



MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION

Dissertation Topic

White female experiences of the Zimbabwean liberation war: Patricia Charter's *Crossing the Boundary Fence*, Sylvia Bond Smith's *Ginette*, Partridge's *To Breathe And Wait*.

BY

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts English and Communication Honours Degree.

May 2014

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences of white females in Rhodesia during the liberation war. For this purpose, Patricia Chater's *Crossing the Boundary Fence* (1991), Sylvia Bond Smith's *Ginette* (1980) and Nancy Partridge's *To Breathe and Wait* (1986) have been selected as they fit in well in the context of experiences faced by white women during the liberation war.

The feminist literary approach is used as it examines the experiences of white females in the context of the Zimbabwean history and paying attention to how the liberation war and women influences the understanding of the Zimbabwean history. This study refers to other aspects of literary text that is the feminist theory because all three writers discuss the negative and positive impacts of the liberation war on white women.

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter one consists of the background of the study, literature review, theoretical framework and justification. Chapter two discusses *Crossing the Boundary Fence* because it explores the experiences of the young white females in Rhodesia during the liberation war. Chapter three analyses *Ginette* as it depicts the experiences of white urban females during the war. Chapter Four analyses *To Breathe and Wait* depicts the interface between war and illness as highlighted through the white character in the text. Chapter five consists of the summary of the chapters discussed. The chapter also provide the conclusion of the research.

DEDICATION

My special dedication goes to Tobias Saratiel for the encouragement and working tirelessly in supporting me. Above all, I would like to thank the Almighty God for seeing me through the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a word of thanks to my supervisor Mr C. Tagwirei whose constructive input, guidance, patience and encouragement, has made this task possible.

I am also at a loss of words to sufficiently thank Mrs H. Mapingire, Mrs M. Chimusoro, Mrs R. Kanda, Mr T. Matemavi, Pastor T. Denhere (UFIC Pastor) and my colleagues for their support and encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank my family for always being there for me with their love and support.

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Chapter one: Introduction

Background of study

The brutal colonial history and the prolonged period of white community rule saw the emergence of violence as an established phenomenon of Zimbabwean politics. The First Chimurenga war of 1896 was the first attempt by natives to throw off the colonial rule and this gave rise to a mythology and language of war. In the second Chimurenga of late 1960-1970s combatants used typical guerrilla warfare tactics. The Rhodesian white minority government retaliated and the war took an immense toll on the population.

Baxter (2010) highlights that in April 1980 Zimbabwe won its long struggle for independence against the oppression and exploitation of colonialism and the Rhodesian white settler regime. The liberation war was motivated by the wish to preserve and recover political sovereignty, the necessity for creating the social bond of equality, the political beliefs of human culture and human rights and the fiscal possibilities of progress. The war that the indigenous people of Zimbabwe waged against colonial rule under the government of Ian Smith was an event of enormous dimensions that had far reaching effects for the country and perhaps the rest of the world. The liberation war took place from July 1964 to December 1979. The conflict pitted three forces against one another, the Rhodesian government under Ian Smith, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the wing of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National

Union (ZANU –PF) and Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army of Joshua Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU).

Even though people are familiar with the Zimbabwean history of the Liberation Struggle, the experiences faced by white women during the war are not really publicized. Therefore the research is going to explore the experiences of white women during the liberation war because the existing literature on the experiences of women during the war is mainly centered on black women. White women on the other hand are sidelined in scholarly literature covering this period. Williams (1972:583) argued that many writers who wrote about the Liberation war were biased. He further goes on to say, most of the manuscripts are not balanced as the Shona literature is one-sided. Williams posits that the one-sidedness is a result of a number of factors that shaped writer’s perspectives on the liberation war. He further points out that the writer’s perspectives were shaped by euphoria, mood of celebration, the dominant ideology of the post-independence epoch, as well as the literary competitions that were held by the Literature Bureau. This is a clear indication that these are the conditions that produced Shona literature that was one-sidedly sympathetic to the guerilla movement and its supporters whilst sidelining the experiences faced by the white community especially the white women.

Spearman (1966:144) is of the view that usually romances show no knowledge of and no feeling for historical accuracy. He argued that what it means is that the materials which the writers used are “distorted vestiges of the wishful fantasies” and dreams of Zimbabweans during the war of liberation. Green (1984:235) presented that the material from which romances are crafted by

many writers were an integral part of the liberation war in Zimbabwe and those who wrote fiction about the liberation war had their perspectives on the war shaped by them. These sorts of writers brought into an unbalanced war fiction literature in Zimbabwe. This research argues, therefore, that the story of a liberation struggle cannot be complete without an analysis of the experiences of the white women during the liberation war.

Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to explore white female writers' perspectives on white female experiences during the liberation war in Zimbabwe.

Objectives of the study

The research problem outlined above can be approached through a set of research objectives.

The research hopes to:

- Show different viewpoints aired by white female authors in Zimbabwe in relation to the experiences of white women during the war.
- Explore the portrayal of young white women during the liberation war.
- Depict the literary depiction of urban white women during the liberation war.
- Examine the interface between war and illness as depicted in Zimbabwean female war narratives.

Significance of the study

The study is very important in the sense that it is going to bring new insights to an understanding of the scripts by white female writers and how it hopes to benefit the academia, diplomats, international organizations and institutions through creating an understanding and appreciation of their writings.

There were significance silences about the white female experiences during the liberation war. Pertinent issues were circumvented by many writers about white female experiences pertaining to the colonial history and the liberation war. Post-independence history did not dwell much on the experiences of white Zimbabwean women. Rather it was more inclined towards nationalistic historiography. This study is different because it is going to encompass the experiences faced by white females during the liberation war as well as history of the nationalistic Zimbabwe.

Many researchers have also contributed on the experiences of white males and black females and males during the war. There were more concerns about entertainment rather than something pro-development of Zimbabwe. Staunton (1990:13) argues that, “fiction is important than history. Some truths can only be told through fiction. We can never understand wars, conflicts and love without fiction. We can never get inside the complexities and understand how small mistakes can turn into terrible issue”. Therefore it can be argued that an important version of the history of Zimbabwe’s liberation war has been articulated through fiction and this fact has not been duly recognized regarding white female experiences during the liberation war.

White women have been a force in shaping the history of Zimbabwe and their experiences both complicate and enrich one's understanding the history of Zimbabwe. White women have been disregarded, forgotten and marginalized in the making of history hence this study seeks to explore the idea that the white women were part and parcel of the war. The history had credited the black man and women and the white male while the white women's involvement is not acknowledged. White female experiences are not generally considered in discourses about the liberation war in Zimbabwe. This research on white female experiences will therefore bring new insights to the understanding of the liberation war.

Research Methodology

In order to achieve the identified aims of this research and in line with the chosen methodology, the investigation is carried out through a close analysis of the three selected texts: Partridge's *To Breathe and Wait*, Sylvia Bond Smith's *Ginette*, Patricia Chater's *Crossing the Boundary Fence*. The perspective is thus that of the experiences that were faced by the white females during the liberation war in Zimbabwe. These texts were purposefully chosen to show the experiences of the white females during the liberation war.

Theoretical Framework

Gibbon and Sanderson (2002) are of the notion that, an understanding of the theoretical perspective of one's study is crucial because it determines progression of the research. The

researcher is going to make use of Feminist literary theory. Feminism is a movement which came in to picture during the 18th century aiming for women's equality. Among the proponents of the feminist theory are Ann Oakley and Claire Wallace. The feminist theory focuses on gender inequalities between men and women in societies.

Smith (1982) argues that feminism is the political theory and practice which intends to liberate women of all color, classes, abilities and sexual orientations from all angles of oppression. To Oakley (1981) feminism is about prioritizing women's interest and representing those interests. The feminist theory is of the idea that gender inequality is not an individual matter but it is intensely embedded in the structure of societies. Gender inequality is built into the organization of marriages, families, politics and other cultural productions. The experiences faced by the white females were not an individual matter but the experiences were inserted in to their communities. The feminist literary theory is going to guide this research in exploring the representation of the experiences faced by white women in literature.

Mama (1997) argues that the Zimbabwean revolutionary struggle was rooted in the Marxist ideologies that are basically patriarchal in nature therefore gender principals were not necessarily embraced. Therefore it was difficult to have white women assume leadership roles in a structure that had no design for allowing such an operation. Therefore the white women were rendered powerless hence they became victims of oppression thus there is need to take into cognoscente the feminist theory in to this study.

From a feminist perspective it is vital to argue that during the liberation war white women were victimized indirectly. Their individual sufferings occurs in the context of the interruption of normal everyday routines and in the absence of a normal live women were left alone to cope in the impossible conditions imposed by war and not only with violence but also with full responsibility of home and family care. Therefore the feminist literary theory tends to expose the challenges that were encountered by white women during the liberation war as they are depicted in literature.

Literature Review

Literature review is a compilation of what other scholars have said on the area of study one is working on. Besides showing where gaps have been left out, a literature review gives the researcher some guidance or some direction. It inspires, educates and informs and helps one to generate his or her ideas. This means that in research one needs to depend on existing knowledge in order to come up with new knowledge.

There has been an increase of literature that has been written on the liberation war in Zimbabwe by scholars such as Lyons (2004), Bhebe and Ranger (1995), among others. This study has revealed some gaps concerning the depiction of white female experiences during the war. The discourse of the experiences faced by women during the liberation struggle has attracted a lot of research interest and attention by many writers, both blacks and whites. However what is disturbing is the absence of scholarly work on the experiences of white women during the liberation war. The bulk of the published scholarly literature on the women involvement in the

war in Zimbabwe focuses on the black Rhodesian women where their participation has been glorified for instance in the writings of Staunton (1990), Lyons (2004) and many others.

Tanya Lyons (2004) gave full attention to the role played by black women from 1965 to 1980 within the framework of feminist approach to the study of literature. Lyons is at pains to show that the study of the Zimbabwean liberation war has been told many times by different people. Lyons holds that the history of the war had been told from a male perspective because women's participation in the war is not appreciated. She laments the absence of the discourse of women as fighters from the discourse about the war by both males and females. This is a relevant observation because the liberation war novels that are available have been written by men and they are a manifestation of patriarchal values and culture. This research will focus on the discourse of women, particularly white women which Lyons observes as a missing in current discourse of the war.

Lyons (2004:312) points out that, "The proceedings of women in Zimbabwe's anti-colonial liberation struggle were decisive for the accomplishment of the guerilla war. By 1972, it can be noted that when the armed struggle against the white minority rule was in full swing, women were being trained to fight and this was one of the most significant developments of the guerilla war in Zimbabwe." She argues that socialist feminists expected that women in Southern Africa would be liberated as their nations gained independence. But however, though they were very actively engaged in guerilla fighting, "their active involvement did not ensure their automatic equality or access to the fruits of independence. As a result, many fiction writers have focused

their attention on understanding why they did not gain equality rather than on what black women experienced during the liberation war”(Lyons 2004:314). This study is going to look at the experience of engagement by the white women during the war.

Staunton (1990) notes that while independence and freedom created a favorite political climate in which writers could write about politics, the liberation war fiction writers did not quite have freedom and independence to write about the negative aspect of it. She argues that though writers now had the freedom to write about the guerilla war they understood that their freedom went to a certain point. This is a clear indication that the writers did not have the freedom to explore the ugly side of the liberation war. They have written what they believed those in authority wanted to hear, praising the war and nationalistic guerillas because most of them wrote at a time when a nation was in celebratory mood so they feared to be viewed as anti-revolutionary where Chiwome (2002) clearly states that “the fear was real”. This kind of fiction that glorified the war and tended to agree with the ZAPU official version of war was a form of internalized fear that was sometimes justified as responsible writing. This simply shows that the writings were therefore to romanticize the war and not to expose the ugly facts of the war, therefore it is one sided. This is a clear indication that most literature was distorted which compels this research to close the gap by revealing the other side of the liberation war experiences looking at the white Rhodesian females and how did they put their writings on paper about the liberation war.

Bhebe and Ranger (1995:26) hold that

The major studies of the war from an African perspective do not deal with armies or military tactics or the experience of fighting men and women. Instead they deal with the impact of the war on Zimbabwe's peasantries with the war experience of African women, with ideology and religion and with the need for healing after the war.

They further argue that the White Rhodesian side of the war has much literature about soldiers and fighting but we still know very little about the experiences and effect of the war on white females. Despite this, the two scholars make no effort to address the imbalance thereby raising the need for the current research to explore the experiences of white women during the war.

Kriger (1992) argues that a significant part of the mobilization by guerillas involved force because of the contradictory plans of peasant societies. The experience of the liberation struggle varied according to geography, the political and religious institutions in the zone to the degree of incorporation into the colonial political bargain. He further argues that the violence against women in the liberation struggle added to the long term difficulties nationalist policies around gender issues. While women never constituted a small part of ZANLA forces they were enrolled into the liberation forces mainly as cooks and potters. This clearly shows that most of the literature acknowledged the experiences of the black women during the liberation while the white females do not have significance in the discourse of the war.

Ranger (2004) argues that Zimbabwean politics saw a variety of political and economic tremors in which new social relations occurred. Ranger talks of patriotic history which he says reduces a multifaceted history of nationalism to a system of revolutionary reality. Ranger seeks to separate this new history from the older nationalist historiography that celebrated ambition and transformation as well as confrontation. He posits that there are serious limitations which he considered as a dangerously one sided, thin and contentious patriotic history. This is an eye opener because writers are mainly focusing on the patriotic history while ignoring the experiences of white women.

Law (2010) dwells much on the Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, settler nationalism, opposition politics and the role of women in Rhodesia's history more broadly. She argues that the limited historiographical material which examines the position of white Rhodesian women suggest that women had a lazy existence. Therefore her research is of paramount importance as the analysis will help this study in shedding light on the experiences of white women during the war which to date has been largely neglected.

Tagwirei (2013) is an eye opener to this study as he draws attention to "Significant Silences" whereby literary texts are prevented from speaking pertinent issues by the discursive contexts in which they emerge. In his discussion, he quotes Eagleton (1976:35) who posits that "It is in the significance silences of a text in its gaps and absence, that the presence of ideology can be positively felt" This clearly shows that most literature avoids certain aspects leaving the real significance of the matter. One silence which obviously needs discussing pertains to the

experiences of white women during Zimbabwe's liberation war. Therefore this research is going to address this gap by highlighting the experience of white females during the liberation war which are not given in the existing literature.

Urdaing (1989:227) points out that, "In revolution war situations there is often no defined front line and both women and children can come directly under attack thus the stereotyped image of men going off to war and a woman staying at home away from conflict has to be radically revised". Hence in such revolutionary wars, women are not just victims but had to work hand in hand with the male fighters so as to sustain the power of the warfare. This research argues therefore that a history of women's involvement in the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe which focuses on black women only cannot be complete without an investigation of experiences faced by white female Rhodesians during the liberation war.

The researcher noticed that there appears to be a huge gap in Zimbabwean literature in terms of research that focuses on the experiences of white females during the liberation war. Therefore the researcher was compelled to have a deeper and extensive research on the experiences of white females during the liberation war using fictional works so as to come up with a detailed research on the experiences of white females during the liberation war.

Chapter Layout

The first chapter is the introduction to the study which defines the problem of the study. It is in this chapter where the aim of the study has been spelt out. The significance of the study shall assist the researcher to generate a perspective of looking at the problem. The first chapter also consists of the literature review, theoretical framework, research design and methodology.

Chapter two shall explore the experiences that were encountered by young white females during the liberation war in Zimbabwe as depicted in Chater's *Crossing the Boundary Fence* (1988). The novel is centered on the character Diana who is a young white female. In chapter three the researcher shall depict the experience of urban white women during the war through the character of Ginette. The fourth chapter relies on the analysis of Nan Partridge's *To Breathe and Wait*. The researcher shall examine the experiences of white females due to war and illness as depicted in that novel. Chapter five will consist of the summary, and conclusions. The researcher shall compile a reference list at the end of the research acknowledging different sources used in the research.

Chapter 2: Rural white women and the Experiences of War

2.0 Introduction

Crossing the boundary Fence is a novel set in Zimbabwe. This novel gives insight into the experiences of white women on farms and schools in secluded areas of colonial Zimbabwe. The novel is about two young females Musa and Diana, whose races are black and white respectively. This novel was set before independence. It attacks racism and airs out the experiences faced by the young white females during the liberation war especially through Diana, seen to be crossing the boundary fence in order to create and maintain an interracial relationship with Musa, despite her hardcore racist brother's disapproval.

The researcher has included, *Crossing the Boundary Fence* in this research as it is centered on the Zimbabwean liberation war and deals with the experiences of white women in rural and farm settings. One can argue that, the author was not particularly interested in the experiences encountered by white females during the war. Nevertheless the experiences of several white women are part of the narrative whose major preoccupation is the friendship between Diana and Musa. Though it is mainly centered on reconciliation after the liberation war, the researcher will mainly focus on the experiences which the white female characters encountered during the liberation war.

According to Tagwirei (2013:13) *Crossing the Boundary Fence* focuses on historical concerns which include the liberation war in Zimbabwe, independence and the drive towards reconciliation between the whites and blacks during the war. Chater introduces us to a number of

historical events that were encountered by both blacks and whites during and after the liberation war in Zimbabwe. According to Tagwirei (2013:27) there is no record of colonial atrocities in *Crossing the Boundary Fence*. He argues that the text has children as its target audience. The notion of childhood innocence would inevitably sanction a silence on “horrific” and “ugly” aspects of life which was faced by white adult females during the war. It might also be worth noting that in the novel much is said about the experiences encountered by Diana’s mother, sister, and female doctor. The text, because it targets children, focuses primarily on the experiences of a white child. The social and economic lives of the adult white females were affected during the liberation war. The living conditions and general environment for the white women was nothing comparable to where they came from and it necessitated the manipulation of, as well as the adaptation to the new environment. In the novel we learn that Sister Barbra was born in Northern Ireland and had to come to Africa as a Science teacher. This change of the environment influenced the living conditions of the white women. Also in the novel the school which Sister Barbra teaches had to close down because of the war.

2.1 Diana’s Experiences

In *Crossing the Boundary Fence* Diana is confined within one side of the fence because of the racial divide symbolized by a fence that separated the Herons farm and Ezekiel’s. The fence was a racial division line that was dividing the farms, black and white. According to Vera (1992) the boundaries dehumanize both the colonized and the colonizer who strive to live with artificial identities which accompany these colonial constructed definitions. In the novel one is able to hold that the fence serves to govern the conduct between the blacks and whites. Diana knew that

her father would not allow her to ride alone outside the farm because he did not want her to interact with the black race. Diana's family overprotected her to the extent that she could not ride her pony outside the farm because they did not want her to be hurt during the war since she was cherished so much. The movements of the white females were restricted by their male counterparts. However Kevin was able to ride outside the farm without any protection from the family. This shows gender imbalance in the family, which is biased against the young girl, Diana, as she was not able to enjoy her life during the liberation war.

In support of the above notion, the issue of racial divide can be traced back from the time the whites colonized Zimbabwe. The 1930 Land Apportionment Act institutionalized the racial division of land in Zimbabwe, with 50 000 Africans moved to the reserves in the next ten years, another 85 000 moved between 1945 and 1959, and at least 88 000 more moved from 1964 and 1978 (Riddell, cited in Martin and Johnson, 1981:53). It was by a series of such acts that Africans in Zimbabwe were deprived of their land and were not compensated. Sibanda and Moyana (1934:47) point out that the Land Apportionment Act came about because settlers wanted land to be divided between black and white so that it could be kept for unborn white children. They further argue that some of the land was owned by absentee landlords. The Land Tenure Act (1969) had two significant results in that the ecological zones, which were most favorable to cultivation, were now almost all in the European area and that the land set aside for Africans was insufficient for their numbers (Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe, 1989:207). It is crucial for one to note that, these are some of the Acts had created boundaries that existed between the whites and blacks. This is clearly depicted in *Crossing the Boundary Fence* where Diana is not allowed to cross the boundary fence to meet Musa.

During the liberation war, one can argue that, the luxurious life of entertainment was disturbed. Diana could not attend the pony club meetings since the war was at its peak. Diana tells Musa the reason why she was not able to cross the boundary fence since her family would not want her to face any misfortune:

It's very sad because I can't ride in the veld anymore, or come to meet you at the fence, I did want to come to your place again with Spiwe. They have put some jumps for me in the paddock, but it's not the same at all, and anyway the pony club meeting has been cancelled because of the war.(38).

One can argue that prior to the war Diana was used to a life of entertainment and luxury characterized by going to club meetings and moving around with her pony. But however the intensification of the war has affected her social life as she can no longer enjoy the entertainment she used to have.

Furthermore white women are separated from the things they cherish the most. In the novel Diana's pony Mayflower, is taken away from her. This does not go down well with her since she is attached to the pony. It is because of her gender that Diana is unable to stop Mayflower from going away. As already noted in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, during the liberation war white women were victimized indirectly and directly. Diana witnesses direct individual suffering which occurred in the context of the interruption of normal everyday habits. Out of fear, women are forced to accept their oppression as natural and unavoidable. Diana cries when her horse is taken by her brother. Her powerlessness became a favorable breeding space for more oppression from her brother.

Diana finds it difficult to build a relationship with blacks because they are viewed as terrorists by the white society. The white community believes in racial ideologies so they do not want to see any kind of relation between the whites and blacks. They believe in the notion that whites are superior to blacks. Because of her family and the hardcore racial brother, Diana is lonely since she cannot build a proper relationship with the blacks. The novel clearly states that she is shut in like a bird in the cage (58). Tagwirei (2013) points out that as the war intensified, Musa is forced to re-evaluate her friendship with Diana seeing that Diana's family has the wealth that blacks are fighting to repossess. Musa is able to discern the disparities which existed between whites and blacks. This causes a temporary lapse in the two girl's relationship. This affects Diana as she is always found lonely at their farm till the war ended. This is a clear indication that she cannot create relationships with blacks as she is always under surveillance by her family.

Kevin as the racist brother to Diana showed the extent to which he does not want her sister to socialize with blacks. Homwana (2007) argues that violence against women in times of conflict touches on the core constructions of identity and ontological security. He further argues that this is a strategy for maintaining patriarchal hegemony. In this regards, Kevin is seen very dominant to Diana because he was considering their superiority over blacks and believing that Diana should not talk to the blacks. This is a simple indication that Diana is experiencing oppression from her brother, Kevin.

Diana makes use of letters so that she can sustain her friendship with Musa and this conveys the fears of the young females during the liberation war. Since Diana could not cross the boundary

fence, writing letters was the only way she could breach the boundary. It is also through these letters that Diana gets to understand what was happening in the war because Kevin was misrepresenting facts of the war to Diana. It is also through these letters that Diana is able to inform Musa and Spiwe that she has been forbidden to go outside of the farm because of the war. Evidently, in *Crossing the Boundary Fence* there is no equality of sexes. This is shown through the character Diana who is denied the right to communicate to blacks directly.

Diana's social life is interrupted during the war. In the novel Diana does not have the freedom to communicate with the blacks and she even fears to be seen by her family communicating with them. In the novel we are introduced to a scenario where Diana is asking Peter and Anna not to say any information about her black visitors, Musa and Spiwe, at her home because the white systems regarded it as a taboo for white persons to socialize with blacks. It clearly highlights how the white society controlled their white counterparts from socializing with the people of the other race.

2.2 Jennifer's Experiences.

Sweetman (2005) notes that age and gender identity governs people's experiences in battle. In *Crossing the Boundary Fence* one can argue that the experiences that are being encountered by Diana are different from what Jennifer encountered. In this scenario the age determines the kind of experience that one encounters. Jennifer's experience is not much articulated in the novel. In the novel it can be seen that Jennifer is permitted to express herself unlike Diana. This is

evidenced when she stood by Diana. She asks Why shouldn't she ride if she wants to? We don't all have to do the same things all the time, do we (11)?

It is clear that Jennifer is confronting the oppressive nature of the family that always enforces rules on the girl child. Charter's portrayal of Jennifer and Diana simply highlights the conception that the experiences of the war varied according to the age.

2.3 Experiences of the European Female Doctor

Feminist theory support equal treatment of men and women regardless of their gender. *In Crossing the Boundary Fence*, Charter introduces us to a situation whereby we see blacks fearing to go for treatment since they fear that the European female Doctor might give their whereabouts to the CIDs. One can argue that, the white female doctor is having a better job and involved in politics as she was working hand in glove with CIDs. She knew what was happening during the war. It can be argued that the experiences of white women were different due to their social, political and economic status.

2.4 Experiences of Diana's Mother

In *Crossing the Boundary Fence*, Diana's mother is found spending much of her time at the farm. Diana's mother is left with the burden at the farm, as she is the one who had to take care of the family. Because of the physical nature and status of women, the white women depended on males. Godwin and Hancock (1993:31) noted that while exceptional women did exceptional

things, most adult white women accepted their roles as wives and mothers. Their principal of work was home management.

In addition, nature requires men to protect and fight while women look after their children at home. Such domestic orientated perceptions of the order of gender relations shaped the roles and status of white women. In the novel Diana's mother embraced and subscribed to domesticity but however Sister Barbra and the European Doctor have contested domestications and negotiated for better roles and status in society.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the Zimbabwe liberation war had an effect on the white female characters. This chapter was mainly based on the experiences of white women in rural and farm environments. Gender imbalance and race is seen as a factor contributing to the negative experiences which white women encountered during the liberation war.

Chapter 3: Urban white female experiences of war in *Ginette*

3.0 Introduction

Chater's *Crossing the Boundary Fence* was discussed in the previous chapter and it was established that her novel portrays the experiences of white women in rural farms during the liberation war. However, Sylvia Bond Smith's novel *Ginette* will be used to explore the experiences of war encountered by white women in urban settings.

Smith's *Ginette* is set in Rhodesia during the liberation war. The novel is about a white urban woman by the name Ginette who, after an all-too-brief marriage, drifts sadly into a series of romantic adventures in search of love and happiness after the death of her husband. Through hard working as a war-time boss of industry and a realistic approach to her sex problems, she finds perfect fulfillment when she discovers that even true love could be basely used for the greedy ambitions of the business-man to whom she had given everything. It deals with her life experience as an independent woman who was economically independent because of the nature of her job. The researcher is going to pay attention also to the war experiences faced by other urban white women.

3.1. Ginette's Experiences

3.1.2. Strained marital relations

Ginette is a victim of loneliness. The war has brought about loneliness in the lives of urban white females. Her husband, Barry spends much of his time participating in the war hence little

time at home with his wife. Ginette is the one who has to take up the duties of the husband. She is now the decision maker. The author notes that

Husbands were away for the most of the time and the women were left at home to cope on their own with all the day to day problems that arose. Problems with schooling, servants, sick children; the car or the lawnmower needing repair; the filter system breaking down so that the water turned green and slimy; financial difficulties that previously their husbands hand handled. And the loneliness. That was perhaps worst of all. The long evenings with no one to talk to. Emotional as well as physical needs were left unsatisfied and the tension built up (52)

The novel depicts the notion that Ginette spends long evening hours with no one to talk to. One can argue that when one is lonely, s/he has loss of intimacy and feelings of guilt and despair. The liberation war destroyed the sexual satisfaction of the white women because their males were always upset from their homes. To some extent this liberated the white females as they were now able to make decisions independently without confronting the male part. The liberation war affected the social life of both males and females as they were separated from each other.

Ginette's sexual life was also affected by the liberation war in that most of the times Barry would come from the war tired and could not perform well during sexual intercourse. The men who participated in the war would perform many duties and tasks as they were trying to protect themselves in the war. The novel clearly explores the feelings that Ginette experienced:

But she wondered about the poor relationship they had in bed. His half-hearted efforts at love making became more and more infrequent, and sometimes he did not attempt to woo

her at all whilst home on leave. Whatever Barry had to face out there in the bush was destroying his libido, and his lack – luster approach left her feeling frustrated and miserable. She found it difficult to broach the matter with him. On a few occasions when she did try, it was no good (54)

The novel also tries to express that Ginette sometimes tries to convince him to engage in sex but it was to no avail. The husband, taut and unable to relax often drank too much beer and fell asleep in a chair watching Television leaving his wife unfulfilled and unloved. After making love with Barry, Ginette was left feeling sexually unsatisfied. Women were deprived sexually because their husbands would be tired after the war.

In the novel *Ginette*, Anne is a domestic wife as she did not have a job. She depended on her husband Clifford. The death of Barry has indirectly affected Anne's marriage. Clifford is found engaging in extra-marital relationship with Ginette. This is so because Anne is not performing well in bed and Clifford could not be satisfied. Historically, female sexuality has been classed in many female dominated cultures as subordinate to male sexuality and as something to be controlled by society. Socially constructed masculinity might propose that men have a higher drive than women. Giddens (2001) postulates that natural differences ranging from hormones, chromosomes, brain size and genetics as responsible for innate differences in behavior of women and men. One can argue that it was because of Ginette's loneliness that she became independent and she could enjoy sleeping with different men. Ginette is found going to Clifford's house and spends weekends there after Anne moves out.

3.1.3. Loss of loved ones

Furthermore, the liberation war brought about pain and suffering to white women. Ginette's husband, Barry is shot dead by the guerillas. Ginette is left a widower and she is to experience an independent life. When Ginette is told that her husband has been shot dead, she breaks down and her sobs shake her body in an uncontrollable storm of grief. During war times women were in grief after the loss of their loved ones. Ginette had to depend on her own protection since the husband was dead. The death of Barry brought sorrows and suffering upon Ginette's life. The novel highlights that Ginette's tears were streaming down her face and that she cannot get over the death of her husband. Ginette therefore, cannot protect herself from the misfortunes of the war since she had lost her husband who was supposed to protect her during the war. In support of this, one can also use Musengezi's *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984). The title is derived from the war experiences. Musengezi is saying that in war people die and it is those who survive who will live to endure the pain of loss. This supports the experience that Ginette encountered after her husband died in the war. She survived to endure the pain of losing loved ones.

3.1.4. Work opportunities

It is imperative to note that the experiences faced by the white working class women and the ones that were encountered by the white rural women were different. This can be illustrated by Diana's mother in *Crossing the Boundary Fence* who is a domestic wife who economically depended on her husband. Rutherford (2001:33) noted that white women together with the workers on the farm were subordinate to the European male farmers. On the other hand, Ginette belongs to an urban working class which is independent in making decisions without the

interference from the males. The white women who lived on the farms were therefore taking care of the children and their husbands. Ginette climbs the professional ladder after she has been promoted. Ginette breaks the glass ceiling; traditionally it was very hard for women to reach upper positions because it was not easy for women to be given opportunities to further their careers. Therefore, one can argue that during the liberation war period gender experiences differed from one geographical setting to another. Ginette as urban white women possesses a white collar job which allows her to be promoted. This clearly shows that women were not always rendered powerless in all circumstances. The coming of the war has opened some doors for some women with white collar jobs. One can argue that the war came with emancipation of women as gender equality was observed. This is evidenced with the case of the death of Ginette's boss Tom who was shot dead by the guerillas. This was the opportunity for Ginette to occupy the high paying position at her working place.

It is important also to note that, the war experiences differ according to geographical location. The experiences faced by Diana's mother in the rural farm were different from the experiences which Ginette encountered. In the *Crossing the Boundary Fence*, one can note that the houses of the white people living in the farms were under attack by the guerillas during the liberation war unlike the houses of white people who stayed in urban areas. This is so because the war was mainly concentrated in rural areas.

During the war relationships were unstable and short-lived. This was mainly due to the fact that the men were always mobile as they found themselves incorporated into their army at times

against their will. Ginette experiences difficulties in finding love and happiness. After the death of her husband, Ginette is found in search of love and happiness from different males. In light of this, one can argue that Ginette had to fall in love in three affairs but the affairs could not last long because the men failed to satisfy her in bed: Over the next year Ginette, vulnerable in her loneliness, had three affairs, all short lived and all unsuccessful [...] When he made love to her it was all over so quickly, it left her more frustrated than before (105).

The first three relationships that Ginette engaged in after the death of Barry did not satisfy her, and they were totally unromantic in nature. While making love to her, Ken Brampton was either totally silent or talking about his horses. From this information one can note that the death of Barry increased Ginette disappointments in sexual satisfaction. This symbolizes how white Rhodesian males had not lived up to Ginette's sexual expectations. The society seems ill at ease with the sexuality of women. Culturally an ideal man is supposed to satisfy woman's sexual desires.

3.1.5. Female manipulation

In this novel, Smith clearly pointed out that salvation for the man comes through the woman in Rhodesia. Clifford asked Ginette if she could move some of his money out of the country. During the liberation war it was illegal to move money to another country. However, because of Ginette's love and affection towards Clifford, she assisted in taking the money out of the country. Urban white women were manipulated by the males during the liberation war. Ginette

does this because of the love that she has towards Clifford. She feels that by not helping him she might be betraying Clifford's love.

3.2. Mrs Ashby's Experiences

In the novel *Ginette*, gender equality is also witnessed when Mrs. Ashby got a job. During the liberation war, she had experienced a bored life mainly running the house chore duties for her husband and herself. She was married to a retired farmer and this is a clear indication that she was a house wife. Women were limited to less strenuous tasks like fetching water, cooking, preparing clothes among other duties. Murdock (1949) argued that physical strength and child bearing are biological and determine roles and spheres of operation in the home and public place for women. Mrs. Ashby was dependent on her husband: Her children had grown up and gone, and she had no commitments at home. She was bored stiff mainly running the house for her husband and herself. She wanted the mental stimulation and challenge of a demanding job (140).

The boring nature which she experienced has made her to look for a challenging job because she wanted a mental incentive. She got the job and became Ginette's secretary. This is also witnessed in *The Grass Is Singing* where Mary runs away from the farm to town hoping to secure her old job as a secretary. In this light, one can also support that in urban settings, white women emancipation was highly achieved as they could get white collar jobs where they can earn same salaries with men. This shows that men and women were having same opportunities in their lives.

Angela Davis(1981)gives a good description of the boring nature of normal women's work at home when she writes:

The countless chores collectively known as “housework-cooking, washing dishes, doing laundry, making beds, sweeping, shopping etc.-apparently consume some three to four thousand hours of the average house wife’s year...yet it does not even account for the constant attention mothers must give to their children... Housework after all, is virtually invisible, repetitive, exhausting, unproductive; uncreative these are objectives which most perfectly capture the nature of housework (222).

The observation above can be further supported by Doris Lessing’s *The Grass is singing*which clearly depicts the suffering of women during the liberation war through her portrayal of Mary Turner. One can agree with Davis’s condemnation of society’s lack of proper recognition and appreciation for those who had to perform the chores. Oakley (1981:78) noted that housework cannot be considered as ‘proper’ work because, for her, it denies women their real sense of identity and is “directly opposed to the possibility of human self-actualization”. The housewives, especially in the urban areas, were excluded from active economic engagements outside the home.

3.4 Conclusion

In *Ginette*, Smith explores the experiences faced by white females during the liberation war. She presents the novel through the character Ginette. Ginette is a professional woman who encountered different experiences as compared to other white female characters during the liberation war. The story airs out the life of white urban females during the liberation war. It is important to emphasize that the Rhodesian settler women were not all the same and this was facilitated by the geographical setting which was different.

Chapter 4: Race, illness and the experiences of war in *To Breathe and Wait*

4.0 Introduction

To Breathe and Wait is a novel written by Nancy Partridge. The novel was published in 1986 after the Zimbabwean Liberation war. Partridge lived in Bulawayo and was involved in social movements and took an active interest in the changing role and status of women. Partridge might have been influenced by her active interest towards the status of women in Zimbabwe especially during the liberation war to come up with the novel *To Breathe and Wait*. The novel mainly focuses on black and white females and how they endured the war with lots of pain and suffering symbolized by cancer. The researcher will examine the interface between war and the experiences faced by the white females during the liberation war in Zimbabwe.

The previous chapter looked at the white female experiences in urban settings. The researcher looked at the experiences of white working females during the liberation war. However, in this chapter, special attention is going to be paid to the experiences encountered by white female as the novel, *To Breathe and Wait*, fits well into the theme of Liberation War in Zimbabwe.

4.1 Cancer as a Symbol of War.

Generally, cancer is a disease caused by an uncontrolled division of abnormal cells in a part of the body. In *To Breathe and Wait* cancer plays a vital role. According to Moyana (1999:348), “It symbolizes the global cancerous condition at the heart of the Rhodesian problem”. She further goes on to say that the cancer affected the mother, Mrs. Messiter, whose children it ingests drawing them deeper and deeper into the conflict. One can argue that the cancer is not just a physical cancer but it is symbolic of the liberation war which is corrosive in nature. The illness

of Deidre represented by cancer is part of the terrible chain of events to her life ensuring that she could do nothing. To Deidre she feels that the war was not worth it because it is a waste of human lives like what physical cancer does because she was not aware of the period the war can end. Deidre was considering the cutting of human relationships between wives and husbands, as well as the mothers and their sons.

It can also be further argued that cancer might symbolize the pain of the war in the sense that the survival of the illness by Deidre shows the strength of white females during the liberation war as they were able to survive the pain and suffering of the war. In addition to this, when one is affected by cancer, in most cases it spreads all over the body and this is like what the war did. It had spread all over the country and it had impacted greatly on white women. Deidre's illness was the part of the terrible chain of events during the liberation war.

It can also be further argued that the cancer is symbolizing the white government system which was viewed as corrupt, vicious and full of torture and killings. Deidre is not just fighting against the physical cancer but also fights against the white colonial system that takes away children, friends and hopes. This is also portrayed by Katharine's anger against the white government for its cruelty and brutality after her husband Bill was harassed.

4.2 DEIDRE'S WAR EXPERIENCES

The liberation war brought about family disintegration. In *To Breathe and Wait* Deidre's sons are being called up to fight against blacks in Smith's war and this has affected her spiritually as she watches them being taken away. She had no power to stop them from being called up but to

endure the anxiety and wait for all this to end someday. Through this family disintegration she was affected in that her hopes became mingled, as she has hopes for the country and as well for herself and the children. Considering her health condition, Deidre's family was to stand as a pillar of strength and support her but however all these desires were shattered by the war hence she had to suffer the endless waiting for her own. It is vital to point out that Deidre's love life was changed due to change of circumstances in Rhodesia because of the liberation war. Deidre's anxiety is seen when she expressed that, "I'd have said my life was built round the children. Perhaps it is, around them. But on Julia and Bertram. And Katharine. Odd. Not even family" (22). This is a clear indication that Deidre's family was involved in the war at her time of need. Because of the absence of her family at home, Deidre increasingly relies on her servants during the war, Julia and Bertram. She even acknowledges their importance when she says "I have Julia and Bertram. I am well looked after" (23). This clearly shows that because her children are participating in the liberation war, she is left surrounded by her servants. From this one can argue that the war was a vehicle in destroying family relationships

In addition to that, one can argue that Deidre endured great suffering and pain during the time her sons were participating in the war as she felt that they might be killed. This can be supported by amaiMukai in *Ndaponda Gandanga*. AmaiMukai as a mother is stressed about fate of her only child, Mukai a male war collaborator. Mukai worries that her sons might have died due to some shooting that took place which resulted in some individuals losing their lives. As a mother she weeps because she is not sure since if her son is still live. Deidre develops a critical consciousness during the war time. Partridge clearly points out that Deidre's illness has helped her to focus and to analyze the happenings in the war. Deidre had acquired the ability to critically

analyze the issues during the war after the death of Lancelot her maid's brother. This enabled her to empathize with the victim's mother more as she remembered that her son Charles was in the same war that claimed Lancelot's life. Deidre encountered psychological suffering as she would think about her sons in the war wondering whether they were still alive or dead. Deidre says:

What expiation could there be if Charles died out there in the bush, never saw his child, never found out how truly I love him, so easily at odds though we get. Would I not snatch at Vengeance ever more? Oh, I hope not, I hope not, but may I never be tested. May he come back safe and whole in mind, though how could what he is going through help him to see more clearly? Or Lancelot's mother? How can life be bright for her again (117)?

The death of Lancelot has made Deidre to keep living in pain and suffering as she could think of her son Charles that he might be killed also. Deidre was living in the pain of the war as she was very sensitive to the pain of cancer. She was sustained by hopes just like every other mother that one day she might see her children back at home.

The liberation war ushered the aspect of sisterhood among black and white females. Deidre and Julia share a common plight hence they realize their importance to each other. One can argue that the form of sisterhood among the women provided them with the need to cope with the spiritual and psychological suffering that they are subjected to during the war period. By sharing their experiences Deidre and Julia are able to overcome their problems affecting them as mothers. This means that the only way for women to overcome their plight and experiences of the war lies in seeking unity and solidarity in sisterhood. Hooks (2000) argues that it is impossible for feminist movements to end female oppression without a unite front therefore women should exercise the power of solidarity. This means that the only way women of both

colors can change and transform the society is by eliminating the barriers that separate them. White women, because of the common war experiences with blacks, are able to work with black women. In the text both Deidre and Julia's children are in the same war. Therefore these women are connected by the reality of being mothers to the extent that a strong bond is created. This is evidenced when Deidre was run over by her daughter's car as she was trying to push Julia's niece away from it. She sacrificed to be run over instead of the little black girl. This signifies a boundless love towards her black friends whom she is willing to die for and not only for her white family. Moyana (1999:356) posits that Deidre now understands black people better, as people who also love and whom she can love in return.

Furthermore, the liberation war improved race relations between the white women and their black servants. Mason (1958:215) depicts that the Rhodesian white people were born master over African (pikaninibhasa-baas) and died a master over blacks (bhasi-baas). He further depicts that this relationship between settlers and blacks as that between "master and servant" was given legal expression in the Master and Servant Act of 1891. The blacks were made to labour for the white man's comfort without properly remunerated. The Africans were seen as second-class people, without civil rights, without property rights, without the right of appeal, entirely subject to command or whim of the white masters. Martin and Johnson (1981) noted that during the colonization period African laborers were treated like absolute animals. During colonization period African laborers on the white farms were oppressed and ill-treated by their masters. In *To Breathe and Wait*, one can argue that it was because of the disintegration of families that made the white females to spend most of their time doing gardening activities together with their black

servants. This is evidenced in the case of Deidre and Katherine, the white females working with Julia, a black servant.

One can argue that since their families were participating during the liberation, gardening was the part of the activity which white female characters could engage in as a means of wiling away time. The white women worked with Africans in the gardens so as to maintain their relationship unbroken. Also the issue of race relations was witnessed through communication. The novel explores the bond between Deidre and Julia were Deidre points out that,

That was a subject t be changed, but Deidre, the flour running out over her fingers in a white spray , saw rocks ahead in so many directions she accepted that in silence. Working in silence with Julia was companionable, a way of communicating, not a separation” (67).

This is a clear indication that the war created strong relations between master and servant.

In addition to the above notion white women were also conducting tea meetings where they could meet and discuss about the mixed feelings, happenings, anxiety and grief of the war. In the novel Deidre and Katharine invited each other for tea. This probably shows that the white females did not have much to do as their movements were kind of limited during the war hence they engage in such meetings so as to spend the day.

Deidre encounters the pain of the war as she witnessed the injury of her son Charles. She bemoans the wasteful nature of the war when Charles was injured. She asks “How does a young man cope with the pain of those severed nerves and muscles (151)? With an acute image of the

war, Deidre was expressing the pain she was living in when her son Charles get injured. It is important also to note that, it was this injury that brought her close to Charles. Charles was wounded in a landmine explosion which claimed his foot. Hunt and Hunt (1987:109) pointed clearly that during the care of women to their loved ones, the mothers' sacrifices personal goals for the sake of sustaining the family. The injury of her son enabled Deidre to empathize with people from both races. One can argue that because of this Deidre suffered physical, emotional and spiritual pain as a result of the liberation war.

In *To Breathe and Wait* the notion of motherhood is strongly emphasized through the character Deidre. White females are portrayed as the pillar of the liberation war nonetheless scholars tend to oversee their contributions toward the ongoing war. This notion of motherhood is also witnessed in Vera's short story entitled *It Is Hard to Live Alone* where she raises vital arguments on who sustains the war. She further highlights that the role of mothers of individuals who fight is very crucial. Therefore Partridge's novel depicts Deidre's role as a mother who underscore the endurance and losses that go with motherhood during the war.

Moreover, the wound that the male counterparts witnessed had made the white women to comfort and care for their males. In the novel *To Breathe and Wait*, this is shown through the character Deidre who comforted to her son Charles after he was injured. The white females became emotional caretakers to her son Charles. Deidre comments that: "Yes, knowing, no gun will be trained on you is comforting her, poor child. Never will be again, Charles... But you can't be called up, Charles, you can't be called up" (152). Deidre was telling Charles about her feelings towards him. She felt that because of the wound that Charles had, he was not able to

participate in the war anymore. Deidre takes comfort in that Charles is badly wounded in the war and he will not have to participate again in the war as this was frightening her. She was worried of Charles if he would recover quickly as she was enduring the pain of Charles's severe injured nerves and muscles.

With the intensity and escalation of the war, it is also crucial to note that the white women lived in denial during the liberation war. Deidre failed to accept the reality of the liberation war. Actually, she doesn't want to recognize her children as part and parcel of the war. This is evidenced when she said "Jon might fight to kill, but only if he is attacked" (71). Deidre is trying to give an explanation for the notion that since the blacks were fighting the white community the white males were in the war as a way of protecting themselves and their community.

Deidre experienced a difficult situation agonizing over the possibility that she might die before witnessing peace in Rhodesia. The novel clearly states that:

It would have been wonderful to see- think one might see something coming to flower for the country but there was no hope in her now for that: peace, stability, progress, she would not live to see any of it (62).

The dreams and hopes of Deidre during the liberation war are shattered because of her impending death. Deidre's hope to live each day as she had done, seeing things come to flower with her family was going to live to her expectation but with the intensity of the war there is no hope for peace and stability as she thought she will no longer witness any. Hence she suffered the endless waiting for her own end.

4.3 Katharine Experiences

As has been said before, the white government was vicious and cruel. It is this system of the government that brought Katharine to deeper anger because the government caused her physical, emotional and spiritual pain during the liberation war. After Katharine's husband was distrusted by other whites he was harassed and persecuted. Her husband Bill was working near the Africans area and therefore because of his activities, the white government suspected that he was doing something wrong though there was no concrete evidence. Katharine's anger is shown when she explains:

Bill is being harassed and I am very *angry*. He was called in again today. Wretched little nincompoops. They strut round, their uniforms newly pressed, like little Napoleons and start questioning him all over again, trying to get something on his African friends.

Blasted Government! It is iniquitous. I could put a bomb under them (166)!

Katharine was telling Deidre about the pain and suffering that she was living in because of the government which she says is made up of "short-sighted fools" (ibid). Katherine feared that her husband could be killed. This is a clear indication that the white government was inconsiderate against its own people thereby causing pain and suffering to white women during the liberation war.

Moreover, white females lived in fear of being raped by guerilla. Since the husbands were not always available at home, white women therefore were prone to being violated by the guerilla fighters. In the novel Katherine was conned and her bag was taken away and this is evidenced when she stated that:

Perhaps we all, women, carry this fear deep in us, a means to survive, being so afraid we are careful, But it is not only the sex thing in rape, if Kay is right. She says we are afraid of our very self being violated, a deep fear. I felt like that, even though they didn't touch me, when the pair of men conned me and got off with my handbag. Oh dear, I am still ashamed of having been so emotional that day, but I felt as if I had been invaded intimately (112).

In most cases, rape and war are inseparable. One can argue that Katharine would have heard about the happenings of rape cases that occurred to the black women who were participating in the war. This has however limited the movements of white women as they feared that the guerillas might rape them also. This is a clear indication that the white women were living in fear of being victimized.

4.4 Eleanor's Experience

In *To Breathe and Wait* it is also vital to note that white females were self-reliant. This self-reliance is reflected by the characters, Susan and Eleanor. The novel indicates that Susan would learn to do things by herself. Eleanor's husband is always away and she had to learn not to be dependent upon him. This calls one to argue that the liberation war ushered in a degree of independence among white women since they did not heavily depend on their male counterparts. This resulted in white women becoming decision makers. The feminist ideology preaches equality and these helped white women to see themselves as advancing into traditional male controlled spheres such as decision making.

Also, white females during the liberation war are closely attached to nature and environment. Flowers in most cases are symbols of birth and death, and have emanated to suggest variations in essential life events since their life cycle closely represent the life cycles of humans. Probably one can argue that cancer in the novel is also being symbolized by the flora outside because cancer is corrosive in nature and it's more like a season just like flowers.

In a nutshell the novel critically explores the effects of the war upon the lives of white females. The novel promotes the ideas of unity by showing interaction between white and blacks during the liberation war. The main character in the novel, Deidre suffers from cancer which symbolizes the chain of painful events which she survived during the war. The pain which she suffers ensured that she could do nothing but to breathe and wait for the unknown.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter offers a summary of the major issues stressed in this research. The chapter specifically summarizes the experiences of white females during the liberation war as depicted in *Crossing the Boundary Fence* (1998), *Ginette* (1980) and *To Breathe and Wait* (1986).

The research was mainly guided by the objectives below

- To show different viewpoints aired by white female authors in Zimbabwe in relation to the experiences of white women during the war.
- To explore the portrayal of young white women during the liberation war.
- To explore the literary depiction of urban white women during the liberation war.
- To examine the interface between war and illness as depicted in Zimbabwean female war narratives.

The researcher analyzed the novel, *Crossing the Boundary Fence* as it fits well in focusing on the experiences of young white females during the liberation war. The novel critically depicts the experience encountered by Diana, a young white female who crosses the boundary fence in order to create and maintain her relationship with Musa, a young black female despite the disapproval of her racist brother Kevin. Diana is confined within the one side of the fence because of the racial divide which the fence symbolizes. During the liberation war white people especially the females were not allowed to interact with the blacks. When Musa and Diana go to the boarding school their relationship is sustained through letters. It is also important to note that young white females during the war were strongly protected by their families since they did not to see them

being hurt and this typical of the white man. The novel also explores how the social life of young white females was disturbed during the war time. Therefore the novel focuses on two remarkable female characters that are Musa, a black female and Diana, a white female. In this interesting novel one notes that these two females face different experiences of the war due to their difference of their skin color.

The novel *Ginette* depicts the experiences of white urban woman during the liberation war. The novel depicts the urban white females as economically independent since they were occupying influential and a well-paying job during the war. The liberation war brought the emancipation of women as they engaged in higher work positions as well as decision makers and this is depicted by the character Ginette who climbs the professional ladder. However the novel depicts the experiences of white females during the war. Their husbands were always in the bush and this destroyed their sexual life as their husband would at times be tired and not able to perform well in bed. White women had to endure the pain of losing their loved ones in the war especially their husbands. The character Ginette found it difficult to find love and happiness after the death of her husband Barry.

In *To Breathe and Wait* the main character Deidre Messiter is afflicted with Cancer. She suffers pain in silence as she witnesses her sons being called up to fight against blacks hence she wait for all this to end. Partridge mainly focuses on women of both colors and how they endure the war with pain and suffering symbolized by cancer. Considering, the story of a black maid, Julia who with her incomparable dedication looks after her employer, Deidre Messiter, who was

afflicted by cancer. She suffers a lot of pain in silence. That is an experience one counters in real life. In *To Breathe and Wait* the violence of war is felt in the novel as it fume on taking life and drawing people to one side or the other of the conflict. In the novel race relations are created among white and blacks females because of their same plight that the war of the liberation has brought upon their lives. Deidre breathes and waits for the unknown. Partridge focuses on the women of different races and how they endure the pain and sufferings of the war.

The period of the Zimbabwean liberation war brought about anxieties upon the lives of the white women in Rhodesia. Some white women separated with their families who had to join the Smith government and this resulted in an unstable society where white females were left alone. Irene Staunton (1990: xi) bemoans that

Not unnaturally, several common preoccupation and themes emerge from these stories, such as fear. Fear for the lives of their children who had gone to join the struggle; fear for the survival of their homes, their children who had remains behind; fear of ‘contacts’ between the freedom fighters and the Rhodesian security forces; fear of soldiers, fear of sellouts . There is also a remarkable sense of persistence and acceptance: acceptance of war and the consequences of war, of situations over which they had no control.

The above evidence tends to explore the psychological impact of the war on white females who were left behind. Therefore, one can argue that the experiences of the white females were not homogenous in nature. The experiences differed according to the class and geographical settings. The researcher noted that the experiences that the urban females encountered were

different to the ones that the farm women encountered during the liberation war. The urban females were emancipated economically, socially and physically whereas the ones in the farms have to look after the children and their workers. It is also his period that the race relations were cemented because the white and black females were able to share their sufferings of the war.

The other factor that has contributed towards the silencing of the experiences of white females during the liberation war it's because white females were not visible at the war front. White females did not fight physically alongside their male females as they were left home taking care of the children's and supervising their native workers. The researcher noted that the white women is merely content in terms of colonial affectations however her circumstance is equivalent to if not worse to that of the black women in terms of her independence. During the liberation one can observe that white females are mere victims of their domineering patriarchy which watch its prestige as the main class.

White women females have played a major role during the liberation war however they are misrepresented by most writers. Race, gender, geographical setting, age contributed immensely towards their sufferings during the liberation war. Some white females benefited to some extent and other were affected heavily.

White women played a crucial role during the liberation war although they did not fight alongside their males counterparts. White women encountered great sufferings and pains during the liberation war as they witnessed the loss of their loved ones in the war. However, on the other hand one can argue that the war marked the emancipation of the white females as they were able to attain high paying jobs and become decision makers in the absence of the male figure.

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