to fight the donkey (colonialism) and restore his freedom to access to land, natural resources and shelter all symbolised in his final repossession and control of the tent. However in the same folktale, the man's consciousness is heightened and this story can be a metaphor linked to the political control of Zimbabwe by black people in 1980.

Thus Comrade Chatambudza uses the folktale mode which ordinary people can easily comprehend so that beyond satisfying the mobilising effect, the folktale provides the mythic structure in which the struggle between African people and colonialism is depicted in metaphysical terms of good versus evil. The existence of the folktale within the novel confirms what Iyasere (1975) describes as ora-novel, a form of art in which the author relies on the oral genre to structure a written narrative. In the case of *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), the folktale's existence is extended and given a durable form when it exists alongside modern realism that is based on typical characters under typical conditions. In other words, just as nationalism is composed of different ideologies (some traditional some modern) *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) provides an example of how Shona authors made recourse to the cultural humus provided by orality in order to give shape to the novelistic form.

In short what is common in the discourse of the folktale is not only that it is the oral mode imbedded in the text, but that the folktale is an allegorical figure used to comment on one thing while it means another. In this context, the moral of the story is strong in its power of the language as masking in so far as it is camouflaging. It brings the role of the donkey as a beast of burden to the fore, an animal which is looked down upon. Bakhtinian carnival laughs at the man's stupidity when he allowed the donkey in the tent. The folkloric narrative meant that some masses' level of consciousness was uneven, and so freedom fighters assisted those who were slow to decode the meaning of oppression. Carnival shows the ambiguity of language during mobilisation lectures at *Pungwe*. With the triumphal entry of the donkey into the tent provides the carnivalesque qualities of decrowning and crowning between the man and the donkey. The tent belonged to the man in the first place but because of his over-generosity, he ended up being evicted and later the donkey took charge though this was short-

lived. This man should be able to laugh at himself after he crowned the donkey illegitimately and temporarily which was later decrowned. The power of nationalism glosses over the differences between people. It disregarded individual differences and focussed on the collective.

The folktale delineates how people got united against the enemy, “*Vamwe vazhinji kwazvo vakauya kuzomuyamura. Vamwe vakamupa mapfumo namatemo zvokurwisa dhongi riya nazvo*” (Nyawaranda, 1985:54). (So many people came to this man’s rescue, some brought spears and axes to drive out this donkey). This above folktale has ideological affinities to the one told by Baas Die in Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) in which a folktale is used to depict a journey by Africans from slavery to freedom in Zimbabwe.

The element of communal solidarity is also shown when the freedom fighters went beyond the collective which proves the strength of working as a team as is shown in this folktale. This team work is further cemented in another novel, *Vavariro* by Choto (1990:60) which shows how regional integration yielded the desired results through “*Jeri akaudzwa naTumirai kwaibva pfuti dzavaishandisa pamwe nemabara adzo... Dzinobva kuChina. Dzimwe kuRussia asi iyi iChinese made*” (Jeri who was told by Comrade Tumirai where guns which we were using during the struggle were coming from including their bullets. These ones come from China and some from Russia but this one is Chinese made). This realisation shows us that the strong military support that the liberation fighters received from China during the war of liberation partly explains why post-colonial Zimbabwe’s foreign policy is aligned towards the East. This is most apparent in the Look East Policy that Zimbabwe adopted after 2000. The Shona novelists inculcate into the masses the spirit of solidarity from China, Russia and many more countries.

Like in *Vavariro* (1990) and in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), Pungwe was a space of elaborating the conduct of the war through the mobilisation and conscientisation techniques. The gospel of unity and disunity coupled with warnings to the masses and the guerrillas is further captured when Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* says:

*Pakazopinda vamwe komuredhi vakataura nezvokubatana nokusatengesana... Uyo anonga atengesana zvake, hatimunzwiri tsitsi nekuti iyewo anonga asina kunzwira ruzhinji rweZimbabwe tsitsi. Zviri nani kubvisa nzungu yakaora mudura kana ichizoshatisa nzungu dzose muduramo. Kana tichinge tatengeswa, fungai,*

*tingangopere tose pabhesi pano izvozvi tabhombwa nokuda kwomunhu mumwe chete* (Nyawaranda, 1985:54-5).

On the *Pungwe* stage, there entered one comrade who politicised people about the importance of unity and not to sell-out. One who has sold-out would be an enemy of the masses and would not deserve our mercies. It is better to remove one rotten ground nut before it spoils the whole granary. You can imagine the effects of being sold-out that we can all perish from bombing as a result of just one sell-out)

The spirit of unity preached in the above passage is also embedded in the song which says “*Isu nemidzimu yedu takabatana muZimbabwe*” (Nyawaranda, 1985: 39). (We Zimbabweans and our spirit mediums are so united in this country) which was sanctioned spiritually. The theme of unity is also revealed in the songs that Pongweni, (1982: 59-61) believed were meant to appeal for assistance and expression of gratitude. Such songs like “*Ruzhinji rweAfrica*” and “*Vanhu vose vemuAfrica*” (1982: 62-64) emphasise a Pan African ethic in which the liberation of Zimbabwe was considered a metaphor for the quest for freedom by African countries which had not become independent.

### **5.7 *Pungwe* and punishment in the Shona novel**

However, the emphasis on the themes of unity, collective identities and similar national destinies that the Shona novels above portray also serves to warn traitors among Africans. For example, in the novel *Vavariro* (1990), Peter, a police officer is a traitor who declares that; “*Munhu wose anochengeta magandanga handidi kumuona pamba pangu*” (Choto, 1990:53). (Everyone who assists freedom fighters is my enemy). Peter’s job led to his death upon visiting his rural home. His treacherous activities led to his death although this death did not take place at the *Pungwe*. This is unlike in Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) where Mai Tawanda was beaten to death at a *Pungwe*. Deaths at *Pungwe* meant the spirit of carnival was promoting these contradictions. *Pungwe* became a space of punishment, an ideological rehabilitation and a place of execution during the war. People used this war to settle their scores. Chinodya’s (1989:203) Mai Tawanda was beaten to her death and this is followed by the call that “There is no mercy for those who sympathise with traitors, either. You should be rejoicing... Anyone here with a relative in the army should tell them to resign” (ibid: 207). While it is a fact that some people were actually sell-outs it is also very true that many people were killed as a result of lies from mujibhas. Mazarire (2009:314) sums up this argument when he says:

The personal connections between *mijibhas* and the guerrillas were responsible, many people think, for some unwarranted deaths of local civilians in the so-called *crossfire* or *tamba wakachenjera* (play it safe). It is believed the many deaths of the so called 'sell-outs' were products of calculated *mijibha* conspiracies to rid themselves of personal enemies or threats on the one hand, and guerrilla duplicity on the other.

That there was punishment at the *Pungwe* which often sometimes meant death is supported by one headmaster who, in an interview, related a story on how a married couple of Mumbijo village in Buhera District were asked to eat their ears and fingers when they were suspected of being sell-outs. The couple's gruesome death is still the talk of Buhera even decades after the war. But punishment was not always in the form of death. There is punishment which is a deterrent measure. Mhanda (2011:117) writes in his novel that he administers punishment to guerrillas who had committed war crimes. He says, "Following his confession, I asked all twelve of them to lie on the ground where after I personally took a big whip and gave them each ten lashes in full view of the ululating villagers... we disappeared into the night – soon after that." Mhanda does not specify the nature of the crime and since the punishment was in the form of beating, one can infer that the crime was not serious enough to warrant death. In this instance, punishment was viewed as form of deterrent measure against future offenders (Makanda, 2013). Punishment was also meant to "... develop a sense of ownership of the war amongst the oppressed... disciplinary issues needed to be dealt within a short space of time" (Makanda, 2013:77). In Zvaida Kushinga, an opposed view is given when it is shown that the Rhodesian forces killed headman Mberi for assisting the guerrillas. The novel shows that violence was not the monopoly of mujibhas and guerrillas as Mazarire (2009) seems to suggest above.

In Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), a transgression by the Rhodesian force disguised as an ordinary woman is punished severely by death right at the *Pungwe*. The novel captures the dramatic treachery by this Rhodesian soldier in the following way:

*Asi munoziva kuti maiva neyi muzidengu macho? Povho yakaramba inyerere, Komuredhi Muchaparara akazoti, 'Regai ndikuudzei. Maiva nomusoja akanga akatakurwa nemumwe wake akapfeka somudzimai. Musoja aiva mudengu macho aitova nepfuti yaakanga akatokoka achifunga kuti isu makumuredzi tichaungana padengu paya kuzotambira sadza'* (Nyawaranda, 1985:37)

(Do you know what was in that big basket? The masses remained quiet, then Comrade Muchaparara said, 'Let me tell you. There was an armed security force hidden in that big basket and he was dressed like a woman to disguise onlookers. This enemy's gun

was ready to shoot. He had anticipated that the freedom fighters would all stupidly gather in order to receive food ’)

From the above passage, the complete annihilation of the enemy by the guerrillas at the *Pungwe* is justified. The Rhodesian soldier depicted from the passage above is traitorous. His disguise in a woman’s dress is treacherous. However, the unmasking of the Rhodesian soldier reveals the carnivalesque feature in the novel which is underscored by the fact that common songs such as the one that gave warning to traitors, “Chenjera chenjera” were sung during disciplinary sessions.

Furthermore, during *Pungwe*, the material and metaphoric aspects of carnival converged leading to a political platform characterised by carnivalesque Chimurenga War songs. Moyo’s (1985:137) *Nguo Dzouswa*, Comrade Blood he stood up singing a song that warned the sell-outs. The majority of the people at this *Pungwe* responded in the singing to everyone’s joy “*akasimuka nechimbo chinoti, ‘Mutengesi chenjera’. Voruzhinji vakaimbawo zvikafadza vose vaivapo*” The song “*Chenjera chenjera*” exists in the Shona orature and it brings the strong warning to the enemy, fits in the genre of carnivalistic discourses. Chimurenga War songs provide a dual purpose explanation of Bakhtin’s carnival. Young boys became the readily available recruits as *mujibhas* whose assignments as go-betweens were meant to arrange girls for ‘*vanamukoma*’ (big brothers) or *vakomana* (boys) as the guerrillas were affectionately known. Mazarire’s (2009) observation is very apt that when *vabereki* (parents) were asked to dismiss and return to their homesteads, as one *ex-mujibha* recalled that:

...there was often an instruction for us to assume the role of sentinels. We were told that it was part of our training to become guerrillas in our own right and that it needed such resilience and the ability to keep secrets. We knew however some of the girls would have moved into the *poshtos* (sleeping areas) already to spend the night and have *svuto* [sex] with them (Mazarire, 2009:314).

That *mujibhas* or guerrillas slept with the girls against the liberation code of conduct is shown in Choto’s *Vavariro* (1990) where *mujibha* Jeri tries to woo Tsitsi who rejects Jeri’s advances. In Samupindi’s *Pawns* (1992), the taboos that imposed no sex between guerrillas and the *chimbwidos* is dramatically carnivalised when Comrade Fence has sex with Angella during the thick of the battle with the Rhodesian forces. Such lack of discipline is the reason for which the necessity for the code of conduct for the guerrillas was established and taught to the masses at the *Pungwe*. The above passage shows that taboos against sex by the

guerrillas during the war were to be strictly observed because its breach meant serious disciplinary measures were to be taken against perpetrators.

### **5.8 *Pungwe* and the depiction of ZANLA disciplinary code of conduct in the Song “Nzira Dzemasoja Dzekuzvibata Nadzo”**

Nkomo (1984), Mutandiri (2009), Kalu (2009) and Mazarire (2009) are all critically mistaken to emphasise punishment as the central activity that took place at the *Pungwe*. None of these critics sufficiently differentiates the kind of crimes for which certain punishment was preferred. These critics also underestimate the importance of punishment as deterrent. In other words, the war of liberation required a firm form of disciplinary conduct for the liberation struggle not to be undermined from within. In *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982), the first song “*Nzira Dzamasoja Dzekuzvibata Nadzo*” is veritable evidence and critical testimony that ZANLA was committed to a code of conduct during the struggle. This code of conduct is elaborated in the song “*Nzira Dzamasoja Dzekuzvibata nadzo*”. This song below is quoted in full in order to identify the taboos and explain the kind of disciplinary that will be taken if these taboos were transgressed. The song goes:

Kune nzira dzemasoja dzekuzvibata nadzo Tererai mitemo yese yenzira dzakanaka	Soldiers have a code of conduct by which They live and obey rules and regulations.
Kune nzira dzemasoja dzekuzvibata nadzo Tererai mitemo yose nenzira dzakanaka	Soldiers have a code of conduct by which They live and obey rules and regulations.
Tisava tinotora zvinh zvemass yedu Dzosai zvinhu zvose zvatowa kumuvengi.	We must not exploit or robe the masses. We must return all contraband to the enemy.
Taurai zvinonzwika kuruzhinji rwevanhu Kuti mass inzwisise zvakananga musango.	You must communicate your stand Clearly the masses must know the party line.
Bhadharai zvamunotenga nenzira dzakanaka Nokuti mudzosere zvinhu zvose zvamakatora.	Pay fair prices for everything hat you buy Return anything that you have.
Tisava tinotara zvinhu zvemass yedu Dzoserai zvinhu zvose zvatorwa kumuvengi	Confiscated for military reasons Pay fair prices for everything that you buy Return anything that you have.
Taurai zvinonzwika kuruzhinji	You must communicate your stand

Kuti mass inzwisise	Clearly to the masses They must know the party line.
Tisaita choupombwe muhondo yeChimurenga Tisanetse asungwa vatinenge tabata Tisaita choupombwe muhondo yeChimureng Tisanetse vasungwa vatinenge tabata	We mustn't engage in promiscuity While waging a revolutionary war We must not harass prisoners of war.
Tisava tinotora zvinhu zvemass yedu Dzoserai zvinhu zvose zvatorwa kumuvengi.	We must not exploit or robe the masses. We must return all contraband to the enemy.
Taurai zvinonzwika kuruzhinji rwevanhu Kuti mass inzwisise zvakananga musango.	You must communicate your stand Clearly the masses must know the party line.
Aya ndiwo mashoko akataurwa kare naivo vaMao vachitidzidzisa Aya ndiwo mashoko akataurwa kare naivo vaMao vachitidzidzisa	These are the words of wisdom handed To us by Mao Tse Tung The revolutionary sage
Tisava tinotora zvinhu zvemass yedu Dzoserai zvinhu zvose zvatorwa kumuvengi	We must not exploit or robe the masses. We must return all contraband to the enemy. You must communicate your stand
Taurai zvinonzwika kuruzhinji rwevanhu Kuti mass inzwisise zvakananga musango.	Clearly to the masses They must know the party line.

(Pongweni 1982, 9-11).

This song derived from Mao, the Chinese leader, contains seven central commandments that were meant to influence the conduct of the guerrillas. Guerrillas were expected to observe rules and regulations, return all contraband goods to the enemy, pay fair prices for everything that they bought, desist from taking goods from the masses, explain clearly the ideological party line why they were fighting, resist the temptation of promiscuity and stop harassing prisoners of war. Each of these commandments was meant to safeguard the progress of the struggle and violating each would attract some form of punishment. Interpreted in this way, the Pungwe and the war as carnival spaces were informed by this moral code that was meant to protect both the guerrillas and the masses. To this extent, in ZANLA's war and at the Pungwe, discipline preceded punishment and not vice-versa. Thus, this song which is a form of carnival narrative and that was sung at the *Pungwe* carnival space offers a rich tradition of satire and parody that challenges mainstream ideas and figures of behaviour in society. The



song offers a strong warning to the freedom fighters unlike most songs whose insults were directed towards the Rhodesian Forces. Part of the humour lies in the demand for freedom from such a seemingly disempowered enemy soldiers. The songs were intended to be a strong warning to sell-outs and never-could-be sly extended jokes that warn. The plaintive tone of the songs in the novels meant that the Freedom fighters the opposites of what they said. These songs are therefore Bakhtinian carnivals.

### **5.9 *Pungwe* as theatre of the oppressed**

Critics such as Kidd (1992) have described *Pungwe* as theatre for development though partially correct, this view needs to be revised and then deepened. For the guerrillas and the masses, *Pungwe* sessions were not acting per se, political conscientisation at the *Pungwe* was in itself a form of warfare to win the minds of the masses. Viewed from this perspective, *Pungwe* sessions represent what Gramsci (1971) calls the war of position which is an ideological stance that Gramsci distinguishes from a war of manoeuvre that is expressed through actual combat. However, some elements of the theatrical that underline *Pungwe* as carnival space could also be ascertained especially when guerrillas and masses role played themselves as freedom fighters against the Rhodesian forces. Thus, *Pungwe* provided the artistic and political expression which strengthened the nationalist consciousness of Zimbabweans. Modelled on a set of Bakhtinian attributes, *Pungwe* created political alternatives during the war's widening arena of conflict. Chimurenga War songs won the popular political imagination of the masses condemning the colonialist government as an epitome of the Zimbabwean people's quest for emancipation. *Pungwe* meetings as sites of political change and renewal echo Bakhtin's notion of carnival that there is no distinction between actors and spectators, "carnival is not a spectacle seen by people; they live in it, and everybody participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (Bakhtin, 1984b: 10). Everyone is both actor and spectator within the morale built at *Pungwe* as the public square. No dancers in artistic terms but true nature of human bodily actions are experienced in terms of carnival.

The Rhodesian forces, as a violent lot, turned their deadly ire on the masses in trying to vent out their anger. Tens of thousands of Zimbabweans were casualties in this war. A hundred of thousands of masses at *Pungwe* were at risk of death. In a related comment, Mamdani, (2009:63) conclusively puts it that, "We have a moral compass within us and its needle is

moved not only by human suffering but also by evil". *Pungwe* theatre was performed under intense surveillance which forced Zimbabwean masses and guerrillas to be more and more creative. They intensified their underground strategies by introducing guerrilla tactics which Zenenga (2008:75) calls "hit-and-run" in order to put across their Chimurenga revolutionary messages. Zenenga (ibid: 75) quotes a Savannah Arts Trust playwright who explains how this type of theatre functions:

When you do hit-and-run theatre, you beat drums and the people gather. . . Your heart is beating very fast. You are full of fear that you are going to be arrested at any minute. You know the exact message that you want to give. You make sure the people get the message in the shortest time. As soon as you see that people are getting the message, you disappear.

This form of theatre resembles *Pungwe* in that its content is so immediate to the extent that a play has to hit the nail on the head and deliver the political message within the shortest possible time, in case the crowd gets dispersed or performers get arrested. So guerrilla strategies at *Pungwe* as hit-and-run popular theatre are candidly political because the cadres and masses as artists-cum-activists have "no time for the psychological subtleties surrounding such and such a figurehead. . . once it had been decided that a particular character would be easily recognized by an obvious symbol, it was used however obvious it was" (Boal, 1998:215). An instance of the *Pungwe* sessions as providing theatre, acting and impersonation for different roles is revealed in the collection of short stories, *Masango Mavi*. In the story First Street- Harare, there is a war veteran who recalls moments at *Pungwe* during the past war and begins to address people in First Street as if he was at a *Pungwe* session (Chiwome, 1998:34-40).

Closely related to the notion of *Pungwe* as theatrical carnival space Loomba (1998:18) writing in a different context, interestingly emphasised the treatment of the Third World countries by the colonial powers that resist the romanticism of their once- colonised countries "as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact heritages waiting to be recovered..." Colonialism's consequences were not only exploitative and brutal, but they were also dehumanising giving birth to a binary of the haves and the have nots. Fanon, (1963:32) in *The Wretched of the Earth* is quite convinced that this is inflected by a class struggle:

...this world cut into two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close

quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic sub-structure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched everytime we have to do with the colonial problem.

The mapping of these race and class binaries by Fanon is extremely challenging to comprehend with all its complexities. Colonialism's dehumanising aspects are imbedded in songs which touch on the colonised people's psyche. This injured consciousness of the Zimbabwean masses as colonised people, in Fanon's (1967:18) phrasing in *Black Skin, White Mask* is not simply an issue of appropriating their labour but those "in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality"

This high level of commitment by the masses, coupled with their growth of interest and support is complemented by Choto's (1990:16,19) who says:

*Mauto eMusangano vakauya kuzorwisa masoja kuti nyika ino itorwe nevatema... Magandanga aye atinobvunzwa namasoja ndivo vana mukoma vandiri kutaura. Zvino vandituma kuti mukuru wese anofanirwa kusvika kubhesi rekwaKatsvuku... Kana vana ava vava kuendavanofanirwa kutakura upfu, mapoto,ndiro nemuriwo. Saka ini ndichabvisa mbudzi yangu ndiyo ichanouraiwa ikoko... Anenge ane muromo usingamharwe nenhunzi zvinopedzerana zvega, ndava vakomana vacho havaitiki... Vakaita zvikwata nezvikwata sezvo zvakanga zvisingaiti kuti vangosimuka pamwe chete. Vaizomirirana kana vava mugomo reMarowe. Izvi vakazviitira kuti varasise masoja kana ainge azosangana navo.*

Freedom Fighters came to fight the Rhodesian forces for the independence of this country... Those people who are described as terrorist by the soldiers are the very freedom fighters. They have sent me to inform you that every elderly person must be at Katsvuku's base... When the youth are attending a Pungwe, they needed to carry with them mealie-meal, pots, plates and vegetables. I am pledging my goat to be slaughtered there... If we have sellouts in our midst, nature will sort things out because those guerrillas do not tolerate any nonsense. They moved to the Pungwe in small groups to disguise their mission from the enemy. They would wait for one another in the Marowe Mountain)

From Choto's quotation above, there is a careful selection of his Shona lexicon. "Mauto emusangano" for Freedom fighters who were not paid should not be confused with soldiers, a term that refers to the Rhodesian forces who were paid by the then state during Chimurenga war. For the guerrillas working without pay was a demonstration of selfless dedication, commitment and sacrifice to the cause of the liberation struggle. The guerrillas' mobilising

tactics were quite excellent from Choto's exposition which shows how masses rallied behind them.

Sell-outs were also warned to shut their mouths at *Pungwe*, as Choto (1990:19) rightly puts it "Anenge ane muromo usingamharwi nenhunzi zvinopedzerana zvega". (One who is talkative leading to the selling out, would be severely dealt with). This shows linguistic carnivalesque element where an idiomatic expression is embedded in masking and euphemism. This incorporates more of baroque description which is evidence of playing around with comedy in the novel. This is part of Bakhtin's use of his *mesalliances* to create a carnivalesque ambience in the political narrative. The Bakhtin's critical framework enunciates these carnivalesque features not only in novels but in songs too. For example, in the novel *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) it is said that:

*Rumbo rwakatambwa vanhu vakati vanyekera, rwunokaida, rwunotsinhirawo samadzetse, aiwa, mheterwa nemakwa zvikati hatisare pakadaro. Komuredhi Gaba akanga otamba zvake ari pamberi pavanhu achinakidzwa zvikuru. Aitamba akakotama, akabatanidza makumbo, achisvetuka-svutuka, panonzi bha-a obva arova mujibha. Vamwe vanhu vose vakanga vonakidzwa. Komuredhi Speed akazonyararidza vanhu oenderera mberi nekutaura* (Musengezi, 1984: 99).

(Both the masses and the guerrillas danced to the tune of this greeting song, some nodding their heads, some humming in agreement, while others whistled in delight. Comrade Gaba was dancing upfront to the joy and amusement of the *Pungwe* audience. His dancing style expected him to bent, with feet not astride but going up and down accompanied by a tap on the ground. This managed to boost the masses morale at the *Pungwe*. It was when the *Pungwe* tempo was so high that Comrade Speed ordered people to be quiet as he continued with the political conscientisation of the masses).

Singing and dancing marked the beginning of a *Pungwe* session normally followed by political dosages from a political commissar. He would chronicle the history of the struggle, the challenges of oppression and other problems caused by the settler regime. Pfukwa (ibid: 63) adds that "Pungwe ... was therefore politicization of the peasants. It was a process of educating them of the goals of the struggle, its history and the evils of the Rhodesian regime... The idea was to win the hearts and minds of the population." The masses responded to every *Pungwe* activity with great enthusiasm because it was a creation of culture that needed everyone's involvement. This is in consonant with the Bakhtinian philosophy that leads to the realisation that *Pungwe* as carnival space is always kinaesthetic, meaning that "it involves movement and resists stasis. This enacts (performs and represents) the idea of

transformation” (Crichlow & Armstrong, 2010:407). The biggest issue under discussion here is to articulate what the peasants’ responsibilities were as clearly articulated by Choto (1990:19) who says, “...vanofanirwa kutakura upfu, mapoto, ndiro nemuriwo” (The masses were expected to take to the *Pungwe*, mealie-meal, pots, plates and vegetables). From the questionnaires, respondents mentioned the formation of committees that were responsible for the collection of food, clothes, money and the provision of security.

*Pungwe* was a participatory festive which solicited the involvement of the masses in addressing identified political problems of that time and provide possible solutions feasible to all involved. From the questionnaires, it is quite apparent that all forms of social interacted provided a mirror to all involved in the struggle that stirred them into action. Carnivalisation thus “makes it possible to extend the narrow sense of life” (Bakhtin, 1984:177) so as to enhance maximum co-operation of the peasantry. *Pungwe* provided a vehicle of peasants’ participation in the Chimurenga War’ socio-political system. Moyo’s novel *Nguo Dzouswa*, shows the peasants’ full participation at a *Pungwe* when one woman, after a slogan was given a chance to ask, “*Ini makomuredzi ndine mibvunzo yakawanda, zvino handizivi kuti ndoibvunza yose mukamwe kana kuti ndobvunzva mubvunzo nemubvunzo*” (I have several questions and I don’t know whether you want me to ask all the questions at once or it has to be one by one). This is in consonant with the Bakhtinian philosophy that leads to the realisation that *Pungwe* as carnival space is always kinaesthetic, meaning that “it involves movement and resists stasis. This enacts (performs and represents) the idea of transformation” (Crichlow & Armstrong, 2010:407).

### **5.10 *Pungwe* songs as popular festivals in the Shona novels**

So far the analysis of *Pungwe* as carnival space in this study has explored the depiction of *Pungwe* in the novel. It is also important to realise it is the liberatory usage of popular songs that characterised the *Pungwe* as a space of double voicedness. Multiple genres were used to address different political constituents such as the freedom fighters, the masses and also the enemy, For example, in Moyo’s *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985:135) the novel evokes two titles of popular songs that were sung at every *pungwe*. The novel does so not by recreating making recourse to the linguistic figure of collective deixis which uses metonym to invoke a sense of the whole that is absent but is represented in shorthand. In the novel, the occasion is the *pungwe* meeting and one female freedom fighter says:

*'Icho'!*  
*'Charira!' vanhu vaiita kunge vachatsemuka makurokuro nekudaidzira namazwi ari pamusoro.*  
*'Kupiko!' akabvunza Blood.*  
*Vanhu vakapindura vachiti, 'MuZimbabwe.'*  
*'Vana mhayiyu mune morari here? Seiko musina morari? Ini ndiri munhu anofarira morari chaizvo. Handiti tiri kunzwana vabereki? 'Hongu!' Voruzhinji vakadaira vachibvumira.*  
*Comrade Viva, aiva wechirume, akabva asimuka norwumbo rwokuti, 'Mbuya Nehenda kufa vachitaura kuti mapfupa angu achamuka' Munhu wose akaimba pavava numufaro mukuru nokuti vazhinji waitamba (Moyo 1985:135).*

(There! Gunshot! People shouted on top of their voices where! Blood asked. People responded that it was in Zimbabwe. Women do you have morale? Why do you not have morale? I am one cadre who is fond of having morale. Are we together parents? 'Yes!' the majority of the masses at Pungwe responded in agreement. Comrade Viva was a male guerrilla, stood up singing the song 'Mbuya Nehanda' who died soon after prophesying that her bones will rise again. Everyone who was there joined in the song and dance to their biggest delight).

Firstly, in this verbal exchange above, a sense of harmonious community is constructed through the use of slogans that ensure that everybody at the *Pungwe* participates. Secondly, it is a female freedom fighter who addresses the masses at the *Pungwe*. This point is very important because it revises the notion that during the struggle women did not participate in the war at the front. Thirdly, and more relevant to this study is the fact that Comrade Blood refers to the song, *Seiko Musina Morari* (Moyo, 1985: 135). In the utterance, the author is not compelled to write down all the words of the song. Blood uses metonymy and deixis basing on the understanding of such as mention of the song would echo in the speech community being addressed. Furthermore, it is the space of *Pungwe* that is confirmed here which also speaks to the title of this study thereby rooting it in the Bakhtinian second world constructed by the masses during the *Pungwe* as carnival.

As if Comrade Blood in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) was affirming Bakhtin, the context of carnivals are an "escape from the official way of life" (Bakhtin, 1984a:8) exposing in her strategies of satire and mockery, the "joyful relativity" (Bakhtin, 1984b:160) of people creating history. But this escape from "official" ways of life is not a form of escapism. In fact, they point to or gravitate towards African communal "revival and renewal" (Bakhtin, 1984a:7) at a *Pungwe* spectacle. That *Pungwe* songs provided "the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance" (Bakhtin, 1984a:9) is also in the novel, *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) wherein it is further

underscored and confirmed by the male freedom fighter, comrade, Viva who animates the masses through singing the song, “*Mbuya Nehanda Kufa vachitaura kuti mapfukwa angu achamuka*” (Moyo, 1985:135). This reference invokes the female ancestor as present at the birth of the Zimbabwe nation. However, the distal deixical title of the invoked song also touches on the grammar of the community’s spiritual lived experiences in which the death of Nehanda that she foretold herself is viewed as regenerative that is to be realised in the triumph of the armed struggle. Through Nehanda’s transcendent transfiguration manifested in her prophecy there is evidence of some carnivalesque enactments.

In Nyawaranda’s novel, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), the role of songs in cementing a communitarian identity is affirmed just as we saw in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985). However, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) introduces an elegy and dirge in the mode conveyed by the songs, signalling the paradox of the struggle as life-affirming, but also as a space of vulnerability. In the song, sung by Comrade Chamukainyama in the novel reads:

<i>‘Nhai komuredhi, komuredhi, komuredhi...? (mushauri), (Why Comrade, Comrade, Comrade...? </i>	
<i>‘Unosara naniko musango? (vadaviri) Mozambiki...!</i>	Who would be with you in the forest? Mozambique!
<i>Unosara naniko musango? Yave indipenzi...!</i>	Who would be with you in the jungle? When we get independence,
<i>Unosara naniko musango? KuTanzania ... !</i>	who would remain with you in the jungle, In Tanzania!
<i>Unosara naniko musango? Indipenzi... </i>	Who would remain with you in the jungle? At independence,
<i>Unosara naniko musango? Komuredhi, komuredhi, nhai komuredhi... !</i>	who would be with you in the jungle, Comrade, comrade, comrade...!
<i>Unosara naniko musango? (Nyawaranda, 1985:37)</i>	Who would be with you in the jungle?)

Chimurenga songs such as the above one were reflective in nature. They show a sense of dejection and entrapment in Rhodesia that had become a jungle place haunted by the Rhodesian forces. For many young men and women there was no security in Rhodesia. These young men and women all wanted to go to Mozambique and train as freedom fighters. This idea that the forests of Mozambique were freer than Rhodesia which is hinted in this song is also captured in the novel *Vavariro* (1990) by Choto. In this novel, Choto’s (1990:60) young

mujibas like Jeri and a chimbwido named Tsitsi feel emboldened as they are trained right at the base to become freedom fighters and thus escape the insecurity experienced by the masses. However the same song above in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) take stock of the losses that the freedom fighters had suffered, bemoaned that although other freedom fighters would be going back home to celebrate independence, there was deep sense of regret that others had not made it. But this same song was also used at the initial moments of recruiting the masses to go and train as freedom fighters in Mozambique.

Some songs that were also sung at the *Pungwe* and which performed different functions are found in Pongweni's seminal text *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982). For example, unlike the novels that have created an impression that ZANLAs only enemies were the Rhodesian forces, in the song "Kugarira Munyika Yavo" Muzorewa, Chirau and Sithole are also targeted for ridicule even though their arms also claimed to be fighting for the independence of Zimbabwe. In other words, in the songs, more than in the novels, there is a sense in which the *Pungwe* was imagined as a carnival space where contradictory interests among the Africans were played out. However there are some songs that neither the novels nor Pongweni's text capture despite the fact that these songs were also sung at the *Pungwe*. For example the song "*Uende KwaNyashanu*" is an oral song not yet written down and it reveals the different targets that were destroyed by the liberation forces in the name of subverting the Rhodesian state machinery. Some of the lines of the song ran thus:

<i>Huya uone iwe huya uone mabhunhu</i>	Come and see, come and see the white
<i>Uende kwaNyashanu</i>	If you visit Nyashanu
<i>Huya uone</i>	Come see
<i>Bookshop hakuna</i>	How we have destroyed the bookshop
<i>Uende kwaMudanda</i>	If you visit Mudanda
<i>Huya uone</i>	Come and see
<i>Kanzuru hakuna</i>	We have destroyed the Council offices

(Singer Anonymous).

At the centre of this song, there is an irony that borders on self mockery on the part of the guerrillas. On one hand, the acts of sabotage are depicted as a sign of triumph of the colonial government's symbols of spiritual authority. In the context of the struggle, to have destroyed a school, a library, a bridge a store was something celebrated in the songs at *Pungwe*. On the other, the destruction of the road, the bridge, the library was self-inflicting pain because the Africans needed these services soon after their independence. Thus, the song



“*KwaNyashanu*” is one of the best examples on how the carnivalesque operates. The carnival spirit celebrates, mocks, insults and even parodies the self who is performing those acts. Bakhtin describes this paradox as double-voiced, heteroglossic which are all the functions of what he calls the dialogic imagination.

### 5.11 *Pungwe’s double voicedness in the Shona novels*

As depicted in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) the *Pungwe* and its songs were developed to counter the propaganda of the Rhodesian state machinery. In the novel, the author reveals how the Rhodesian broadcast corporation used radio as ideological medium to disseminate information that distorted the aims of the liberation struggle. One such instance is captured in Moyo’s (1985:129) novel, in the following way:

*This is the Rhodesian Broadcasting Co... The time is 6 o'clock, the news in Shona follows. Akambotura mafemo ndokuzoenderera mberi oti, 'Hedzinoi nhau dzichiverengwa naTinos Nhamoyapera. Salisbury: Vamwe varume vashanu vatongerwa rufu mushure mokunge vawanikwa vaine mhaka dzokupara mabasa ougandanga. .. Fort Victoria: Varume vaviri navakadzi vashanu vawanikwa vaine mhaka dzokubikira magandanga ndokubva vatemerwa kugara mutirongo kwoupenyu hwavo hwese.*

*Mutoko: Mumwe murume atongerwa kugara mutirongo kwamakore makumi maviri namapfumbamwe mushure mokunge abatwa nemhaka yokuba mombe mbiri dzoumwe muchena.*

(This is the Rhodesian Broadcasting Co... The time is 6 o'clock, the news in Shona follows. He took a deep sigh of relief and continued saying, 'Here is the news read by Tinos Nhamoyapera. Salisbury: Five men were sentenced to death after they were found guilty of committing terrorist activities... Fort Victoria: Two men and five women were found guilty of preparing meals for the guerrillas and they were sentenced to life-imprisonment'. Mutoko: A man was sentenced to twenty-nine years imprisonment after he was caught stealing two cattle from a white farmer).

In this passage, the Rhodesian state machinery flexes its muscles and competes with the *Pungwe* in attempting to control the minds of Africans. Of particular importance is the reference to some people who were arrested for helping the freedom fighters. The persecution of the ordinary people who assist the freedom fighters was actually used by the freedom fighters to mobilise the masses to join the liberation struggle. The irony here is that in attempting to exaggerate the casualties from the freedom fighters as a way to prevent the masses from joining the liberation struggle the Rhodesian forces ended creating hostilities with the masses. This double-voiced nature of the contradictory messages sent out by the

Rhodesian state reveal that the official's media aided in undermining the state. This irony is further underscored at a *Pungwe* in *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) when it is revealed that propaganda of the Rhodesian state had its limits and paradoxes. Comrade Speed encourages the masses to remain united, but at the same time discourages them from reading state newspapers whose messages were biased against the freedom fighters: He has:

*Munofanira kuziva zvinhu makomuredhi. Tiri Kunzwanaka? E, muchiverenga mamwe mapepa kwete kusimbirira Rhodesia Heartl, neAfrican Times anogara akaburitsa makomuredhi akaruzwa, he-e 20 matororo afa, 15 mamwe aurayiwa, 10 mamwezve afa. Panofa ten matororo panguva imwe chete wakapombopaona iwe? Zvingaitika asi zvaitike kaviri nekatatu izvozvo. Panofa mumwe chete chaiye pane basa makomuredhi, panoitika matatsu-tatsu. Panosara pasina muti ipapo. Ya-a verengai mapeppa akanaka kwete vanaRhoseai herald vanenhau dzekunyepa, anaZimbabwe News ariko anebasa evanhu neemauto* (Musengezi, 1984:83).

(You are supposed to comprehend issues comrades. Is that clear? Eh! you need to read other papers and not to heavily lean on the Rhodesian Herald and the African Times whose propaganda is so open when they report that freedom fighters are the biggest losers he-e twenty terrorists are dead, fifteen more were killed and ten others were killed. Where ten guerrillas die at the same time is very rare to witness that. Well, it is possible that not regularly. Where we encounter just a single causality, surely grass would be hurt. So read good papers that provide a balanced story and not the Rhodesian Herald who are liars. Why don't you read the Zimbabwe News whose editorial policy has the people's interests at heart?)

More than merely highlighting the struggle over the mould of Africans between the Rhodesian forces and the freedom fighters, this passage suggests that there are alternative forms of media where Africans could be exposed to alternative views. The *Pungwe* is one such forum providing alternative perspectives that are opposed to official news. The news papers such as the Zimbabwe News run from Mozambique by freedom fighters is also suggested as a carnival space where there voices that contested Rhodesian official news. But there is also an exaggeration from Comrade Speed that freedom fighters did not get killed easily. Speed made this point in order not to discourage the masses from joining the struggle if it became known that large numbers of fighters also perished in the struggle. The romantic image of the guerrilla as one who was invincible and which was popularised at *Pungwe* served to invest the masses and the freedom fighters with hope of a logical and victorious ending that would culminated with independence for the majority of Africans. In a sense then the instability within passage from Comrade Speed is reminiscent of the operation of the carnival space. According to Bakhtin, there are contesting views even from the same source,

a fact that brings out the heteroglossic nature of language when, he points out to the power of dislocated parody and travesty:

In ancient times the parodic-travesty world was (generically speaking) homeless. All this parodic-travesty form constituted, as it were a special extra-generic or inter-generic world. But this world was unified, first of all, by a common purpose, to provide a corrective of laughter and criticism to all existing straightforward genres, styles, languages, voices, to force the men to experience beneath these categories a difference and contradictory reality that is otherwise not experienced in them...People and epoch. (Bakhtin, 1981: 59-60).

One such 'contradictory' reality is that, often most of the masses were inspired to join the liberation struggle from the political speeches made at the *Pungwe*. This fact is depicted in *Nguo Dzouswa* in which a married woman chooses to leave her husband and beloved child in order to join the liberation struggle. In the words of this woman, she had become married to the national cause, thus revealing the fact that collective freedom was prized more than individual fulfilment in lived out in a repressive political context of Rhodesia. Kudzai is convinced that:

*Zviri nani kufira ruzhinji rweZimbabwe pakuti munhu fire murume umwechete oga. Hongu, takusiya asi chishamiso chiri apa ndechokuti ndiri kundorwira rusununguko rwangu nerwako. Zimbabwe yakasununguka haina wainofanira kusiya kana kusarudza napamusana porufembahwema kanarunanzwa hukama, ganda romunhu kana rutevedza dzidza. Izvi zvinofanira kutora zvimbo kana oiwe pachako wazvisarudza uchizvibvisa mukati moruzhinji* (Moyo, 1985:123).

(It is better to die the generality of the Zimbabwean people than to die for your own husband. Yes I have left you but surprisingly you need to realise that I will be fighting to have independence for you and me. Independent Zimbabwe will not leave anyone behind on the basis of tribalism, nepotism and racism. This will only be possible if you isolate yourself from the majority who don't think this way).

This passage reconfigures the new roles that women had to place during the struggle. No longer would the women be merely confined to the domestic sphere where they would simply provide food to the male freedom fighters doing the actual battle against the Rhodesian forces. Beyond this recognition of the emergence of a new woman with a new political consciousness, Kudzai emphasises the importance of rejecting obscurantist ideologies such as tribalism, and individualism. For her, the struggle needed commitment from both men and women. This passage carnivalises or questions some male ideologies within the actual struggle. At another *Pungwe* session in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), Comrade Viva spells out the aim and ideological vision of the struggle in the following ways: "*Vabereki musangano wedu*

*une gwara regutsaruzhinji. Munyika hamuna kufanira kuva nevamwe vanhu vanotsemuka matumbu nepfuma asi vamwe vachipona nenhoko dzezvironda!”* (ibid: 136). (Parents, this *Pungwe* meeting of ours follow the socialist ideology. Noone in this country is supposed to be filthy rich while some Zimbabweans wallow in abject poverty!). These statements are alluding to the socialist thrust that the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) had adopted. Furthermore, it can be argued that the *Pungwe* did not only produce “the individuating view point of style but also a ...dynamic, heterogeneous process: the unfinished and open body, dying, bringing forth and being born... not separated from the world but ‘blended’ with it” (Prochazka, 2011:138).

In other words, in the novels analysed in this section, *Pungwe* is presented as a site which could be easily transformed into a place of fun and potentially dangerous at the same time. This then clearly reminds the world that laughter and terror are interrelated. There is also an exaggeration of the suffering of the freedom fighters when they are depicted as desperate human beings who had to drink urine in order to survive (Kanengoni, 1997). This heightens the impact of carnival on the war novel.

In *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), *Vavariro* (1990), *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), the *Pungwe* transformed the masses and guerrillas into actors, and this marked what Bakhtin describes as demarcations between spectators and participants (1984b:122) when he says that, “carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act.” In this very similar fashion, as the masses gathered at *Pungwe* festivals, they actively participated in the singing and dancing (Moyo, ibid: 136; Musengzi, 19984:85).

At the *Pungwe*, social roles were dissolved and people could ask critical questions that they would not normally ask in a situation outside the context of the war. For example, in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), women take the mantle of being the moral guardians of the struggle. They do so by posing questions through which the freedom fighters could clarify the aim, cause and course of the struggle to take. In Moyo’s novel, at another *Pungwe* session Comrade Blood, a woman opens the floor to other masses to air their views. One woman asked about the safety of the freedom fighters while in the assembly points, the potential sabotage and

rigging of elections by the Rhodesian forces.(ibid:137). That the struggle in general and the *Pungwe* in particular created a new woman who was prepared to know her new role in the struggle is also revealed in *Vavariro* (1990) when Tsitsi engages Comrade Tumirai about the fate of the ordinary people after the war (Choto, 1990:91). If the whole of Zimbabwe had become an extended *Pungwe* session or oral classroom, then we can agree with Bakhtin that *Pungwe* could be taken as context of dialogical imagination and that as carnival space, at *Pungwe* there was a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers so that “all were considered equal” (Bakhtin, 1984a:15, 10). As also depicted in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), social barriers were made to collapse in order to enable the masses to be free enough to mingle with the freedom fighters to create a huge family united by a common goal which was to dislodge the colonial government. In the novel, these hilarious moments are captured in a language that manifests the freedom that can only be associated with carnival festivities. The descriptions of the dances in the novel reveal *Pungwe* as theatre where people performed in ways that were therapeutic even when the aim was to solidify the commitment to the goals of the struggle:

*Kwakatanga kuchadairwa namamwe makomuredzi asi nenguva isipi munhu wose akanga atorubata rumbo rwacho... Komuredhi akabva apinda mudariro oti wacha, wacha, wachara, iri pfuti yairira iyoyo kumusana paaitambapo. Vanamai vakaiti mhururu puti ndiye kakuruva togo mudariro apo vamwe vakanga vapindawo makaremo. Vane mashave okutamba akabva abuda. Ko, unozombiti pane rufu here pasi pano wazadzwa nomufaro? (Nyawaranda, 1985:51).*

(It was only a few comrades who were responding but latter almost everyone had gotten the tune of that song... One Comrade took to the floor and started dancing with his gun strapped on his back making some lyrical sound. Women ululated as dust made a cloud in the ring as more and more people joined in. To many, it seemed as if their dancing spirits were manifesting. Both guerrillas and the masses completely forgot about the existence of death because of high morale that was boosted by the Chimurenga songs. )

The joy that is captured above is identified as a critical element of the carnival spirit. Bakhtin says that during carnival, the norms and prohibitions of usual life are suspended so that an atmosphere of freedom, frankness and familiarity reigns. On this basis “an ideal and at the same time real type of communication, impossible in ordinary life, is established” (Bakhtin, 1984a:92). This study further argues that during carnival the official ordering of space and time is suspended and the people become:

... organized *in their own way*, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coerced socio-economic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity (Bakhtin, 1984a: 255).

During *Pungwe* as shown and analysed in the Shona novels during carnival all official truths become relative when “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order”, and was “opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretence at immutability” (Bakhtin, 1984a:10–11). Each of the novels also reveals that individualism is deplored at the *Pungwe* in favour of promoting collective identities. This spirit is emphasised as a key in the theory of the carnivalesque by Bakhtin who says that during carnival the individual self whether freedom fighter or a civilian is dissolved when “The individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people’s mass body” (Bakhtin, 1984a: 255). In Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985:71) the gospel of unity is preached at a *Pungwe* was regarded supreme. “*Vanhu vakasvikira mukuparidzirwa vhangeri rokubatana pamwe chete muhondo. Apo komuredhi akataura pamusoro penyaya iyoyi akanga apedza, kuimba kwakabva kwatanga*” (The masses arrived at a *Pungwe* when the gospel of unity during the war was already midway. When the freedom fighter talked about it singing of chimurenga song ensued).

The depiction of female sexuality at the *Pungwe* is complicated in English novels from Zimbabwe. For example Chinodya’s *Harvests of Thorns* (1989) portrays an ambivalent binary of seduction and aggression as inversions of each other when Pasi and Ropa’s verbal and narrative sexuality adopts a pornographic model. Chinodya’s (1989:144) Pasi and Ropa are represented in seductively exciting poetic language as the man searched for “the centre”:

He felt her fingernails on his neck, his face, his chest, her blouse, her hands directing his face to her breasts, her hands holding his face to her breasts. Her nipples in his mouth. His hands stroking her, squeezing, pressing, afraid to be stopped, searching for the centre...

This increases the erotic association of the two lovers in the middle of the painful Chimurenga War. Pornographic acts are a form of a model of popular art which provide critics with some chronic uneasiness “but it is precisely this erotic form that Bakhtin’s insight on that carnival illuminates best”. Seduction and aggression are ambivalent inversions of each other. Rabelais’s joyous description of bodily functions take a decidedly negative cast here as lymph glands “swell and burst in suppurating fissures, drain for days, months, years, a purulent stinky discharge” (Bakhtin, 1984b:34).

Chinodya just like in most Shona novelists employs a narrative technique on socio-political sexual and psychological form embodied in a fictive Chimurenga world which is carnivalesque in its inversion of most African contested norms. The freedom fighters and masses are presented in this novel as inhabiting a “second world” of the *Pungwe* carnival where death and sickness are the expected norms. Chinodya portrayed of death and sickness is metaphorically representing the political and economic meltdown of Rhodesia. In all the selected novels analysed in this section there is the Bakhtinian linkage of sex, birth and death which manifest itself in a very satirical and disgusting manner. Another disciplinary song that was often sung was “Rangarira zuva riye rawakasiya vanamai vachingochema” meaning remember that day when you left your parents weeping.

### **5.12 Carnival and the carnivalesque laughter in Shona novels**

Bakhtin’s theory of literary carnival views this world as one that coalesces, fuses or destabilises norms and ideas that are typically thought of as opposites. Carnival often involves subversion of mainstream social, legal, economic or other norms. Former Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith and his administration of distinguished figures are ridiculed, relegated and challenged by the oppressed Zimbabwean masses that are yearning for a known bliss that one day they will assume power. Carnival is a permitted blowing off of social steam that, while riotous and even sometimes offensive, is often ambivalent in its goals: in carnival the lowly sometimes secretly admire and yearn for the respectability and privilege of those whom they mock.

The oppressive colonial Rhodesia, mirrored in the Bakhtinian idea of a world which is “eternally unfinished” is a world that is “dying and being born at the same time, possessing as it were two bodies” (Russo, 1995:165) encapsulates the duality of reflections where at Pungwe, praises and abuses would go hand in glove, to shift from the old to the new, from death to life. Bakhtinian conception of carnival world offers a significant insight of an “alternative social context” (Bakhtin, 1984b:322) which can only be manifested in unofficial forms. Carnival breaks down barriers by overcoming the class divide and all hierarchies. *Pungwe* is one popular festival such, where in the time of festivity, life is lived to its fullest through parodying and mockery of hierarchical order by the oppressed masses. The official life distinctly divides the borders between ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ while on the other hand “the

unofficial carnival is people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter" (ibid:8) in an effort to merge the opposites. In the deployment of his carnival theory, Bakhtin, (ibid:166) puts it that:

[I]n the development of the class society such a conception of the world can only be expressed in unofficial culture. There is no place for it in the culture of the ruling classes; here praise and abuse are clearly divided and static. [Because] official culture is founded on the principle of an immovable and unchanging hierarchy in which the higher and the lower never merge.

The main reason why *Pungwe*, as public square, is carnivalesque, is that the concept of the carnival belongs to all the people and it allows the integration of distinct categories that are often set aside by ideologies of a particular culture that manifests itself in a series of binaries: the rich and the poor, the serious and the ridiculous, the sacred and profane, life and death, rulers and the ruled, and many more. Bakhtin (ibid: 148) succinctly avers that:

Carnival strives to encompass and unite within itself both poles of evolution and both members of antithesis: birth-death, young-age, top-bottom, face-backside, praise-abuse, affirmation-negation, and the tragical -the comical, etc... It could be expressed thus opposites meet, look at one another, are reflected in one another, know and understand one another.

Bakhtin's carnival assumes metaphorical contours which occur within specific language variety, such as in parodies or satires. The colonial masters have imposed on the Zimbabwean people stipulations which necessitate a rejection of life so that they could accept a newer life. When news broke up that Cephas, in *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), has joined the liberation struggle, his grandmother is disturbed and she says:

*Ko kuita chiverevere ndokubateiko, muzukuru? Dai wakanga wabvunzawo vana sekuru, vaidai vakakupawo mazano. Zvino zvwourayisa mwana ari kuzvidziidzira zvake? Mwana wemwana wangu akanga apindwa neiko? Zvino iko kwaakaenda ndokupi? Iwo maBhunu anomuponesa mwana wemwana wangu? Inga kuzvarira ... Hura hwangu ... huri padara huchimharwa nenhunzi ...Mwoyo yevarume handizive kuti yakaita sei. Munotadza kutirimuka nezvinhu zvakadai ? ( Musengezi, 1984 : 36).*

(But why did you clandestinely leave for Mozambique. You could have asked for advice from your uncle. Now you are killing your child who is as school. What evil spirit had entered my nephew? So where has he gone to? The white Rhodesian soldiers will not spare him. My intestines have been left in the cold for flies to feed on. I don't understand men's hearts. Why are you not moved by this very big issue).



Colonialism negated life in order to ensure that it is lived in the shadows of prisons and survives because that condition subsists. Musengezi (ibid: 42) rightly puts it that “*Upenyu hwakanga hwasara hwaive hwokudenga. Upenyu utsva hunouya nokumutswa kwavakafa*” (The only life left was the heavenly one. New creation comes from the resurrection of the dead. Bakhtin (1984a:21) has considered this synthesis of death and life as an indispensable yardstick to measure this regenerative carnival spirit:

To degrade is to bury, to sow and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one.

*Pungwe* degraded the Rhodesian administration by digging “a bodily grave for a new birth” and “also a regenerating one” through independence. The selected body of Shona literature depicts the carnivalesque world of the oppressed masses through a sounder expression. The freedom fighters are the carnival actors who thrive through laughter and bodily engagement. Through their often incongruous and hyperbolic deeds these folk-figures constantly subvert the serious life issues while simultaneously molding a fertile dispensation based on the principle of inclusivity and diversity.

The novels under discussion are infused with the gestures, meanings and language of the carnival. Carnival is a blanket term which refers to ritual practices and events typical of *Pungwe*. Since carnival is the temporary suspension of set hierarchies, “licensed misrule” (in itself a paradox), a celebration of exuberant life force, the victory of the physical, of nature over human-made authorities. Bakhtin’s other tenet is that high culture assimilates folk culture of laughter. *Pungwe* became the scene of carnival, where the most characteristic carnivalesque event during colonialism manifested itself. Also the most significant element of the carnival in Musengezi’s novel is the laughable scene at Saint Augustine High School which precedes the third *Pungwe* at this school where as students watched a film entitled “Five ashore in Singapore” and small boys sounded so comic. Musengezi (1984:95) explains:

*Tukomana tudiki twaive mberi tukati twatanga kutambisa minwe mifananidzo yacho ichibuda pamberi apo. Vanhu vakabva vati bvuu-kuseka. Hamenowo akanga auya nechipunu, chakabva chasimudzwa mudenga mufananidzo wacho uchibva wati je-e pamberi. Vanhu vakakwenyana vakagosheedzana kuti vaone zvaive mberi. Vakada*

*kutyoka mbabvu nokuseka. Kakomana kaiti kakachitambisa chipunu koita sakari kufoshora kachikanda mukanwa. Vanhu vakaputika nokuseka vakatozonyarara mifananidzo yefirimu chairu yatanga.*

(The small boys who were seated in the front played around with their fingers in front of the projector's light which beamed phallic-like shadows on the wall. People laughed their lungs out. Someone had brought a spoon which was again placed against light and it made all sorts of impressions, especially when he tossed it like a shovel. This was quite comic to the audience. People stopped laughing when the film was projected).

In congruence to Bakhtinian carnivalesque, the author focuses on the lower body which evokes laughter among the participants at the film show soon to be turned into a *Pungwe*. For Bakhtin, the lower bodily part has the generative, reproductive and renewing energy to recreate. This is its joyful degradation, and this merged with the celebration of rebirth and renewal. The carnival fore-grounded laughter and the body, the grotesque body – open to devour and to produce, just like earth. The ‘fingers’ and the ‘spoons’ represent the phallus and as the small boys jokingly played around with them they symbolise fertility. The openings in the body enjoyed popularity in the carnival (the mouth, the genitals), everything that was out of measure, like the protruding belly (whether pregnant or fat), a big nose (phallic symbol) symbolised – decaying – life pregnant with new life. At *Pungwe*, it was unavoidable to have excessive drinking and eating, together with singing and dancing.

The novels embody carnival, where the freedom fighters bodies incite and define carnivalesque laughter. The inestimable amount of meat that the guerrillas devour at *Pungwe* since meat produces blood, is likened to the Renaissance medical thinking that same moist heat which accompanies copious blood makes us inclined to laughter and becomes clear that a propensity to laughter and an excess of grease come from the same source. Bakhtin offers a serious analysis of the physical and physiological beginnings of laughter, thus rendering carnivalesque insights scientific. The study shows the balance between contrasting terms of the Author-Text-Reader communicative model where negotiating a Chimurenga war conflict needs the aesthetic goal and the pragmatic objective. This study constructs the Author –Text relationship resulting in “purposiveness without purpose” which Kant (1946) considers as a crucial part of aesthetic excellence. The selected novels’ laughter of the carnival sounded philosophical, because according to Bakhtin, (1984a: 66) laughter:

... has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole [...] The world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when is seen from the serious standpoint. Therefore, laughter is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter.

Besides representing the liberating and festive side of carnivalesque laughter, the novels portray laughter's regenerative power. Freedom fighters had that impulsive speed of thinking, of eating and of executing the war. The guerrillas' immense appetite and insatiability emanated from their having travelled for days without food and water and they endured a lot of suffering and withstood tortuous moments. Kanengoni (1997: 4, 5 & 7) in *Echoing Silences* has this to say:

One of Munashe's already painful memories about the war was the long journey from Chifombo to the war front; across the flat, monotonous Zambezi Valley, along the Zambezi River meandering lazily like a venomous snake, across a seemingly endless wilderness through heavy forest, past the small forward supply base to which he never imagined he would have to return in such uncertain circumstances, only to be asked to kill a woman and her crying baby. Finally they had reached the border with Rhodesia; he remembered the sun, the heat, the exhaustion... By the time they got to the Zambezi River three days later, what remained were the armaments, the treacherous terrain, the little food and the scorching sun in the cloudless sky above... What ran out first was water, but still they moved on ... Then delirium began...[with] blisters between their legs, fought over their urine to quench their burning thirst and engaged in pitched battles with phantom enemy soldiers. Some died. This was how Max had died. This was how the short, bow-legged comrade that Munashe had helped to nickname Bazooka had also died...There were many other distressing memories that Munashe had about the war...[including when] they worked on him throughout the night and a woman tied a string around his testicles and Munashe bellowed...his eardrums were damaged... They continued beating him.

Fighting "over their urine to quench their burning thirst" is laughable and painful. This pain of imagining your own urine is ridiculous more-so fighting over someone's urine is even the worst absurdity. With this kind of a treatment during the Chimurenga war, ex-combatants feel that the masses who were back at home do not understand the painful experiences they went through and also do not appreciate the role they played during the war. When "a woman tied a string around his testicles and Munashe bellowed" the pain evokes laughter that a woman was playing around with Munashe's genitalia. The regenerative power of the organs that are hurt symbolise fertility. This is an interesting characteristic of carnivalesque *Pungwe's* festive laughter.

### 5.13 *Pungwe's festive laughter that liberates*

The *Pungwe* crowd are not passive spectators to the dramatised war spectacle but typical of Bakhtin's carnival, it is marked by the breakdown of the lines of demarcation between spectators and participants Bakhtin (1984b:122) sums it up when he says, "Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act". Nyawaranda's (1985:50) cadre summarises the breakdown of the chasm between masses as spectators and freedom fighters as participants:

*Ndichiri kuyeuka ndichikuvimbisai kuzotandara nemi vabereki kuti tidzidzisane ungaru hwe hondo yechinurenga, akatanga achidaro komuredhi Muchaparara, 'nhasi uno handisi ndogandichange ndichitaura nemi. Pano tine makomuredzi akawanda kwazvo achanga achitandadzana nemi. Kana nemiwo, vabereki, makasununguka kutiudzawo zvamuinazvo. Ndisati ndagara pasi, ndinoda kusiya ndakuturirai kuna komuredhi Pasindepedu. Pamberi nehondo!'*

(I still remember vividly that I promised to entertain you parents. We need to teach one another the wisdom enshrined in the Chimurenga war, Comrade Muchaparara said. Today, I am not alone as we will alternate speaking to you. We have quite a sizable number of freedom fighters who will take turns to entertain you. Even you parents, feel free to participate and let us share the knowledge that you have also. Before I sit down, let me introduce you to Comrade Pasindepedu. Forward with Chiumrenga war)

The masses' active participation at *Pungwe* was aimed at stimulating a process of community engagement in problem-solving and political action, building community cohesiveness and creation of a forum for discussion. It was a powerful means of raising important political issues from either side. It provides a socio-politico-dramatic context where role-play, mime, songs and dance maintained and sustained interest.

It was both infortainment and edutainment where maximum participation provided a medium for entertainment, self expression and exposure to participants. Nyawaranda's (1985) guerrilla, Pasindepedu further encouraged the masses to transform themselves from being anxious spectators of the war as it was dramatised at *Pungwe*, into being active participants who are psychologically conditioned into the festival mood of their own creation. He says:

*'Vabereki' vakabva vatanga komuredhi vaya, 'ndichambotanga nerwuyo kuti rwutipe morari' Pakarepo komuredhi vakabva varushaura voti 'zvinoda wakashinga kani, zvinoda wakashinga (mushauri). Ha-ha, zvinoda wakashinga moyo..., (vadaviri)*

*kuenda mozambiki...’ kwakatanga kuchadairwa nemamwe makomuredzi asi nenguva isipi munhu wese akanga atorubata rumbo rwacho... komuredhi akabva apinda mudariro oti wacha, wacha, wachara, iri pfuti yairira iri kumusana paaitambapo. Vanamai vakaiti puti ndiye karukurwa togo mudariro apa vamwe vakanga vapindawo makaremo. Vane mashavi ekutamba akabva abuda. Ko, unozomboti pane rufu here pasi pano wazadzwa norufaro? (Nyawaranda, 1985:51)*

(‘Parents’ a freedom fighter started to address them, let me begin by singing one Chimurenga song so that we all in the spirit of having morale. Instantly the cadre started to sing a song that goes thus: It needs courageous men and women to join the liberation struggle, and to go to training in Mozambique and return home to fight. At first it was only a few guerrillas who were responding, but later almost everyone at the Pungwe had mastered that song and sang in unison. One cadre got into the dancing ring rhythmically making a sound beat with his gun clad at the back as he danced. Women ululated and more masses joined in the dancing and dust rose into the sky as enough proof that morale was boosted. Some dancers were actually possessed as they appeared to fear no one especially during the war where death was eminent).

Joining the liberation struggle was a sign of bravery. *Pungwe’s* inherent populist tradition through Chimurenga songs and dances, induced people’s defiant celebration as a means of overcoming colonialism and their lack of confidence outside of “official” culture. Songs and dances assisted in expressing people’s ideas and opening avenues of possibilities in transforming their colonial situation. Songs and dances acted as a catalyst which reconfigured the *Pungwe* theatre into a Bakhtinian carnival. *Pungwe* consciously employed performing arts to boost verbal dialogue stimulate confidence building and share political awareness. Nyawaranda, (1984:54) rightly puts it that “*vane mibvunzo vainzi vabvunze vachipindurwa. Dzimwe dzimbo dzechimurenga dzaiimbwa pakati*” (those with questions were given the floor and their questions were answered. Songs were sung at intervals to punctuate political scene at *Pungwe*.)

Most the respondents were in unison that morale that was generated from *Pungwe* through Chimurenga songs and dances is the laughter that liberates. The description of Muchapera who was attacked by a crocodile generates a festive laughter which sets people free from all kinds of fears of animals of prey. These animals, like the crocodiles, metaphorically refer to the enemy Rhodesian Forces. The fright of death disappears especially when Comrade Speed in *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) dreamt while narrating how ironically a white man shot a crocodile that nearly attacked him as he was crossing a flooded river clinging on to an ox’s tail. Comrade Speed’s narration is meant to overcome their fears through laughter which is a feature of Bakhtin’s carnival. As freedom fighters were crossing a flooded river from

Mozambique into Zimbabwe, one of the twenty cadres was eaten by a crocodile: Musengezi (1984:91) says:

*Ndipo pavakawana karwizi aka kakazvimbirwa kachieredza matanda. Vakabatana maoko ,ndokupinda vari makumi maviri. Vakafamba zvinyoronyoro, zvinyoronyoro, mvura yakasvika muchiuo umu. Avo varume vakabatana vari kuenda, vari kuenda. Gumi nevapfumbamwe ndiye yambu kuzoti wokupedzisira achinoti, vakanzwa hwetu, ndiye mvura bhorodhodhodho dho dho, ndokuona zimuswe kuti rimbinyu. Akanga abatwa negarwe. Mvura yakabva yatsuka ropa ... Vakapedza mazuva maviri varipo vachiti zvimwe munhu achadzumbunuka asi munhu nya ndiye nya... Kufa kwa Komureddhi Muchapera kwakavarwadza.*

(They found the river flooded and dragging logs. They held one another's hands and twenty guerrillas entered into the river. They crossed it slowly and slowly as the water got to the waist level. As the men continued crossing the river nineteen of them managed to cross this flooded river. One of them was eaten by the crocodile, the water turned red because of blood... They spent two days with the faith that he would come back to them but that never happened. The death of Comrade Muchapera pained them all).

The sad death of Comrade Muchapera, creates a grotesque carnivalesque representation. The war promoted a carnival environment by displaying the unbridled lusting, crazed bingeing and even allowed physical mutilation of the enemy when caught in combat. There were casualties in the war. Choto's (1990:51) Tumirai puts it that:

*Onai kuti tarasikirwa naKomureddhi Zivanai naBuster nemamwe makomuredzi nanamujibha vanga vachishandira vari kwaDende... Ngatimbonyararai kwemaminetsi mashanu kuti tirangarire magamba atisiya...*

(You reckon we have lost Comrades Zivanai and Buster including other comrades and errand boys who were executing the war in Dende... Let us have minutes of silence in remembrance of our fallen heroes).

There was a minute of silence to honour the fallen cadres who were shot dead during combat. It was next to impossibility for members of the Rhodesian Forces to take leave days off their job and then visit their rural homes during the war. This was a suicidal move as Tsitsi's brother Pita in Choto's (1990:52) *Vavariro* did on his own peril:

*Pita akanga asingafanirwi kusvika kumuswa munguva dzakadai. Pita akanga asiya arova VaCharira achiti vanochogeta magandanga. Makomureddhi paakanzwa zvaPita vakati vaizoona zvavaigona kuzoita naye kana achinge vamubata ari mupenyu.*

(Peter was not supposed to visit his rural home in the thick of Chimurenga War. Peter had earlier on beaten Mr Charira on allegations that he kept the guerrillas. When the freedom fighters had about Peter, they promised to deal with him especially when they caught him alive).

The wanton killing of Tsitsi's mother, Mr. and Mrs. Charira and all his cattle, is retaliation of the shooting of Pita. Having five or more deceased bodies strewn around, involve the flourishing of carnivalesque traditions. This necessitates characteristics of the carnival to twist, mutate, and invert regular ideas of societal makeup. When Chipo's mother, in Kanengoni's (1997: 75) was introduced to Munashe whom she knew had mental disorders from the war, she "sighed, wondering what fate had bound the destinies of her only two girls to a man who like the war itself would surely wreak havoc on the lives of others. 'They enjoyed cutting off people's ears and then forcing the victims to eat them. Who doesn't know that? They are psychopaths!'" This exudes the carnivalesque's qualities of twisting, mutating, and inverting regular themes that constitute societal composition. The Bakhtinian perspective of the carnival play a crucial role in analysing the *Pungwe* institution where the generality of the Zimbabwean people who "inhabited a dual realm of existence" (Vice, 1997:150), needed independence. For Bakhtin, one is official existence, characterised by the authority of the church, the feudal system, work, and the other is unofficial, whose main attributes are reversal, parody, song, and laughter. According to Bakhtin (1984b:133), the un-official which typifies *Pungwe*:

carnival [...] is an attitude toward the world which liberates from fear, brings the world close down to man and man close to his fellow man (all is drawn into the zone of liberated familiarcontact), and with its joy of change and its jolly relativity, counteracts the gloomy, one-sided official seriousness which is born of fear, is dogmatic and inimical to evolution and change, and seeks to absolutize the given conditions of existence and the social order. The carnival attitude liberated man from precisely this sort of seriousness.

Like the carnival, *Pungwe* represents people's "second life", both as an escape from oppressive Rhodesian administrative hierarchy of Smith's white supremacy embodied in what Bakhtin calls the "official feast" (Bakhtin,1984b:10). Carnival is the festive embodiment of change and disorder "it celebrated the temporary liberation from prevailing truth...Carnival was the true feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed" (ibid: 10). The rituals of *Pungwe* carnivals as depicted in the selected literature offer a very similar Bakhtinian form of life that was non-official, outside the feudal, political forms. The "immovable and extra-temporal stability of the

medieval hierarchy” which had “eliminated” laughter from “official cult and ideology”, was faced with its other, “the popular, humorous part of the feast” (ibid: 82), and the second festive life of medieval people (ibid: 75). The usage of *Pungwe* theatre to parody and resist spectacle of Western imperialist hegemony is evidenced in Dereck’s behavior when he thought being the white meant he was a superior being. Makari’s *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985:8) portrays headman Mberi being reduced to a nonentity after he declared his herd of cattle at a dip-tank. His pronouncement of his herd as seventeen was more of competing with a white man. Having a big herd of cattle was a yardstick to measure a man’s worth and his self-sufficiency. Mr Mberikwazvo was humiliated when the white man mocked him, “You think you are clever? Today you will learn a good lesson... Climb that tree, bobjaan!”. (Makari, 1985: 17).

The killing of several Rhodesian soldiers by the guerrillas is a fulfilment of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque inversion and victory of the cadres and the Zimbabwean masses. Like Bakhtin’s popular festive folk forms, Chimurenga songs in the selected Shona novels are subversive of elitist Rhodesian administration. In support of the employment of subversive texts, Moyo’s (1985:136-7) song that was sung while an alleged sell-out was being disciplined says:

*Maoko akarohwa zvakare, mipururu ichitsemurwa. Vamwe mai vakavamba rumbo vanhu vose ndokutanga kuimba vamwe vachitamba. Viva akagara pasi Blood ndokusimuka... Blood akasimuka nechimbo chinoti, ‘Mutengesi chenjera’ Voruzhinji vakaimbawo zvikafadza vose vaivapo. Kambo aka kakaimbwa kwakanguva kakati rebei kupinda dzimwe dzose.*

(They joyously clapped their hands to the accompaniment of whistles. One woman sang a song and the Pungwe and the audience started to sing and dance. After Viva’s turn, he sat down and Comrade Blood stood up singing a warning song. The rest of the crowd happily joined in the singing. Surprisingly, this particular song took long to be stopped).

As they took long to sing a warning song “*Mutengesi chenjera*” (sell-out watch out) the other guerrillas were busy disciplining an offender. The songs mixed outrageous satire with critical political pedagogy that provoked an emotional and regular analytical feedback. *Pungwe* as performing arts was able to reach out to the remotest rural masses who convincingly accepted this Chimurenga ideology. *Pungwe* became a vehicle of mass mobilisation and participation intended to persuade the masses to support the war. It was forum for political awareness raising, critical analysis of the socio-political problems, decision- making and stimulating



active collective involvement in fighting the colonial scourge of imperialism. For Bakhtin (1984:10) the carnival is “that peculiar folk humor that always existed and has never merged with the official culture of the ruling class”. Chimurenga songs at *Pungwe* carnivals become parodies of Smith’s government. Songs are carnivalesque renditions sought to rebelliously reconfigure the Chimurenga ideology of *Pungwe* as a medium for raising and resolving challenging political issues. *Pungwe* reinterpreted people’s political experiences by reasserting the validity of their African identity. Nyawaranda’s (1985:68) puts it that:

*Komuredhi Muchaparara vakamupindura voti, paya pavakanga vosimuka, ‘Izvo tichasara tichironga nepovho yacho. Tinogona kuvaudza kudaro patichsangana navabereki vacho papungwe yatichaita navo mangwana.’*

(Comrade Muchaparara answered him as he was standing up, ‘Concerning this subject matter, we need to agree and plan together with the masses. We will inform the povo when we meet them tomorrow at a *Pungwe*’).

Songs and dances represented a renewal, a recovery from a colonial injured consciousness and a revival and affirmation of people’s dreams, hopes and aspirations. *Pungwe* is a people’s culture that acts as a tool to express their worries, concerns and wishes during the war. It is portrayed as a platform of conscientising the masses politically. This creative cultural resource assisted in building the masses’ self confidence, courage and communal sense of belonging and identity.

#### **5.14 Crowning and Decrowning in the Shona Novel**

Chiwome’s (1998: 62-3) Takaruza was traditionally crowned a District Administrator with the blessings of an ancestral spirit. For Bakhtin, the “primary carnivalistic act is the mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king... And he who is crowned is the antipode of a real king, a slave or a jester” (Bakhtin, 1984b:124). Takaruza is this carnival king-cum-clown, the “herald of another... non-official truth” (Bakhtin, 1984b:93) who in the poem is being installed following the dictates of traditional culture accompanied by traditional Shona discourse of praise-song:

*Iwe Takaruza! Nhasi takupa umambo, Watora nzvimbo yemuchena akatadza kushanda nesu, Chiva mutungamiri wedu muupenyu hwanhasi hwedunhu redu... Pauchafa vana vako havakugari nhaka, Ushe hunodzokera kudunhu, ... Heyi tsvimbo nebakatwa zvokudzivirira vanhu, Usazorega nyika ichifa nenzara iwe uchiguta, Kana wodzoka kuno usazotaura nesu neChiRungu, Urambe uchitaura norurimi rwatakugadza narwo, Ndirwo rurimi runonzwikwa nesu navadzimu..., Hofisi yako*

*ngaigare yakashama..., Yeuka kuti nyika vanhu, Ukayeuka izvi, mvura ichanaya, zvirwere zvikapera.* (Chiwome, 1998:62).

(You Takaruza! Today we have chosen you as our king to replace that white man who could not represent and work with us in harmony. You be our leader in this present day in our constituency. When you die, your children will not inherit you but we hold another leaders' council meeting like this one. Here is our symbol of power as you are in authority, this walking stick and a long knife to protect people from the enemy. Don't watch us die of hunger while enjoy. When you come back to address us, please use our indigenous language which is the language that we have used when we installed you and not English. When you speak to us in our language it goes to the heart and our ancestors listens to you. Your office must always remain open because for a country to be a nation it is because of its inhabitants. Bearing this in mind will render a lot of blessings as we receive adequate rains and without infamities).

What is quite comic is how Takaruza became a hero or a king for a moment, with his exaggerated air of importance especially when he forgave a policeman who did not salute him:

*Paakasvika kwamudzviti akasvikodana mupurisa akamutuma kuti amutsvakire makiyi ake. Mupurisa haana kusaruta, Takaruza akamuregerera nechomumwoyo somunhu wavakanga vasati vaziva kuti ndishefu vasvika. Mupurisa akamuratidza musuwo womunhu akanga afanobatiswa chigaro chaifanira kugara iye. Akapinda mukati wanei mune kamwe kakomuredhi kechidiki kaitaura change ChiSena. Kainzi komuredhi saka akaziva kuti kakanga kabvawo muhondo saiye. Chaimunetsa ndechokuti kuno kwedu kaitsvakei kachirega kutonga kwakakanga karwira. Kakaverenga tsamba iya zvisvishoma-zvisvishoma kakapedzisira koita sekainge kashamisika* (Chiwome, 1998:63).

(When he got to the district offices, he called one policeman and instructed him to look for his office keys. The policeman did not salute. Takaruza forgave him for he had not known that he was talking to one in authority who has assumed duty. The policeman showed Takaruza the office which was already occupied by someone. When he got in the office, he found a short and youthful Comrade whose language sounded like Sena. He was called comrade and it quickly dawned upon Takaruza that this short man was a war veteran like him. What puzzled him most was why this man was employed in our province far away from his home area. The short man read Takaruza's appointment letter slowly but surely and looked surprised).

Takaruza managed to caricature his own heroic identity especially when he confronted the short war veteran in an office he thought was supposed to be his. Contemporary metafiction exists-as does the carnival- on the boundary between art and life, denying frames and footlights, making as we have seen, little or no formal distinction between actor and spectator, that is, between write and reader.

## 5.15 Songs and Grotesque Realism

Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque is further buttressed by Kayser's *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* whose definition will be used as lens through which to view the selected body of Shona fiction. The grotesque from Bakhtin's perspective resembles Kayser's definition which is founded on two premises: first, that the grotesque world is "the estranged world" (Bakhtin, 1984a:184). Kayser affirms that the grotesque is a "structure" containing elements of the unexpected that transform our usual encounter with the world into a "strange and ominous" experience. He views the world of the grotesque as a place where all reliable sources of meaning and order-identity, natural law, social law, and historical order-have become distorted, suspended, or destroyed. It is the Chimurenga War experience that filled the freedom fighters with a "fear of life rather than [a] fear of death" (ibid: 84-5). The oppressed Zimbabwean people were condemned to be eternal victims of that colonial world. Kayser's second argument recommends that the grotesque, as a means of perception, enables the reader to subdue the "estranged world." The artist's use of the grotesque allows the reader to perceive the "ominous powers" that "lurk in and behind our world" and, perceiving them, to "challenge" and "subdue" their "demonic aspects" (ibid: 188).

Both masses and the freedom fighters valued the significant function that Chimurenga songs played during the liberation struggle especially communicating political ideas and other socio-political issues. *Pungwe* realised that songs and dances were a potent weapon in shaping socio-political relationships. Songs exist in every society and it is a phenomenon that transcends historical epochs. The important fact was acknowledged by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in the early 1970s, when it commissioned research into the crucial role that songs play throughout history. The research culminated in the UNESCO Report, (1973:10) which says:

Music is tied to society... the function and place of music and musicians in society have been greatly modified in the course of time. As old forms disappeared, new ones were created. The modern musician is heir to all the music traditions that existed before, and for the first time he utilizes them fully, adopting them to the needs of the twentieth century.

Chimurenga songs are tied to the people's sensibilities. Most of these songs are adaptations and modifications of traditional and religious tunes. These songs were performed in the colonial context embodied the people's dreams, hopes and aspirations for independence.

They expressed the united people's socio-political experiences inextricably intertwined to their daily existence. In Musengezi's *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), Comrade Speed as he sang "Mwana uyu ndewani" (Whose child is this) he dramatised it by lifting a small boy as he enjoyed the song. This dramatic style is in conformity with Deleuze's (2000:111) emphasis on the function of style in coming up with "the viewpoint valid for all associations [...] all images, replacing the experience by the manner it is spoken of". This individual freedom is elaborated through the author's discursive strategy of liberating poetic verses in the song:

SOLOIST:	<i>Vana ndevaniko?</i>	Whose children are these?
CHORUS:	<i>Hee- hee panyika nyoro</i>	Hee- hee in a wet country
SOLOIST:	<i>Vana ndevani</i>	Whose children are these?
CHORUS:	<i>Hee- hee panyika nyoro</i>	Hee- hee in a wet country
SOLOIST:	<i>Hee- hee panyika nyoro ndeve Zimbabwe</i>	Hee- hee in a wet and fertile country
CHORUS:	<i>Panyika nyoro</i>	they are Zimbabweans in a wet and fertile country
SOLOIST:	<i>Vanodyeiko</i>	what do they eat?
CHORUS:	<i>Hee- hee Panyika nyoro</i>	Hee- hee in a wet and fertile country
SOLOIST:	<i>Vangafare Seiko</i>	How can't they be happy?
CHORUS:	<i>Hee- hee panyika nyoro, ndeve Zimbabwe, panyika nyoro</i>	Hee- hee in a wet and fertile country they are Zimbabweans, in a wet and fertile country.

(Musengezi, 1984: 33).

The song is also a negotiation of the masses' sense of patriotism. This song "Mwana uyu ndewani" magnifies the author's comic imagery when he lifted a small boy from the crowd. The notion of grotesque in this song has an underlying tension created from distorted bodies soon after the raid at the school. The meaning of innocent children who were having fun at a film show turned into a *Pungwe*, shows the invested world which became a site of grotesque reality. By grotesque reality Vice defines it as "a site of interchange and inter orientation and a textual approach to the world, as opposed to the demotic slang and parodic composition". It is from the *Kongonya* dance at *Pungwe* that the liberating forms of Chimurenga songs reverberates an exceptional kind of communicative sign in the parodic composition that is typically Bakhtinian carnival. *Pungwe* generated carnival speech, carnival laughter, and Chimurenga dance styles, coupled with other interactions where equality, freedom and political beliefs are comprehended in order to "liberate from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times", with these Chimurenga dances claiming "ever changing, playful, undefined forms" (Bakhtin, 1984b:10-11).

The selected body of literature is situated within a broader socio-cultural problematic, a step that further revitalises and decentralises the Bakhtinian canon as a socio-political critique that assists this present researcher in laying facts of the Chimurenga war bare. The novels situate the Chimurenga war's historical experiences into its proper context by exploring both the masses and freedom fighters on one hand, and the Rhodesian forces' cruelty in support of its colonial administration on the other side. These selected Shona novels as "just one discursive genre" among a whole host of genres that constitute "a system of discourses" (ibid: 6) will be effective in viewing the world through Bakhtinian lens. Some readers might be wondering why the researcher chose these novels. In a related comment Rama (cited in Remedi, 2004:13) writes:

What is there, in that novel, is a repertoire of forms, not just themes, but forms, means of expression. The construction of the gag, the joke, the fragmentary mode of artistic elaboration that pertains to the traditional forms of language and speech...

By turning to Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque and discussing the light it cast on chosen Shona fiction, this chapter will show that using Kayser's model to discuss this body of literature's grotesquerie is counter-productive and that African literature's cosmological views are not as Manichaean as some would argue. This song's semiotic intercourse is well captured in Bakhtin's (1984: 270) related comment:

It seems to us that one could speak directly of a special polyphonic artistic thinking extending beyond the bounds of the novel as a genre. This mode of thinking makes available those sides of a human being, and above all the thinking human consciousness and the dialogical sphere of its existence, which are not subject to artistic assimilation from monologic positions.

The language of this song is not in abstraction but loaded with meaning derived from the body of images that are negotiated, adjusted and mediated through dialogue. The meaning of the song is therefore inferred that way. Bakhtin (ibid: 271) clearly states that, "the thinking human consciousness and the dialogic sphere in which this consciousness exists, in all its depth and specificity, cannot be reached through a monologic artistic approach."

The *Pungwe's* carnivalesque typified Bakhtin's theory of folk humour in collapsing and overturning conventional boundaries and societal norms of Zimbabwe during Chimurenga war. The song, *Seiko Musina Morari* is enough statement that *Pungwe* was essentially a licensed time of revelry and excitement. Just like Bakhtin's theory of carnival, *Pungwe* presents a site of struggle, interchange and revelry, a licensed watershed for both masses and

freedom fighters to challenge each other's socio-political ideas. *Pungwe* had features of grotesque realism and parody.

In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin presents an understanding of the grotesque that is less ominous than Kayser's. The tradition of folk humor that stems from medieval carnival is the source of Bakhtin's theory. He writes that carnival celebrates the "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order" (Bakhtin, 1984b:10). The liberation struggle produces an overwhelming sense of the "gay relativity" of those truths and of that order. During carnival, everything is seen as happily grotesque, susceptible to the "peculiar logic of the inside out, of the 'turn about,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crowning and uncrownings" (Bakhtin, *ibid*:11). The purpose is neither negative nor ominous, as Kayser would have it. Rather, the end is a carnivalesque laughter that "revives and renews." Most of the Chimurenga War songs sum up Bakhtin's (1984a:34) sense of revival when he avers that, "This carnival spirit offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things". Songs like '*Seiko seiko musina morari*' (Why, why don't you have morale) invoked the grotesque where much of its imagery surrounds the carnival and consecrates its "inventive freedom" (*ibid*: 34). It derives from what Bakhtin (*ibid*: 19-20) calls the "essential principle of grotesque realism" and degradation. The "high, spiritual, ideal, abstract" is degraded "to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body".

The grotesque images associated with the carnival reflect the concept of degradation. Foremost is the fool, the clown. His function is to lower everything that is high by parodying religious and official rituals, by cursing and comically condemning all that is official, and by stressing the body and its functions: eating, drinking, defecating, and fornicating. The emphasis on the body is also seen in the feast, another of the chief elements of the carnival. With its seemingly endless banqueting, frivolities, and dancing, the feast celebrates the triumphant primacy of the body. The pre-carnival world's single truth, single vision, and single sense of things are rejected for the complex truth that truth is not single, that it is complex, high and low, and accessible only through carnivalesque laughter.

Orature, still acts as a significant component of people's daily struggles against suppression, exploitation and oppression. Chimurenga War used orature as a potent weapon that society

used to conscientise the masses and present their concerns, hopes and aspirations. Furusa (1991:13) cites Alpers' article which underscores the socio-political function of orature in contemporary African struggles when he avers that:

One of the most important popular expressions of resistance to the brutality and humiliation of colonialism in [Africa] was cultural. Of these songs, music and dance were easily the most universal forms of protest with proverbs, stories and wood sculpture providing other vehicles of resistance.

Chimurenga War theme at *Pungwe* was clearly revealed by both the political speeches and songs. The war's thematic concern was forcefully demonstrated through the songs. They heighten tension and suspense, thereby propelling the political stories to reach its climax. Nyawaranda (1985) portrays how Chimurenga songs enhanced audience participation by providing a sense of solidarity among the masses and guerrillas struggling against colonialism:

*Pavakomana vose vataiva navo, mumwe chete chete ndiye akarwisana nemabhunu acho akanga atinyangira. Vamwe vose vana mukoma kutoimba zvavo wena dzimbo dzechimurenga pfuti dzichirira kudaroko. Waingonzwa vokuza uya akanga achirwisa mabhunu... paya pakazoiswa bhazuka pane masojapo, pfuti dzavo dzose dzakabva dzanyarara kuti zii-i, kana kuzomboti kosoze* (Nyawaranda, 1985:33)

(Of all the guerrillas we had, just one out of the rest fought the enemy soldiers single-handedly. The rest of the cadres could afford to sing Chimurenga War songs aiding the sound of the gun. You could hear the encouraging tunes as this cadre did wonders to kill the Rhodesian white soldiers. He silenced the enemy soldiers when he shelled his bazooka and there was a deafening silence).

Besides its mobilising role to the generality of the Zimbabwean masses, songs were a source of inspiration that engendered the war spirit of determination. We realise how the songs unified the masses as artist with the freedom fighters. Songs are a vehicle through which the people learn about the goals and purposes of the liberation struggle. They provided an ideological weapon that injected the spirit of solidarity among the masses and cadres. This significant function of songs is well chronicled by Ntuli (2010:219) who says:

First, they are the means of audience participation. Secondly, they dramatise action. Thirdly they play a literary role in developing plot, conveying theme and revealing characters. In developing the plot, songs are important in many ways. Firstly, the movement from one episode to the next can be brought about by means of a song. Secondly songs heighten tension and suspense thus moving the story to its climax. This normally results from the fact that songs are sung at critical moments, when the

character who is singing is experiencing extreme grief. It becomes difficult for such character to express his emotions and feelings except in a song.

The centrality of the Chimurenga War was well encapsulated in song and dance which, in a very big way, expressed people's hopes, dreams and aspirations. Songs never allowed despair during the struggle. In emphasising the role of remembering war themes in general Canonici (1996:35) made reference to "a fixed refrain, used as an introduction and as the mnemonic centre of the story". In attesting the function of the masses singing as a "form of guerrilla warfare complimenting the military and ideological efforts of our freedom fighters in the bush" (Pongweni, 1982:6) songs epitomised the vital dynamics of life. During political sermons, songs stimulated political awareness which encouraged dialogue and debate. Women also played a critical role in society as evidenced by Moyo (1985:135) who describes a female cadre at a *Pungwe*:

*Comrade Blood, aiva wechikadzi, akasimuka ndokudaidzira kuvanhu, vanhu vacho vachibvumira. Vana mhayiyo mune morari here? Seiko musina morari? Ini ndiri munhu anofarira morari chaizvo! Handiti tiri kunzwanana vabereki?*

(Comrade Blood was a female cadre who stood up and addressed the masses who were responding. You beloved mothers, you do not have morale. Why do you not have morale? I am one person who loves plenty morale! Do we clearly understand one another parents?).

Female guerrillas equally participated side by side their male counterparts as is testified above. Morale during the *Pungwe* was generated through singing. Songs strengthened the masses and the fighters for freedom's socio-political cohesion. These wealth of cultural expressions like songs have awakened the masses and guerrillas' Chimurenga War zeal and enthusiasm. Since literature is a result of the people's struggles to create a better and harmonious society then songs have the capacity to create positive and negative images. At *Pungwe*, songs enhanced the liberating force by presenting innovative solutions to colonialism. They are a powerful and potent cultural medium for political awareness raising. Nyawaranda (1985:35) succinctly puts it that:

*Komuredhi Muchaparara ndivo vakavhura dandaro racho norumbo voti: 'VaSamora tipei masabhu!...' Ngoma yakati yapfumbira pakare, twakomuredhi twakwidza, gidi kumusana ronzi berekwe, kukati kwoimbwa nekutambwa, uchinzwa kuti waka waka, waka waka, riri gidi rinorira kumusana kudaro. Hapana kuti unotadza, waingoona woimba nokutamba mudariro usingambozvifungiri. Mwoyo unobva watorwa namanzwi nokutamba kwakomuredhi akanga auya nechombo. Pakadaropo, unonga usisazezi rufu, nekuti komuredhi akanga auya nemorari.*



(Comrade Muchapara was the first to sing a song as a way of setting the Pungwe scene when he sang Mr Samora give us the sub-machine gun!... After he had warmed the Pungwe stage bubbling with confidence, with his gun clad on his back, he sang and danced. The sound made by the gun on his back was so rhythmical to his dancing. There was no room for failure, unconsciously one would be psyched into the mood of singing and dancing. Comrade Muchapara stole the hearts of many through his singing and dancing. There was no fear of death because the guerrillas had brought in morale).

The novels depict the transgressive features of carnival and the grotesque. This study examines how the interrelatedness of high and low cultures is worked out in the body of literature under scrutiny. In order to understand our society better, Bakhtin's theories of carnival and grotesque will unravel war notions presented in our culture through literature in order to challenge colonial power.

This study firstly acknowledges that Bakhtin's theory of carnival and the grotesque continues to be an indispensable tool for analysing the relationship between the high and the low in colonial culture. Carnival typifies *Pungwe* in that it is a profane celebration where people feast and dress in costume and when the world is turned upside down. The grotesque is used in this study to refer to the use of bizarre, absurd, irony, laughter and excess, dealing with the dichotomy life and death. This art is characterised by the mixture of parts of humans and animals, the presentation of defecation and vomit, which has to be considered as a whole celebration of the body. It is in this case that "the grotesque expresses not the fear of death but the fear of life" (Kayser cited in Bakhtin 1984b:50).

The Zimbabwean masses were labelled with an inferior identity ascribed on them by the colonial white administration. In the selected literature, the words used are quite vulgar, which is a significant characteristic of the carnivalesque. Language, though a crucial factor, the body is even more important. It is Fiske (1987:248) who observes that "the body is where the power bearing definitions of social and sexual normality are literally embodied and consequentially the site of discipline and punishment for deviation of those norms" People refuse the identity proposed by the dominant ideology and use the body as a material against morality, discipline and control.

The carnival and the grotesque are used as anti-hegemonic strategies to disobey authority and therefore flee from hierarchy. The carnival is when oppressed people long for a free world

where people would not miss anything. “The suspension of all hierarchical precedence during carnival time was of particular significance” (Bakhtin, 1984b:10). Masses as spectators, more often than not would become spectacle by mimicking the dancing styles of the guerrillas. In both form and content, the *Pungwe* spectacle’s purpose was a complete justification of the Chimurenga War’s political conditions and goals. This spectacle represents the continual justification of why the guerrillas and the masses were supporting the liberation struggle. It enabled its participants to escape the world temporarily. Strinati (1995: 225) states that “there are no longer any agreed and inviolable criteria which can serve to differentiate art from popular culture.”

In support of the Bakhtinian inversion of normal life during carnival, typical of *Pungwe* during Zimbabwe’s Chimurenga War, Marx and Engels’ use of the metaphor of the *camera obscura* which expounds on the idea of misrepresentation that can take place:

If in ideology men and their realizations appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life process as the inversion of objects on their retina does from the physical life- process (Marx and Engels 1976, Vol 5: 37).

It is an existing truism that such a comparison with Bakhtin renders the human mind responsive to inverting reality. This yields into Marx and Engels’ (1976, Vol 5:36) profound statement that, “it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness.” It is through *Pungwe* that ordinary people’s practical consciousness achieved power as a combination of voluntarism, consent and not by coercion. *Pungwe* theatre did not assume the Machiavellian view that power can be achieved through both force and fraud. It was through Chimurenga War’s chosen ideological weapon that created consensual political dialogue and assisted in transmitting political ideas. *Pungwe* played upon the masses’ common sense as it animated social relations in understanding how to, “organise human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.” (Gramsci, 1971: 324, 377). *Pungwe* as one of the numerous African ideologies tapped from the reservoir of culture “create the terrain on which men move” towards independence. It is Chatterjee’s book, *The National and its Fragments* whose description on nationalism, best suits what happened at *Pungwe* as a historical project:

In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even the

state is in the hands of the colonial power. The dynamics of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power, (Chatterjee, 1993: 6-7).

The selected body of Shona novels heavily deploys grotesque, often coupled with humorous corporeality as a means of articulating “unofficial” views on socio-historical, cultural and religious discourses. Grotesque realism is the darker side of society which has no lower level. Bakhtin provides an essential and potent weapon to critically interrogate the selected works of art. He conceptualises grotesque realism as firmly linked to elements in the “carnival sense of the world” as a mode of biological and socio-political dialogue which renders “the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, [and] abstract” to the point of corporeal materiality which induces a carnivalesque toppling of social values, customs and hierarchies (Bakhtin, 1984b:19).

Grotesque imagery, folk laughter and the market place are three main characteristics that form the favourable atmosphere of grotesque realism during the *Pungwe* carnival. The Shona novels are an embodiment of a Bakhtinian posturing of the grotesque where “the world of Romantic grotesque is to a certain extent a terrifying world, alien to man. All that is ordinary, commonplace, belonging to everyday life, and recognized by all, suddenly becomes meaningless, dubious and hostile” (Bakhtin, 1984b: 39).

Chimurenga songs are quite axiomatic to Bakhtin’s perspectives of grotesque as a notion which induces ambivalent laughter whose intention is to create the serio-comic feeling whose purpose provides “the corrective of laughter and criticism to all existing straightforward genres, languages, styles, voices; to force men to experience beneath these categories a difference and contradictory reality that is otherwise not captured in them” (Bakhtin, 1981:59). The songs and dances represent people’s sub-consciousness on the political circumstances that they are in, and their ideas they are afraid of saying or doing. It is in these songs at *Pungwe* that grotesquery constantly plays a crucial role as a vehicle of transmitting a temporary liberation from the truth that prevailed and from the order that was established. The harsh conditions during the colonial period, the arduous and painful Chimurenga war experiences surely meant that people needed this temporary liberation from the tyrannical yoke of the enemy. When reflecting on grotesque, Bakhtin considers Kayser’s view of grotesque which assumes four principles namely:

(1) the grotesque is an estranged world; (2) the grotesque appears to be an expression of an incomprehensible, inexplicable, and impersonal force; (3) the grotesque is a play with the absurd; (4) the creation of the grotesque is an attempt to invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of world.

Bakhtin (1984b:41) further adds that instead of grotesque being of dark “monstrosities” he views it as “the festival of spring, of sunrise, of morning.” *Pungwe*’s setting, meaning the where and the when of it, was also clearly defined. There are two significant modes, according to the Bakhtinian carnival, through which the reversal of cultural norms within literature or song is performed. It is through grotesque realism and the carnivalesque that the abolition of certain cultural categories and political hierarchies coupled with the celebration of language that is viewed as obscene, non-sensical and absurd. Grotesque realism is the representation of modes through which the carnivalesque flourishes. According to Bakhtin (1984b: 303) this grotesque imagery is embedded with grotesque body, images of “exaggeration, hyperbolism ... [and] excessiveness”. Reference to the body in Bakhtinian terminology does not mean “the body and its physiology in the modern sense”, because this is not “individualized” but it refers to the universal, comic and “at the same time an all-people character” (Bakhtin, 1984b:19).

### **5.16 Festive carnival and food**

Feeding fighters for freedom was one such act of communal solidarity. According to Bakhtin, in the process of labor and struggle:

The popular image of food and drink are active and triumphant ... They express the people as a whole because they are based on the inexhaustible, ever-growing abundance of the material principle. They are universal and organically combined with the concept of the free and sober truth, ignoring fear and piousness and therefore linked with wise speech. Finally, they are infused with gay time, moving toward a better future that changes and renews everything in its path (Bakhtin, 1984b:302).

Eating at *Pungwe* radiated a festive spirit which laughingly captures key facets of human survival. Lan says that spirit mediums imposed certain prohibitions on food that the fighters for freedom would eat and that which they would not eat. (Lan, 1985) For example the eating of okra was a taboo. Songs to buttress the taboo in the minds of the masses and guerrillas were like this one “*Gandanga haridye derere muhondo nekuti rinorera*” (Guerrillas should not be fed on okra for it weakens them). This song meant to specify the expected menu that

the guerrillas should enjoy during the struggle. This offers a typical carnivalesque hilarity whose glee generated such prohibition songs. The main reason for the creation of such a taboo was to make sure that the cadres were provided with a good menu. They would go for days without receiving a decent meal in the midst of a fatiguing war. Giving someone okra who is almost fainting of hunger is tantamount to mockery.

Eating in general and what to eat in particular is a very good source of merriment at the *Pungwe* carnival. The Zimbabwean masses took it upon themselves to look after the fighters for freedom. They undertook to provide food stuffs, mealie-meal, vegetables and meat ranging from chicken to beasts as attested by Manungo (1991:164):

It was at Pungwe that the peasants and the guerrillas discussed the difficulties being faced by the peasants, such as their diminishing food supplies, lack of cash, and the dangers which they faced whenever the Rhodesian soldiers suspected them of supporting the guerrillas. The Pungwe served as a means to politicise and conscientize the peasants.

Also food prepared by a woman on her periods was also considered a taboo. Any business that entails ingestion and defecation is evidence of the limits of the physical body as it commences with the world are represented as tropes of renewal. Another crucial trope of renewal is sexual intercourse which illuminates the linkage of the body to the world as well as its social relations between bodies including creation of new bodies. The significant role of banqueting and food at *Pungwe* is within the sphere of the free and familiar environment which cements relationships. This is a fulfillment of the Shona proverbial saying that “*Ukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya*” which literally means any relationships are fully fulfilled and concretised through sharing a meal. Bakhtin (1984b:281) argues that banqueting feasts demonstrate people’s competitive advantage against all odds and victory over trials and tribulation of this world.

The cadres relied on sadza and beef, goat meat, chicken, etc. At first the masses would bring already prepared meals from their various places. Before the fighters for freedom partook of that meal there were security concerns where they would ask one who prepared the meal to eat first. With time, when the masses were politically conscious, they would cook food at one point contrary what one informant had portrayed. Also tea was prepared in the morning taken with fat-cooks. Another respondent, who quickly realised that the food was poisoned after he

also had eaten a bit of it, gave the researcher a captivating and chilling account of his survival. In an interview with another war veteran in Gweru, he clearly explains their diet:

We received different kinds of dishes ranging from chicken, goat meat and beef coupled with a mountain of sadza. The meals were so delicious that we hungrily ate them especially on this day after having gone for days without eating a decent meal because the masses were placed in keeps in the Centenary areas near Mt Darwin. This continued as the norm. As the war progressed, there was depletion of livestock, and some of the masses were jealous of their livestock hence we encountered instances where my group encountered a case of food poisoning. This then necessitated the taking of beasts from white commercial farmers in the neighbourhood. These animals were better known as cabbages, which was a way to disguise the enemy (Interview with Mr Bvunge, 31 July 2013).

The respondent above showed the researcher that during the war, there was an element of excess and superfluity after the war. Food was all over and it did not run out hence the selected body of carnivalesque Shona novels celebrate this theme through *Pungwe*'s banquet feasts. In Bakhtin's opinion (1984b:285) "the themes of table talk are always 'sublime' and filled with 'profound wisdom'". This communion at *Pungwe* between guerrillas and the masses emphasised free and familiar relationships which connects the Shona novels to Bakhtin's qualities of carnival.

The guerrillas quarrelling over one's urine when they were thirsty and this is quite typical of Jean-Louis Costes, a performer artist, noise musician and film actor, who plays not only with his urine but also with faeces and sperms on stage when performing. People justify his rudimentary antics because he is an artist on stage. In this similar vein, fighters for freedom were also actors in a theatrical struggle for existence. According to Bakhtin (1984b: 9) carnival is a utopian world of renewal, festivity and laughter. For Bakhtin, everyone participates and lives in a second life that is beyond hierarchy, religious dogmas, official norms, and prohibitions. Comrade Tapera, a guerrilla, finds himself in a predicament where he is about to die of hunger. The subsequent provision of food is typical of the Biblical manna from heaven:

*Muviri wake wakanga wodedera nenzara. Akakambaira odzika gomo. Akanga asisagoni kufamba. Asvika mujinga megomo akapinda mumunda waiva nemagaka. Akadya kudzimara dumbu rake rodzimba* (Choto, 1990:120).

(His body was shaking because of hunger. He crawled down the mountain. He could not walk. When he got to the foot of the mountain he got into a field which had cucumbers. He ate until his stomach was painfully filled up).

Tapera's bodily processes that were weak are connected with the intake and output of food where "... *akapinda mumunda waiva nemagaka. Akadya kudzimara dumbu rake rodzimba ...*" (... he got into a field which had cucumbers. He ate until his stomach was painfully filled up). In this sense, the plentiful cucumbers show excess which functions as the guarantee to the very fact of survival. Spirits protected the masses from unforeseen danger for they are endowed with supernatural powers which are crucial for the struggle.

Spiritual guidance protects the guerillas and masses from danger and even death. In some instances, "mediums guided the operations of guerrillas in the field with tactical counsel derived from revelation received in possession (Presler, 1999:89). *Pungwe* was uniquely fashioned into a formidable weapon of cementing deep-rooted integration of the Shona social and religious life on one hand and the mobilisation and conscientisation of masses by the guerrillas. One Honde Valley Anglican (cited in Presler, 1999:87), provides an insightful observation on the *Pungwe* achieving its political objectives of grassroots consensus when he says:

The *mapungwe* of *Chimurenga* expressed the view that the whole Zimbabwean nation was drawn to the one and only cause – fight for the liberation of the country. Yet the aspects of the *Chimurenga* itself and the associated *Chimurenga mapungwe* were culturally, traditionally and spiritually symbolic, hence religious orientated. I experienced pain, grief and sorrow – it was the bleakest period of my life. Hence the whole nation sang religious orientated songs. These *mapungwe* of *Chimurenga* played a very important part during the liberation struggle insomuch that I have termed them *the gene (factors) of unity to a genuine cause*.

This carnivalesque analysis of the normative ritual of ancestral veneration by invoking the guardian spirits set forth an alternative interpretation of *Pungwe* theatre as part of popular culture which exudes its carnivalesque qualities. The fighters for freedom promoted the respect for ancestral spirits whose stewardship of the land claimed serious religious legitimacy to the liberation struggle. The transition of these features from carnival cultural ethos to the selected Shona literature represents, in the words of Lachmann (1988-1989:2), "creative memory" which is performed by many popular cultural texts. The following examples demonstrate how "creative memory" is endorsed in the African popular-cultural texts and how they present "the unconscious turn to the past" (Holquist, 1994:129).

The other feature of carnival that is common in the selected Shona novels is Billingsgate language which can be characterised as a familiar speech of the market place, Billingsgate language also manifests itself through bodily forms. In the selected Shona novels, bodily

principles are shown through the images of characters that eat, drink, fart, vomit and have sexual intercourse. At *Pungwe*, typical of carnival, everything is “inside out, vice versa,” and “upside down” Bakhtin, (1984b: 370) further posits that “All ... thrust down, turn over, push head first, transfer top to bottom, and bottom to top, both in the literal sense of space, and in the metaphorical meaning of the image”. Billingsgate language is mainly anchored by a recognisable speech of the marketplace (a local trade affair), “abusive language, insulting words or expressions, some of them quite lengthy and complex” (Bakhtin, 1984b:16) is one of the characteristics of Bakhtin’s carnival. At St Augustines High School, when the Rhodesian Forces ambushed a *Pungwe*, they employed derogatory language, “*Soja iri raivaridzira richisheedzera ‘Lie down you African!’... Kana pane terrorist ngaibude pachena. Inoregererwa*” (Musengezi, 1984:103, 105). (One Rhodesian soldier was shooting at the dispersing crowd shouting loudly, ‘Lie down you African!... If there is a terrorist reveal, yourself please and you will be forgiven).

In true carnivalesque fashion, the chosen political Shona narratives at *Pungwe* are mostly worried about the lower bodily stratum and grotesque realism. Aphiri (the white farmer) in Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) causes unbearable pain on his farm workers for no apparent reason but for their own amusement and that of the audience. The white farmer’s anger was coming from serious losses of his livestock to the freedom fighters. Closely related to this, the well established facts by a historian and academic, Mazarire (2009:302) categorically states that:

Meanwhile, some of the effects of the war had begun to be felt already. For instance, between October and December 1976 some 2442 head of cattle were stolen from the Mukorsi River Ranch and driven into nearby areas such as Chibi, Nyajena and ultimately, into the western parts of Mshawasha Purchase Area... This gave rise to a fairly well organised system in which *mijibha* stole these cattle from ‘Makwari’ and distributed them to various bases from Nyajena northwards.

In some other parts of Zimbabwe, the coined term *makabhichi* was known as *matobwe* (snot apple) or *magwigwi* especially around the Masvingo province (Mazarire, 2009). These pseudo names were coined to conceal the traffic to outsiders and it is no surprise that the names differed in various areas because of the dialectal differences. This intolerable suffering endured by both the masses and fighters for freedom creates audience laughter, which for Bakhtin (1984b:51) is the essence of carnivalesque laughter, whose potency is in its liberating and regenerating power. The laughter liberates political leaders from certain socio-political norms and hierarchies by celebrating the lower bodily stratum, and by inversion and



exaggeration. The heinous acts that were committed by Alphiri to the masses in the neighbouring villages included the shooting of the village herd and the killing of a pregnant woman as enough testimony to Bakhtin's grotesque realism.

### **5.17 Elements of costume and masking in the Shona novel**

A popular myth that was explained to masses at the *Pungwe* related to the belief that guerrilla could disappear or vanish whenever they were confronted by the enemy. At the *Pungwe*, the guerrillas did not challenge refute this myth. They also wore the kinds of attire that would make them invincible. This element of masking fed into the myth that guerrillas were invincible. Makanda, (2013) himself a former freedom fighter, explains the "mystery" surrounding the costume that made guerrillas appear like they were masking of camouflaging effectively from enemy reconnaissance. Makanda (2013:71) says:

A review of other strategies also took place at these night vigils. For example, in the initial stages of the war, the masses were not allowed to disclose the presence of the guerrillas but as it became apparent that they were frequenting the areas, the masses were then allowed to disclose that they had seen the guerrilla and that they were carrying guns like the soldiers. This strategy was meant to frighten the Rhodesian soldiers. The masses were urged to exaggerate the numbers of guerrillas after silently counting the numbers of the enemy soldiers and giving them false directions. The masses were also urged to lie or exaggerate on the sizes of the weapons carried by the guerrillas and in some cases to mention that they carried dreaded weapons such as mortars, bazookas and light machine guns.

The chosen Shona novels show how freedom fighters, before anyone moved into the village or the *Pungwe* area, posted mujibhas as sentries to strategic positions. At the *Pungwe* meeting, two cadres would conduct a session while the others in a group of eight or so would be strategically positioned protecting the *Pungwe* area. In this similar vein even before attacking a camp, disguise was a common feature. In an interview, with a respondent (2013) says:

Disguise needed cadres to assess what was relevant and what could suit them at that particular context. In our group I remember female comrades who belonged to my group who pretended to be cotton or tobacco pickers at a farm. Their mission was successful. I disguised myself as a teacher after taking an identity card from within that area. I went into a nearby camp with the Headmaster and a Senior Teacher of Chiwanza Primary School in Centenary. We used the Headmaster's Daihatsu car and we were introduced as new teachers at the school. This mission was very successful since we later came and attacked the camp with much accustomed ease.

Another exciting carnivalesque trait in view of fighters for freedom is that there are prescribed attire that enable guerrillas to easily hide when confronted by the enemy. This expected costume provides carnivalesque flair. The guerrillas' attire resembles nature, meaning the forest with its wild animals. This type of clothing is an illustration of becoming the "other" thereby replicating Bakhtinian carnival. The enemy tried it when two members of the Rhodesian Forces' soldiers concealed their identity when one dressed like a woman and pretended to bring food to cadres at a *Pungwe*. The cross-dressing and the carrying of the disguised informer as food causes the masses at *Pungwe* to laugh at a foiled plot. Also Musengezi's (1984: 100-1) fighter for freedom, Black Mamba's description of his attire and how he spoke conjure carnivalesque images:

*Chikomuredhi ichi chakanga chakapfeka hovhorosi nhema, yakabvaruka-bvaruka, vhudzi racho riri refu rakasvibira asi risina kukamwa. Vanhu vese vakaramba vakati zii, chichipaumba nehasha... Zvaaiita zvaisetsa asi zvaaitaura nematauro acho zvainzwisa tsitsi.*

(The diminutive comrade was dressed in torn black overall, with unkempt hair which was tall and darker. People's dead silence was because of his fuming with anger... How he performed before the masses was comic but embedded in his political and how he delivered it was loaded with meaning and full of pity.)

The humor is irked out of a tense political atmosphere which arouses feelings of pathos. To add on this feeling is the cadres' attire which was torn and all his appearance with unkempt hair creates a comic- grotesque image of a lost child. The contradiction of evoking humor through experiencing reality on how he delivered his political sermon on a uniquely functional topic considered a serious matter of the heart during the liberation struggle is a carnivalesque occurrence. The carnivalesque, besides being exuded by his tattered and torn overall, is also shown through his subversive political tone to the masses which serves a liberating function when "it disrupts authority and introduces alternatives" (Cuddon, 1990: 111). This disruption of authority is seen when Gaba noticed the venom with which his counterpart politicises the masses, he dragged him outside. "*Akazobatwa nakomuredhi Gaba ndokuenda [naye] panze.*" "*Comrade Gaba dragged him outside*" (Musengezi, 1984: 101).

The abusive language was also used by freedom fighters while directed towards white oppressive farmers and the Rhodesian settle regime. This is not only destructive and degrading but also reconstructing. It liberates the generality of the Zimbabwean masses

through humorous Chimurenga songs and dances. Its liberative force and ambiguous tone is found in this mockery.

Another carnivalesque element resides in guerrilla-warfare's dressing-up as ordinary Zimbabweans. They then masquerade as commoners in order to be able to execute their war tactics. This form of a disguise is synonymous with carnival masks worn in the public square. They convincingly assumed a new identity that chased away fear and freed themselves from the fetters of oppression. Bakhtin (1981:163) adroitly puts it that:

These masks take on an extraordinary significance. They grant the right not to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize life; the right to parody others while talking, the right not to be taken literally, not to be oneself.

*Pungwe* planned spying missions in this very similar way. Comrade Tinotonga feigned madness in order to perform a reconnaissance tour of the camp to which Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) says:

*Asi ivo varoyi vedu imi, kupenza mukomana mudiki akadai? Benzi harina makata kana materu.... Mufana ane chivindi chinenge cheshumba uyu,. Uya uzopinda usoja. Tigokutungamidza mberi kana torwa nemagandanga mugomo remidzimu* (Makari, 1985:31-32).

(The witch doctors are not good. How could they bewitch such a youth like this. A madman fears no one, everything to him is very simple and possible... this youth is as brave as a lion. Come and we recruit you into the Rhodesian Army so that you will take the lead when we are fighting the freedom fighters in the Midzimu Hill.)

When madness is feigned it at times becomes very realistic. When Comrade Tinotonga was hit with an egg in the face, he almost forgot his mission and was so angered that he almost revenged. Makari (1985:40) says, “*Benzi riya risati radavidza zai rakanga ratoputsikira kumeso kwaro kare. Bva iro harina kutirimuka. Rakaramba rakangomutarisa chete. Maziso aro akambomhanya mhanya neshungu. Rakazvidzora ndokunyemwerera zvaro*” (As the madman tried to answer, he was hit by an egg in the face .He looked unshaken by that. He kept on staring at the white man who did that. His eyes were quite observant and he restrained himself).It is more of a game or a play which Bakhtin perceived as playing a crucial role of carnivalesque parodies like the cosmic questions such as that of time, fate and political power (Bakhtin, 1984b:231-39). This symbolised the performance of communal spectacles which thrives on sustaining its norms by suspending those of the officialdom.

This guerrilla managed to transform himself into insanity through using his body and costume in a carnivalesque manner to parody the enemy soldiers. This is a highly risky and suicidal endeavour as occurred in the Bakhtinian carnival process of the grotesque where the presence of death ushers in socio-political upheaval. Embedded in these inversions of the metaphysical world to the profane is the lyrical sound of carnivalesque laughter (Bakhtin 1984b: 218). The laughter generated from the ironic circumstances where Rhodesian soldiers wishes if this brave youth joins the army when already he is a guerrilla, allows the freedom of both fearlessness and revelry. Mad people are more often than not relegated to the margins of social legitimacy by popular approval. This cadre is the key figure where laughter and pity, joy and rebelliousness are conjured. The “mad” cadre provides an environment of conflict and defiance, diversion and triumph especially a thorough reconnoitering of the camp they would bomb by night. The ability to laugh in the middle of a dangerous war could only be possible at a public square, the *Pungwe*. Laughter generated at *Pungwe* worked as a catalyst for the masses’ rebellious defiance against the official culture of the British oppression. *Pungwe* created a more festive life of the carnival where official rules were temporarily suspended and new relationships degenerating into what Bakhtin (1984a: 108) calls “the living present”.

The fantastic portrayal of this “mad” Comrade with emphasis on his heroic attributes is hyperbolic. This is a shining example of the selected novels deployment of corporeality. Heroes more often than not are explicitly painted with carnivalesque grotesque qualities. The ‘mad’ man’s multiple identities all stemming from his disguises and costuming implies a carnivalesque profanation of the embodiment of grotesque realism. Almost every novel about Chimurenga war ascribes fighters for freedom with the roles as eccentric figures. Some guerrillas after having been cornered by the Rhodesian Forces ended up joining a church gathering of Johanne Marange sect in the midst of their worship and they disguised themselves as church followers:

*Takabva tangonanga pamusangano paya. Tose taiziva kuti masoja ari kutironda.. Nechinguva chisina kufanira takanga tatonyura mumagemenzi. Takabva taita savatendi vavapositori chaivo. Madzimai aivepo akatora zvombo zvedu ndokuzvimvonyera mumanapukeni. Zvamunoona zvakadai kana povho yoziva hondo inodadisa kushanda nayo. Masi ndiwo makwenzi namapako edu. Eheka ndihwo hutiziwo hwedu. Kana seni ndakatopiwa tsvimbo zvikanzi paridza Vhangeri. Mumwe wangu ndiye aiverenga Bhaibheri (Makari, 1985: 81).*

(We went straight into a group of worshippers. We knew pretty well that Rhodesian soldiers were following us. In no time, we were putting on white church garments and looked exactly like the church's apostles. The women promptly hid our arms after wrapping them in their babies' napkins. It was quite evident that the masses were quite knowledgeable about the Chimurenga war dynamics and guerrilla warfare. The masses are our shields and shelter where we hide comfortably. As for me, I was given their rod used by the apostle and was asked to preach the gospel as my colleague read the bible.

What the guerrillas did by seeking refuge in church signifies their repentance into the spiritual realm which reasserts their renewal. This comic spiritual devotion as a result of successfully escaping death ceases to be just mere masquerading. Laughter becomes a vehicle that draws the masses closer by demolishing their fear and piety and equipping them to be more familiar with one another and the guerrillas. This resulted in the *Pungwe* producing dialogic communication which leads to the depth of the guerrillas' spiritual faith which is also representative to the fulfillment of their independence. This is truly carnivalesque spirit because Bakhtin (1984b:39) rightly avers that:

The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles.

The novelist is able to delineate the regenerative theme that is epitomised by the two guerrillas' disguise. Upon getting to where the Jahanne Masowe church service was, the answers given to the Rhodesian soldier's question ironically asked to the guerrilla they are looking for, represents a denigration of authority. Makari (1985:81) says, "*Nechinguva chidikidiki vavengi vedu vakasvika pamusangano uya. Vaifemedzeka seimbwa... 'Iwe muparidzi, ko munhu apfuura napano iko zvino uno achimhanya mamuisa kupi?'... Ko ndemumwe wenyu here? 'Achiita mumwe wedu sei' "* (In no time, our enemies got to where we were. They were gasping for breath like dogs. You the preacher, where have you hidden a person who passed through here running? Is he one of you? How can he be one of us?). The image of the Rhodesian soldier who stands at the threshold of authority as constitutive of a public official, is a typical agent of fear, is altered into a grotesque purpose of laughter. "The abuse and thrashing are equivalent to a change of costume, to a metamorphosis," writes Bakhtin (1984b:197).

Abuse reveals the other, true face of the abused, it tears off his disguise and mask. It is the king's uncrowning [ . . . ] But in this system death is followed by regeneration, by the new year, new youth, and a new spring.

The Rhodesian soldier is reduced to nothing, this is decrowning of an official. This is similar to the farm scene which depicts a shrewd schema whose gross exaggeration is epitomised in Nyawaranda's (1985) Comrade Muchapondwa's martial valour and who successfully shows features of grotesque realism especially with the suspension of normal rules of behaviour. In the Shona novels, the top and bottom exchange places in a literal sense. For Bakhtin (1984b:51), "gay death" is one of the attributes of grotesque imagery. He views death from laughter as one of the forms of gay death (ibid:408) and an ambivalent representation of the carnival.

A similarity between carnival and *Pungwe* theatre is inherently found in how *Pungwe* meetings were conducted. In carnival, new connections may alter in what Bakhtin (1984b:108) calls "the living present." During the carnival period, just like at a *Pungwe*, official rules, norms, and values were temporarily suspended to create a more festive life. Carnival practices, such as underwear becoming outerwear, clothes worn inside out, nose picking, and displaying backsides were common during festivals.

For Bakhtin, the "grotesque body" of both the masses and the freedom fighters are symbols of resistance against British colonial rule. This masking and unmasking clearly demonstrates the authentic unit of heteroglossia in folk laughter. The Bakhtinian carnival laughter unifies the community in a similar way that *Pungwe* brought both the masses and the fighters for freedom together. This thematic concern is a common scatology of the collective grotesque body which is parodic. It enables the laughter aroused at a *Pungwe* to be that liberative. The carnivalesque reflection assists us to conquer the extra-terrestrial and celestial apprehension of death. This provides a sense of victory to cope with the illogicality of life. This generates laughter, which facilitates the masses and fighters for freedom's endeavour to overcome the horror of death, mortality and irrationality of life. This creates a gay (joyful) laughter that demolishes the fear of death. War is quite fearful and the terror of death is directly interlinked with the concept of hell. Bakhtin (1984a:393) ridiculously portrays the hellish form of medieval carnival such as "a dragon, spitting fire, an elephant with men astride, a giant devouring a child, an old devil eating wicked wives" all these representations are ambivalent

because they “include in one way or another symbols of fear defeated by laughter” (ibid : 394).

The presence of clowns in literature also assists in widening the huge chasm where literary education buttresses colonial stereotypes of racial inferiority as adroitly puts forward by Robinson (cited in Loomba,1998:86):

As a clown will instinctively tread lightly and feel ashamed of his hob-nailed shoes in lady's boudoir, so a vulgar mind may, by converse with minds of high culture, be brought to see and deplore the contrast between itself and them.

It is such cultural control which suppressed creativity which this study regards ambivalent. Due to this ambivalence, Bakhtin suggests that “degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth” where death is not negatively portrayed but as that which necessitates a rebirth and regeneration. Amongst the crowd of the fighters for freedom, we have naïve heroes whose farcical transformation of the carnivalesque fool, is a result of unmasking “conventionality, hypocrisy and falsification”. It is this that makes social languages return to the source of everything. This leads to ambiguous laughter of the masses during war and familiarises with the sacred as well as the obscene.

## **5.18 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to present and analyse the depiction of *Pungwe* in Chimurenga war Shona novels and war songs found inside and outside *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982). The Shona novels analysed in this chapter are *Vavariro* (1990), *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), *Chakwasha* (1991), *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), and a collection of short stories, *Masango Mavi* (1998). The chapter was organised in different sections through which it was revealed that there are similarities and differences in the portrayal of *Pungwe* within the novels. On the setting of the *Pungwe*, it was revealed that critics as well as novelists agree that the relationship between the guerrillas and the masses was described at the *Pungwe* as being akin to the metaphor of the fish and the water. The chapter also revealed that by and large the *Pungwe* was a space for political mobilisation and ideological conscientisation of the masses by the guerrillas. This view is confirmed by Pongweni (1982:preface) whose book *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982), argued that songs sung at the *Pungwe* were “the songs of the children of tribulation;

that they exuded political sentiment and that they were an artistic form of guerrilla warfare, complementing the military and ideological efforts of our freedom fighters in the bush”. The Shona novels analysed in this chapter emphasised that discipline was critical to the success of the struggle.

In the novels, some guerrillas and some masses who transgressed were punished either by beating or by death. This point has been seized upon by some critics who have then concluded that the *Pungwe* was a space for violence and nothing else. This is not true. The basic imaginative realities that the Shona novels foregrounded were that discipline was the pre-condition for executing a successful war. This is revealed in the song “*Nzira Dzamasoja Dzekuzvibata nadzo*”. Unlike in the novels where at the *Pungwe* the constructed enemy of the masses was depicted largely as the Rhodesian forces, in the song, “*Kugarira Nyika Yavo*” from Pongweni’s *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982) other political parties led by Muzorewa, Chirau and Sithole were also imaged as the enemy of the people.

Furthermore, the novels and some of the selected songs also showed some differences. Put differently, the institution of *Pungwe* is largely a ZANLA institution and as such, most of the views shared with the masses confirmed official ZANLA ideological position. To put it in this way is not to minimise the contribution of ZANLA in the execution of the war and the building of the *Pungwe* institution. Rather it is to argue that the presentation of a *Pungwe* as live performance in the context of war is differently re-presented by the authors when the same *Pungwe* exists in the novel. It was revealed from the analysis of the novels and songs presented in this study that *Pungwe* is an ideological warfront, even when *Pungwe* manifests itself as theatre of the oppressed people. In short, *Pungwe* finds a new narrative live in the interstices of the novel. The offshoot of such existence is that *Pungwe* can now be interpreted differently by whoever reads the Shona novel, which means that the surviving freedom fighters as witnesses to the war in which they participated can no longer ‘monopolise’ the interpretation of *Pungwe*. In the next chapter this issue is taken further where the emphasis will be on the discussion of the findings of this study.



## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, focus was on the presentation and analysis of the depiction of *Pungwe* in the Shona novels, some selected songs from *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982), and minimally, from what some interviewed people have to say about the *Pungwe*. In this chapter, the main aim is to discuss the findings of the study. This involves critical remarks on the appropriateness of carnivalesque theory in explaining the presence of *Pungwe* in the Shona novel. It also involves reappraisal of the consequences of embedding the *Pungwe* within the Shona novels and some songs. Lastly, the chapter critically engages the implications of using carnivalesque as well as manifesting instances of narrating the *Pungwe* and how these shape the theory of the Shona novel.

#### 6.2 Discussion: *Pungwe*, Carnavalesque, Popular Public Sphere and the Shona Novel

In this study, it was found out that *Pungwe* is the political institution that was created by ZANLA forces to foster a close fighting relationship with the masses against colonialism. It was found out that critics differ in their understanding of what *Pungwe* was. On one hand, Nkomo (1984), Mutandiri (2009) and Kalu (2009) all are of the opinion that *Pungwe* was a political space used by ZANU to mobilise the masses in the struggle in a violent way. On the other hand, critics such as Makanda and Pfukwa who were themselves freedom fighters and their understanding of *Pungwe* are positive. Pfukwa convincingly argued, and this study agrees with him, that guerrilla warfare is a struggle of a people with less sophisticated firepower and as such the guerrillas had to build constructive bridges with the masses. Makanda (2013) accedes and points out that the *Pungwe* was a philosophy based on the Maoist conception of the guerrillas as the ‘fish’ and the ‘masses’ as the water.

This metaphor claims natural relationship between the masses and the guerrillas. It also implies that there is an ideological closeness, if not similarities between the guerrillas and the masses. Furthermore, it was found out that *Pungwe* is warfront for the winning of the minds of the people. At the same time, *Pungwe* is a physical structure where performances that

celebrated the struggle mocked the Rhodesian forces and their surrogates in the black political parties especially those led by Muzorewa, Chirau and Sithole were subverted. This last point which designates *Pungwe* as a liminal space links this study to the theory of the carnivalesque. Here, the study was based on Bakhtin's notion of the carnival space as a space of creative contradictions. Carnival space allows the ordinary people to mock the values of the official narratives which have outlived their usefulness. Carnival space asserts life-giving values that are anti-exploitation of the masses.

It was found out that Bakhtin was an astute theoretician for whom carnival space also contained elements of self-mockery within the masses, and the guerrillas. The aspect of parody, laughter is cathartic; they allow the ordinary people and the guerrillas to express their triumph, doubts and also transform *Pungwe* as a space of paradox: assertion of freedom, but could also turn into a space of punishments of the guerrillas and the masses who erred. *Pungwe* could also be turned into a blood bath by the Rhodesian forces whenever, the guerrillas and the masses lost their vigilance. When the *Pungwe* was incorporated into the novels, the novels also became an extended classroom that the actual *Pungwe* was. The novels re-asserted the idea that their narrative became a form of *Pungwe* where several ideas clashed, confirmed each other as well as interrogated each other. To the extent that the novels are circulating in the public domain, it also means that the *Pungwe* that during the struggle was confined to the war zones, is now circulating in the public sphere through the narrative agency of the the Shona novel and some popular songs. Thus, at a theoretical level, it was found out in this study that Bakhtin's theory applies to the analysis of the *Pungwe* within the novels. Conversely, once the *pungwe* have been embedded in the novel and elaborated as narrative, it followed that the *Pungwe* also complicated the genres of the classical realism normally associated with the birth and development of the novel. Put differently, the novel genres deny each other the authority to speak with a single voice. This is important observation that bears on the analysis of the novels because as is critically discussed below, the novel has been rendered polyvalent by the presence of *Pungwe* within it.

### **6.3 The depiction of the setting up of the *Pungwe* in the Shona novel**

On the issue of the setting up of the *Pungwe* as depicted in the Shona novel, three Shona works of art namely, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), *Vavariro* (1990) and *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) analysed. For example it was found out that *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) depicts the

relationship between the guerrillas and masses were cordial. Initially, all the food was cooked headman's house and each family would bring food and the young girls would wash the guerrillas' clothes, while the young men or mujibha would be sent on different errands or reconnaissance. This image is one of unity. The guerrillas established bases without having to ask for permission. They wielded power to command the villagers to visit the base. It was found out that the romantic and idealised relationship of the guerrillas and the masses in the initial phase that *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) paints is questioned, and complicated in Makari's novel, *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985). In the novel, setting up of the *Pungwe* in the villages was not automatic or spontaneous. In fact, the initial contact between the masses and the guerrillas was marked by fear, trepidation and uncertainty.

On analysing *Vavariro* (1990), it emerged that the masses represented by Mr and Mrs Chimoto showed fear as they had never seen the guerrillas before. On balance, the depiction of the entry and setting up of the *pungwe* in the three novels is different in detail and emphasis. While *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) suggests that there was already mutual rapport between the masses and the guerrillas, *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) and *Vavariro* (1990) adopt a critical stance, revealing that in some sense the masses felt that the guerrillas were an 'invading' force. Makanda supports the above view by suggesting that "Pungwes were not the first strategy to be used to forge links with the masses. Initially, clandestine meetings were held" (Makanda, 2013:71). This point confirms the findings of this study which is that there was no automatic and unproblematic relationship with the masses.

#### **6.4 Discussion: The relationship between the masses and the guerrillas at the *Pungwe* in the Shona novel**

It was found out in the study that the relationship between the masses and guerrillas was the most cordial, warm and yet sometimes thorny, complicated, controversial, even uncaring and unconvincing. In *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) the relationship between the guerrillas and the masses is warm as shown in the song "*Mhoroi mose mose*" that sought to establish political and ideological rapport and strengthen trust between freedom fighters and the masses. This depiction of the cordial relationship between the guerrillas and the masses is supported by Manungo, whose research on the peasant –guerrilla relationship in Chiweshe confirms the existence of consensus and harmony in the repertoire of this trend or tendency that emphasise warm or cordial relationship. Phrases such as 'they understood', agreed, supported,

agreement that were exchanged between the masses and the guerrillas imply smooth interaction. However, critics such as Makanda (2013) slightly modify the projected romantic picture of harmony that is depicted in the Zvaida Kushinga and also contained in Manungo's convictions of a natural bond between the masses and the guerrillas at the Pungwe.

The second trend that describes the relationship between the masses and the guerrillas can be identified as patronising. For example, in *Vavariro* (1990) guerrillas are depicted as active and the masses as passive, guerrillas issue directives or commands and the masses are portrayed as accepting largely without questioning. This patronising attitude is very much revealed at the *Pungwe*. In Nyawaranda's novel, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) Comrade Pasindepedu, monopolises discussions at the *Pungwe*, clarifies the goals of the struggle as if to suggest that the ordinary people do not know the cause of the war. This condescending attitude of the freedom fighters constructed the masses as an anonymous group without any opinion. Patronage is further shown where the guerrillas are the ones who claim to have all the answers to their questions. The evidence of such 'arrogance' is revealed when the authorial voice in Nyawaranda's novel notes; "*Vane mibvunzo vainzi vabvunze vachipindurwa*" (Those with questions were told to ask). This brief quote captures the essence and spirit of contradiction that informs the carnivalesque.

On one hand, the guerrillas could be said to be well-meaning and genuine whether the masses had some questions to be asked. On the other hand, the brief quotation above shows the power that the guerrillas who were calling themselves sons and daughters were wielding that power over their parents. It was found out that all the novels do not provide space for the masses to initiate dialogue at the *Pungwe*, even to argue against certain guerrilla conduct like the burning of schools, libraries and other social amenities that benefited the masses up to today. It is this "silencing" of the voice of the masses which has led some critics such as Kriger to suggest that there was another coercive relationship between the masses and the guerrillas. This trend that suggests that there was a coercive relationship is confirmed and modified in the lyrics of the song "*Povo Yaramba*" which goes that: "*Povo yaramba, povo yaramba zvemadhisinyongoro*". (The masses have denied chaos) These lyrics have layered meanings: First *povo* or people rejected colonial culture of exploiting Africa's labour and resources. At this semantic level of meaning, there is convergence of meaning between the masses and the guerrillas and this undermines Kriger's absolutist view that the relationship between the masses and guerrillas was coercive through and through. However, the same

lyrics were sung by the masses when rejecting some authoritarian tendencies developing among some guerrilla who slept with young girls without their consent.

### **6.5 *Pungwe* as theatre of the oppressed in Shona novel**

The study found out that the novels depict *Pungwe* as a form of theatre of the expressed where ordinary people and the guerrillas performed their pain, happiness and aspirations as is exemplified in the song, “*Chenjera chenjera*” (Moyo, 1985:137) found in *Nguo Dzouswa*. This aspect of the carnivalesque that re-enacts moments of pain and suffering people’s historical experiences is also confirmed in *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982). According to Pongweni (1982:1) the carnivalesque element in songs sung at the *Pungwe* is that they acted as “the barometer of the mood of our people: in times of tribulation it is exhortatory, defiant, supplicatory and educative; in victory, celebration and imbued with caution and vigilance”. This paradox of the pain and pleasure alluded to in the above quotation is deepened in Lachmann’s (1988-89:124-6) understanding of the working of the carnivalesque space who “formulates a myth of ambivalent that denies the end by sublimating death [so that] ..., by ridiculing death and finiteness, folk culture, which is the bearer of this revelation, embodies the refusal to acknowledge the authority of those official institutions”.

The study also found out that some unwritten songs found in the Shona oral cultural fund emphasise the ambiguity of the *Pungwe* space. For example, the song “*Pamusoroyi Comrade*” was often sung when someone was being beaten at the *Pungwe* for a transgression. The irony of it is that the song sometimes was being sung by a person who was being beaten or by the mujiba who was doing the beating or by the guerrilla who was commanding the beating. In short, the study acknowledges Kriger’s thesis of violence at the *Pungwe* but the study does not agree entirely with her conclusions because it was found out from the analysis of the novels and some songs especially “*Nzira Dzemasoja Dzekuzvibata Nadzo*” that punishment did not precede discipline. Discipline was imbedded in the taboos and observances contained in the songs. Punishment was only meted in exceptional cases and it was found out that this form of punishment at *Pungwe* was measured to be proportionate to the nature of crime so that it is not true as historians (Kriger,1995; Mazarire, 2009) seems to suggest that death was always assured as the imagined form of penalty committed by either the guerrillas or the masses.

## 6.6 Discussion: *Pungwe* songs, grotesque realism and popular festivals in the Shona novel

In seeking to understand the agency of popular songs sung at the *Pungwe*, selected Shona novels, Pongweni's compilation of *Songs that won the liberation war* (1982) and unrecorded songs were analysed. In terms of the songs in the novels, the study established and found out that their deployment was used to serve different ideological purposes in the war. The discussion of the role of the songs in *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) revealed that songs functioned as narrative glue; in the song 'Mwana Ndewani', what was highlighted was the issue of patriotism. Only those sons and daughters who committed themselves to fight in the struggle and those who supplied food and spied for the guerrillas could themselves act as children who were loyal to the struggle. This song emphasises the issue of voluntarism in which going to war was self sacrifice for the collective good. The study found out that novelists such as Nyawaranda in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) expand the meanings of the songs when they show that songs of the struggle affirmed the principle of life but also revealed that those fighting for freedom were also human beings and as such vulnerable.

Despite this vulnerability in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) the songs are infused with zeitgeist pumped up with measured optimism. In the song, '*Mbuya Nehanda Kufa Vachitaura Shuwa*' (Moyo: 1985:135), there is a sense of prophecy that amounted to the fact that the suffering would come to pass. In fact, right in the thick of war, where death was close to the masses and the guerrillas, the freedom fighters kept their morale high. They even coined songs in which they encouraged the masses to adopt a positive attitude towards war despite the destruction that the masses often suffered from the fire power of the Rhodesian forces. The song, '*Seiko Musina Morari*' in *Nguo Dzouswa* (Moyo, 1985: 135) and from which part of the title of this study has been taken emphasise triumph of the human spirit to succeed over social and political conditions of adversity. Taken collectively, the study found out that the emplotment the songs in the novels reveal a paradox popular to the structure of the carnivalesque. According to Bakhtin (1984a:8), the subterranean energies that inform the carnival spirit derives from the desire of the oppressed people to "escape from the official way of life" mostly punctuated by an insatiable desire to exploit the weak in society. However, Bakhtin further reveals that in their spiritual journey from slavery to freedom that was enacted at the carnival, the masses also expressed "joyful relativity" (ibid: 160) in which the creation of history would usher new values that would define the new society.

If, as has been argued in the discussion above, the novels emphasise the spirit of conquest of a formidable adversary, the study found out that in *Songs that won the Liberation War* (1982), Pongweni has compiled some of the enduring songs that speak to the issue of maintaining discipline for the struggle to be consummated in political emancipation. Songs such as ‘*Nzira dzemasoja Dzekuzvibata nadzo*’ is a veritable code of conduct that list the taboos that the guerrillas had to observe. It was found out in this study, that more than in any novel, this song is central to diffusing arguments that project *Pungwe* as a place of destruction and violence. The emphasis of the song on observing the rules and regulations of a just war included not exploiting the masses, respecting the rights of the prisoners of war, explaining clearly to the masses the ideological causes and courses of the war and the need to refrain from promiscuous behaviour that would have compromised the struggle. Such a holistic people’s ‘bible’ provided the spiritual compass to guide the people in their struggle. As Pfukwa points out, to avoid unnecessary casualties, mobility was a key tactic in guerrilla strategy (2007). Vambe (2011:11) adds that “Guerrillas were human beings; they could misjudge their actions resulting in heavy casualties of the guerrillas and the ordinary men, women and children”. In short, then, the study established and found out that popular songs were used for different purposes that Pongweni summarises as:

- Conscientisation songs,
- Songs conducting an argument by proxy with the opposition
- Songs appealing to the ancestral spirits for guidance
- Songs appealing for assistance from and expressing gratitude to, progressive countries and finally,
- Songs in which liberation armies take stock of tevents, thinking about the past, present and the future (Pongweni, 1982: preface).

A new dimension that Pongweni’s (1982) book introduces and which is not found in the Shona novels is the use of songs sung by artists and compositions from the restrictive environment of home. These songs according to Pongweni were sometimes adapted for live performances at the *Pungwe*. According to Pongweni home-grown songs were in the form of

- Harambee songs meaning those that were appealing for unity among the people
- Songs inspired by tribulation
- Songs defying and deriding the colonial system (Pongweni, 1982: Preface).

It is unfortunate that the Shona novelists whose works have been analysed in this study have not creatively borrowed from the songs sung by the home artists. One of the reasons that have been point out in this study is that some of these songs contradicted and contested certain values that were propagated by the guerrillas. Songs from home artists like Thomas Mapfumo were terse, used elusive imagery that had the potential to question the ideological vision of the struggle. Put in other ways, the study found out that with few exceptions, the songs that are found in the novels more or less conform to the official ZANU songs sung at the *Pungwe*. Furthermore, some of the songs by home artists could also be appropriated by the Rhodesian forces. This is the case with Thomas Mapfumo's song 'Bhutsu Mutandarika' that was used by the Rhodesian forces to mock the guerrillas' clothes that they used as war uniform. This idea that songs could be infiltrated by the Rhodesian forces is further elaborated in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) and *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) in which the Rhodesian forces used popular print media as an ideological space to win the minds of the Africans. Bakhtin had already foreseen the possibility of the carnivalesque being expropriated to further the interests of dominant classes in society when he states that:

The carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. It was hostile to all that was immortalised and completed" (Bakhtin, 1984b:10).

To speak of 'temporary liberation' also ironically suggests that sometimes the theoretical tools of carnival did not aim to completely overthrow the socio-economic and political basis of oppression. The study argued that this toying with power implied in the theory of the carnival is manifested further in concepts of carnivalesque laughter, festive carnival and food, as well as masking.

## **6.7 Critical discussion on conclusions to findings of the study**

A very fascinating finding is that the selected Shona novels' depiction of *Pungwe* possesses a festive spirit which laughingly grips both facets of human existence during Chimurenga War. Since laughter is one of the prime components of carnival relativity, it is for these novelists the distinguishing symbol of the human species. The building up of morale at a *Pungwe*, led to laughter which accounts for the festive merriment clearly manifested in allusions to



Chimurenga war songs' popular celebrations. These novelists evince a unique affection for the guerrilla warfare, depicting their martial and military valour spurred from the *Pungwe*. Good literature is linked to or reflects the politics of the day. From the findings of the study literature mediates between the real world and the imaginary one. This study commented on the nature of the mediation by making use of Bakhtinian theory of the carnivalesque. The carnivalesque elements of *Pungwe* manifested from the analysis of the selected body of Shona novels and songs confirmed what Bakhtin and Medvedev found in their book, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship. A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics* which is that:

Literature is one of the independent parts of the surrounding ideological reality, occupying a special place in it in the form of definite, organized philological works which have their own specific structures. The literary structure, like every ideological structure, refracts the generating socioeconomic reality, and does so in its own way. But, at the same time, in its — content, literature reflects and refracts the reflections and refractions of other ideological spheres (ethics, epistemology, political doctrines, religion, etc.). That is, in its — content literature reflects the whole of the ideological horizon of which it is itself a part (Bakhtin and Medvedev, 1991:16).

Together with ethics, religion, philosophy and politics, *Pungwe* in the novels and expressed through songs organised the ideological system of the freedom fighters. The Shona literature in this study reflects socio-political and economic Zimbabwean reality and the *Pungwe*'s collective ideological view of society.

In fact, any literature is political writing, and it can be viewed as a result of certain postulations dominant in Zimbabwean socio-politics where a certain class of people try to exercise its supremacy over other groups. The racist white Rhodesian minority looked down upon the generality of the Zimbabwean black people. Makari (1985), through Sabhuku Mberikwazvo, articulates the black person's oppression when he says:

*Ko, kuchazove riniko kuti mutema agarike? Mutema akasikirwa kutambura chete here? Heya takasikirwa kuva varanda vavachena? Ko, iye Musiki akaitirei zvakadaro? ...nokuti dzimwe nyika dzavatema dzava kuzvitonga. Ko, dzakandoucherepi muti wacho tigondoutsvakawo? Tingagarike sei isu tichitongwa norumwe rudzi? Nyika yedu inoerera mukaka nouchi asi hapana chouwiri kwatiri (Makari,1985: 6).*

(When will it be that a black person would be in control of this country? Was a black person created to suffer? So, were we born to be whitemen's servants? Why did God allow that to happen? But why are some African countries independent? Where can we find that medicine so that we can go and fetch it. How can we have peace when

someone is in charge of our destiny? Our country is endowed with all that we want, milk and honey flows but nothing is enjoyed by any one of us).

In further support of this argument, their book, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, Bakhtin and Medvedev (1991:17) declare that the subject matter of literature replicates ideological affirmations. They put it that:

Everything takes place in a world of ideological quantities and values. The ideological environment is the only atmosphere in which life can be the subject of literary representation. [...] Whatever plot or motif we choose; we always reveal the purely ideological values which shape its structure.

Another finding is that the Maoist philosophy enshrined in the fish and water metaphor renders *Pungwe* to reflect certain ideological assertions whose Chimurenga War values “shape its structure”. The selected body of Shona novels, being a complex cluster of Shona languages and signs, manifested as sites extremely fecund Chimurenga war’s narratives that enshrined the values represented at the *Pungwe* whether inside out outside the Shona novel or songs. The study explored how the novels encode and decode the war tensions, political complexities and the ideological nuances within the African cultures. The Chimurenga war’s complex articulations make this literature a significant “contact zone” where “transculturation” at *Pungwe* occurs in all its diverse forms. It is clearly evident therefore, that literature further appropriates, inverts and challenges dominant means of representation and colonial ideologies (Loomba, 1998:70-1).

The Shona novels under scrutiny are an amalgam of fiction written against a backdrop of the ended Chimurenga War. It had been clear that these novels’ major thrust is the enactment of human theatre which reinforces the justification of *Pungwe* meetings during this war. This creates and reflects new ways of perceiving the Chimurenga war and provides new modes of articulation though Bakhtin’s formulation of carnival. This current research is a departure from the Westernised intellectuals’ pessimistic portrayal of the African when Appiah (1996: 69) shares this condition of pessimism:

Despite the overwhelming reality of economic decline; despite unimaginable poverty; despite wars; malnutrition, diseases and political instability.... popular literatures, oral narrative and poetry, dance, drama, music and visual art all thrive. The contemporary cultural production of many African societies, and the many traditions whose

evidence so vigorously remain, is an antidote to the dark version of the post-colonial novelist.

It would sound contradictory if art and culture “thrive” in the midst of poverty and disease. In actual fact, art and culture are supposed to be the driving force and energy that negotiate ways in fighting Africa’s crisis. Another crucial finding is that *Pungwe* continues in its desirous quest to articulate, in the post-independence era, the view point of the oppressed Zimbabweans through song and dance.

These research findings are an attempt, in the words of Chakrabarty (1992:3), to “once again return the gaze” in the writing of third world literature and histories instead of having huge dependence and borrowing from Europe. Chimurenga war songs were more than entertainment; they generated mediation and restored socio-political order. They fostered socio-political values by encouraging *Pungwe* as a carnival site to operate on the basis of inclusion and asserted cultural norms that demonstrated linguistic identity.

Pongweni, in *Songs That Won The Liberation War* (1982) collected, compiled and discusses the revolutionary songs as “... the barometer of the mood of our people: in times of tribulation it is exhortatory, defiant, supplicatory and educative; in victory, celebratory and imbued with caution and vigilance” that played a central role in the successful execution of the Chimurenga war in Zimbabwe (Pongweni, 1982:1). He discusses the black psyche’s meanings, messages, thematic concerns and purposes of the various songs sung by both fighters for freedom and the masses. The popular songs like *Seiko Musina Morari* (Moyo, 1985: 135) (Why do you not have morale) is a fulfilment of the Bakhtinian thematisation of humor and the comic imbedded within the songs, which has made him popular in postmodern critical discourse. It is for this reason that this Bakhtinian theory’s prominence whose “appropriations” and “recuperations” assisted the researcher to understand representations of Chimurenga thereby bringing out the complexity of *Pungwe* through literary innovation. The ability of songs to challenge attitudes of the Rhodesian authorities is a carnivalesque experience. Pongweni discusses the open political content of the songs including those of celebration that welcomed the resounding victory of Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic front) in the historic election of 1980. The Chimurenga songs sung at *Pungwe* are part and parcel of:

The music of the troubled period [which] reflects these tensions ... both self congratulatory on the part of those party supporters whose sacrifices had been

rewarded, and ecstatic, oozing gratitude to the guardian spirits of the nation who had guided the people and their leaders through the most trying moments in our history and that of our supports throughout the world (Pongweni, *ibid*: 151).

Pongweni observes that songs like *Vaparidzi vawanda* and *VaMugabe votonga* by the Green Arrows are an exhibition of a set of binaries where two contrasting images of pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe. In *Vaparidzi vawanda*, one is warned to tread on politics with caution because of the colonial conditions that were obtained then. This was the time of Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) Ndonga, of Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), of Zimbabwe People' Army (ZIPRA), Front for Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) by Shamuyarira and Chikerema. Each of these fighters was claiming to be the most authentic representative of the people. The masses got confused and ideologically many were misled by one or the other party hence Jordan Chataika sung "*Vaparidzi vawanda, hatichaziva wekutevera, baba tadzungaira*" a song that was warning politicians that they were sowing seeds of disunity among people. *VaMugabe votonga* becomes an affirmation of the celebratory mood of the black majority rule. Pongweni (1982) discusses these war songs as folk poetry whose language is not only communicative but also full of hope and optimism.

The selected literature critically reviewed in this study is taken as testament to the fact that over and above "individual cultures we all belong to the human culture of mankind" (*ibid*: 207). The theatricality of the Chimurenga War *Pungwe* was different from the features of Aristotle's European drama. African theatre should use indigenous conventions to judge it according to African cultural context. Sirayi (1999:62) advocates a plausible position when he says:

To judge indigenous African theatre on the basis of European cultural heritage is like taking a fish out of water and putting it in the sunlight. As the fish dies, when it is put in the sunlight, so indigenous African theatre cannot survive when judged by European criteria.

Indigenous African spirit of communalism is well encapsulated in African theatre as a communal performing art. At *Pungwe*, the Zimbabwean masses as part of an active audience would interrupt freedom fighters as actors in mid-performance. The *Pungwe* was a two-way communication between Zimbabwean masses as inhabitants of the community and the cadres. The Nigerian playwright, Soyinka, in Nkosi (1983:118), puts it that:

African theatre is sophisticated in idiom. Our forms of theatre are quite different from literary drama. We use spontaneous dialogue, folk music, simple stories, and relevant

dances to express what we mean. Our theatre was stylized forms as its basic accepted disciplines.

Brechtian theatre is reminiscent of the African method of theatricality. From the foregoing discussion, an interesting and thought provocative finding is that African theatre's remarkable resourcefulness as a very powerful tool for influencing attitudes, social change and robustness is evidence of how sacred African oral traditions are. Since this theatre is communal, any member of the community could be accommodated. This is why it was easier for the fighters for freedom and the Zimbabwean masses to quickly blend. At the communal theatre there is poetic license in order to realise poetic justice. People insult, praise, mock, reprimand opponents verbally and inform public (bembera) opinions, all in order to defeat points of view. That is the spirit of carnival and by extension of *Pungwe*.

Fighters for freedom and the masses engaged in verbal duels, throwing brick bats to opposition/enemy. As a performed art, *Pungwe* theatre presented and continued to exude the picture of a situation more clearly than prose fiction and poetry, and by the same token it provokes people more sensitively. The point that *Pungwe* functioned as popular theatre, far removed from being mere visual aid to the role of a popular movement called Chimurenga, is further buttressed by Sjogren (cited in Chesiana, 1987:2) when he argues:

[theatre] is the most direct of all artistic forms. It confronts living beings with other living beings and in this immediate correspondence between its practitioners and its recipients lies the theatre's superiority over all other forms.

In the whole of Africa, theatre occupies a very special place by ensuring cultural continuity and socio-psychological stability in Zimbabwe. During Chimurenga War *Pungwe* became the broader process of bringing socio-political and economic change consciousness. Unlike the novel which is a foreign literary genre, drama has been an indigenous art in African context. In fact, it can be seen and heard therefore one does not need to be literate to appreciate it. *Pungwe* is a fusion of both oral and literary, where the orality of the chosen works draws extensively from the African indigenous verbal art forms. There is nothing written that has ever looked at *Pungwe* as popular culture which harness several genres at once. It is this multi-medial nature of this art that is the main focus of the study.

The Zimbabwean masses and fighters for freedom easily participated as actors employing their own folk cultural expression. Participating in their own idiom enabled people to derive their strength from the revitalisation of their cultural base. Epskamp and Boeren (1992:28-9) rightly noted that: “Folk culture as an agent of development includes a relatively unexplored range of avenues: indigenous institutions, socio-economic organization, legal-political system, religious values, patterns of leadership and consensus, informal learning systems, local technologies and artisans, channels of communication and popular forms of art, music, drama.” *Pungwe* employed these folk media as this shall be dealt with in later chapters. The representation of Africa as passive and a homogeneous continent of one backward “race” that had slept until it had been awoken by colonial impact is complicated (Hutchison, 1999:30) on this image of the Africans. Muhwati’s (2006: 2) sentiments are that:

The African image in quite a number of, literary creations in Zimbabwe literature is palpably bedridden in intensive care. This image finds revelation in the titles themselves. The physical wreckage and spiritual paralysis that is by definition an expression of this image, leads to an agonizing realisation that, in life’s vicissitudes, and life’s race of race survival, African people remain undeveloped and fledgling stutters. The images of characters in these novels whose titles are vapid project Africans as victims of collective inertia, wallowing in cultural and historical amnesia and disintegrating in irretrievable mentacide. As a result, in terms of agency and mobility, the African race remains glued on the starting line, quite overwhelming by the seemingly insurmountable hurdles in the race of life.

Whereas the passage describes “African image” the complexity of *Pungwe* was that there were ‘African images.’ Though united by desire to overthrow a common enemy among guerrillas, there were divisions on ideological level.

Alexander (2000) has supporters in her researches who argue that ZANU cadres, in some cases, used force but it could not guarantee acceptance by Zimbabwean masses. Also, before revising his original stance, Moore had initially suggested that ZANU leaders had the monopoly of violence since the war’s inception. After another assessment, that corrects this position states that in the liberation struggle and after, ZANU did not succeed “in imposing its hegemony on the people” (Vambe, 2009:90). There were images of violated people but also of triumph images of unity but also of beating sell outs (*vatengesi*). The term became a technical one suited for the liberation struggle. The war would take on a religious tone with significant associations with the spirit mediums rallying behind cadres at *Pungwe*. The meaning of the term *African* would then have taken no resonance of this passivity and of the

implicit meaning determined by the Eurocentric colonialist mindset. Set against this enervating discourse, *Pungwe* signals the consummation of communitarian values and the dedication of the black post-colonialist discourse to rediscover what remains of a neglected, and in the main unrecorded past through the oral history, rites, myths, and legends that were marginalised at best, or totally ignored by historians in colonial times. *Pungwe* boosted the morale supported by the combustion fuels of liberation movements in organising and politically motivating Zimbabweans' ability to create momentum of the degree of resistance to capitalist and imperialist political domination. *Pungwe* took a highly complex view to the crisis of expectation that was marked by an extremely sensitive response to liberation efforts.

### **6.8 Findings on *Pungwe*'s repertoire and social heteroglossia**

*Pungwe* as an instrument of Chimurenga War assisted in mapping out "a tradition of carnival as a liberatory insurrection... the artistic avant-garde group can revolutionary organization... rose to prominence..." (Grindon, 2011:148-9). *Pungwe* was an instrument-cum-methodology for re-arrangement with popular masses which assured spiritual, political and military significance. It was a socio-politically radical incorporation of the everyday colonial experiences fused into art that the Bakhtinian philosophy "theorises joy and desire as the basis of a culturally and politically radical event which they variously term as a 'carnival', 'festival'" (ibid: 148). It was at *Pungwe* that the vision of the carnival was unitary, combining civil society actors and the marginal communities of Zimbabwe where joy and laughter were essential components of carnival's undogmatic suspension of normal social relations;. (ibid: 149). Zimbabwean people lived in the world of carnival where joy and festivity were at the roots of the *Pungwe*. The rituals of the world of laughter at the *Pungwe* in Bakhtinian (1984b:5-6) phrasing:

Were sharply distinct from the serious official ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonies. They offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man and human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom

Both the ordinary people and the freedom fighters' relations "were characterized by the inversion of heirarchical relationships where the low mocked the high, and all dogmas and hierarchies were suspended" (ibid: 149). The *Pungwe* created a separate world which was very different from the official world of the spectacle where "the principal of joy is the basis of a social experience that is unitary, self-contained and separate from the usual world" (ibid:

149). Showing how *Pungwe* were essential and intergral to a Shona people' spirituality as a powerful religious and political force, Presler, (1999:16) rightly puts it that:

A culturally fromed confidence that nocturnal ritual offers spiritual encounter, community solidarity, and liberative empowerment constitutes the formative yet flexible matrix for *pungwe* practice in diverse historical settings. During the war *pungwe* practice prompted freedom fighters to promote Shona Spirit Religion and enabled them to mobilize the rural population for a struggle they otherwise might not have supported so actively.

*Pungwe* is a flexible but formative ritual phenomenon in Shona life. It is a movement of wilderness rights during which the people engage the major spiritual struggles of their lives in order to gain victory. *Pungwe* meetings asserted the Zimbabwean people's "increasingly bold carnivalesque raptures of hegemony to provoke authority to shed its veil of tolerance and reveal its serious, violent and intolerant nature, in turn provoking revolution against it" (Grindon, 2011:152). The choices and political actions which were a consequence of the burden of communication were based on the expediency and ideological manifestations of the liberation war. Taking into consideration the Bakhtinian (1984b:74) thinking of medieval tradition of the carnivalesque, the researcher's bearing on the *Pungwe* notes that 'forms of pure laughter were created parallel to the official forms.' This form of "pleasure became a defiance of the law, and carnival occupied a more provocative status" (Grindon, 2011:152).

## **6.9 Findings on Pungwe's interconnectedness with ontic aspects of communication**

The *Pungwe* participants speak and act in a political theatre that resonates perfectly well with Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. The notion of belonging conveyed in unofficial discourse through established meanings. Bakhtin (1984b: 287) puts it that, "to be means to communicate" and this is only possible after realising that we come to be who we are through others because "we find our being in the language and action of the other" (Cohen, 179).

Political conscientisation at *Pungwe* appropriated Bakhtin's interactive mode through "double voiced speech" or the art of communication "directed toward someone else's speech" (Bakhtin, 1984b: 185). Masses and fighters for freedom assumed political roles whose voices vary from the way they speak and to be able to suit their roles. Comrade Chatambudza in Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) narrated a folktale of a man who owned a donkey



which he kept outside his tent. One chilly cold day, the donkey pleaded with his owner to be allowed in the tent for warmth to which the man agreed.

*Apo dhongi riya rakanga raisa mhuno mutende rakatanga kuchemazve richikumbira kuti ribvumidzwe kuisa makumbo aro maviri apamberi mutendemo....kusvikira muviri waro wese wava mukati metendemo....nekuti dhongi rakanga radziyirwa, harina kuda kuzobvazve mutendemo. Rakabva rabanha murume uya nekumudzvinga mutende make kuti risare iro rodziyirwa roga. Murume uya akazodzokera kutende kuya apakatira zvombo zvakawanda kwazvo zvekurwisa dhongi riya nazvo (Nyawaranda, 1985: 53)*

(As the donkey's nose was allowed in the tent, it started to plead with the owner to be allowed to insert its front hind legs in the tent. The story does not end there; it continued to plead until the whole the whole body was in the tent. The donkey became quite comfortable; it permanently stayed in the tent. It started to fidget, kicking the owner out of the tent and remained very comfortable. Later, the owner came back to the tent armed with an assortment of weaponry to fight the donkey.)

The folktale chronicles the colonial history of Rhodesia as providing raw materials, rich and fertile grounds for the rebellious inversion of the official order which is the primary activity of the grotesque realism in the selected literature. This folktale is used as a narrative weapon for fighting the injustices born of British imperialism. The *Pungwe* mode diverges from ordinary political sermons, to adopt the folkloric world-view as in the carnival tradition. Folktale is used as a catalyst to counteract people's socio-political ills during the liberation struggle. The satirical co-habitation of the donkey and its owner, animal and human, reveals subversion manifested through the sordid metaphors where the donkey represents the Rhodesian settlers imposing themselves on the African owner of their land.

The political narrative of the donkey paints a sticking, self-revealing and absorbing reflection of the innumerable version of overhauling the effect of colonialism. The Zimbabwean masses suffered emotional and psychological distress because of the debilitating effects of socio-political and cultural marginality in Rhodesia. Africans, in sharing problems with humankind is afflicted with a collective political malady where *Pungwe* provided a vehicles of participation, decision-making and collective action. However, at the end of the folktale, the masses are depicted as having succeeded in defeating the 'donkey' which is the euphemism of the white settler government in Rhodesia.

## 6.10 Findings on Mujibhas and Chimbwidos: Generational Gap

This study revealed that Kriger's (1995: 183) portrayal of mujibhas and chimbwidos as ruthless, directionless, opportunists and a misguided lot is not shared by the novelists and songs. This was not confirmed in the Shona novels and the songs as a commonplace practise although in some cases at the live *Pungwe* some youth were involved in unnecessary harrassment of villagers and how guerrillas with the encouragement of some guerrillas. But in the struggle this phenomenon was rare and it only happened after the offender had been given several warnings not to sellout the struggle. Therefore, *Pungwe* was not a space of killing orgies but a carnival square for socio-cultural gathering, political conscientising which contained an aesthetic that was firmly underpinned by an unambiguously political moral fibre. It is through the usefulness of the Bakhtinian epistemology that closely connects the Shona novels and songs to carnival, authority and laughter. Of the carnivalesque theory Bakhtin (1984b:152) says:

Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated, and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants *live* in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect; that is, they live a carnivalistic life. Because carnivalistic life is life drawn out of its usual rut, it is to some extent 'life turned inside out,' 'the reverse side of the world'.

Kriger's (1995:183) critique of the liberation struggle excludes a carnivalesque amusement when she says:

Mujibas would use personal hatred to identify sell-outs. Many people who were innocent were killed by mujibas. Mujibas would condemn sell-outs before the comrades. Comrades might trust their version and kill innocent people. Mujibas themselves killed people. Many Mujibas were killed by comrades for killing innocent people.

Kriger's (1995) analysis emphasises the negative aspect of the liberation struggle. However, Kriger's onesided voice is modified by critics such as Pfukwa (2009) and Makanda (2013) whose narratives at the *Pungwe* are balanced. The latter two critics acknowledge that some unsavoury things could happen at the *Pungwe* but their main arguments converge on the important point demonstrated in this study which is that the *Pungwe* was the enduring institution through which the relationship of the guerrillas and that masses as that between water and fish is realised as natural.

## 6.11 Findings on Spirituality during Chimurenga War

At the *Pungwe* the element of spirituality informed and guided the conduct of the guerrillas and the masses as they executed their war. African traditional religions Christian narratives were harnessed to the goal of realising the liberation struggle. This forced guerrillas and the masses to sharpen their own theological vision and examining the usefulness of the African traditions. This aspect came out in both the Shona novels and the songs in the *Pungwe* narratives. There is a strong symbiotic relationship among religious beliefs, the political and intrinsically ideological message informing the selected Shona novels. In this regard, there was Christianity in particular which was re-appropriated by the guerrillas and the masses and re-used and deployed at the *Pungwe* to function as a type of conquest and a kind of camouflaged spiritual subjugation and control. On the other hand, Chimurenga War remained highly critical of the Christian religion, just as Marx (cited in Florian, 2010:34) in a related comment, issued his now famous remark on religion:

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. [...] The critique of religion disillusions man so that he will think, act, and fashion his reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his reason, so that he will revolve about himself as his own true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself.

Despite this paradoxical use of Christianity, the fighters for freedom and the masses' motive behind their turn to religiosity assisted them in refashioning their thinking along ways that captured the visions of the struggle. Thus, religion, as carnival agent of change, emphasised a changed order and functioned as a tool of resistance against oppression.

Religious spirituality was subversive and opposed white men's culture even when that opposition was formed from appropriation some of the cultural resources from Christianity. This part of the carnivalesque agents; its capacity to use cultural capital from the officials in order to resist the authorities. *Pungwe* space was a battleground whose carnival action "interrupt[ed] its diachronic progression and turns against itself from time to time, inevitably remind[ing] its participants that their transformative project is not an end in itself and points to enduring, positive values it is meant to generate" (Losambe, 2000: 37). During this war, the rapturous moments involve some conflicting relationships between guerrillas and the masses with mutual understanding arrived at during *Pungwe* time. In short, the relationship between the Shona novel, the *Pungwe* and the songs insisted "dialogic exchange taking place

on several different levels at the same time” (Holquist, 2002:68) especially as it marks a shift from religious consciousness to Chimurenga’s political ideology.

### 6.11.1 Findings on Pungwe’s Cultural Capital

In diagnosing the cultural capital of the *Pungwe*, this chapter argued that *Pungwe* is a form of theatre in a variety of forms and contexts that can make and indeed has made positive political and social interventions in a range of developing cultures across the world. Theatre is a vehicle used in a plethora of ways to engage communities creatively, productively and meaningfully in addressing issues of colonial injustice, white supremacist prejudice, violence, cultural and economic poverty, and political intolerance. As protest theatre in Zimbabwe, *pungwe* appealed to the conscience of the oppressed masses as a mobilising tool that activated them in the resistance movement through supporting freedom fighters. Theatre is a form of communal memory and therein lays the aspect of *Pungwe* in the novels as some form of cultural capital. This cultural capital contained values that could be turned to, dusted and re-fashioned to speak to the new imperatives dictated by the liberation struggle. Macmillan (2004:64) noted a fact which applies to the analysis of *Pungwe* in the Shona novels and songs when he avers that:

...texts for the ‘theatre’ had been a much more eloquent form to discuss cultural identities and differences than the play text. This is because ‘the play’ is perceived to be dependent on character, while the ‘text’ can explore persona or personae in all their strangeness and complexity. Fanon’s insight into the colonized psche, having to intimately know the heart and the mind of the master better than the master knows those things himself, finds its bitter truth in the text of performance... personae literally means that masks through which we speak. For those of us who negotiate the everyday by using many voices, many guises and strategies because we have to, the performance text in the hybrid form can transgress the traditions and conventions of the play and give voice to our experience of the contemporary world-with all its mixed messages.

People could not resist the sheer imaginativeness of the *Pungwe*’s theatricality whose performance text is imbedded in its hybrid form. Theatre artifice gives space to voices made silent especially the *Pungwe* was vocal in the colonial Rhodesia’s hegemonic white patriarchal culture. Theatre traces the ugly and dirty realities of how colonialism immersed the stream of popular and public Zimbabwean consciousness. It helped to negotiate the invisibilities of African people’s politico-cultural experiences. Without the knowledge of the *Pungwe*, psychologically, many Zimbabweans found it an impossibility to transcend the denigration of the Rhodesian administration which instilled a sense of inferiority, alienation

and disenfranchisement. The adaptation of *Pungwe* institution is underpinned by Foucault's idea "that power consists of being able to act, and to act on the action of others; in other words, a social intervention which turns individuals and groups within a specific society from being the objects into being the subjects of their own history" (Foucault cited in Macmillan, 2004: 64).

The other finding was that, at *Pungwe*, typical of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, spectators are invited to challenge the role of the acting protagonist (cadres) and themselves help change the nature of their history by being turned into spectators. Boal (1979: ) says "we tried to show in practice how the theatre can be placed at the service of the oppressed... so that they can express themselves and so that, by using this new language, they can discover new concepts". *Pungwe* created a number of participatory forms of theatre where the communities in Zimbabwe took it upon themselves as community theatre practitioners who identified problematic political and socio-cultural issues to be acted out as a participating group (Boal, 1979).

One of the *Pungwe*'s constitutive features which make them a form of life is this carnivalesque quality of its social movements. It was an "intrinsically, political aspect of mobilization, one that is part of the capacity of popular culture to sustain what Habermas calls the formation of a public will without reducing participants to mechanisms of a fixed principle of unity" (Halley, 1989:163). Of special concern is the diversity of motivations ideas, perspectives and approaches all profoundly subversive of established Rhodesian colonial power that were expressed through the *Pungwe*.

*Pungwe* was a reinforcement tool in search of communal political power base. It became a platform of the real problems of the subjugation of the rights and needs of the marginalised Zimbabweans arose. The *Pungwe* became profoundly stimulating with genuine participation of the masses whose agencies served as a means to fundamental human processes of learning in an open, flexible and participatory manner. The masses were not from the educated elite but "all have to varying extents borrowed from a range of empowerment-oriented discourses: socialism, Freierian development theory, Christianity, schechners ideas on the roles of the arts, black liberation theory ... and so on" (Boon & Plastow, 2004:3).

*Pungwe* was able to tease out for the Zimbabwean people 'ideas of what makes empowering arts function. Its major strengths were its ability to develop mechanisms that were uniquely reflective of and closely tailored to the culture and needs of the Zimbabwean communities.

*Pungwe*'s spiritual energies resided in its capacity to encourage "and in demonstrating that this struggle goes on ..." (Boon & Plastow, 2004:4). The *Pungwe* reflected the use of cultural forms which were and are still rapidly being appropriated in Zimbabwe for use in communities.

*Pungwe* ameliorated dire Zimbabweans' living conditions. This form of empowerment is not only concerned with the amelioration of people oppression but 'with the liberation of the human mind and spirit and with the transformation of participants who see themselves- and are often seen by others- as sub human, operating only at the level of seeking merely to exist, into conscious beings aware of and claiming voices and choices in how their lives will be lived (Boon & Plastow, 2004:7). The central crux of the *Pungwe* is 'that by enabling people to discover and value their own humanity, both individually and in relation to others, they seek to empower those involved to claim the status of creative thinking beings who have agency over the shaping of their lives and those of their families and communities' (Boon & Plastow, 2004:8).

Music and dance were there to boost low confidence of the participants leading to the potential achievement of the *Pungwe*. It increased people's self-confidence. As Fanon, Freire, Boal and Brecht all argue while writing in contexts similar to this ideological weapon, *Pungwe* action was a rehearsal meant to prepare for a revolution. The *Pungwe* and humanity are viewed as always in a process of becoming, which is a dynamic force which is never static.

*Pungwe* was also about revealing the African 'culture which suffered discrimination on grounds of race, religion or ethnicity; about groups suffering extreme deprivation within 'Third World' countries, or about the desire of a whole 'developing' nature or culture to make its voice heard in the face of economic exploitation from outside' (Andrews, 2004:36). However, *Pungwe* changed peasants' attitudes and provided a means of expression previously despised and ignored. It empowered the majority through 'en-voice-ment' of political narratives, songs and celebrations of life-enhancing theoretical skills. This removed tensions and trauma with a sound sense of struggle. The Zimbabwean masses lived under varied circumstances converged to a shared feeling of how to overhaul the economic relationship by which each form of the peasantry was controlled. The *Pungwe* overwhelmingly offered different formulations on how the people's oppression was

constituted and how it could be fought and what liberating system would replace the status quo.

The songs and dance at *Pungwe* provided the enchanting aesthetic variety of the traditional Zimbabwean music. The Zimbabwean cultural strategies equipped the masses to cope with their predicament and the worldview created by their traditional oral culture motivated them in a repudiating colonialism. The pursuit of the sole goal of fighting colonialism ingrained in the masses' common mentality of remedying their situation. The ZANLA cadres rose in military conscription ensured that masses were well educated. *Pungwe* motivated the masses' consciousness as a revolutionary programme and as an energetic and community-spirited activity. *Pungwe* provided the collective memory of the struggling Zimbabweans whose harshness of the colonial administration created solidarity and a psychological substratum that they lived through a particularly gripping story, and have unique experiences to recount, but they also know that published academic history has not recounted it, or analysed it. *Pungwe's* initiatives to recount and to analyse the political situation in Zimbabwe was to be done through the medium of theatre.

The process of formulating versions of people's war experiences and creating mechanisms and ways of presenting it coherently on 'stage' at *Pungwe* forced the whole struggle to be operated at the level of collective. *Pungwe* as community theatre existed more for the benefit of both freedom fighters and the Zimbabwean masses. Since its introduction, *Pungwe* began an unbroken cycle of community theatre through its creative process. Having been conscious of all its motivations, the *Pungwe* phenomena spread to all parts of the country with extraordinary rapidity. *Pungwe* sessions were able to nurture and control social life throughout the liberation struggle and entailed underlying social and political structures whose dramatic contact was much closer to the Shona traditions in every sense.

### **6.11.2 Findings on Psychoanalysis and Performance at *Pungwe***

The therapeutic value of *Pungwe* theatre is so obvious that they hardly need elaboration. *Pungwe* provided entirely different spectacle as they were mounted almost daily. People's trauma and political instability and uncertainties were a great plea for their political predicament in communities to be taken seriously at *Pungwe*. *Pungwe* were quite effective and more memorable. They provided villagers with a platform to perform themselves thereby revealing their artistic talents, personality traits like ability to dance or narrate historical

events to the audiences' satisfaction. *Pungwe* became permanently ingrained, in parts of the Zimbabwean people's lives during the war.

### **6.11.3 Findings on Masculinities at *Pungwe* Performance**

In the African ontology of being, subjectivity has a rationality considering Zimbabwe's colonial history of imperialism. The colonial administration's dominant culture created disempowerment on Africans leading to an identity crisis. Africans were looked down upon as mentally ill patients and also as people on the closest verge of a nervous breakdown. Black masculinity is a real issue. Africans were viewed "as failures who were psychologically fucked up, dangerous, violent sex maniacs whose sanity is informed by their inability to fulfill their phallogentric masculine destiny in a racist context" (Macmillan, 2004: 60). Tapping wisdom from the reservoir of African traditions, *Pungwe* was so empowering by deconstructing collective oppression as a means of getting group solutions. As this chapter unpacks representations of masculinities, *Pungwe* has relevance in identifying possible solutions in the execution of white oppression. *Pungwe* was highly theoretical as a site of contestation between good and evil. At *Pungwe*, there has been a pathologised approach where females have been constructed within "subculture as a substitute for powerlessness" (ibid: 60).

While power is central to any discussion on masculinity, it is central to any discussion on femininity because it is often eroticised through the commonly known wider gendered power relations in society. During *Pungwe* meetings, masculinities are understood as an articulated response to structural inequality, acting out and subverting hegemonic definitions of power and control, rather than an alternative to them. Living in a culture where racist colonisation has designated black men as more body than mind, the present researcher is witness to, and participant in, the black bodily experience as collective memory. (Macmillan, ibid: 60). It is unavoidable to get support from Mbembe's perception of the theatricalisation of sexual politics of power in the post colony leading to theatricalisation of the masculine body showing male authority. When the mind is severed from the body and the soul it leads to the fragmentation of identity in the construction of masculinities.

*Pungwe* provided a conducive environment in the utilisation of the creative tactics in the domain of performance and African morality that enabled these fragmented identities to coaxer. Macmillan (2004:61) gives Schechner's delineation of performance as "behaviour heightened" or "twice behaved behavior" therefore masculinities during *Pungwe* theatre were



“a site of performed cultural discourse around index and symbol, multiple truths and lies... [and an] arena of struggle”. Freedom fighters’ clothes were in dark shades, the colour of vegetation, more of masking, which is an African ritualistic practice adopted as a survival strategy during the colonial era. The hunter in an African setting would put on a duiker skin to conceal his identity and appear like one of the animals. This chapter unpacks the different heterogeneous constructions of masculinities by empowering the subject. *Pungwe* provided strategic mechanisms of resistance, subversion and affirmation, formed by the dialectics of race, gender, sexuality, classes and desire.

## 6.12 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the findings of the study. In seeking to understand the agency of popular songs sung at the *Pungwe*, Shona novels, Pongweni’s compilation of *Songs that won the liberation war* (1982) and unrecorded songs were analysed. In this study, it was found out that *Pungwe* is the political institution that was created by ZANLA forces to foster a close fighting relationship with the masses against colonialism. On the issue of the setting up of the *Pungwe* as depicted in the Shona novel, three Shona works of art namely, *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), *Vavariro* (1990) and *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) analysed. For example it was found out that *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) depicts the relationship between the guerrillas and masses were cordial. It was found out in the study that the relationship between the masses and guerrillas was the most cordial, warm and yet sometimes thorny, complicated, controversial, even uncaring and inconvenient. In *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) the relationship between the guerrillas and the masses is warm as shown in the song “Mhoroi mose mose” that sought to establish political and ideological rapport and strengthen trust between freedom fighters and the masses. It was observed that Bakhtin’s notion of the carnival space allows the ordinary people to mock the values of the official narratives which have outlived their usefulness.

Carnival space asserts life-giving values that are anti-exploitation of the masses. An interesting and thought provocative finding is that African theatre’s remarkable resourcefulness as a very powerful tool for influencing attitudes, social change and robustness is evidence of how sacred African oral traditions are. Since this theatre is communal, any member of the community could be accommodated. This is why it was easier for the fighters for freedom and the Zimbabwean masses to quickly blend. At the communal theatre there is poetic license in order to realise poetic justice. People insult, praise, mock,

diminish opponents verbally, inform public (bempera) opinions, argue in order to defeat points of view. That is the spirit of carnival and by extension of *Pungwe*. Political conscientisation at *Pungwe* appropriated Bakhtin's interactive mode through "double voiced speech" or the art of communication "directed toward someone else's speech" (Bakhtin, 1984b: 185).

Masses and fighters for freedom assumed political roles whose voices vary from the way they speak and to be able to suit their roles. Thus, religion, as carnival agent of change, emphasised a changed order and functioned as a tool of resistance against oppression. Religious spirituality was subversive and opposed white man's culture even when that opposition was formed from appropriation some of the cultural resources from Christianity. This part of the carnivalesque agents; its capacity to use cultural capital from the officials in order to resist the authorities.

Therefore, *Pungwe* was not a space of killing orgies but a carnival square for socio-cultural gathering, political conscientising which contained an aesthetic that was firmly underpinned by an unambiguously political moral fibre. The cultural capital of *Pungwe* is that it became a vehicle used in a plethora of ways to engage communities creatively, productively and meaningfully in addressing issues of colonial injustice, white supremacist prejudice, violence, cultural and economic poverty, and political intolerance. *Pungwe*, as protest theatre in Zimbabwe, appealed to the conscience of the oppressed masses as a mobilising tool that activated them in the resistance movement through supporting freedom fighters. *Pungwe* were quite effective and more memorable. They provided villagers with a platform to perform themselves thereby revealing their artistic talents, personality traits like ability to dance or narrate historical events to the audiences' satisfaction. During *Pungwe* meetings, masculinities are understood as an articulated response to structural inequality, acting out and subverting hegemonic definitions of power and control, rather than an alternative to them.

The findings of this study show that there are variations in the ways in which the *Pungwe* is depicted in the Shona novels and in some songs extracted from *Songs that won the Liberation war* (1982). However, the study argued that these narrative differences are more in detail than in ideology as most novels revealed that the *Pungwe* was a liminal space where new and positive identities were created and elaborated. It is also true that some endings of novels such as *Vavairo* (1990) reveal despair by the masses over the promises that were made by the guerrillas at the *Pungwe* during the struggle. But these ideological differences between

the masses and guerrillas that manifest after the war do not undercut the significance of the *Pungwe* as a physical, spatial and ideological epi-centre of the positive values that sustained the liberation struggle until independence of Zimbabwe in 1980. Chapter seven is the conclusion of the study and it recalls the questions of the study, underlining how they have been responded to, as well as providing recommendations for future study in the relationship between the Shona novel, song, and *Pungwe* in Zimbabwe.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to offer a conclusion to this study. To do so the study's questions are recalled in order to reveal the thematic focus of this research and how the issue of *Pungwe* in the Shona novel as carnivalesque space has been argued. This chapter also highlights the contribution of this study to the development of critical scholarship on the Shona novel in Zimbabwe. The chapter suggests recommendations pointing to possible future directions in the study of the Shona novel, carnivalesque theory and the *Pungwe* institution.

#### Questions of the Study re-visited

Below are the questions that informed the study and to which critical answers were explored in the form of the thesis.

##### 7.1.1 Question I: How did the Shona authors and singers use *Pungwe*?

Chapter Five analysed the Shona novels, songs and a collection of short stories. The study established that Shona novelists did not slavishly use *Pungwe* in their novels. What emerged were tendencies in the use of *Pungwe*. Authors used showed that the *Pungwe* was a carnival space where new identities were forged. The novels revealed that at the *Pungwe* guerrillas used this space to mobilise political support from the masses. All the novels revealed that the *Pungwe* was also a context of conscientising the masses. Some novels glorified the *Pungwe* while others took a measured view that also showed that some violations of the rights of the ordinary people happened at the *Pungwe*. This point was modified in the songs compiled by Pongweni, in which it is shown that the guerrillas and the masses developed an effective code of conduct that influenced how the masses and the guerrillas related to each other in the struggle.

Therefore in terms of how the Shona novelists and the written songs and unwritten songs analysed in the study depict the *Pungwe*, there is convergence that the *Pungwe* was an

extended classroom for the masses. In the novels as in the songs the philosophy guiding the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army's (ZANLA) war in which the masses were viewed as the 'water' with the guerrillas being the 'fish' was confirmed as a natural relationship of harmony between the masses and the guerrillas. This view which came out of the novels and the songs modified the extreme view from some critics such as Krieger who point out that the *Pungwe* place was a space of enacting violence on the masses. On the other hand, and to the credit of the Shona novelists, they also modified the romantic and idealised view of the *Pungwe* as the place where there were no conflicts between the guerrillas and amongst the masses. In short, the question relating to how the *Pungwe* was imaged in the novels and the songs was answered in the positive and balanced.

### **7.1.2 Question 2: Have the Shona authors created credible and complicated narratives of the *Pungwe*?**

As alluded in the response to question one, the credibility of the Shona novelists was revealed in the different ways in which the *Pungwe* was represented. For example *Vavariro* (1990) refused from the beginning of its narrative to project the relationship of the guerrillas and the masses as being cordial at all times. This is a credible narrative stance because in the actual struggle and at the actual live *Pungwe*, guerrillas largely shared similar views to those of the masses, but sometimes guerrillas were sometimes viewed by the masses with suspicion. In fact, contradistinction any pretence that the masses and the guerrillas all agreed on all points at the *Pungwe* is subverted at the end of the novel where there is disagreement between the former guerrillas who are now rich and the masses that are poor regarding the distribution wealth in the new nation. Other instance of how credible the narratives of the *Pungwe* were is provided in *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1985), and *Nguo Dzoswa* (1985) in which female freedom fighters address the masses at the *Pungwe*.

This narrative is credible and also contests critics such as Simbanegavi-Nhongo who argues that women were marginalised at all times in the ZANLA war of liberation. The narratives in the Shona novels have also been complicated by unrecorded songs in which it is clear that sometimes the masses were unfairly at the receiving end of the force sometimes unleashed by the guerrillas. This narrative is both credible and complicated in that it denies that the experience of the masses at the *Pungwe* were homogeneous, an imaged projected in some novels and supported by some uncritical scholars. Songs such as "Kugarira Nyika Yavo"

from *Songs that Won the liberation War* (1982), showed that the enemy of the masses and the ZANLA guerrillas were also some black Africans led by Muzorewa, Chirau and Sithole, who in the context of the struggle compromised their ideological stances by working with the Rhodesian forces. This point is credible and complicates the view the monolithic view that came out of the novels which is that the Rhodesian forces were the only enemy of the masses and the guerrillas.

Unrecorded songs such as “*Pamusoroi Komuredhi*” “*Uende kwaNyashanu*” and “*Chenjera, Chenjera*” also complicate the image of *Pungwe* provided in the novels by showing the harsh treatment of the masses by the very guerrillas who claimed to be fighting for the independence of the masses. In short, the narratives are credible and complicated which reveals the spirit of carnival as theorised by Bakhtin which the world of the officials is parodied, mocked and laughed at by the world of the masses. Minogue and Palmer (2002) support the contradictory nature of carnival when they argue that the narratives reveal carnival festivities as nonofficial, extra-ecclesiastical, and extra-political in which what is emphasised and represented is an underworld, an alternative characterised by repression and a quest for freedom.

### **7.1.3 Question 3: Why are there differences and similarities in the narrative and ideological depiction of Pungwe in the novels?**

The Zimbabwean liberation struggle moulded a heteroglot world in which there were conflicting narratives. It stands to reason that authors and singers, by virtue of the fact that they come from different backgrounds would necessarily create narratives of the war and *Pungwe* in which there are similarities and differences. Bakhtin, on whose theory of the carnivalesque that this study is based on, says that it is contradiction that marks carnival as a space of new values. These conflicting values are realised in the styles, themes and ideological visions of the authors and the singers. In his own words Bakhtin believes that the carnivalesque is:

a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words value judgements and accents, [that] weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group and all of this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a space in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expressions and influence its entire stylistic profile” (Bakhtin, 1981:276).

The *Pungwe* setting, the participants (masses and the freedom fighters), and their interactions at *Pungwe* manifest carnivalesque elements in a socio-political milieu. The Shona novels represent a more permanent image of the carnivalesque. Chimurenga war rituals reflected positively on African popular culture which provides the means for a conceptual landscape that indicates the moment and situation governed by time and space of a dialogue whose verbal exchanges were never neutral. The *Pungwe* landscape becomes not only “graphically visible” in space but it is also “narratively visible” in time through dialogue in Shona novels (Folch-Serra, 1990:225).

#### **7.1.4 Question 4: What are the consequences of interpreting *Pungwe* outside of its live war contexts and what are the implications to the theory of the Shona novel?**

It was found out in the study that the classical division between high art (written) and low art (orality) is a fallacy. The fact that *Pungwe* can exist inside the written narrative means that there is a dialectical relationship between the two. In fact, the presence of *Pungwe* in the novel introduced semantic plurality so that the novels could be interpreted in different ways. However, it was also observed that in the struggle for liberation in Zimbabwe, the *Pungwe* was performed; it was a form of lived theatre. This observation is important because theatre survives on the basis of para or extra-linguistic features. These features can be verbal, aural and auditory. These aspects are unfortunately subordinated to the written text whose existence is realised between two covers. In short the implication of inserting and depicting *Pungwe* in the Shona novels is paradoxical; on one hand, it ensures that the *Pungwe* is read about at any time and interpreted in different ways. On the other hand, the performative aspects of *Pungwe* in its lived context are compromised. The implications to their sing the Shona novel is that the African worldview contained in orature of the *Pungwe* has to be considered. It also means that there is no single theory of literature that can explain adequately, the complexity of the Shona novel. One needs Western based theories such as the carnivalesque as well as African based theories embodied in African orature whose manifestation in the Shona novel is the *Pungwe* institution.

## **7.2 Conclusion and findings of the study**

This study has undertaken an analysis of the following Shona novels *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), *Vavriro* (1990), *Chakwasha* (1991), *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984), *Masango Mavi* (1998) and *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) using a theoretical framework based on Bakhtin's

interpretative method of the literary carnivalesque. The theory has been used to explain the presence of *Pungwe* within the Shona novel. It was observed that as part of orature the *Pungwe* assumed new life within the novel. It was also shown that the live *Pungwe* was modified within the novels as its elements of performance were transfixed. As a result the novel gave *Pungwe* a permanent and written identity within the novel.

On the other hand, *Pungwe* was deployed to satisfy different functions within the novel. The *Pungwe* was a platform for political mobilisation, for conscientising the masses explaining the causes and courses of the war. The *Pungwe* was also a place where the code of conduct governing the guerrillas and the masses elaborated. This came out in the song, “*Nzira Dzemasoja Dzekuzvibata nadzo*”. The moral code justifying the war and also functioning as the disciplinary code of the guerrillas made it possible for the study to argue that the *Pungwe* was not a place where guerrillas committed violence on the masses. Admittedly, some guerrillas and the masses were punished at the *Pungwe* as a deterrent measure to misconduct that would have jeopardised the war, the masses and the guerrillas themselves.

However, by and large the study established the presence of the *Pungwe* in the novel extended the narrative possibilities of the Shona novel. As a performance genre, the existence of the *Pungwe* in the novel also denied genres of classical realism the authority that is normally associated with them which is that of being the only authentic modes of source of representing reality. Slogans, songs, speeches at the *Pungwe* render the Shona novels unstable. As Irele comments in a different context, cultural narratives such as the *Pungwe* are always “...open and mobile...perpetually recreated, modified as the occasion demands, and given new accents from one instance of its realization to one another” (Irele in Vambe 2012: 58). Vambe (2012) adds that the presence of *Pungwe* and its oral genres of the song in the Shona novel ensured no single meaning of the novel is guaranteed.

Thus, the essence of the carnivalesque theory was revealed as the destabilising effect of *Pungwe* so that whether or not Shona authors had wished to project a single and uncomplicated meaning of war, this was subverted by the figures of *Pungwe*. It was concluded in the study that when *Pungwe* enters the novel it does not remain the same in all its performed aspects. This point is an important finding of the study because it explains why a single author manifests different uses of *Pungwe*, and why different Shona authors used *Pungwe* to pass on different messages.



The study established that Shona novelists have managed to portray the *Pungwe* institution as composed of war “festivals” which erased the lines of demarcation between “official” and carnival life through the suspension of socio-political hierarchies. This has been clearly explained by Bakhtin (1984b:10) who puts it that, “The official is based on inequality, rank, order, stability, unchanging timelessness, the past, values and norms. In contrast, carnival celebrates liberation from prevailing truths and established order. It marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.” This theoretical framework allowed the study to respond to the questions upon which the study is based.

### **7.3 The study’s contribution to scholarship on the *Pungwe*, songs and the Shona novel**

#### **7.3.1 Contributions of Shona Novel and the *Pungwe***

This study has analysed the relation of the songs and the *Pungwe* institution using the carnivalesque theory. The most outstanding contribution of the study is to have appropriated Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque and then deploy it in the Zimbabwean Chimurenga War songs and Shona novel context. This contribution is outstanding because before this study, no one has explored this dimension. Applying carnivalesque theory to the Shona novel also allowed the researcher to depart from the usual application of nationalist theories on the Shona novel. Embedding the *Pungwe* narratives in the novels ensured that the *Pungwe* has a new existence inside the novel. The novel uses metaphorical narratives and as such the *Pungwe* could be re-interpreted differently by different authors, depending on their ideological standpoints. Furthermore, the existence of the *Pungwe* in the novel confirmed Bakhtin’s view that the novel is the most heteroglot of genres and that this reality encourages semantic instability of the novel. It was also argued that on the downside, some of the performance aspects that characterise live *Pungwe* are fixed on the pages. In fact the use of the carnivalesque as a theoretical lens with which to analyse the Shona novel has denied genres of classical realism to claim uncontested authority in the novel so that the conditions of the semantics of the Shona novel have been argued as constant change in the meanings of the texts. The carnivalesque experience at *Pungwe* provides a liberative function that, to use Mudimbe’s phrasing, “burst the bonds that hold together the diachronic continuity of events and erases that which brings together, in much the same way as conjunction, the coherence of the new memory” (Mudimbe, 1994:136). This finding is also confirmed by Vambe (2004: 6-

7) who argues that when the extra-linguistic features of a live *pungwe* are inserted in the novel, they have the capacity to "...rehearse a coherent communal narrative of identity while also revealing the cracks and crevices of a world torn apart mercilessly into its representations".

### **7.3.2 Contributions of Oral Song and the *Pungwe***

Through the application of the carnivalesque theory it was revealed that the *Pungwe* institution which had hitherto existed in the Shona people's imagination contains oral elements. The analysis of the songs in the novels and those sung at the *Pungwe* revealed dynamic interchange of cultural resources. Song in the novel also destabilised genres of classical realism and in the process rendered the novel amenable to plural interpretations. But on the other hand, the implication of embedding the songs of the *Pungwe* in the Shona novel was also that the *Pungwe's* performative dimensions are compromised. Para-linguistic features of the songs of the *Pungwe*, and their aural vitality have also been subdued in the new text provided by the Shona novel. The other contribution of the study is to have shown that the Shona novelists resorted to the *Pungwe* institution as a way of paying homage to their traditional/oral culture in order to revitalise and bring out new themes in the Shona novel and songs. This means that any study of the Shona novel and Chimurenga songs from now on, cannot afford the luxury not to acknowledge the spiritual energy that the oral identity brings to the Shona novel and the songs.

In terms of the actual analysis of the Shona novels was concerned, the study's contribution is to have highlighted the similarities and differences in the ways in which the *Pungwe* institution was deployed and imaged within the novel. The significant contribution on this point is that the ideological background and positions of the authors influenced how their world-view. The *Pungwe* institution as a cultural template through which to understand the dynamics of Zimbabwe's liberation war also revealed that in order to fully appreciate the orality of the *Pungwe*, one need to analyse the novels alongside the songs written down. It was found out in this study that sometimes the songs were more open when used at the *Pungwe* sessions. In short, although this study limited itself to the analysis of the novels and some songs the written dimensions of the *Pungwe* are critical in the process of re-thinking national identities in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

Thus, the study has also exposed how the Shona novelists depict the *Pungwe* ritual which stands as a trope in a discursive formation which consists of place-based struggles standing as metaphors of contested terrains of identity. This trope has manifested itself through the novelists' deployment of a semiotic field of representations that range from song to dance, folktales, political narrations, electronic and print media's propaganda, contemporary and traditional folk media and other forms of popular culture. This point is quite pertinent since it is already embedded in Bakhtin's account of the novelistic chronotope. Bakhtin (1981) investigates participation frameworks by linking the novelistic world to its interactional text. Bakhtinian thought fits in the chosen novelists when he explores this carnivalesque element by taking into consideration relations between "the world of the author" and "the world of the listeners and readers"; these, he says, "are chronotopic as well" (Bakhtin, 1981: 252). With the concept of the chronotope, Bakhtin formulated this theory which re-established the historical to the structural axis in order to create a bifocal lens for literary and social analysis. The selected songs and novels' analysis is done through the "gates of the chronotope" to "the sphere of meanings" (Bakhtin, *ibid*: 258).

In brief and firstly, *Pungwe* stood by itself as constitutive of political teachings of the ideals of the struggle. Participation of the masses was further supported by Chimurenga war songs which created the communal carnival identity. Freedom fighters and the masses operated in unison and their ideals were elaborated through songs. From an organisational point of view, *Pungwe* offered lived experiences by encouraging the strategising of the aims and objectives of the war. It provided a physical space for the revival of the philosophy of the collective identity that informed the struggle. The freedom fighters were the fish that could not exist out of water represented by the people.

Secondly, when *Pungwe* is represented in the novel, it is now dependant upon the authors' understanding of the *Pungwe*. Some of the authors concentrated on depicting the physical organisation of the *Pungwe* and celebrated it as an affirmation of the values that underpinned the struggle. This view is in contrast to some critics who viewed *Pungwe* with negatively.

Thirdly, some authors attempted to balance the positive and negative understanding of the *Pungwe*. The idea was to refuse to romanticise the *Pungwe* while at the same time also rejecting the idea of giving extraordinary capacity of the *pungwe* to organise the armed

struggle. The main thrust of this study was to critically examine the significance of representing *Pungwe* in the Shona novel. The analysis concluded that the novel mediated the *Pungwe* in ways that shifted and altered some of the meanings that were realised in the actual context of *Pungwe*. *Pungwe* as depicted in the novel becomes a version of the actual lived experience.

Fifthly and lastly, the study suggested the possible development of an open-ended communication model based on the relationship between the *Pungwe* institution and the Shona novel. In this model, it was observed that communication was top-down in so far as guerrillas 'imposed' their views of the armed struggle on the ordinary people. But to the extent that the war was executed in the backyard of the masses, it is also arguable that the masses also influenced the political direction of the armed struggle. In a sense then, the political *Pungwe* became a volatile cultural space where humanistic values were exchanged between the masses and the guerrillas. On the other hand, to the extent that the Shona novel is a recreation of the *Pungwe*, it was also observed that the authors had their own interpretations which did not always agree with the views of the guerrillas and the masses. But, by and large, the Shona novelists used their fiction to expand the creative canvas of literature using the theme of the *Pungwe* in the war of liberation. In short freedom fighters and the masses as both communicators and the recipients both encoded, transmitted, received, decoded and interpreted socio-political messages. This provided a democratic space through which political messages were transmitted to the interpretation of meaning by all the parties involved during the struggle. This model of democracy prevailed at the *Pungwe*.

#### **7.4 Recommendations**

In view of the significance of the interaction between the *Pungwe* and the Shona novel, the study recommends that

- More narratives of *Pungwe* should be included as part of the Zimbabwean schools, colleges and universities' curricula.
- New Afro-centric theories need to be used to interpret the uniqueness and vitality of *Pungwe* in influencing the formal compositions of the Zimbabwean novel.

- A model of communication that is democratic can be developed in the Zimbabwean cultural context in order mobilise people to develop national projects such as *nhimbe* in the era of the land reform.
- New research needs to be carried out to ascertain new forms of *Pungwe* in the Post independence era and these new forms could be used in awareness campaigns in HIV and AIDS programmes.
- At an intellectual level, there is need for further research on how fiction can be used to expand knowledge of the models of *Pungwe* that would then be applied in society to mobilise resources for particular projects.
- The theoretical implications of embedding *Pungwe* in the written form whether this is the Shona novel, short story or poem should be expounded on.

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