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## ESSAY REVIEW

### THE TREATMENT OF THE RHODESIAN WAR IN RECENT RHODESIAN NOVELS

SINCE DECEMBER 1972, the war in Rhodesia has been steadily escalating. From the remote areas of the north-east where the first sustained guerrilla presence was established, the fighting has now spread along the whole of the eastern border and into south-eastern Rhodesia. Sporadic incidents have occurred as far inside the country as the Mangwende and Chikwaka Tribal Trust Lands, while in 1975 another area of conflict was re-opened in northern Matabeleland. Two novels dealing with the war were published in 1976 and a further two in 1977;<sup>1</sup> and their publication prompts one to look at what is now a fairly substantial body of fiction which has the war or the early phases of nationalist militancy as its principal concern.

An article on bad novels—for nearly all those dealt with here are at best indifferent and at worst very bad indeed—requires some explanation. Any work of fiction selects what its author believes to be the centrally defining issue of the situation which he is describing. A novelist who deals explicitly with political events in his society and who accepts unquestioningly the conventional attitudes and prejudices around him is likely to produce a bad novel for what he has selected as significant will be based on attitudes characteristically superficial, ill-informed and therefore inaccurate. Almost by definition, a bad novelist lacks the imaginative ability to recognize and convey complexity; he will lapse into polemic ignoring the fact that part of man's bewilderment arises from his recognition of mutually exclusive but apparently valid versions of reality. And this is as true of the political novel as it is of any other. A bad novelist who writes about political issues will be beguiled into registering as profoundly significant the personality clashes, the power scrambles and professions of faith of ambitious men that are the incidentals of political life. He will fail to register the social and economic issues and forces that make these ephemera take the various forms they do. More dangerously he will be partisan and treat sympathetically only one side of what may be a many-sided confrontation, in which all sides have some sort of validity even if it is only in the myths and rationalizations with which members of the various groups defend their positions.

Paradoxically, however, it is because most of the novelists dealt with in this article are intensely partisan that they are interesting. All of them to a greater or lesser degree write within the framework of white Rhodesian politics and consciously or unconsciously their work registers with particular denseness the myths and prejudices of the white community. A novel, simply because it tries to be more than the opinion of its author, because it attempts

<sup>1</sup> William Rayner, *The Day of Chaminuka* (London, Collins, 1976), 244 pp., £3.50; Giles Tippet, *The Mercenaries* (New York, Delacorte Press, 1976), 358 pp., US\$8.95; Robert Early, *A Time of Madness* (Salisbury, Graham Publishing, 1977), 269pp., Rh\$6.90; Peter McCurtin, *The Massacre at Umtali* (New York, Belmont Tower Books, 1976), 191pp., US\$1.25. This last book is negligible as narrative and, as it adds nothing about the treatment of the war, to what is in *The Mercenaries*, I have not discussed it.

to create a world, is invariably more revealing of political attitudes than a piece of political journalism or a politician's speech. These can be dismissed as subjective whimsy in a way that only the most eccentrically personal novels can be. A bad novel allows us to glimpse the soft underbelly of a society.

The existence of the Rhodesia settler community has twice in its ninety years history been threatened by insurgency, once in 1896-7 and again during the present war. Numerous novels have been written about both conflicts but it cannot be said that the more recent drew on the earlier ones for tradition. There is, in fact, no tradition in the Rhodesian novel. I have found very little evidence that any novelist in the last thirty years has read the work of his predecessors,<sup>2</sup> which in any case is very difficult to find, as not even the National Archives of Rhodesia has a complete collection. Despite this, there are remarkable similarities in the novelists' treatment of the Rising and the present war; and this is in itself interesting. Although Ranger has analysed the Ndebele and Shona Risings as the first expression of a united and militant African nationalism,<sup>3</sup> a more recent historian has demonstrated very convincingly that the Ndebele Rising at least, owed more to the dynamics of the Ndebele state than it did to any newly discovered concept of African solidarity.<sup>4</sup> If this thesis is correct it is of significance that two groups of writers, the second unaware of the existence of the first, should treat two totally different conflicts in much the same way. It is a comment on white Rhodesia that this should be so. We do not expect that an examination of these novels will tell us anything about the war; it will, however, tell us something of what white Rhodesia thinks and feels about its own identity.

My point can best be illustrated by looking briefly at one early novel and some of the non-fictional writings about the Rising and then examining the novels that deal with the present war.

Ernest Glanville's *The Kloof Bride*, published in 1898, is based on a conspiracy among Zulus, Angoni, Ndebele, Arabs and Boers who join arms to sweep the British from Africa. The most paranoid of imperialists could hardly propose a more improbable alliance but its very improbability is instructive. The Arabs hope by exciting the Blacks' 'love of war' to bring British troops against them. In the ensuing battles the Blacks will be exterminated 'like smoke driven by the wind' and Arabs and Boers will have Africa for themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Fatuous though Glanville's plot is, it incorporates themes that are seminal to much Rhodesian writing during the 1890s. The Rhodesian settler colony is shown to be at the mercy of the wildest conspiracies and something of the insecurity of the settlers during that stormy decade is suggested. More important than the conspiracies, however, is the incorrigible savagery of Africa that these early novels take for granted as something which can be exploited and turned against the Whites. Empire has in its civilizing mission

<sup>2</sup> The only important exception is Sir Henry Rider Haggard some of whose novels are still widely read in schools. Since U.D.I. locally published novels have received considerable publicity, and, as imported books become more scarce, local novels have been widely read by Rhodesians. It is likely, therefore, that within the last five or six years Rhodesian novelists have become aware of recent writing in this country. An exception to this is *The Day of Chaminuka* which is banned in Rhodesia.

<sup>3</sup> T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7: A Study of African Resistance* (London, Heinemann, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> J. R. D. Cobbing, 'The Ndebele under the Khumalos, 1820-1896' (Univ. of Lancaster, unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1976), 440-5.

<sup>5</sup> E. Glanville, *The Kloof Bride; or the Lover's Quest* (London, Methuen, 1898), 155.

an obvious and defensible rationale but it operates surrounded by mysterious and brutal irrationality. Some of the qualities of this view of Africa are suggested in Glanville's description of the Zambezi:

the great river flowed on in silence, rising far off in the desolate land of heathen gods, and flowing darkly by scenes of bloodshed, of barbarous rites and fiendish cruelty. Sorrow and cruelty have been its heritage through the centuries, the angel of death hovers above its trackless forests, the miasma lurks in its rotting marshes.<sup>6</sup>

The details in this description appear as clichés in numerous novels and travel books which have Southern Africa as their setting<sup>7</sup> and often seem to be employed in order to justify the harshest of colonial methods. Confronted with such alien malignancy—the word 'fiendish' is revealing in that description — both settler and administrator can be exempted from any attempt to grasp at the political motivations of Africans. Blood-lust and irrational brutality are the appropriate products of such a land and violent reaction to its savage people the only possible response.

These themes in the early Rhodesian novel were fuelled by the invasion of Matabeleland in 1893 and the Rising of 1896-7. Not only did these events correctly confirm the settlers in their belief that their hold on the territory was very tenuous, but commentaries on the war and the official Company reports on the Rising underscore the idea of Africa's savagery and the impenetrable superstition of its people. Lobengula raided into Karanga country in 1893 because, 'As an unbroken military power, the Matabele were an insolent, cruel and overbearing people, undeserving of the sympathy of the most quixotic of philanthropists.'<sup>8</sup> Earl Grey's official report on the Ndebele Rising gives as its second chief reason 'the incapacity of a warlike and aristocratic race to give up their old habits, and to accept their natural place in the peaceful and industrial organisation of a settled civilised community'.<sup>9</sup> Grey's report also names the M'limo<sup>10</sup> as the chief agent responsible for fomenting unrest and this allegation together with the rather shadowy account of who or what the M'limo was and what his power really consisted of served only to make the reasons for Ndebele discontent vilely esoteric. H. Marshall Hole's report on the Shona rising offers the scantiest analysis of its causes and these reflect the confusion in the settlers' minds as to why the Shona should have been anything other than contented with their lot. The intelligence of the Shona, Hole complains,

has been underrated, and their cunning— it cannot be called courage —has not been sufficiently appreciated. They have shown themselves capable of concerted action, and are greatly swayed by superstition and belief in witchcraft, which finds expression in the 'M'limo', who is a person of far greater power than any chief . . . With true Kaffir deceit they have beguiled the Administration into the idea that they

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>7</sup> An almost parallel description can be found in François Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa: a Record of Twenty Years' Pioneering among the Barotsi of the Upper Zambesi*, trans. and ed. C. W. Mackintosh (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), 641. A comparable but much earlier description appears in Robert Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (London, J. Snow, 1842), 613.

<sup>8</sup> W. A. Wills and L. T. Collingridge, *The Downfall of Lobengula: The Cause, History, and Effect of the Matabele War* (London, The African Review, 1894), 12.

<sup>9</sup> British South Africa Company, *Reports on the Native Disturbances in Rhodesia 1896-97* ([London, The Company] 1898), 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 39.

were content with the government of the country, and wanted nothing more than to work, and trade, and become civilized; but at a given signal they cast all pretence aside . . ."<sup>11</sup>

The Administration was, of course, taken completely by surprise by the Rising in Mashonaland. Caught up as they were in their own myth of Ndebele sovereignty over Mashonaland, which Company propaganda assiduously maintained, it was impossible for them to anticipate either the Rising or the stubborn determination with which it was conducted so that the fighting was drawn out well into 1897. Hole in trying to ascribe causes for the Rising could do nothing, therefore, except fall back on abuse. 'Kaffir deceit' and 'cunning' combined with 'superstition' and 'witchcraft' were the only acceptable causes for Shona dissatisfaction because they suggested grave psychological and moral defects in the Shona character. That the Ndebele raids were only sporadic and whole areas of Mashonaland were unaffected by them for decades at a time and that no Shona group acknowledged Ndebele sovereignty were details too embarrassing to admit to even if anyone in the Company Administration had had sufficient curiosity to establish that this was the case.

In the event, official reports on the Rising devote very little space to its causes and are taken up with detailed accounts of killings of Whites, hair-breadth escapes and military skirmishes. The Whites in these incidents are individuated by names, professions and backgrounds; the Blacks are an amorphous mass of 'rebels'. The Whites enact their parts as pioneers in yet another saga of empire while the Blacks serve no other function than to provide an appropriate hazard attendant on imperial expansion.

With the suppression of the Shona Rising, the emphasis on an embattled settlement disappears from the Rhodesian novel. As early as 1907, Gertrude Page can introduce a character with the laconic observation, 'He had been through each native war as it came, with the same cold-blooded indifference to death.'<sup>12</sup> In this novel the savagery of Africa has become 'the native question'. 'What is the matter with the natives?' asks the heroine. 'They are quite harmless.'<sup>13</sup> Later she wonders whether they will not even become useful when they are more civilized. The assertion that 'there is only one way to rule and civilize the native, and that is by *fear*', she dismisses as 'monstrous',<sup>14</sup> although the book remains unconvinced on the subject. The tone of this novel is the tone of nearly all novels that deal with Africans (many seem unaware that they exist) until the early 1950s.<sup>15</sup> Africans are at worst a nuisance, at best comical but never a threat to Rhodesian colonialism.

It is only in the 1960s, after the first guerilla incursions into Rhodesia, that the novel once again begins to deal with the possibility of successful black resistance to continued white rule. The lateness of the date is in itself unexpected. The Land Husbandry Act of 1951 had given the African National Congress, originally founded in 1934, an issue on which it could establish countrywide support and the nationalists had shown their resilience and the

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>12</sup> G. Page, *Love in the Wilderness: A Story of Another African Farm* (London, G. Bell, 1907), 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>15</sup> There are, of course, important exceptions, A. S. Cripps and Doris Lessing among them. Cullen Gouldsbury and Charles Bullock, both of whom were in the Southern Rhodesia Native Department, debate with some seriousness the value of African customs in, respectively, *God's Outpost* (London, Eveleigh Nash, 1907) and *Rina: A Story of Africa* (Cape Town, Juta, 1949).

extent of their organization by surviving the successive bannings of their parties in the following years.<sup>16</sup> No novel, however, seems to have dealt with the issue. It is perhaps a commentary on white complacency bred out of ignorance of African politics that it was not until a section of the nationalists resorted to arms that a novel was written that dealt with the security situation.

Robin Brown's *When the Woods Became the Trees*<sup>17</sup> is an extraordinary novel moving uneasily between Christian mysticism and the affected cynicism and introspection of a teenage boy, Gentleman, who is the narrator. Of all the novels dealt with here, it is the only one to show Whites retreating before the black onslaught. Before the end of the book Salisbury is encircled with barbed-wire entanglements through which the black armies finally break.

At the beginning, the 'nuggets', Gentleman's word for Africans, have 'started muttering';<sup>18</sup> in place of texts from the mission, they have booklets 'written by the Chinese in patronising Shona', and, as Gentleman observes, 'Every Nugget from the age of ten upwards had to be regarded as a potential stone-thrower.'<sup>19</sup> Part of Brown's intention is to show Gentleman struggling to think his way clear of the racial prejudice with which he has grown up. He regards with distaste a farmer who remarks, 'The Kaffir regards kindness as a weakness,'<sup>20</sup> and listens eagerly to a priest who explains that a ritual murder, in which a black woman, painted white, is savagely hacked to pieces, is not 'just animal brutality. What you saw was an act of racial symbolism.'<sup>21</sup>

Although Brown makes use of the unrest in the early 1960s for his detail, his novel attempts more than to chart white uneasiness at sporadic bombings and stone-throwing incidents. As the ritual murder suggests, nationalism in this book has strongly religious overtones. The nationalist organization is, in fact, called the Black Messiahs and at a huge rally in the bush which Gentleman stumbles upon, their leader combines messianic oratory with more practical orders to take 'badsas', knobkerries, make guns and spears and follow him. The Messiah can speak of African 'suffering' being 'the suffering of colonial slaves' but the rising appears to have little political motivation. Rather it is a product of mindless, quasi-religious fervour. The political content of the Messiah's speech is dismissed by Gentleman as 'all the -isms and political clichés, and the meaningless tub-thumping phrases'.<sup>22</sup>

How far the confusions in the book are the product of Brown's own mind and how far they are his attempt to convey the bewilderment with which a teenager looks at the world is difficult to establish as Brown has little control over his material. We are told that the West has become decadent and is 'losing out by pure default'<sup>23</sup> — a judgement we are expected to approve. The priest, on the other hand, observes that the teachings of Christ 'are in sharp contrast to the manner of behaviour of the majority of Europeans in this country'.<sup>24</sup> Decadence is not defined but it presumably means a failure to live up to the social teachings of the gospel, although the West is criti-

<sup>16</sup> The African National Congress was banned in 1959; the Zimbabwe African People's Union in 1962; the Zimbabwe African National Union and the Peoples' Caretaker Council in 1964.

<sup>17</sup> R. Brown, *When the Woods Became the Trees* (London, Michael Joseph, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

cized for its 'civilised niceties'<sup>25</sup>—which could mean anything. That Brown's main theme is the failure of Whites to live up to their Christianity would appear to be confirmed by the ending of the book. As the Blacks are about to overrun Salisbury, the priest arranges for himself to be crucified in their path; and overcome with the sight, both Black and White join in racial harmony around the cross. Why either side should be moved by this singularly eccentric act is not explained and one has to accept it as an allegory that only in Christ can true peace be found.

The book has flirted coyly with allegory throughout—the priest for example is a carpenter and as Gentleman's name suggests he is torn between his middle-class upbringing and his own gentle nature which is on a quest for truth. The problems created by imposing allegory on the naturalistic form that Brown uses are, however, enormous. In contrast with the total confusion of the white community and the implacable hostility of the Blacks, which are conveyed with some skill, the solution of the crucified priest appears painfully simplistic.<sup>26</sup>

*When the Woods Became the Trees* is an interesting book in one respect. The black separatist churches in Africa were traditionally mistrusted by colonial authorities and occasionally provided a focus for black resistance to colonial rule. In Rhodesia the separatist churches have never served this function and remained strenuously apolitical.<sup>27</sup> For all the racial tolerance implicit in the book, Brown finally can conceive of nationalism as nothing more than a misapplication of the Christian tradition; it is offered as a perversion of Western spirituality and owes nothing to Africa.

In 1966, W. A. Ballinger's *Call it Rhodesia*<sup>28</sup> attempted to trace the history of this country up to U.D.I. through the fortunes of a single family. There is little first-hand experience of recent African insurgency, but U.D.I. is seen as the crowning decision of the epic progress with which the novel invests the history of the colony. Liberalism is 'sweet surrender... The world belonged to the strong. The future, God help us, belonged to her and her breed.'<sup>29</sup> The whole tone of the book justifies such a conclusion. A group of Whites gathering to discuss U.D.I. are told that even if the 'Pan-Africanists' decided to invade Rhodesia 'we could beat the living day-lights out of them'. Even if they have guns, the speaker concludes, it will not matter: 'it's not the guns, it's the man behind the guns. Are we afraid of black invasion? I say no.'<sup>30</sup> Such a remark is in keeping with the confident assumption of

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>26</sup> In the sequel to *When the Woods Became the Trees*, *A Forest is a Long Time Growing* (London, Michael Joseph, 1967), the priest explains his crucifixion as a diversionary tactic. One suspects that this explanation is an afterthought on the part of both the priest and Robin Brown as the incident is obviously intended to have a profound spiritual significance in the earlier novel.

<sup>27</sup> This conclusion is based on the research of M. L. Daneel, the leading authority on separatist churches in Rhodesia. See, for example, his article 'Shona Independent Churches in a rural society' in A. J. Dachs (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1973) esp. 182-8. In *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches* (The Hague, Mouton, 2 vols to date, 1971-), I, 384, Daneel does acknowledge that the Ethiopian type churches (as opposed to the Zionists) are ambivalent in their attitude to African nationalism. Missionaries and administrators have, however, tended to believe that the separatist churches were agents of political subversion. For example see T. O. Ranger, 'The early history of Independency in Southern Rhodesia' in *Religion in Africa* (Univ. of Edinburgh, Centre of African Studies, 1964), 52-74. Brown appears to be influenced by this paranoia.

<sup>28</sup> W. A. Ballinger, *Call it Rhodesia* (London, Mayflower Dell, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-19.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

white racial superiority throughout much of the novel which smacks of imperial attitudes seventy years before. Incorporating as it does so many myths about why the Whites have been able to maintain their authority over the years, *Call it Rhodesia* reflects the sort of arrogance that gave Rhodesia the confidence to embark on its unrecognized independence.

Both Brown's and Ballinger's books were written before the full extent of nationalist military organization had become obvious to white Rhodesians. When Alan Burgess's *The Word for Love*<sup>21</sup> was published in 1968, there was considerable evidence that nationalism which had in the 1960s believed in achieving power by passive resistance and constitutional means was becoming increasingly militant. In 1964 a gang attached to ZANU had set upon and killed a white man after his car had been stopped at their road block. During 1966 there were numerous incidents which included isolated bomb attacks in Salisbury, the killing of a European farmer and his family near Hartley, and a running fight between a ZANU band and Rhodesian security forces north of Sinoia. In 1967 the first security force casualties occurred in a contact with ZAPU and South African A.N.C. guerrillas in north-western Matabeleland. This incident confirmed that both nationalist organizations had resorted to arms.

Against this background Burgess's novel is curiously ill-informed. Its dating is obscure for although U.D.I. has taken place, the Union Jack flies and ZAPU has not been banned. Ndabaningi Sithole and Joshua Nkomo are mentioned by name but they have nothing to do with the nationalist organization of the novel, the Zambezi Independent People's Party. The local leader of this organization is the voice of nationalism in the novel and he has received his political training in the United States where he assumed the name of Ali Hassim Khan. That black power movements in America should be seen as providing the principal threat to continuing white rule in Rhodesia is oddly naive except that Burgess is able to exploit their racist rhetoric and reduce the political significance of African nationalism accordingly.

*The Word for Love*, almost certainly unconsciously, echoes the themes of the novels of the 1890s. A British South African Police Inspector, Bill Field, is accused of raping a 'rain goddess', Lupin, whom he has rescued after a ritual murder in the Sabi valley. Only towards the end of the book is it established that Lupin seduced Field and was instigated into laying charges against him by Khan who recognized the propaganda possibilities of a rape charge against a senior policeman. It is as if the elements of a continent-wide conspiracy exploiting black savagery have been localized in this incident. By playing on the superstitious fear of a primitive tribal woman, a man, whose name and training make him sinisterly international, sets out to destroy Field who images the stability of Rhodesian society.

Where the Burgess novel differs from the earlier work is in the implication that unless agitators disaffect them tribal Africans support the white regime. Doris Lessing in *The Grass is Singing* notes that even in the 1940s a new sentimentality for African societies unaffected by missionaries or western education was becoming an accepted white Rhodesian attitude: 'Yet the fashion is changing: it is permissible to glorify the old ways sometimes, provided one says how depraved the natives have become since'.<sup>22</sup>

This change of attitude to traditional tribal structures and values has been reflected in interesting shifts of Government policy over the last thirty years. Faced with the growing power of African nationalism the Government sought

<sup>21</sup> Burgess, *The Word for Love* (London, Michael Joseph, 1950), 14.

<sup>22</sup> Doris Lessing, *The Grass is Singing* (London, Michael Joseph, 1950), 14.

and often found allies among the chiefs whose authority was in itself being questioned by the new organizations and the chiefs were in turn given greater status and authority than they had enjoyed since the Risings.<sup>33</sup> Consequently most of the recent novels include Africans—usually elderly—who treat nationalists and guerillas with a contempt that derives its authority from their position within the tribal structure. *The Word for Love* is no exception although Burgess has sufficient perception to represent both Lupin and the fiercely loyal Tzalo as anachronistic.

Despite its date and its often efficiently observed descriptions of the unrest in the early 1960s (hut burnings in Tribal Trust Lands and rioting in Harari). Burgess's novel is not primarily concerned with the threat to the white regime. Field's wife is sterile, the 'rain goddess' represents fecundity and custom forbids that Field leave his wife to marry a woman whom he loves and with whom he may have children. The 'rain goddess' as the medium through which the harvest is assured becomes an image of Nature whose promptings are more powerful than any curb that society's conventions can impose on a man. The political and erotic themes are only tenuously linked: nationalism and marriage conventions are both artificial impositions on the seasonal cycles of birth, fruition and death. In allowing himself to be seduced by the 'rain goddess' Field has responded to his most profound urges. Similarly, it is implied, Africa will lose the source of its vitality if it follows a man like Khan.

In 1968 the first<sup>34</sup> novel was published that dealt explicitly with the guerilla campaign: David Chapman's *The Infiltrators*<sup>35</sup> which is distinguished in that it at least attempted to be factual. Chapman was in Botswana for several years and was subsequently a member of the South African Police which gave him the advantage of first hand acquaintance with the sort of country in which the 1967 clashes occurred, and it is on these that the book is based. Chapman attempts objectivity by viewing events through the consciousness of both the guerillas and the Whites who are opposing them and some sense is offered of the idealism of the men who are crossing the border. Nhlabano, the leader of the gang, sees the Caprivi strip as 'a wedge driven between the ribs of Black Africa... a cankerous growth of White Baasskap'.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, however, the hostile generalizations about the guerillas interfere with Chapman's apparent detachment. One of the band reflects that he only learned to hate white men after being indoctrinated by men from Eastern Europe. He 'still found it difficult to hate openly people whom he had always respected and obeyed [but] he knew what he and others had to do to make the new life of freedom possible'.<sup>37</sup> If anything justifies Nhlabano's idea of Baasskap, it is in a sentence such as that where the structures of a racist authoritarian society are seen as normative.

<sup>33</sup> An analysis of these changes in attitude can be found in A. K. H. Weinrich, *Chiefs and Councils in Rhodesia* (London, Heinemann, 1971), 12-22.

<sup>34</sup> In 1967, Robin Brown's *A Forest is a Long Time Growing* eerily anticipated aspects of the present situation. With the majority of the Whites fled and the African leaders dead, an interim government is established with both black and white representatives. Their efforts to create a new non-racial nation are opposed by communist guerillas operating in the Manicaland mountains. As the white regime has already been overthrown by the time the novel begins, it is not strictly relevant to this article. It is interesting, however, to note the implications that Whites will accept non-racialism only after they have been defeated by armed force and that even this defeat will not be acceptable to communists. As before in his earlier novel, Robin Brown still cannot take African nationalism seriously as a force in the political life of the country.

<sup>35</sup> D. Chapman, *The Infiltrators* (Johannesburg, Macmillan, 1968).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

Chapman's prejudices are more obvious when he puts into Nhlabano's mind attitudes to Africans that are conventional among many southern African Whites: 'each one shrugging off responsibility and trusting in the leader to get them to their destination. It was an apathy habitual to Africans and Nhlabano could sense it and understand it.'<sup>38</sup> Since this is the characteristically hopeless fatalism of the guerillas it is hardly surprising that they are betrayed by one of their comrades, led into an ambush and killed. It is a comforting analysis for Whites but one that bears little relationship to the details of the 1967 clash when large numbers of guerillas escaped into Botswana. As so often with these novels dealing with the early stages of the war the underlying theme of the book is the futility of the task the guerillas have set themselves.

It was not until 1969 that a novel written by a Rhodesian was published that claimed to deal explicitly with the war. Daniel Carney's *The Whispering Death* announces on its title page that 'This book is set in Rhodesia some time after the Declaration of Independence when the population faces an ever increasing rise in acts of terrorism'.<sup>39</sup> As Carney was a member of the B.S.A.P. between 1963 and 1967 the reader might be forgiven for expecting accurate background details of the terrorist threat but Carney makes no attempt to provide them. An African albino claiming to be the spirit of Lobengula who will lead the Blacks against the Whites is the leader of the terrorist band, a suggestion as improbable as Glanville's conspiracy seventy years before. Albinos have little status in Shona society and Lobengula could not conceivably be a Shona folk hero. Carney's choice of leader and his defence through his hero, Terick, of the man's authority is, therefore, more revealing of the ignorance underlying Whites' attitudes to Blacks than it is about the situation it purports to be describing:

But if a man were to go into the reserve and claimed he was Lobengula's spirit, Terick argues, 'if he could perform a few tricks, hold a few impressive ceremonies, he might be able to sway them or at least terrify them so much that they couldn't hand him over.

Lobengula, Terick goes on to explain to the member in charge, was reputed to have 'a white soul' and this was why he was a great chief.<sup>40</sup> Carney is at least correct in one detail: both Mzilikazi and Lobengula used the common Ndebele idiom 'my heart is white' to visitors meaning that they wished for friendship.<sup>41</sup> Only a writer's racial complacency, however, could put on the phrase such a construction as the whiter a man's soul, the greater he necessarily becomes. But then Carney's Africans are the savages of Hollywood, able to be beguiled by tricks and ceremonial, and the white man, in imperial romances at least, is a past master of both.

*The Whispering Death* is crammed with clichés. An old Afrikaner speaks of his love of the soil; the District Commissioner and Member in Charge indulge in childish games during a party at the police camp but this is merely boyish high spirits. Both are efficient men upholding the highest standards of equity and justice among a savage people. The point is made clear when Terick is himself arrested and condemned to death for killing the albino: justice must come before personal revenge and official Rhodesia is concerned with justice. The most interesting stock character in the novel is

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> D. Carney, *The Whispering Death* (Salisbury, Graham, 1969).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> An example can be found in J. P. R. Wallis (ed.) *The Matabele Journals of Robert Moffat* (London, Chatto & Windus, 2 vols, 1945), 1, 73.

Katchemu, a direct descendant of Rider Haggard's Umslopogaas, and inevitably an Ndebele. It is permissible to have an Ndebele companion in these novels, whose arrogance, tribalism and propensity to violence are invariably held up for our admiration. Katchemu is no exception: 'a giant of a man' he recognizes 'no man as his superior regardless of rank or colour',<sup>42</sup> but his loyalty to Terick is unquestionable. After he and Terick have been involved in a brawl while breaking up a beer drink, Katchemu comments, 'It was a good fight', and after that he and Terick 'just seemed to drift together'.<sup>43</sup> When Terick's wife is murdered by the albino's gang, Katchemu seizes a servant who was wounded in the attack and threatens to break his neck unless he tells Katchemu who is responsible: ' "Also," he added as further inducement, "I will burn your kia, take your wives, defile your daughters and feed your grandchildren to the jackals".'<sup>44</sup> The ironic phrase 'as a further inducement' invites our approval of Katchemu's methods. Nor should we expect anything very different of him. He is, after all, a savage. The drums at a beer drink awake his primitive instincts, " "Fight," they said, "Blood." they said. "Red flowing blood . . . Dance the dance of a warrior like your grandfather did before his fire . . ." '<sup>45</sup>

While the rest of the police party, inhibited by standing orders and a determination that justice should be seen to be done, try orthodox methods in hunting down the killers of Terick's wife, Terick and Katchemu with two farm labourers set out to hunt the albino. 'Oh Mambo,' Katchemu said softly, 'I will follow you unto death. She was my madam and it was my farm too . . . We'll go hunting you and I, my Mambo.'<sup>46</sup> Together they kill seventeen of the band, Katchemu and the labourers die and Terick is left in lonely pursuit of the albino.

What Carney is trying to do in *The Whispering Death* is to set primitive emotions of love and revenge — their atavism is imaged in the hunt — against the imposed structures of law and order which the Member in Charge and District Commissioner represent. The hunt is described in brutal detail as Terick extracts his revenge from the agonies of his quarry and although Terick is hanged the book allows the justice of his execution to remain ambiguous. In the end Terick's neighbours gather round an empty grave that has been dug on his farm and fire a volley over it at the moment that he is executed in Salisbury prison. 'We want to give Terick a military funeral,' one of them explains.<sup>47</sup>

*The Whispering Death* succeeds in being both brutal and sentimental. It avoids any confrontation with the issues of the war by having the absurd albino as the manifestation of terrorism. It operates almost entirely within the conventions of the early novels. With its emphasis on the brutal unreason of Africans — even those Africans who are regarded sympathetically as hunters and warriors — it asks that Terick's choice of revenge be seen as an appropriate response to a violent situation. There is a sickening concept of 'manliness' underlying the book, an unspoken agreement between strong men who know that Terick has done only what he had to do. As Terick explains to a terrorist before he tortures him: 'you killed my woman.'<sup>48</sup> In such a novel where the machismo of an earlier empire is being glamorized

<sup>42</sup> Carney, *The Whispering Death*, 9, 13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

that is defence enough.

From 1969, the year *The Whispering Death* was published, to the time of writing, the Rhodesian war has steadily escalated; security force communiqués on the war take 1972 as the date in which the war began in earnest. In that year Wilbur Smith, South Africa's best selling novelist, who was born in what was then Northern Rhodesia and lived for some years in Salisbury, added his contribution to the Rhodesian war novel with *The Sunbird*.<sup>49</sup> More than any other of the novels dealt with in this review, *The Sunbird* works explicitly with the themes and situations of an earlier tradition. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* which was in part inspired by the reputed ferocity of the Ndebele and in part by the discovery of Great Zimbabwe established a fictional tradition of its own. Basic to the novels within that tradition is the supposition that Great Zimbabwe was built by white colonizers, whose technological achievements were finally submerged by the hostile savages around them. Great Zimbabwe does not appear as a major theme in any Rhodesian novel after 1906, its value as a symbol ceasing as the Rhodesian colonial settlement became more confident if its vitality. That Wilbur Smith should in *The Sunbird* exploit the Zimbabwe myth, suggests that once again white Rhodesians are experiencing the same insecurities that they felt during the 1890s.

*The Sunbird* must rank as one of the most perverse books ever written about Rhodesia. Its archaeologist hero, Benjamin Kazin, has maintained a theory of the exotic origins of Zimbabwe against what he calls 'the debunkers, the special pleaders, the politico archaeologists, who could twist any evidence to fill the needs of their own beliefs'; these men have scoffed at this work, maintaining that 'some Bantu group, possibly the Shona or Makalang' is responsible for the buildings.<sup>50</sup> At last, on a site on the Rhodesian-Botswana border, Kazin uncovers the remains of an ancient Carthaginian city which his excavations show to have flourished in the third to the fifth centuries A.D. before being destroyed by the black hordes sweeping down in their southward migration. That exotic origins for Zimbabwe can still be maintained is absurd but not unexpected.<sup>51</sup> Although no trained archaeologist who has ever dug at the ruins has ever believed them to be anything other than the work of local Africans, there is a considerable body of writing identifying their builders as settlers from various Mediterranean and Middle East cultures. The myth that a once great white civilization flourished in Central Africa was actively exploited by the B.S.A. Company in order to provide additional and more romantic justifications for its occupation of Mashonaland.<sup>52</sup> The building's origins have always been an issue in Rhodesian politics among those Whites who refuse to believe Africans capable of the organization necessary to erect so complex a series of buildings. Both as a justification for colonization and as a confirmation of African inferiority, the exotic origins of Zimbabwe have been important in settler politics.

<sup>49</sup> W. Smith, *The Sunbird* (London, Heinemann, 1972; Pan Books, 1974).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* (1974 edit.), 71-2.

<sup>51</sup> The best known recent work attributing exotic origins to Great Zimbabwe is R. Gayre, *The Origin of the Zimbabwean Civilisation* (Salisbury, Galaxie Press, 1972). The most authoritative work on the subject is P. Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1972); an excellent review of recent books and articles on Great Zimbabwe is P. E. N. Tindall, 'Great Zimbabwe in recent literature', *Rhodesian History* (1973), 4, 93-104.

<sup>52</sup> Rhodes hired J. Theodore Bent to excavate the ruins and A. Wilmot to search the archives of Europe for more scholarly proof of the buildings' links with Ophir. The results appeared in, respectively, *The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland* (London, Longmans, 1893) and *Monomotapa (Rhodesia)* (London, Fisher Unwin, 1896).

However tenuous the connection may appear to be between a fifth century or earlier settlement and a nineteenth century British colony, it has frequently been made and it is this connection that excites Smith's imagination. As the first carbon-datings from the site confirm his theories, Kazin reflects: 'somewhere between A.D. 200 and A.D. 400 an armed Phoenician warrior had led his armies and war elephants across this beloved land of mine'.<sup>53</sup> An invading army in a beloved land could well be expected to excite hostility. The unconscious—and revealing—irony of the remark is that the idea thrills Kazin. For throughout *The Sunbird* the explicit parallel is being drawn between the mythical Carthaginian colonizers and the Whites of Southern Africa and the fate of the older civilization becomes the possible fate of the new. The parallels are hammered home with a clumsy occultism. All the major characters in the book have their counterparts in the City of the Moon, whose history Kazin discovers written out on golden scrolls. The Emperor of the old civilization becomes in his twentieth century incarnation a ruthless Rand industrialist who is offered as a type of contemporary capitalist glamour, while the bard of Opet becomes a scientist—Kazin himself. The black chief who sacks the City of the Moon is the leader of the guerillas.

What is extraordinary about this novel is the quality of contemporary civilization that is held up for our admiration. Smith writes with a relentless vulgarity about wealth and its trappings. The novel revels in the show of wealth whether in giving proprietary names to expensive watches and cars or in describing in detail casual luncheons served by Johannesburg millionaires ('Cold turkey, lobster salad, smoked trout, and a very good duck and truffles in aspic'<sup>54</sup>). The book's obsession with white Southern African luxury gives a hollow ring to its numerous professions of a simple patriotism. Here for example, Kazin is speaking to a black hijacker attempting to escape from South Africa after a pitched battle with the police: 'You want to burn my land and soak it in blood. You want to tear down everything I hold dear and sacred. It is my country and with all its faults I love it.'<sup>55</sup> The sacrament of this love is a Lear Jet. As Kazin's girl friend says with refreshing honesty, 'we white Africans are like the old Carthaginians... when there's gold in them thar hills who gives a hoot about painting pictures'.<sup>56</sup>

The clash with the guerillas takes place in Rhodesia, Smith offering the attack on white rule in Rhodesia as an attack on the whole of Southern Africa, the two countries representing a single civilization. The empire controlled from the City of the Moon similarly extended north and south of the Limpopo. The details of the encounter are very loosely based on the 1967 incursion into north-west Rhodesia and in giving the leadership of the group to a South African communist, Smith is at least working with an actual historical event. What he makes of it is another matter.

The guerilla commander is a linguist who has had a brilliant academic career and runs the African Languages department at Kazin's institute with phenomenal efficiency—seven 'authoritative dictionaries' in five years.<sup>57</sup> Despite these trappings of the West we are quickly made to realize that the savage is still active in Timothy Mageba:

The nose broad and flat with flaring nostrils, the lips a thick purple black and behind them big strong white animal teeth. From behind

<sup>53</sup> Smith, *The Sunbird*, 72.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

this impassive mask a chained animal ferocity glowers through the eye slits . . . There is a satanical presence about him, despite the white shirt and dark business suit he wears . . .<sup>58</sup>

Initiated into his tribal mysteries by his witchdoctor grandfather, even in his Johannesburg office he is liable to lapse into a trance as the spirit of his grandfather possesses him. In other words degrees and Marxist-Leninism are not enough to muzzle the instincts of the brute in an African.

Timothy Mageba's gang first reveals its presence in the Rhodesian bush by massacring a group of bushmen. Smith's attempts at pathos in describing this scene are destroyed by a salaciousness in his detail as well as by his confusion as to the sort of moral judgement that is appropriate when African kills African. Thus we are suddenly informed that 'For the Bantu the bushmen girls are an object of peculiar lust. I do not know why this should be so, perhaps it is their golden yellow colour, or it may be their tiny doll-like bodies.'<sup>59</sup> And when the significance of the killings is considered Smith falls back on remarks like 'It's their style . . . Frelimo, Mau-Mau, all of them hit their own people hardest', and Kazin reflects on 'the savage ferocity of this land of ours'.<sup>60</sup> It is a part of the book's thesis that only Carthaginians or white Southern Africans can check the natural savagery of Africa and therefore the killing of the Bushmen is part of the normal brutal cycle. When Kazin and the police party have fought their way out of the guerilla ambush, they drive to Bulawayo. As Kazin looks around the town and sees 'the smiles on the faces around me, I wondered why anybody should want to destroy this society — and if they succeeded, with what they would replace it'. And he immediately thinks of the City of the Moon:

A great civilization, a nation which held dominion over an area the size of Europe, a people who built great cities of stone and sent their ships in trade to the limits of the known world. All that remained of them were the few poor relics which we had so laboriously gleaned. No other continent was so fickle in the succour it gave to men, to raise them up so swiftly and pluck them down and devour them so that they were denied even a place in her memory. A cruel land, a savage and merciless land.<sup>61</sup>

In its perverse refusal to acknowledge that social and economic conditions may provide motives for political action *The Sunbird* is a remarkable novel. Smith is able, for example, to emphasize that the Blacks in the City of the Moon and its empire are serfs and slaves and remain unaware of the irony that these parallel the Blacks in modern Southern Africa. While page after page of the novel deals with the cruel savagery of Africa, nowhere does Smith mention that the dark-suited Mageba leaves his office in Johannesburg each day to live with apartheid.

It is a pity that Laurens van der Post's name should be linked with Wilbur Smith's if only by juxtaposing them in this article. Van der Post is a serious writer, whatever misgivings one might have about the accuracy of his anthropology and the appropriateness of his predisposition to transform routine African journeys into psycho-epics exploring human consciousness. In 1972, the same year that *The Sunbird* was published, Van der Post published *A*

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 216, 217.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 231.

*Story Like the Wind*, the first part of a two-part novel, the second part *A Far-Off Place* being published in 1974.<sup>62</sup> As both parts can be read as a single novel and as there is no difference in Van der Post's treatment of the war in the two parts, I shall consider both novels here.

The inclusion of these two novels in this article must be defended. Nowhere is Rhodesia mentioned by name and it is part of Van der Post's intention that Hunter's Drift, the farm that the guerilla armies overrun, should not be able to be located with any certainty either in time or space. Historical and geographical accuracy would be regarded as a vulgarity in books which are concerned to allow the 'flow of a primitive world . . . to help thaw the frozen imagination of our civilized systems so that some sort of spirit can come again to the minds of men'.<sup>63</sup> Although this is Van der Post's intention, there is enough evidence in the books to locate Hunter's Drift on the Rhodesian-Botswana border. The border road—the old Hunter's or Pandamatenka Road—runs along the boundary of the farm; the rivers flow northwards to the Zambezi and Bulawayo lies to the south. More important for the purposes of this article is the fact that the action of the novel takes place some years after the first massacre of Whites in northern Angola which marked the beginning of the Angolan revolution. The point is worth making that whatever Van der Post's intentions may have been, it is clearly impossible to ignore the realities of history; and it is equally impossible not to pass judgement on historical processes which, whether an author likes it or not, implicitly or explicitly he is forced to refer to.

Thus although François Joubert, the central character, whose growth from childhood to an early manhood the novels describe, grows up with his imagination in complete harmony with the bush around him, it is necessary that Van der Post should distort—one could even say sentimentalize—Africa in order to allow him this spiritual intimacy. For it is essentially a part of Van der Post's contention about the superiority of what he calls 'the primitive world' that none of the sympathetic Africans in the novel aspire to the life of modern Africa, but have to be held like flies in the amber of Van der Post's imaginary continent.<sup>64</sup> But this can only be done by making Hunter's Drift a curious mixture of feudal unit, socialist commune and reservation which will keep its inhabitants unspotted from the world. So the great farmstead of Hunter's Drift resembles a Boer farmstead of the last century even down to the baroque gables of Cape Dutch architecture. What has to be ignored is the amount of back-breaking labour that the routine of the farm demands. It is after all amazingly productive and with its irrigation systems and vast range of crops as far removed from 'primitive Africa' as it is able to be.

This sort of contradiction must of course inform Van der Post's account of the guerilla invasion. François's first glimpse of the guerillas, the men of

<sup>62</sup> Lourens van der Post, *A Story Like the Wind* (London, The Hogarth Press, 1972; Penguin Books, 1974); *A Far-Off Place* (London, The Hogarth Press, 1974).

<sup>63</sup> Van der Post, *A Story Like the Wind* (1974 edit.), 10-11.

<sup>64</sup> Despite this, we are told that François's father retired to Hunter's Drift because as Director of Education he 'could not stomach the official neglect of African education although the Africans needed it more than the Europeans'. As a result of his liberalism he is ignored by other Europeans. Elsewhere in the book, however, Mr Joubert's attitude to education is criticized. François has to learn to reject the paternalism of his parents as far as African education is concerned, since it is marked with a 'longing to give' that is never really matched 'with an equal longing to receive'. If the implications of this are followed through, the destruction of Hunter's Drift can be seen as a liberating act as far as François is concerned. Without the house he is forced to return to the 'primitive life'.

the spear as his Ndebele companion calls them, shows them to be people wholly alien to the rhythms of the bush that Van der Post's prose has established with such care for over two hundred pages. They are led by a Chinese, for *A Story Like the Wind* was written when the right-wing analysis of revolutionary movements in southern Africa favoured a Chinese rather than a Soviet conspiracy. Significantly they kill more game than they can eat which is a sign that 'they have death in their hearts and have come to like only killing'.<sup>65</sup> When the first guerillas enter the vicinity of Hunter's Drift their presence is indicated to those accustomed to listen to the messages of the bush by a change in the call of the birds showing that something is amiss. The chief medium of the area begins to prophesy disaster and God himself appears to him in a dream telling him of the great trouble that is about to come over the land: 'Could not all see, the dream asked how the young men had forgotten the praise names of Umkulunkulu and no longer spoke of him but only of things that were useful to them?'<sup>66</sup> Soon more tangible signs begin to appear. Modern trucks begin to move up and down the Pandamatenka Road, their occupants rejecting offers of hospitality which the people of Hunter's Drift instinctively make to them. On one occasion François sees concealed in one of the trucks the same Chinese that he had seen in the bush. On another, three clergymen arrive at the house and announce that they are from the 'World Council of Christian Churches' to look into 'the exploitation of the innocent black people of Africa by you settlers, and to advise on the extent to which it was a Christian duty to help the "freedom fighters" of Africa in their battle against Imperialism and neo-Colonialism'.<sup>67</sup> This is little more than parody and the parody is heightened by the fact that their faces are 'pink' and 'well-fed', a telling condemnation of lack of commitment in a world where the Europeans are suitably lean and tanned. When the attack on Hunter's Drift comes, it comes suddenly one morning. François who has left the house with his girl friend, called into the surrounding bush by a Bushman he has befriended, escapes the massacre which destroys the whole community of the farm. It is at this point that the first novel ends.

What strikes one about Van der Post's account of the war is how little it differs from so many of the other writers I have considered here. Like Burgess before him, or Peter Stiff, he implies that the war is wholly alien to the real spirit of Africa, although he differs from these writers in making what he believes that spirit to be his principle concern. Van der Post has dealt with revolution in an earlier novel, *Flamingo Feather*, which reminds one of Buchan's *Prester John* written nearly fifty years previously. *Flamingo Feather* is an obvious adventure story and is intended to be read as such. In that book, Soviet organizers are exploiting the tribal loyalties of Nguni groups from the Cape to the Equator but the implications of the plot are hardly intended to be taken more seriously than the sudden show of tribal solidarity among the Africans of Buchan's novel. Both novels are designed to send thrills down the spines of white Southern Africans at the idea of being surrounded by some mystical black unity from which they are excluded. Although in *A Story Like the Wind* and *A Far-Off Place* Van der Post is writing about an actual war and the books are intended to be more than adventure stories, the motives of the guerillas are never explained and remain as arcane as did those of the insurgent Nguni in *Flamingo Feather*. The leaders of course, have their say. The Chinese chairman defends the massacre at

<sup>65</sup> Van der Post, *A Story Like the Wind*, 229.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 444-5.

Hunter's Drift by explaining: 'we take little life so not to take much later on';<sup>68</sup> but the main spokesmen of the guerillas, a Scot and a Frenchman, are mercenaries and can hardly speak for what one imagines are their dedicated companions. The Africans, who are on the march from Angola to Rhodesia, never become more than 'Kaffirs... massing in the mountain valleys and bush on the far side of the desert and coming to kill anyone who is not a kaffir',<sup>69</sup> as François's Bushman friend describes them. Certainly the Frenchman talks of a 'system so strong that it can unite the world by force into one powerful society and keep it united and disciplined and in a state of order by force',<sup>70</sup> but that hardly explains why Rhodesian settlers should be particularly selected for extermination, nor why a follower of Mao should use the language of Fascism to defend his part in the war.

In 1973, a year after *A Story Like the Wind* was published, Peter Stiff's *The Rain Goddess* appeared.<sup>71</sup> Like Daniel Carney, Stiff was in the B.S.A.P., though unlike Carney he was a career policeman and rose to the rank of Superintendent. With such a background and at a date when the form the guerilla incursions were taking was becoming more and more obvious, Stiff is able to write with a certain historical authority. He uses dates with care. The first part of the book is set shortly after U.D.I. and moves into 1966. The second part is dated in 1972. December of that year marked the beginning of a sustained guerilla presence in north-eastern Rhodesia and the second part of the book is based on many of the incidents that occurred during that rainy season. An actual event, the abduction of children from St Albert's mission in June 1973, provides an historical basis for the events that mark the climax of the book.

*The Rain Goddess* is also interesting in that it is only the second novel that attempts to provide a guerilla perspective on the war. It describes the disillusionment of men who have crossed into Zambia to join the guerillas when they become aware of the incompetence of the Lusaka Military Command in the early 1970s and that the significant military victories that Lusaka claimed were, in fact, mere clashes where small bands of infiltrators were annihilated. These are, however, merely details to serve the novel's larger contention which is that the activities of the guerillas run counter to traditional tribal practices. Stiff is thus continuing the theme of Burgess's novel. As the title suggests, the *mhondoro* who controls the rain in the area is finally a more significant figure in Shona society than the guerillas will ever be. Opposed as she is to the violence and death that the guerillas have brought among the people of Senga, she withholds rain until the tribespeople are willing to turn against them.<sup>72</sup> The notion that traditional society actively supports white rule is one, as I have indicated, that began to be canvassed in the later 1940s. Stiff in suggesting that the *mhondoro* does actually have

<sup>68</sup> Van der Post, *A Far-Off Place*, 56.

<sup>69</sup> Van der Post, *A Story Like the Wind*, 460.

<sup>70</sup> Van der Post, *A Far-Off Place*, 104.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Stiff, *The Rain Goddess* (Salisbury, Jacaranda Press, 1973; London, New English Library, 1976).

<sup>72</sup> M. Bourdillon in *The Shona Peoples* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1976), 293-301, discusses the roles and responsibilities of the *mhondoro* and these approximate to those Peter Stiff attributes to his 'rain goddess'. He does, however, assert (*The Shona Peoples*, 319) that in the present war, spirit mediums have been active in their support of the guerillas which is confirmed by several trials of spirit mediums accused of supporting guerillas. This would tie in with Ranger's contention that mediums have played significant roles in previous risings against white rule both in Rhodesia and Mozambique, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia and 'The Last Days of the Empire of Mwene Mutapa 1898-1917* (Lusaka, Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, History of Central African Peoples Conference, 1963).

power over the rain raises what was a political expedient to a mystical principle. When Kephass Ndhlela, the guerilla character on which much of the book is focused, is killed there is a crack of thunder, a flash of lightning and the rains begin to fall. 'The Spirit of the Rain Goddess had received her sacrifice of blood and was satisfied. The rain would now be released from the heavens'.<sup>73</sup> Throughout the book it is implied that the guerillas are able to recruit youngsters from the tribal areas only by accident and deceit. Kephass attends his first nationalist meeting because he is more frightened of being denounced as a 'sell-out' than because he is taken in by nationalist claims. 'All these men can do for us is to bring trouble from the police, he says. 'I have heard they live with fat whores in big houses in Salisbury and Bulawayo on the cash they collect from uneducated people in the tribal areas'.<sup>74</sup> His assessment is shown to be correct. Simon Gumede, the nationalist leader from Salisbury, is a cowardly crook subtly exploiting the primitive bloodlust of simple peasants. In the first flush of enthusiasm the people who have attended his meeting turn into a savage mob and attack a village whose inhabitants are suspected of being indifferent to the nationalists' cause. "'Fire, fire, fire," they chanted, their eyes glazed with savage excitement, each man hypnotised by the violence.'<sup>75</sup> His own instincts responding to the brutality around him Kephass sets fire to the thatch of a hut 'eyes staring from . . . madness',<sup>76</sup> as he does so. Later, even more unwillingly, he is persuaded to pour arsenical dip into a water trough on a white-owned ranch, killing a herd of cattle and some travellers who had stopped to drink there. Inevitably Kephass is caught up by the police investigations into the incident and he flees to Salisbury where Gumede persuades him to leave the country, promising that he will be trained as a doctor if he does so. Only when he is outside Rhodesia does he realize that he has been recruited for military training.

That captured guerillas have claimed that they were tricked by promises of education into leaving the country has been a standard defence in Rhodesian courts since the first captures were made in 1966. Although the defence has seldom been accepted by the courts in mitigation of sentence, the claim has been used by the Government as further evidence that the apparently widespread dissatisfaction in Rhodesia has been brought about by unscrupulous agitators like Gumede. The large numbers of school boys who, although in secure possession of school places left the country to join the guerillas during 1974 and 1975 suggests that few people were in fact so naive.<sup>77</sup> Stiff makes no attempt to explain, for example, why Kephass who has every reason to hate the nationalists becomes one of their most dedicated fighters.

Although Peter Stiff's novel was, in 1973, the most accurate book so far written about the Rhodesian war, like its predecessors it fails even to consider the possibility that a sophisticated political choice changed the methods of nationalism from passive resistance to violence. For, finally *The Rain Goddess* falls back on the stock characters and situations that have peopled the Rhodesian novel from the beginning: hopelessly idealistic missionaries who are raped and murdered for their pains; tough farmers who are protecting the land hacked from virgin bush and inevitably an Ndebele who

<sup>73</sup> Stiff, *The Rain Goddess*, 256.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>77</sup> The issue of school children joining the guerillas was highlighted in February 1977, when over 400 children from Manama mission crossed to Botswana. Security Force communiqués claimed that they had been forcibly abducted but foreign journalists interviewing the children in Francistown had the impression that many, if not the majority, had gone voluntarily.

remains consistently faithful to the white authorities. The Blacks in this book are, as they have always been, swayed by superstitious awe of the spiritual leaders of their tribe or, as in the burning of the village, liable to lapse from the standards their tribal ethics demand of them into mindless savagery. Limited as the novel is by these clichés which are expressions of myths about Rhodesian society, it is impossible for it to provide an intelligent account of the war.

Michael Hartmann's *Game for Vultures*<sup>78</sup> published in 1975 shares with *The Rain Goddess* an authenticity of detail but differs from it in showing a healthy scepticism for the very myths that limited the significance of its predecessor. In the first place a guerilla victory is allowed on several occasions to be seen as a possibility, something that the Rhodesian novel has not hinted since Robin Brown's *When the Woods Became the Trees*. A character in Hartmann's novel, David Swansey, remarks 'You forget there's a war going on there or counter-insurgency operations as the optimists call it.'<sup>79</sup> Later reflecting on the leisurely comfort of Rhodesian life, he reflects that 'it could all end so quickly in one mad flurry of violence'.<sup>80</sup> The white Rhodesian male is not represented as the stereotype of eighty years. A reservist glimpsed through the eyes of a guerilla becomes 'an old man trying to relive the lost days of his youth by dressing up and guarding a lonely mission station. Doing his bit for his country. Marunga could imagine the man talking—I've fought Hitler and hell, I'm still good enough to show a few munts the wrong end of a rifle.'<sup>81</sup> A cabinet minister glances at Salisbury's rush hour traffic and observes, 'There's our army down there . . . Men who spend eleven months of the year pushing pens and one month pushing themselves through some of the dirtiest country in the world. Oh, they do it with plenty of curses. But they do it.'<sup>82</sup> *The Rain Goddess* recognizes the divisions between the political and military leadership in the nationalist organizations but Gumedede is so hostilely characterized as the fat nationalist leader affecting radicalism to serve his own ambitions — that the dramatic potential of Kephass's scorn for his military incompetence cannot develop. In *Game for Vultures*, on the other hand, the Lusaka leader is a Mr Mtoko, who is seen almost entirely through the eyes of a field commander. This latter man revels in his 'houseboys' name of Sixpence, enjoying the grim ironic tension between his authority as a soldier and that reductive name. By retaining the names of Sixpence he expresses his scornful impatience with the ideologically correct rhetoric emanating from the High Command that has little connection with the progress of the war. Without resorting to caricature, Hartmann manages to convey these divisions with an effective economy. 'Mr Mtoko is from Lusaka,' says Sixpence. "'One of our leaders. He's an under-secretary or something.'" "I have come to tell you of operation Red Sea," said Mtoko. "It is a mission of great importance . . ." "It would have had to be for you to come anywhere near," murmured Sixpence."<sup>83</sup>

For the first time in the Rhodesian novel, Blacks who oppose white rule are not offered as crazy savages. However much the book disapproves of the guerilla incursions, both Sixpence and the main guerilla figure, Marunga, are shown to be at least rationally motivated, responding to the casual contempt with which they have so often been treated by white society. A vignette

<sup>78</sup> Michael Hartmann, *Game for Vultures* (London, Heinemann, 1975).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

of Murunga looking for work shortly before he makes the decision to cross the border makes the point. He approaches a group of white women having tea on a verandah in Highlands, "“Oh dear me,” one had cooed, “They’re becoming so cheeky these days. It’s this silly man Nkomo. Ruining their respect Here boy, have a sixpence and for goodness sake, stand up straight!” . . . Dismissed as a minor, amusing diversion. Sinking with humiliation, he had left. Right then he would have cut every white throat in Rhodesia.”<sup>84</sup> In a scene like this we are a long way from the youngsters in *The Rain Goddess*, crossing the border, starry-eyed with the hope of further education. The killing of ‘sell-outs’ in Peter Stiff’s novel were acts of bestial savagery, as judging from the security forces’ communiqués on such incidents they must frequently be. *Game for Vultures* recognizes that such ‘executions’ must frequently involve agonizing moral choices. A store-keeper who does not warn the guerillas that the security forces have booby-trapped his store is shot. But his five-year old daughter was raped by some of Sixpence’s men and Sixpence realizing that his hatred of terrorism has some validity pleads with the storekeeper to understand his point of view. “Can you imagine the doubt that will be thrown into the minds of the local people if we let [you] go? . . . People are not concerned why a thing happened, they are only concerned with what happened. [You] let them die, that’s all that counts, not why [you] let them die.”<sup>85</sup> By emphasizing the moral complexity of the incident, Hartmann allows both Sixpence and the store-keeper to emerge with dignity. Only one member of Sixpence’s gang, David Battin, a coloured, is shown as being capable of little more than destructive hatred. Watching his defence council plead, in mitigation of sentence, that he was unaware of what he would be called upon to do when he joined the guerillas, Battin reflects, ‘No you stupid, undernourished monkey, I knew the implications . . . I wanted to join. I wanted to get back to Rhodesia and blast a few holes in fat honkies. I wanted to vent my anger, smash up property, destroy and burn and loot. I wanted to ravage your smug, lazy women; to show your conceited, arrogant minds that I too had blood and flesh and senses.’<sup>86</sup> That word ‘honkey’ from the jargon of American black-power, is more likely to be in the vocabulary of a coloured than in the language of a Rhodesian African and despite the awkward melodrama of the passage—the ghost of Shylock hovers in the background—it is just possible for Battin to have such sentiments and express them so negatively.

It is at this point, however, that one must begin to question the analysis of the Rhodesian war offered by *Game for Vultures*. As I have said, throughout the novel it is implied that the violence of African nationalism is a response to white racism with the further implication that if Whites were more aware of a common humanity in black Rhodesians the war need never have happened. What such an analysis ignores is that a power structure designed to maintain and reinforce the status of a white élite is seen by nationalists as being not only unjust but in the Africa of the 1970s profoundly inappropriate. They would argue that the maintenance of white privilege is the beginning and the end of existing constitutional organization in Rhodesia and only radical changes can affect it. In other words the causes of the war should be looked for at deeper levels than the niceness or nastiness of individual Whites towards their fellow Blacks. Liberal guilt at the routine racial intolerance that characterizes so much of Rhodesian life does not give any understanding into the motives of nationalism. It can provide at best a

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

superficial analysis that does not touch on the root of the issues. Although *Game for Vultures* is distinguished by being the only one of these novels that attempts to look at the causes of the war, it does not arrive at any profound understanding.

On the other hand, where the novel is successful is in suggesting something of the war's complexity. It could be argued that what emerges from the book is that this is in every sense of the term a civil war. *Game for Vultures* has at the centre of its structure an inter-racial marriage between a White and a Coloured. Peter Swansey fights with the Security Forces, his wife is Battin's sister and Swansey gives evidence against him after his capture. Swansey's brother, Dave, is a sanctions buster arranging for war materials to be imported into Rhodesia for the Rhodesian army. The tensions within the Swanseys' marriage are therefore an expression of the antagonisms within the larger society both in fact and imaginatively. By localizing within a marriage the conflicts of loyalties the war necessarily has produced. Hartmann manages to remove the war from the simplifications of opposing ideologies with which the other novelists have been content to work and examines instead its effects on all Rhodesians. After David Swansey has succeeded in getting his war materials into Rhodesia he is forced to recognize the brutal and sordid reality of a war that in England could be distanced by the rhetoric that defends the position of one or the other side; or more culpably could be seen by the arms dealers as nothing more than an opportunity for easy money. All the other novels deal with the cruelty of the war but all consciously or unconsciously imply the absolute rightness of what can only be seen in these novels as the white 'cause'. Hartmann, with his suggestion of civil war, manages a refreshingly compassionate objectivity.

Two novels about the war have been published during 1976. Both are by writers with little connection with Rhodesia and are negligible both as literary works and as intelligent commentaries on the war. William Rayner's *The Day of Chaminuka* returns to the old formula exploited by Carney nearly ten years previously. Giles Tippette, an American, writes *The Mercenaries* with a journalistic efficiency and economy that would be effective within its own limitations if the book were not crammed with ludicrous mis-spellings and inaccuracies and depended on any more subtle understanding of the war than is provided by Ministry of Information hand-outs.

*The Day of Chaminuka*, like *The Rain Goddess* and a *Game for Vultures* attempts objectivity by having two main characters, one from among the Whites, the other with the guerillas. The potentials of this structure are, however, hardly developed. The guerillas are presented as people with a serious political motive, competently organized, and capable even of idealism, but Rayner refuses to follow through the moral and political implications of a war in which people like these are attempting to destroy the stability and harmony that is represented by the white farmer in the book. Instead, he introduces another character, a rebel to the nationalists' cause, who claiming that he has been possessed by the spirit of Chaminuka, preys on the superstitious fears of the peasants with all the paraphernalia and rituals of a medium. Chaminuka is, in fact, one of the two most important spirits within the Shona spirit hierarchy,<sup>87</sup> but the man who has appropriated his mediumship is a product of Hollywood mumbo-jumbo and his rituals bear no relation to normal Shona practice. Rayner's choice of Chaminuka as an appropriate spirit to be invoked by Rufu does, however, have some tenuous connection

<sup>87</sup> A discussion concerning Chaminuka and his medium can be found in Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 301, 318-20.

with the facts of the war. According to Bourdillon, Chaminuka's name is frequently invoked in militant nationalist songs,<sup>88</sup> as it is in several poems that deal obliquely with the war.<sup>89</sup> In the novel, however, Rufu when the spirit is speaking through him uses the language of the more sanguinary of Old Testament prophecies:

'It is my wrath that darkened your lives. You ran after strange gods and became servants in your own land . . . This is the day of Chaminuka, a day of vengeance on your enemies. The spear shall eat them up. The knife shall be made drunk with their blood and it shall be as a sacrifice to Lord Chaminuka . . . I will cut them off, men, women, child and suckling. The mighty shall be laid low.'<sup>90</sup>

Although Rayner remarks on the 'black joke' whereby Chaminuka echoes the ravings of the Prophets, the novel draws no conclusion about this confusion of Christian and Shona religious inspiration which is used to justify the bestial cruelty of Rufu's methods. Nor is it clear whether Rayner is conscious of the irony that Rufu attacks the 'Army Council . . . with the tabs on their uniforms and their filing cabinets and telephones . . . They are fake white men,'<sup>91</sup> but Rufu does not acknowledge his own debt to Western religion. What Rayner does seem to be trying to do is to emphasize how alien to Africa is the ideology of someone like Moyo, the guerilla leader. He is described as a 'young agnostic of Marxist leanings'<sup>92</sup> determined to free the people from their superstitious delusions but when he speaks to the farm labourers, offering them freedom and justice, and trying to inspire them with the success of Chinese revolution, they are uneasily silent, unable to reconcile his account of their oppression with the experience on the farm. They can respond only to the religious fervour of Rufu's rhetoric not to the practical rationalism of Moyo with his Marxist background.

Rayner develops this idea by making Moyo the bastard son of the farmer, Holt, something which the young man had not suspected when he came to Holt's farm in order to kill him. Confronted with the fact of Holt as his father, he lapses back into the traditional Shona respect for his ancestors. 'Am I to shed the blood of my father?' he asks,<sup>93</sup> and from the moment of revelation he is concerned only to protect Holt from Rufu's vengeance.

The point that is supposed to emerge from this is that the pull of kin is more powerful for a Shona than any loyalty he may feel towards the revolution, although it emerges obscurely since Rufu is so improbable a character and Holt is hardly representative of Rhodesian farmers. In fact Rayner goes out of his way to emphasize Holt's eccentricity. Not only was he once a well known English poet but he organizes an extraordinary dance for his labourers on the lawn of the farm house during which he ritually asserts his virile authority over them. As he dances he is at one with the primitive passions of Africa.<sup>94</sup>

Confronted with nonsense like this, the reader is merely bewildered as to what *The Day of Chaminuka* is trying to do. Certainly there is stability and harmony on Holt's farm but since it grows out of Holt's bizarre rituals

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>89</sup> An example can be found in Bonus Zimunya's 'Efulmachina', in *Rhodesian Poetry* (1976-7), 13, 32-3.

<sup>90</sup> Rayner, *Day of Chaminuka*, 151.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 80-2.

it is impossible to draw any conclusions about Rayner's attitude to the war. The farm labourers are shown to be indifferent to Moyo's Marxist oratory and stirred in a savage way only by Rufu. They are the same Africans, gullible and superstitious as Terick spoke about in *The Whispering Death*. Even when Rufu is finally killed, Holt affects the spirit of Chaminuka and Rufu's followers 'moaning with panic'<sup>95</sup> disappear. Rayner keeps his options open. At the very end of the book, Holt dies asserting his authority over Moyo to the end as he orders him to bury his body in a favourite spot. But Moyo does not die and one can only conclude that he continues as a guerilla leader, the book curiously suspending judgement on his ideals and his methods. It is as if Rayner has returned to that initially favourable impression of the guerillas that the opening chapters provide. Nevertheless it is a confusion, since nothing in the plot of the novel justifies our being left with such an impression.

I have indicated the sort of merit that Giles Tippetts's book has. As the title suggests, it concerns mercenaries, in this case led by Americans who are called in by the Rhodesians to attack guerilla base camps in what is rather coyly called Zambezi land in the novel but what is presumably Zambia. The argument for using mercenaries is that it is politically impossible for the Rhodesian forces to undertake such a raid, a contention that events during 1976 have shown to be without foundation. Some interest lies in the fact that the book provides an American view of the war and, however ill-informed it is, it has at least that distinction. Tippetts must have at some time visited the North-East and the tension under which white farmers live and have lived now for over four years is efficiently conveyed.<sup>96</sup> In Tippetts's opinion, however, no one joins the guerillas voluntarily. This is not surprising since one of the leaders, called Mau Mau, has filed his teeth to points in order more closely to resemble his cannibal ancestors while Mobunzu his companion habitually refers to his followers as 'munts'—the Whites in this book use the word 'Wog'. Tippetts, on the other hand, prefers 'boy'. A sample recruiting incident reads like this:

Mobunzu called over Lodi, old Emma's nephew. 'Hey, munt!' The boy looked up at him sullenly, Mobunzu grinned. 'You going to be a brave freedom fighter for the people's cause?' When the boy didn't answer, Mobunzu laughed. None of them was worth much, he thought. They'd spend all of their time at the training base trying to desert, and, once they were brought back into Rhodesia . . . they'd fight only out of fear of being shot by their own leaders. Munts like these, Mobunzu thought, deserved the white man.<sup>97</sup>

So far removed is such dialogue from what is probable among the Rhodesian guerillas that one can only presume that Tippetts is trying to dramatize the sort of information that he has been given about guerilla recruiting methods which are in turn largely dependant on myths about a contented tribal people and ruthlessly cruel insurgents.

It should be with some relief that one turns from *The Mercenaries* to Robert Early's *A Time of Madness*. Early is the fourth of these novelists who has had a police career in Rhodesia and is unique among them by being a regular in the army — he has served with the Grey Scouts since 1973. Despite this

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>96</sup> A prefatory note to the book claims: 'All the political and military conditions described here are true, as I have reason to know.' Since practically every observation about Africans in the book is wrong, one can only presume that he relied on Whites for his information about guerilla recruiting and military methods.

<sup>97</sup> *The Mercenaries*, 287.

experience he has produced a novel as politically ignorant as *The Mercenaries* and the most gratuitously brutal of any novel that I have considered in this review.

Part of the reason for the book's political naivete is its rigorous racism which makes it impossible for Early to conceive of the guerillas' motives and therefore to have any understanding of the war. To remark, as Early does, of the receptionist at the Makuti Motel that 'she was the only single girl in eight-thousand square, womanless miles,'<sup>99</sup> is to suggest that femininity is the exclusive possession of European women and is indicative of the way the novel almost unconsciously denies the humanity of Africans. Early has made his attitude to Africans clear from the beginning although he chooses to express his more doctrinaire racism in the reflections of a missionary priest:

a thousand years of savage, pagan existence could not be wiped out at one stroke. It would take many generations of dedicated men to eliminate the fears and superstitions which were fundamental to the tribal Africans' make-up.<sup>99</sup>

The implication that non-tribal Africans are not subject to these 'fundamental' attitudes, contradicts the very point that Early is trying to make, and, in a less confused novel, would perhaps be blamed on the addled mind of Father Antonio. This would be understandable enough since he has grown old, 'cut off from civilized contact', and now realizing how obdurately savage Africans are is inclined at night to curse God and to 'consign all his teachings to the deepest pits of hell'.<sup>100</sup> In fact there is nothing wrong with Father Antonio's mind. He has merely taken a long time to discover what Early could have told him all along. When the priest realizes that his favourite pupil, Gara, is recruiting for the guerillas and questions him about it, Early remarks:

The blank uncomprehending slightly idiotic look which has baffled, intrigued and infuriated white men in Africa for hundreds of years, clamped across Gara's features like a shutter, giving the impression that a light had gone out behind his eyes.<sup>101</sup>

Writing such as this deserves to be mocked for its arrogance and the total absence in it of insight or compassion. One would imagine that since Gara is holding meetings in a Tribal Trust Land waving an A.K. above his head, Early would be the first to appreciate his need for discretion, but that would imply rational motive and this Early seems incapable of attributing to Africans, preferring stock ideas of their evasive stupidity. 'Wounded buffalo, charging lions and berserk Africans'<sup>102</sup> are offered as a list of hazards encountered in the Rhodesian bush, the animal qualities of all three being apparently indistinguishable from one another.

It is hardly surprising then that the master-mind of the guerillas in *A Time of Madness* should be not an African but a Hungarian communist. Gara, as Early observes, is one of many 'sponsored by the expansionist dreams of Marx, Lenin, and Mao for the overthrow of established order'.<sup>103</sup> The distortions of Marxist theory contained within those tangled metaphors is

<sup>99</sup> Early, *A Time of Madness*, 84.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

one of the few statements of political ideology that the novel provides. This is the more curious since the Hungarian is the 'regional director of the Africa Department attached to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs',<sup>104</sup> and one might expect that he at least would be better versed in Marxist-Leninist theory than he shows himself to be. Instead his breath comes 'fast and shallow' and 'a film of perspiration' covers his face as he speaks of his megalomaniac vision: 'The deaths, the murders you squeal about mean nothing, less than nothing compared with the Soviet conquest of Africa and you with your pathetic laws and senile system of Western democracy cannot stop it'.<sup>105</sup> No Marxist would see the growth of communist states within Africa as its conquest by the Soviets and no one outside the Rhodesia Front could possibly claim that the 1969 Rhodesian constitution exemplified Western Democracy. Even Early does not seem particularly concerned that his novel should give substance to any idea of Rhodesia's political decency. His policeman hero, Rich Kelly, the first person narrator of much of the book, treats the processes of the law as something to be evaded by police conspiracy if necessary—if Stanislaw, the Hungarian, is to be apprehended. *A Time of Madness* repeats the implied idea in *The Whispering Death* that when faced with the brutality that is a part of the war ordinary legal procedures are inappropriate.

That may well be true but it is significant that the particular incident that arouses Kelly's bloodlust is the torture and murder of the family of a European farmer. The incident requires detailed examination not only because its horror provides Kelly's moral motivation throughout the novel but because Early has apparently found the actual brutality of the war insufficient for the purposes of his book and has had to invent an incident more brutal than any that has involved Whites. Numerous white civilians have been killed in ambushes, mining incidents and attacks on farmsteads and children have been murdered and maimed in some of these incidents as must be inevitable in a war where the civilian population is involved. African children have also been killed both by the guerillas and the security forces when they have been caught in cross-fire or in the case of the security forces when they have been mistaken for guerillas. All of these incidents are horrifying enough to satisfy any novelist. In the attack on Nyamahamba Farm, however, Early chooses to make Gara and his followers not only murder the Ronson family, and torture the mother and children before they die, but as a grisly additional detail feed the children's limbs to the dogs in the compound. Conceivably such things could happen in this war — it is after all horrible enough for anything to happen—but what strikes one about this incident, apart from speculation about the sort of mind that could have imagined it, is that it is wholly improbable in narrative terms. Gara and his followers are making for the Zambezi and safety as quickly as the rugged country of the escarpment allows and while they might well attack a farm they would hardly slow down their retreat by torturing its occupants. One can only repeat that it is gratuitous horror. Similarly, lack of skill on Early's part makes Kelly appear to be unaffected by the incident. Later on the same day, he is exchanging bawdy remarks with the Makuti receptionist and, scorning the bed and rest prescribed for a septic foot, is drinking in the bar with the boys — 'it looked like turning into a very pleasant afternoon'.<sup>106</sup> Of course, throughout the book the image of the tortured children is to return to him in order to justify whatever act of brutality he happens to be engaged in, but that Kelly is really

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

moved by the recollection is asserted rather than demonstrated by the novel. Not that Early is incapable of sentimentality. One of the strands of the book — it can hardly be said to be a theme — is the fellowship that develops between tough men in the bush. This is partly exemplified when enlistment in the Rhodesian Light Infantry ensures the reformation of a Johannesburg hoodlum, Lance Koster. Even then Early seems undecided whether his newly discovered decency can be attributed to the R.L.I. or the love of a beautiful woman. Lance, who enlisted after killing a Johannesburg café owner, thinks he is going to be recognized by a South African policeman serving with the Rhodesians, and decides to desert to Zambia. As he reaches the river he sees a canoe landing nine guerillas on the Rhodesian shore. 'The sons-of-whore-binding-bitches, he thought, as he watched the nine terrorists unload their equipment onto the sandy bank. Who do they think they're playing around with? It's the R.L.I. they'll have to face. We'll slaughter them.' This surge of regimental pride is only a momentary lapse, however. He determines to cross and then suddenly 'a vision of Lindy's face hit him. Lindy, her face alight with the soft angel glow of the life inside her. Aglow with a glorious peace and the wonderful contentment with the life she carried',<sup>107</sup> and he returns to his patrol. It is almost incredible that people can still write like this.

Most of *A Time of Madness* is taken up with Kelly's hunt for Stanislaw which leads the policeman through various Salisbury night-clubs and Victoria Falls hotels. Although Salisbury's night life is given a glamour and sophistication it does not possess, this part of the book is more ably handled than the others. Some of the reason for this is that in describing Kelly's search for the communist master-mind, Early has behind him a whole tradition of spy novels that the Cold War engendered. Soldiers' secrets are coaxed out of them in a brothel suitably bugged and equipped with close-circuit television and managed by a homosexual who is Stanislaw's second in command. The scene could be in Berlin, London or New York or whatever cities are favoured by writers of spy novels, and is so far removed from the realities of the actual war in Rhodesia that it can be read as fantasy. Only at the Falls where Stanislaw is working a scheme to get Rhodesian bank notes to guerillas in Zambia does Early provide some motive for this complicated organization. Even then, one imagines it would be easier for the nationalist organizations to get Rhodesian currency at a bank in Switzerland than to arrange for the difficult and dangerous operation the book describes.

What is implied in this section of the book is what Rhodesians have so often been assured by white political leaders and the news-room of the local broadcasting corporation: the Rhodesian war is not a local phenomenon whose history and direction are able to be analysed purely in terms of the political processes of this country; instead it has been fostered and is now being conducted by the sinister forces of international communism. If such an analysis is accepted then the whole paraphernalia of skilled agents operating from behind appropriately sordid fronts becomes explicable and the guerillas are no more than the puppets Early's narrative makes them. Although even then these puppets are mere parodies of Africans: what many white Rhodesians seem to believe Africans are like when removed from the sensible controls of Rhodesian life. Gara acquires a white mistress whom he abuses, lives with all the luxury that Moscow funds can put at his disposal and yet

speaks in a language crammed with the metaphors that so many writers seem to feel are the appropriate registers of Africans; 'they are white sheep bleating at the scent of leopard smell in the wind' is a sample remark.<sup>10a</sup>

In many ways *A Time of Madness* is an appropriate novel with which to conclude an examination of books which, although many of them were written by men with first hand experience of the war, have shown themselves incapable of recognizing the situation in which they are involved. It is an extraordinary comment on white Rhodesian novelists that eighty years after the Chartered Company's report on 'Native unrest', only Michael Hartmann has managed to escape from the ignorant generalizations about Africans which exempt Whites from having to confront the fact that their policies and their government may in some way be responsible for the war. Eighty-five years of the colonial experience and of daily contact with Africans have not been sufficient to release, in the European mind, Africans from their character as superstitious savages. Nor have the Whites been able to alter their self-image from that of pioneers engaged in the glorious saga of Empire. As alarming as this is the evidence that these novels provide of an almost total lack of understanding of the history and the content of African nationalism. Since the Second World War few nationalist movements in colonial territories throughout the world have not had Marxist groups working within them; and as these movements became more militant their reliance on Marxist ideology has increased. This is only to be expected since violent change is a central tenet of Marxist ideology. But to see the war in Rhodesia as the creation of Moscow or Peking and to see it being controlled and conducted by the Kremlin is absurd. It is no different from Ernest Glanville's conspiracy and serves no purpose than to lull Whites into the comforting belief that Africans are incapable of political initiative.

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<sup>10a</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.