

**SYMPTOMS OF POST- CHIMURENGA WAR TRAUMAS :  
EX-COMBATANTS IN POST- INDEPENDENCE  
ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE**

By

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Abstract

*The paper establishes the prevalence of war traumas, related symptoms and prevention; and intervention strategies in all Zimbabwean communities where we have had ex-combatants and the psychologically affected ones. It goes on to explore ways in which culture influences the perception of trauma in an African cultural context. What is conceived as traumatic experience differs from culture to culture. The selected body of Zimbabwean war literature namely: Shimmer Chinodya's **Harvest of Thorns** (1989), Emmanuel Chiwome's **Masango Mavi** (1998), Clemence Chihota & Robert Muponde's **No More Plastic Balls** (2000), College Press's **A Roof to Repair** (2000), Alexander Kanengoni's **Echoing Silences** (1997) and Ignatius Mabasa's **Mapenzi** (1999) sufficiently depicts the psychosocial magnitude of the effects of the Chimurenga War. The evidence presented in this paper from the selected war literature is an attempt to diagnose the impact of Chimurenga war and the psychoneurosis bedevilling Zimbabwe's post-colonial mental environment, especially the ex-combatants. The war itself is given a nuanced investigation because the primary issue is on the most important forms of man-made violence where the magnitude of its effects manifests itself in the post-independence Zimbabwe. Very little research has been done regarding the colossal effects of the Chimurenga war. It is this paper's major contribution to assess the psychosocial consequences of the conflict during this war and to find desirable culturally congruent local therapies to help ex-combatants cope with the illnesses. The present researcher is fully convinced that treating public illness has long been a process of trial and error guided by public attitudes and medical theory. This shapes and affects memories and institutions, rituals and daily practices that are related to present Zimbabwean political culture and hegemony. The researcher is heavily influenced by contemporary post-colonial, literary theories of psychoanalysis and other related theoretical protocols with niches in African war discourse.*

**Introduction**

The chosen body of literature portrays the demobilised ex-combatants suffering from psychosocial problems due to post-traumatic stress disorder. It is quite evident from the novelists' portrayal that there is a very high incidence of this disorder among former Zimbabwean combatants. Up to today, psychological adjustment in Zimbabwe proved impossible.

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This portrayal of the prevalence of trauma is comparable to Ghanaian writers, Ayi Kwei Armah and Ama Ata Aidoo's reactions to the later years of Nkrumah's regime. Ex-combatants have failed to adjust their attitudes and expectations in as much as the government has failed to cater for their needs. The works of art portray the intricacies and dynamics of the different causes, provocations, and manifestations of Zimbabwe's violent conflict, as well as the motivations of the diverse range of protagonists who participated in the war of national liberation. This paper is calling for the most effective types of counselling or other therapies in order to nip the problem in the bud. It traces the conditions in the war that cause a plethora of psychological problems being articulated in the post-independent era by the selected war writers. It goes on to assess manifestations of psychopathology on ex-combatants and how they can be rehabilitated in order to have a meaningful turn-around of the mind-set, which should start with their psyche.

This issue on ex-combatants' mental disorders and "*psychiatry will be found ill-timed and singularly out of place*" (Fanon, 1963:200) considering the fact that Zimbabweans were celebrating their silver jubilee (25 years) after the country's independence in 1980. Soon after independence the Zimbabwean government should not have taken the low profile that it took by defining nation building in terms of marginalizing most of the ex-combatants who were psychologically affected by the war of national liberation. This paper therefore explores, presents and comments upon some visible features of violence within the post-colonial nation building discourse of the post-independence Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, "*the post-colonial state has sponsored a whole complex of elite memorialism*" (Werbner cited in Melber, 2004:10) leaving very pertinent issues that should have sought to heal the psychological traumas that most ex-combatants are trying to overcome. By ignoring this, the Zimbabwe government buried the relevant memory or left its perpetuation to other parts of society which declared outsiders to the official discourse, whereby:

*...the state has itself become the agent of nostalgia, for the sake of nation-building; heritage is state cultural policy, often in an anti-colonial appeal inventing tradition for an authentic past; despite the weighty monumentalism ... or the substantial flow of material and immaterial tribute from the redistributive state to its honoured citizens, the commemoration of the nation is remarkably fragile... Tensions emerge in a variety of ways, sometimes explosively subverting the carefully scripted course of state pomp and ceremony. The state theatrics, so full of impassioned appeals to higher moral bonds in the "undying struggle for national freedom", are risky ...the controversies over remembered identity and post-war trauma heighten as the post colony itself transforms from an early period of triumphalism to a current one of widespread disaffection, subverting the regime's mandate and legitimacy. (Werbner, 1998: 1 & 8) .*

The present post-colonial Zimbabwean context is imbued in a mirror image of traumatic reflections from the historical war of national liberation. The element of violence during

the Chimurenga war is a substantial ingredient to the contamination of the present post-colonial Zimbabwean society. Melber's (2004: 1) remarks are fruitful when he said *"The violent heritage, from a dialectical point of view, shaped mentalities and ideologies of both colonisers and colonised, so aptly characterised by Fanon (1967) and had visible spill over effects into the current socio-cultural and political mentalities"* that exist in the post- independence Zimbabwe today.

The war writers' thematic concern in portraying madness exists meaningfully within the selected body of war literature's discourses. The study of the discourse of madness necessarily has to include the rules, which prescribe certain ways of talking about these topics, and exclude other ways- which govern what is *sayable* or thinkable about insanity at a particular historical context. People have different opinions about the causes of madness. Mental illness does not remain the same in all-historical periods and does not mean the same thing in all cultures. The answers that Jesus' disciples gave when he asked them who he was, are quite synonymous with the different versions of the mental illness that are given by passers-by to the mad ex-combatant. The symptoms of lunacy are being represented in the very different medical language of diagnosis and analysis by the on-lookers who give various interpretations to the mad ex-combatant. The cultural validation of traumatic experiences has demonstrated that what can be widely conceived, as a traumatic event is not always the case in all cultures. The cultural interpretation of the characteristics and nature of traumatizing events are very important factors for correct diagnosis. This is why Chiwome's (1998: 36) interpretation in **Masango Mavi** is quite succinct:

*Fodya yokwaMutoko ndozvainoita, mumwewo ati...ibotsoranetsa...mumwewo mukomana ...akatiwo, aiwa, ingozi dzomuhondo. Vanamujibha vainyanya kuita manyemwe vachiti hondo haina ngozi pavairova vatengesesi. Nhasi tarisa uone.Vanakomuredhi vawaidada navo vakaenda vachikusira mamhepo. Dzokerai kumusha munobika madoro. Mukasadaro muchafa mukasavigwa tikatambura nezvipoko. Pengerai kwamakaroyiwa komuredhi. Mumwewo musikana akadimura nepo achifamba nomumwe mukomana aitura nezvechechi akangodzungudza musoro achiti "Satani zvaanoita navanhu vaMwari! Madhimoni chete aya. Vanhu vorudzi rwangu vanoparara nokusaziva. VaGaratiya zvirema...Akauya kwedu anoswera anaya taadzingira kunguruve madhimoni.*

*(It is caused by dagga (an intoxicating tobacco) from Mutoko, someone said it is the avenging spirit of the dead killed during the war, these mujibhas were quite enthusiastic about the war and thought that killing sell-outs during the Chimurenga War would not cause ngozi. Now look. The freedom fighters who fooled you are nowhere to be seen. Go back home and have rituals performed. If this is not done, you will die and not be buried then you will turn into a spook. You were supposed to stay where you were bewitched. A boy in the company of a girl, passed by discussing church issues. Shaking his head, he said, Satan plays around with God's people. It's demons causing all this.*

*My people perish because of lack of knowledge. We, Galatians are hand-capped. If he comes to our church he will be healed instantly as we chase the demons into pigs).*

This war veteran is viewed as the biblical Legion, powerful and fearful. Buber cited in Appelbaum (1990:171) insists that “*human life is life in dialogue*” and Socrates’ conviction that we find through dialogue the structure of experience both imply “*a communion between the consciousness of the people in the community.*” This existentialist conception of dialectical reasoning and dialogical encounter in Chiwome’s **Masango Mavi** encapsulates the notion of the dialogical or dialectical consciousness in which people can consider as diverse a range of alternatives as is possible in meaningful and creative human intercourse. Dialogical consciousness therefore implies confirmation through opposition. The contradictory views about the causes of the ex-combatant’s madness included questions and challenges that would culminate in some form of reconciliation. Here, dialogical consciousness facilitates a shared understanding of what counts at the real cause of madness, which is the aim of existentialist psychotherapy (Appelbaum, *ibid*:172).

### **Freudian Psychological Theory in Literature**

This paper attempts to “unpack” some of the important philosophical tenets underlying the various formulations of existentialist psychotherapy in Zimbabwean literature. The valuable conceptions of Freudian psychological theory that this researcher will be using is a response to Gouldner’s proposition, cited in Karen Appelbaum’s article titled “Psychotherapy as Dialogue” in Alant (1990:167) that the understanding of any theory requires the grasp of the theory from which it “*painstakingly distinguished itself*” and he goes on to warn that theories which are abstracted from their intellectual or historical ancestry become unauthentic. Most outstanding existentialist psychotherapists owe their credits to Freudian theory. One to remember is Frankel’s argument that “*psychoanalysis is and will always remain the indispensable foundation of any psychological theory and indeed of any future schools.*”(Appelbaum, 1990:167). Psychotherapy will assist ex-combatants to uncover unconscious motivations and repressed desires through techniques such as dream analysis and free association and integrate this material into consciousness. Although the repressed desires may be satisfied in consciousness or be consciously substituted for other more acceptable desires so that the person becomes capable of mature object relations, symptom relief per se is not indicative of cure (Appelbaum, *ibid*: 167).

The thrust of the Freudian account of psychopathology postulates that while representations remain in the unconscious, they present signs or symbols of their existence in consciousness. The ex-combatants’ madness are representations which remain located in the unconscious and they are related primarily to infantile strivings which are indicative of unsatisfied instinctual demands. The ex-combatants in the chosen body of literature who suffer from psychopathology experience psychic imbalances due to their “taking flight” from the unsatisfied desires and demands of the unconscious.

Symptoms of madness in post-independence literature are symbolic representations of these intrapsychic conflicts. The Freudian conception of therapy is the one which will involve the critical task of making ex-combatants' unconscious speak through and be integrated into consciousness.

Closely related to Freud is Foucault's argument that discourse, representation, knowledge and truth are radically historicized, contrasting the rather historical tendency in semiotics. He says things mean something and are *true* only within a specific historical context. Foucault is right when he does not believe that the same phenomena or their interpretation would be found across different historical periods. Post war trauma discourse that has produced a body of Zimbabwean post-independence war literature forms a body of knowledge that should help us on how to cure the malady. It is only within a definite discursive formation that the concept of madness in an African context especially after the war could appear as a meaningful or intelligible construct. For many years hysteria has been traditionally identified as a female malady. The chosen war literature diagnoses hysteria as a genuine ailment rather than a malingerer's excuse. Freud's whole basis for subsequent development of the psychoanalytic method is born out of Charcot's method of hypnosis<sup>2</sup>. The portrayal of ex-combatants in literature is performing or representing with their regalia and unwashed dirty bodies the hysterical symptoms from which they are suffering. Chinodya's (1989: 14) description of ex-combatants is correct:

The people were roughly of his age group and there were some women too. They all looked tough and hardened – their skins were noticeably sunburnt. They wore denim or corduroy or khaki with camouflage caps or cowboy style hats, thick boots, pieces of uniform scattered...A few even had closely scrapped or shaved heads. As the line slowly moved forward the ex-combatants smoke, played draughts or chatted quietly.

The appearance of ex-combatants soon after the war tells us volumes about the effects of life in the bush. There is a sharp contrast between the civilian and the ex-combatants. Chinodya (ibid: 14) adroitly puts it that:

*Across the road, on the other side of the street, chauffeured cars stopped to drop suited gentlemen at the entrance of a hotel.*

Shimmer Chinodya's (1989) depiction of the **haves** (civilians) and the **have-nots** (ex-combatants) is in congruence with Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan writer, who noticed a depressing Africa's post – independence situation and concluded that there were only two tribes in Africa: those who have property (the "haves") and those who do not

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Martin Charcot (1825 to 1893) was appointed physician-in-charge at the *Salpêtrière* hospital for nervous diseases which had been an asylum that aimed to cure its patients through "asylum therapy". The insane were sent to asylums to protect them from exploitation. Charcot's use of hypnosis in the treatment of hysteria impressed many.

(the “have-nots”) in short, the rich and the poor. In **A Grain of Wheat**, Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1967:80) describes the emergence of classes in the following extract:

*But now whom do we see riding in long cars and changing them daily as if motorcars were clothes? It is those who did not take part in the movement, the same who ran to the shelter of schools and universities and administration. At political meetings you hear them: Uhuru, Uhuru, we fought for. Fought where? They are mere uncircumcised boys. They knew suffering as a word.*

This rich versus the poor metaphor derived from Karl Marx, is comparable to the ex-combatant in Emmanuel Chiwome’s *First Street – Harare* in **Masango Mavi** (1998) who also harvests thorns from the war of national liberation. He suffers from psychosocial problems as a result of his exposure to and participation in the liberation struggle. This causes debilitating effects in the post-independent era. Chiwome (1998:35) gives us a vivid description of the appearance of the mad ex-combatant:

*Ichi chirombo chainzvengwa navanhu vomuna First raive rume rakanga  
rakapfeka mamvemve anenge akambenge acheneruswa nezuva nokugarisa  
pamuviri ndokuzosvibiswa neyainge namo yakanga yopenda ganda rerume  
iri. Mamvemve acho anenge aimbove tirekisutu yechisoja.*

*(This mad man whom people were running away from along First Street, was dressed in tattered clothes that had faded because of the sun and overuse. They were very dirty and they looked like a military tracksuit).*

Murders during the war coupled with the post-independent hostilities of the harsh economic environment were to be faced by the ex-combatants. Ex-combatants were generally viewed as potentially violent people more so for a mad ex-combatant there was a double stigmatisation. The author’s voice vividly rekindles this stigma from the general Zimbabwean public. Chiwome (ibid:34) says :

*Vaive mberi kwaro vaifambisa. Vaive nenhano diki vaindonda kana  
kumhanya vachizeza kuti vangabatwa vakaitwa zvinorova. Vairitevera shure  
vaikweva nhanho kuitira kuti varambe vari chindhambwe kubva pariri.  
Vaipesana naro vairipa nzira vachiri kure kunge vari kupesana nembwa ine  
chimbwamupengo.*

*(Those who were in front were walking fast. Those with small strides were seen running for fear of this mad man. Those who were behind were walking lackadaisically so that they maintained the distance between them and the lunatic. Those who walked past him gave him the way from a distance as if he was a rabid dog.)*

It is not only the ex-combatants’ high expectations that were not fully realized but also their families too remained unfulfilled. Appelbaum (1990) cites Gouldner who argues that a “community” in which truths, like the cause of the cadres’ madness, are uncritically accepted and where people’s capacity to negotiate is hindered, is inhuman or alienated. Silence in the post-independence era led to distortions on the way forward. Kanengoni (1997:87) want truth to set war veterans free when he says:

*It all began with silence. We deliberately kept silent about some truths, no matter how small, because some of us felt that we would compromise our power. This was how the lies began because when we came to tell the history of the country and the history of the struggle, our silences distorted the story and made it defective.*

There are so many unspoken truths about deaths that are suspected to be foul plays. This does not give the perpetrators of violence any peace at all. Confessions that are synonymous to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (*TRC*) are very necessary in Zimbabwe. Most people thought their financial woes were going to be over but the opposite is true to the majority of the families. Mokalobe cited in Gear (2005:41) asserts that:

*Society sees us as heroes and just expect too much from us. When they see some of our comrades driving in beautiful cars, they expect the same from us. This is a real frustration to me. To escape this pressure of heroism, I spend most of my time drinking.*

There is a general hostility between ex-combatants and the civilians because while they were fighting, the masses continued with their normal lives. This war literature, according to Cock cited in Gear (2005) points out to the “*Returning Hero Syndrome*” which generates its own stresses from both sides. Muchemwa’s father’s war time friend whose Chimurenga name is Kisko Kid in *A Roof to Repair (2000)* is also equally affected by the war and lived in abject poverty. He always put on

*... faded and torn blue overalls. He wore no shoes and was filthy. His hair had matted and locked. People said he was mad. He was always walking around the local shopping centre, not bothering anyone except to ask for a cigarette. He was content to eat out of the rubbish bin unless someone took pity on him and bought him a bottle of coca-cola and buns. People said that during the war, he would have his food and sleep in a room full of dead people, using some of them as pillows. (College Press, 2000:86-7).*

This chosen body of literature has, as symptoms of trauma, a pre-occupation with political corruption, which is mediated through several images of the consumption of food, eating, bodily decay, lunacy, nightmares and many more. Closely related to these images are metaphors of pollution and possession by evil spirits as a result of the wanton killing during the war. If this ex-combatant “*was content to eat out of the rubbish bin unless someone took pity on him and bought him a bottle of coca-cola and buns,*” it shows the extent to which his madness had gone. On Kisko Kidd’s way to the Heroes Acre for the Heroes Holiday celebrations:

*People looked at his strange clothes and correctly assumed that he was an ex-combatant, but those who were brave enough to ask whether he was going to mourn his dead comrades were surprised to hear him say “**my eyes are dry, and when you see them die, you mourn every day. No, I’m going to remind Him.**” He repeated that now and again throughout the whole journey, and some began to think that he wasn’t, perhaps, quite right in the head. These*

*people went through all sorts of things in the war you know, they said to one another.* (College Press, *ibid*:89).

Psychoanalysis deals with language and how this language can be interpreted in literature. It deals with motives and meanings, which are disguised, in a work of art thereby introducing a significant approach to “*the hermeneutics of suspicion.*” Both Freud and Lacan see metaphor and metonymy as fundamental to the workings of the psyche. For us to be able to comprehend the thematic concerns of this body of literature in contemporary understandings of reading meaning and the relation of literature to culture, our starting point, in terms of Lacan’s sense, is to know that the subject is ex-centric to itself. The ex-combatants as subjects belong to the symbolic order that consists of both the preconscious (the way we organise and categorise and process experience) and the unconscious. In the Freudian thinking, the unconscious, through lunacy in this body of literature is created through repression, then the unconscious is a product of culture. Murder is taboo and what is repressed is also taboo therefore what is taboo is culturally formulated, the forces of suppression are cultural and the way in which and the symbols under which the repression occurs are cultural. So the interpretation of the ex-combatants’ psychic drives is formulated by our culture. Every human has to undergo a repression of the pleasure principle by the reality principle and for the ex-combatants, because of their war experiences; repression becomes excessive and renders them mad. Freud argues that we come to be what we are due to massive repression of the elements that have gone into our making. Freud’s vital conception is that, that which is repressed will “return” in some way. Some ex-combatants’ madness during the war was not all that pronounced but they foresaw the war, in Kanengoni’s phrasing, as “*an insatiable incinerator that would burn them all up, one after the other*” (Kanengoni, *ibid*: 21).

#### **Mental illness in the African context.**

In Africa, those suffering from mental illnesses are called lunatics. The word lunatic, interestingly enough, is derived from the root word *lunar* meaning *moon*. Through astrological reasoning it was believed that insanity was caused by a full moon at time of a baby’s birth or a baby sleeping under the light of a full moon. One more insidious characteristic associated with the moon is insanity or “lune-acy”, where war veterans have failed to accommodate the idiocy of false hope and defiance of death, which is simulated by the apparent inconsistency of life’s hypnotically cyclical day-to-day events in post-independence Zimbabwe. War veterans are confronted with the naked reality of the ultimately inescapable and tragic hopelessness of the human condition. Madness becomes the only apparent alternative available, one may logically extrapolate that one is at all times, either insane or dead. The disillusioned cadres remained in the wake of schizophrenia by falsely considering themselves potential heirs to Zimbabwe’s independence. The moon, in African culture, evokes emotions on multiple psychic levels. When the moon is said to be thin (mwedzi mutete in Shona) madness is at its pick. The life/hope-affirming qualities of lunar concepts are women’s oestrous cycle (kuenda kumwedzi, literary meaning ‘going to the moon’) which is the cyclical regularity and consistency of degree of travel. The moon is also associated with ill-feelings, life’s

transient nature, an illusion calculated to raise people's hopes just high enough to allow them a temporarily unobstructed view of the tragic and inescapably hopeless nature of the human condition like vainly promises in post – independence Zimbabwe.

Some strongly believe that lunatics are possessed by the devil. The African cultural perception of lunacy is determined by the type of relationship that the living people establish with their dead loved ones and how they were disrupted by the war of national liberation, as is the Zimbabwean case. Closely related to this, people have the belief that if they are doing well in life it depends entirely on the good observance and performance of established rites of passage namely birth, marriage, death and ways in which they manage their social, political and economic crises and how they fulfil these vital obligations. Trauma, (*not based on Western biomedicine and Western psychoanalysis which is too narrow and restricted for this discussion and posttraumatic experiences from a cross-cultural dimension*)<sup>3</sup> has been conceived of as an event sometimes of a short and others of a longer duration that is outside the range of usual human experience. Ex-combatants, regardless of their cultural environment are suffering negative psychological consequences because during the war of national liberation, they were confronted with overwhelming experiences that markedly distressed anyone. During the war, the freedom fighters endured a lot of suffering and withstood tortuous experiences as put across by Kanengoni (1997: 4, 5 & 7) in **Echoing Silences** :

*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, ...only to be asked to kill a woman and her crying baby...What ran out first was water, but still they moved on ...[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.*

The above outlined experiences are the real memories of an ex-combatant, Alexander Kanengoni, who is disclosing details of past experiences of Zimbabwean freedom fighters. The cadres' failure to cope with the atrocities they witnessed and perpetrated is clearly outlined. Upon their return home, they felt alienated, forgotten and disoriented by their unfamiliarity with civilian life. These war experiences caused stresses and war

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<sup>3</sup>Summerfield, D. (1995). "Addressing human response to war and atrocity: Major challenges in research and practices and the limitations of Western Psychiatric models." In R. Kleber, C. Figley & B. Gersons (Eds.), **Beyond Trauma: Cultural and Societal Dynamics**. Plenum Press, New York.

traumas so much that integrating them into civilian life is problematic. Trauma and post-traumatic experiences should be viewed from a cross-cultural dimension. The cultural dimension embodies a socialised view of mental health. This leads to isolation of a mentally ill person by the general public. It is important to bear in mind when making an assessment of the psychosocial impact of violence that victims react to extreme trauma in accordance with what it means to them. Kate Hilpern's (2007:12) article "*Beating Schizophrenia*" in *The Mail & Guardian* of 12 – 18 October 2007 has an apt observation when she says, "*In fact, tests have shown that a high proportion of people who have psychotic episodes have experienced trauma*".

It is the interpretation of these meanings that are socially, culturally and often politically framed. Disillusionment and demoralisation have fuelled the ex-combatants' trauma. Critical needs soon after Zimbabwe's independence include psychological counselling and life-skills advice and these were not given soon after independence. Zimbabwe's demobilisation programme failed to adequately address reintegration needs mainly because of lack of sufficient preparation and an absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. There was great need on the part of the ex-combatants to be assisted with reorientation and counselling soon after 1980 when they were placed in assembly points. On the other hand, some ex-combatants claim to be clean. Mrs Tichafa, Benjamin's mother, in a bid to gather more information about what Benjamin might have done while he was a guerrilla, fails to get an answer because Benjamin is not prepared to talk. He says:

*I just walked around with my gun. Nobody fired at me and I didn't fire at anybody. I didn't see corpses and didn't touch any. I'm clean. There are no vengeful spirits after me. You don't have to take me to a n'anga or a priest.*  
(Chinodya, 1989 : 9)

Benjamin's mother had taken a very noble decision in order to integrate her son into society. Most war writers depict the physical injuries and death during the struggle for national liberation. Beyond these physical injuries and death are the profound psychopathological effects on freedom fighters that participated in this war. Alexander Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* gives a more sober, "*realistic and penetrative vision of the war of liberation*" unlike earlier writers' depiction and conceptualisation of the Chimurenga war that is romanticised. (Chatora, 2004 : 27) Chimurenga war was "*a favourable breeding-ground for mental disorders*" (Fanon, 1963:201) where most combatants "*suffered from prolonged insomnia, accompanied by anxiety and suicidal obsessions*" (ibid: 203). The war of national liberation was tortuous, mind boggling and stressful. The chosen writers trace the psycho-trauma and psychopathology through their protagonists during the war and later carried through into the post independence era.

#### *The necessity of killing during the war*

War is all about killing and being killed. It is a question of dog eat dog. Having to kill the Rhodesian forces and sometimes civilians can be a crucial factor in combat reactions.

Almost every one of us has strong moral obligations and convictions against killing or injuring others and for some freedom fighters it was psychologically almost impossible to engage in ruthless killing. Kanengoni's (1997:27) Munashe

*...felt overwhelmed with anger about the killing, the suffering and the desolation, the desperation, the loneliness and the endless pain, he felt angry, angry about the war.*

Munashe was engaged in killing but later experienced intense feelings of guilt and pain together with fear of retaliation and punishment. Some freedom fighters who are now haunted throughout their lives, killed during the war, because they had to. Kanengoni's Munashe is thoroughly beaten as he refuses to kill the woman but he continuously tells "them he had never done such a thing before and the female combatant retorting that no-one had begged him to join the war and the condemned woman watching everything through her swollen eyes, gently rocking the baby crying on her back and waiting patiently for her fate." (Kanengoni, *ibid*:20).

So many things that happened during the war took place out of forced circumstances and beyond one's control, "like so many other things in the war, such as his weird confession that he was an enemy agent and Bazooka's confession that he was a witch..." (*ibid*, 20). These were some of his terrible memories of the war when he was forced to lie in order to escape death. The incident of killing a woman and her baby was the most terrible experience during and after the war. To Munashe "Nightmare and war became interchangeable" (*Ibid*:21). Out of intense pressure from fellow cadres, Munashe was forced to kill.

*The woman fell down with the first vicious blow and the sound of Munashe's jarred and violent cry mingled with that of the dying baby as the hoe fell again and again and again until Munashe was splattered all over with dark brown blood... Then Munashe threw away the blood-smearred hoe and walked away blindly...towards nowhere. (*ibid*:21).*

Aristotle's theory of mind is dependent very much on his theory of matter and form. He suggests that all things have a purpose that ought to be fulfilled. Munashe suffers the pangs of bad conscience after killing the woman together with her baby. As proof that there is something defective about man Aristotle argues that it is the case that man can know what he ought to do but fail to live accordingly. Murder is bad but Munashe killed. Something is seriously wanting in man as proved by John Locke who asserts that man is born without ideas, for he needs ideas to live in the world. The Christians are also contended that there is something dangerous about man since the book of Romans would say "All have sinned and have come short of the glory of God." Kurasha (1991:6) points out that Martin Luther's conception of the mind is characterised by his view of man as inherently in bondage, a captive of selfishness. Munashe was not a free man. His sensory experience of murder makes him stand under the inescapable necessity of sinning during the war. When Munashe

was killing the woman, “*the commander held him back and he refused*” (Kanengoni, 1997:21) as he continuously beat her with a hoe “*again and again and again.*” Page 21. This is a sign that Munashe had already been mentally disturbed. It is clearly evident that man is not forced to sin against his inner will but rather it is Munashe’s will that experiences the inescapability of sin. Paul Althaus cited by Kurasha (1991:94) puts it that “*we do not sin against our will but rather according to our will.*” Munashe was in continual bondage that is why he, like many others, had to resort to mbanje in order to be freed from this captivity. Kanengoni (1997:23) comments about Munashe’s life-supporting sedative herb.

*Mbanje provided him with the chance to escape from the brutal war and its ruthless experiences, to dream, as he wanted, to be where he wanted, and even to stay there, and the others saw it and they worried about him.*

The intoxicating herb failed to bring solace to Munashe’s freedom since the drug had “*reassured him that he could after all survive the routine killings, the unabated savagery and the dying.*” (*Ibid*, 23). In combat situation, during the war of national liberation, with the continual threat of injury or death and repeated narrow escapes, the cadre’s ordinary methods of coping with trauma were relatively useless. The sedative herb could not help him but only offered a delayed traumatic reaction of nervousness, insomnia and other symptoms. He was able to tolerate almost unbelievable stress before it broke after the war. A number of psychological and interpersonal factors contributed to the overall stress load experienced by ex-combatants. This is now predisposing them to break down under the increased burden of combat and after it. With time, increasingly severe feelings of threat and anxiety usually occur as cadres experience tortuous moments such as narrow escapes and when they see fellow comrades being killed or wounded. This diminishes their self-control. Kanengoni’s (1997:25) Munashe “*watched in horror as the poisoned men changed colour whilst they writhed in agony. By the time they died, they had turned green.*” Munashe developed and acquired unrealistic fear or anxieties that severely limit both effective coping behaviours. Over time, during the war, Munashe became habituated to killing and seemed to take pride in it. The way in which he killed one of the captured three commanders is shocking. Kanengoni (1997:28) explains:

*Munashe went berserk. He flicked open the bayonet on the end of his rifle and screaming charged at one of the commanders. The others looked on in disbelief. He lanced the commando through the heart and the South African soldier bellowed, raising his hands in the air. Munashe pulled out the bayonet dripping.*

Contrary to the existentialists who argue that human existence represents choice stands, the Freudian claim that “what we call our ego is essentially passive...we are listed by unknown and uncontrollable forces” and this does not suggest that human beings are absolutely free. (Kruger 1986 cited in Appelbaum, 1990:171). Neurosis according to Appelbaum (*ibid*: 173) represents an attempt by mad ex-combatants to limit their being-in-the-world in order to limit what is perceived to be too wide a range of alternatives. They try to limit their being-in-the-world by occupying themselves with the focused or unfocused “object” of their fear, namely, the Chimurenga war. Appelbaum (1990:173) argues that;

*The neurotic 'I' becomes, in Buber's terms, an ego conscious of itself as being "this way" rather than "that way" and neurotic behaviour becomes understandable as behaviour designed to protect the ego's chosen way of being."*

Schizophrenia, on the other hand, represents a limitless (and structured) being-in-the-world. Schizophrenic ex-combatants tend to renounce the limits of their being-in-the-world so that it becomes limitless. This limitlessness or boundarylessness would make communication difficult. The mind will be inaccessible and makes the "I" inclined to lose its selfhood so that schizophrenic ex-combatants feel selfless and centre less.

This body of literature pays tribute to ex-combatants who have returned home to a barren land scotched by the sun where the fruits of their liberating efforts are elusive. This is quite typical of Freedom Nyamubaya's bride in her poetic recital "A Mysterious Marriage" that shows political disillusionment on how "freedom" and "independence" separated soon after the armed struggle in 1980. The poem goes thus:

*After the war, they went back home.  
Everybody prepared for the wedding.  
Drinks and food abounded,  
Even the disabled felt able.  
The whole village gathered waiting  
Freedom and Independence  
Were more popular than Jesus.*

*Independence came  
But freedom was not there  
An old woman saw Freedom's shadow passing,  
Walking through the crowd, Freedom to the gate.  
All the same, they celebrated for independence.*

*Independence is now a senior bachelor  
Some people still talk about him  
Many others take no notice  
A lot still say it was a fake marriage.  
You can't be a husband without a wife.  
Fruitless and barren Independence staggers to old age,  
Since her shadow, Freedom, hasn't come.*

This above poem, together with the body of war literature under examination, in the words of Kaarsholm (1989:194) is an attempt "at developing a critical contrast between the ideals of the struggle and post-war realities." This literature keeps the central position as an articulation of post-independence social grievances where ex-combatants harvested thorns.

The word “*harvest*” obviously evokes some vivid images of a bumper yield, which presupposed hard labour and Rosemary Moyana says, “*it makes us anticipate a good reward, a lavish feast after the hard work put into the farming stage.*” A thorn on the other hand is negative “*to imagine or even hint at the fact that somebody could actually harvest to wretchedness.*” (Moyana, 1996: 47). Wole Soyinka cited by Moyana (ibid: 52) is more succinct when he says:

*...the reflection of experience is only one of the functions of literature, there is also its extension. And when that experience is social we move into areas of ideological projections, the social vision. It is this latter form of literature that holds the most promise for the strengthening of the bond between experience and medium since it prevents the entrenchment of the habitual, the petrification of the imaginative function by that past or present reality upon which it reflects*

For the present researcher, the post-colonial traumas bedevilling ex-combatants are a reflection of war experiences in the post-independence Zimbabwe. The post-independence situation is that of a “wounded nation” with mad ex-combatants everywhere. The Chimurenga war was tortuous, vicious and could not just end without, in Charles Mungoshi’s diction, “*some kinds of wounds.*” The wounds are becoming fresher with independence characterised by “*dejected and unemployed ex-combatant[s], a torn family and a wounded nation*” (Veit-Wild, 1993:322). As if to say this is not enough, most ex-combatants are haunted by the traumatic war experiences to the extent of being lunatics. In Mabasa’s **Mapenzi**, characters’ madness are manifested in so many ways. More than half of our Parliamentarians are mad. This is clearly exposed when Mabasa (1999: 20) says:

*Handinawo kuzoita nharo. Security yacho yakandisiya ndave kuna Second Street. Kure nenzimbo dzisingadikwi mapenzi asi idzo dzizere mapenzi .*  
*(I was not argumentative. The security guard accompanied me up to Second Street far away from Parliament Building where they do not want mad people to linger around when ironically the house is full of mad people [the ex-combatants]).*

The author, through his character Mr Hamundigone is claiming that mad people inhabit our Parliament. It is these leaders who would want to die clinging on power thereby fulfilling the adage that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Mabasa attacks this betrayal by our top leadership whose “*broader psychological scope exploring the agonies of men and women damaged by the war ... holds a warning for the entire African continent*” (Hunter, 2003 : 4). Mabasa (1999: 23) says :

*Ndinoda kudya kusvikira ndarutsira mundiro. Ndinoda kunyepa kusvikira mese manditi ndinoreva chokwadi. Ko handiti ndiyo freedom yacho... Ndinoda kutonga kusvika pasisina wekudzanga.*  
*(I [our president] want to be well fed until I vomit in the plate where I am eating from. I want to lie to you until you all take it to be truths. Is this not freedom?)*

The tragedy of African leadership is that they want to die in power. This exposes how they have betrayed the generality of the toiling Zimbabwean masses.

### Post-independence traumatic events in war victims

Anyone may break down if the going gets tough and what of one's encounter in a fierce battle? When conditions of overwhelming stress occur as in military combat, mental disorders may develop. Kanengoni's **Effortless Tears** (1993) has a story entitled "*Things We'd Rather Not Talk About*" where a young man was forced by freedom fighters to kill his father with a pick-axe at a Pungwe while the villagers stand by singing "*an ominous song that told of the grim fate that befell sellouts and enemy collaborators*". The writer narrates the story from the perspective of a young man being mentally tortured and tormented years later by the psychotic hallucination of that night. Kanengoni illustrates the perennial reality that the Chimurenga war was not only military and political but it was also a psychological event. War is abhorrent and "*it has provided a research sitting that can perhaps never be duplicated in civilian life: a 'laboratory' in which the effects of severe environmental stressors on the personality integration of thousands of men could readily be evaluated.*" (Coleman, Butcher and Carson, 1980: 171). By writing his short stories, Alexander Kanengoni is undergoing therapy. Most of the ex-combatants in this body of literature are suffering from the general combat situation during Chimurenga war with its physical fatigue; ever present threat of death or mutilation and severe psychological shocks. Kanengoni's (1997:24) Munashe puts it succinctly:

*I am tired of the shit war. I am tired of not knowing what will happen to me tomorrow. I am tired of waiting to die. I am tired of the endless killings. I am tired of everything.*

Songs and dance generated psychical transformations in both the Zimbabwean asses as human actors and in the freedom fighters that were the embodied spirit actors who performed supra-human acts at pungwe as well as in the war itself. The Zimbabwean ex-combatants' traumatic reactions to the experiences of combat have passed through a number of stages such as "operational fatigue" and "war neuroses," before it is finally termed "combat fatigue" or "combat exhaustion" typical of the Korean war and the Vietnamese war.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the Second Chimurenga War, symptoms in combat exhaustion are varied depending on the severity and nature of the traumatic experience and the personality make-up of the individual. In this body of literature, the common symptoms among ex-combatants are dejection, weariness, and hypersensitivity sleep disturbances and tremors. The failure to maintain psychological integration, with increasing irritability, disturbances of sleep and often-recurrent nightmares represent the incipient state of "combat exhaustion" in ex-combatants. Kanengoni (1997:29) puts it that:

*Munashe married a few long years after the war ended and his new wife's first problem was her husband's nightmares: the tearing screams and drenching sweat. The night becomes a window into his life during the war. His dreams are all about killing and dying. The night is the most dreadful time for both of us. It's as if the war had begun*

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<sup>2</sup>The Vietnam War (a military struggle fought in Vietnam from 1945 to 1975) was the longest military conflict in U.S. history. The hostilities in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia claimed the lives of more than 58,000 Americans. Another 304,000 were wounded.

*all over again blood and then thrust it in again and again and again...and the naked body of the dying commando convulsed as it slumped forward."*

Munashe's big mistake was his failure to maintain good group identification in combat troops. His inability to identify himself with or take pride in his group made him lose a highly supportive factor in maintaining stress tolerance.

The war literature's thrust on political decay in the neo-colonial Zimbabwe and its decadent values is reminiscent of an aspect in Fanon's chapter on "***Colonial War and Mental Disorders***" in ***The Wretched of the Earth***. In most cases, trauma manifests itself in these various forms; mental distress, eating disorders, swallowing problems and lack of peaceful sleep. Frantz Fanon links this "*mental anorexia*" to the denial of humanity and the sense of prevailing political and social injustice that is experienced under Zimbabwe's post-colonial rule. One Algerian prisoner was sent to hospital for treatment and Fanon (1963 : 256) writes:

*What we saw in front of us was a thoughtful, depressed man, suffering from a loss of appetite, who kept to his bed. He avoided political discussion and showed a marked lack of interest in everything to do with the national struggle. He avoided listening to any news, which had a bearing on the war of liberation.*

The main problem centred on having "*a marked lack of interest in everything*" led to difficulties in falling asleep and other sleep disturbances. This haunts ex-combatants and is a common accompaniment of fear and sustained emotional arousal. Freud regards dreams as "the royal road to the unconscious" (Brown and Pedder, 1991 : 16 ) For the ex-combatants; dreams are an attempt to master the unpleasant war experiences and how to solve the problems. They are a disguised fulfilment of a repressed wish. What the cadres are undergoing is a wish-fulfilling function of dreams. Dreams are often considered "as the non-discursive mode of communication of the non-dominant cerebral hemisphere" (Ibid : 16)

During war, they went for days without adequate sleep. The recurrent nightmares together with the traumatic material become reactivated during sleep when they desperately need quiet and rest. Chiwome (1998:) graphically shows us that the repeated dreams can be so terrifying that the ex-combatants are even afraid to go to sleep. Chiwome's (1998:39) ex-combatant Muchaparara says to his wife:

*"ukanzwa ndichinetseka muhope, ndinenge ndakatsikirirwa, ndisina kurara zvakana. Unongondizungunusa chete ndobva ndarara nedivi kwaro."*  
 [Chiwome comments] *Chokwadi ndechokuti zvake zvakanga zvisina kuti akarara nedivi ripi. Kana akarara negotsi zvainge zvainyanya, asi hapana divi raakanga awana riri nani kurara naro kubva pakapera hondo. Akatodhakwa ndipo pazvaitonyanyisa. Dzimwe nguva aitombofunga kurara agere kuti zvisauya. (If you see me struggling when fast asleep, I will be in pain and not sleeping properly. Shake me so that I can change side. [Chiwome*

*comments] The truth of the matter is that his problem was not a question of not sleeping properly; sleeping on either side caused hypersensitivity since the end of the war. When drunk, it was worse. He even thought staying awake at night was better in order not to experience the prolonged tortuous, emotional and stressful nights.)*

The solution to his psychosis was not in how he would sleep but authentic and permanent solutions were to be found, as Hilpern (2007:12) says, “[o]utside psychiatry,” and through use of “... techniques ranging from cognitive behavioural therapy to family interventions and self-help methods of controlling their inner voices”. The ex-combatants’ continual relieving of these traumatic battle experiences in dreams gradually serves to discharge their anxiety associated with the war and to desensitise individual ex-combatants to the point where they can assimilate the war experiences. Their hallucinations and subjectivist process of ordering and filling in their life world creates their own idiosyncratic philosophy. Readers strongly feel that the traditional route taken by Munashe’s parents to heal him sounded quite logical. Ironically, Munashe sinks into permanent madness. Kanengoni’s novel tragically ends with disillusionment and death. *Heroes Day*, a short story by Ruzvidzo Mupfudze has Kisko Kid’s confession of his cause of madness given as:

*When I killed my first man, a mere boy like me, and just a scared, I laughed so hard and my comrades thought it was because I enjoyed the sight and taste of blood. Its smell. They changed my name to Comrade Dracula then... The boy’s face is one of the faces that I go to sleep with, even though I know he would have killed me if he had got the chance... Hand to hand combat. I ripped off his Adam’s apple with my teeth. (College Press, 2000: 87)*

The characters’ responses to war trauma vary. It is sometimes less self-destructive, leads to madness, some refuse food, while others commit suicide like Munashe. The promised outcome of African independence was to bring about a just and egalitarian society. Munashe’s suicide during the cleansing ceremony is a reminder to the war veterans of Africa that the war of national liberation has given birth to the present betrayal to the vision of the struggle itself.

## **Conclusion**

The paper delved deep into psychopathology and psycho-trauma’s causes, how they symptomise and possible solutions. It has further attempted to highlight the severity of the post- Chimurenga War symptom manifestation of the war trauma from the selected post-independence Zimbabwean literature. This body of literature has managed to portray the liberation struggle as a complex historical process that created more victims than it did heroes. (Chatora, 2004: 43) The paper clearly delineated the causes of these trauma and suggested solutions through what other characters did. It also influences policy-makers to develop effective strategies to help individual war veterans and their various communities to recover from post war traumatic experiences such as madness, lack of

shelter and food. Mabasa's preface to **Mapenzi** is summative, through a poem by Memory Chirere who says:

*Patinorara, handipo patinoda kurara,  
Zvatinodya, handizvo zvatinoda kudya  
(Where we sleep is not the exact place  
of our choice, what we eat is not the food  
we should be eating)*

The poem pays tribute to the war veterans and the generality of the Zimbabwean people's endurance to the worst collective suffering rooted in the betrayal by the ruling powers and cruelties of post-independence realities. This Zimbabwean literature "nevertheless offers signposts to greater freedom and new possibilities of identity for Zimbabwean women and men" who fought the Chimurenga War (Hunter,2003:4). Curing war trauma becomes a fulfilment of the much sought after vital obligations that the Chimurenga War wanted to achieve. Who will liberate the liberators now that they are entangled in these psychic webs?

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