

The historical representation of the agony of war in Mia Couto's *Terra Sonâmbula*¹

Sunday Bamisile

Abstract

*It is a common knowledge that war is destructive. Its negative physical and sociopsychological effects on the young and old, combatant and non-combatants are substantial because of the stressful traumatic experiences of flagrant abuse of human rights, depression, anxiety, sexual violence, disability and the loss of the loved ones, malnutrition, among others. Most often than not, the most vulnerable are the elderly, women, children and the incapacitated. My focus in this paper is to carry out the historical representation of the agony of war in Mia Couto's *Terra Sonâmbula* by doing a textual analysis of this same novel. Through the use of historical approach, attempt will be made to understand the text through the analysis of the social and historical contexts in which the novel was written. The novel, which is divided into two distinct parts, illustrates the experience of two major characters (a child named Tuahir and an old man called Muidinga) that were initially separated due to factors beyond their control but they were reunited in a trip while the Mozambican civil war was still ongoing. The main objective is to demonstrate how the author depicted the calamity of this post independent Mozambican war that occurred between 30th May, 1976 and ended on 4th October, 1992 and its traumatic effects in the life of different characters. The findings include different burning issues such as discrimination, xenophobic attack, racism, corruption, among others, which affected Mozambique and her people immediately after the attainment of independence. The study concludes by showing the unique history, traditions and culture of the Mozambican people and how all these combined together to help the country build a viable state in the postcolonial period.*

Keywords: history, literature, struggle for power, Mozambican war, trauma

Introduction

In war situation, the poor are killed. In peace, it is the poor that dies.² *A Confissão da Leoa*, Mia Couto (2015).

Why do individual people despise themselves, hate themselves, abhor them-

1 This essay is a modification of a term paper submitted to Professor Ana Malfaldade Leite as a M. A student in 2002 /2003 academic session at the Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal.

2 Free translation from Portuguese to English of this extract and any other one in the essay was done by me.

selves and others, even during times of peace, and why does every nation treat the others in this way? This is certainly an enigma. (Sigmund Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death”)

This essay starts by referring to the Novel *Terra Sonâmbula* as an historical fiction because it reconstructs an unpleasant unforgettable past event in Mozambique, which was influenced by the war which took place between 30th May, 1976 and ended on 4th October, 1992. This essay is divided into six interrelated parts: In the first part, attention will be paid to the historical context of the text – here efforts will be made to situate the novel in context by evaluating the details that surrounded the sociocultural, religious, economic, and political occurrence and events that occurred in Mozambique during the period that the story was written. The second part, which serves as the theoretical basis of the essay will discuss and highlight the relevance of Historical approach in the evaluation of *Terra Sonâmbula*. Effort will be made to investigate the sociocultural, historical and political factors that facilitate the reconstruction of the motive behind the author's literary creation (remote and immediate cause). The third part shows how the author combines some of the following basic elements of historical novel: character, actions, setting, theme, plot, conflict, and world building in *Terra Sonâmbula*, which makes it to be reconsidered as an historical novel. The fourth part shows the author as a Mozambican born European writer with an African soul, who uses his literary creations to educate and inform the readers, and at the same time, criticise the struggle for power and corrupted leadership in his country. The fifth section, which is the heart of the essay, focuses on how the history of war and its effect on the people are demonstrated. Lastly the conclusion justifies how Couto faithfully uses his knowledge of Mozambican history appropriately to avoid distortion by authentically and objectively illustrating different sides of the stories without taking side.

An appraisal of Mozambican sociohistorical and political trajectories

Though the Portuguese and other European countries came to Africa under the pretext of civilization, Christianity and commerce,, their real mission was basically commercialisation and exploration (exploitation) Mondlane, (1969). Portugal was metropolis to five Lusophone speaking African countries: Angola, Mozambique, São Tome and Principles, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde Baço (2009). Mozambique, which is our area of attention, was founded by the Portuguese in 1498 (Torgal, Luís. 1996) Soon after their arrival, the Portuguese crown began to exploit the natural and human resources of the (African) continent and her people (Jones 1998). Colonisation began at the end of the 16th century

in order to protect the country from Dutch invasions Gilbert (2002). The colonial occupation was not peaceful and the Mozambicans and other Lusophone African countries had to carry out several nationalist revolts and resistances that eventually led to wars for their liberation from the yoke of Portuguese obnoxious colonial administration Newitt, Malyn (1995). The Mozambican's struggle for liberation started on the 25th September, 1964 and ended on 8th September, 1974. The armed conflict was between the Portuguese Armed Forces and FRELIMO (Front of Liberation of Mozambique, nationalist armed movement). It ended after the signing of the "Lusaka Peace Agreement" on 7 September, 1974 and Portugal accepted to liberate the Mozambique people from the yoke of colonial domination and the country was officially proclaimed an independent state on June 25th 1975.

As stated earlier, the Mozambican postindependence civil war started on the 30th May, 1976 and ended on 4 October, 1992 due to the internal power struggle for power and divergence of political ideas between the two main political parties; a socialist party named FRELIMO³ and the capitalist party named RENAMO⁴, sponsored by Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa (Lloyd-Jones, Stewart, and António Costa Pinto, eds. 2003). These two political parties fought asymmetrically by using unorthodox and unconventional approaches (planting landmines on several roads leading to cities, industrial centres and farm lands) Cabrita, João 2000- This consequently led to the death of over 1.5 million Mozambicans and displacement of over 3 million residents. This war had adverse effects on the socioeconomic and political situations of the country. There was low agricultural production, emigration and instability (Chabal, 1983).

The central objective of this historical novel, *Terra Sonâmbula*, is to bring to the fore the agony, horrors and misfortunes that surrounded the bloody war in Mozambique and at the same time to denounce the devastating traumatic effect of 16 years' civil war that started in 1976 and ended in 1992, that resulted into loss of lives and properties. It is a story that shows that the period that was marked by successive armed conflict against Portuguese rule for the independence of the country on the one hand, and the bitter and ruinous conflict for power between the two main political parties RENAMO and FRELIMO parties in 1975 at the other extreme. The conflicts, daily life, dreams, hope and the struggle for survival are the most relevant points of the plot.

3 Frente de Libertação de Moçambique – (Liberation Front of Mozambique).

4 Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, l(Mozambican National Resistance)

The relevance of Historical approach in the evaluation of *Terra Sonâmbula*

Historical novels are narratives that are based or set in the past that wish(es) to reconstruct and/or reinvent the atmosphere or situation of past occasions by recreating the ways of life, adventures, deed, exploits and prowess of notable historical characters of the olden days. The setting (time and place) is the essential feature of the story. The historical fiction is usually unobtrusive, authentic and sensitive in nature. It is unobtrusive when it relies on believable and accurate setting which includes authentic historical characters, happenings in historical fictions. It is authentic when it realistically illustrates and uses socio-cultural, economic and historical features, and uses suitable language which is appropriate to the setting of the period. Its sensitive characteristic has to do with how it combines and balances various ideas, events and situations without prejudice

The historical approach is the procedure of understanding any literary text by looking beyond the creative work itself to study possible cultural and historical situations that are likely to influence the work that is being studied. In her article titled “The Perilous Realm of Realism” Katherine Paterson (1995) describes historical novel as “a sort of bastard child of letters – respectable neither as history nor as fiction.” (82). In spite of this remark, historical novel has turned to be an important genre used by authors to project and educate the public readers. It has generated commentaries and counter commentaries from critics and scholars regarding its definition and categorisation. The general consensus is that historical novel encompasses distinct and specific qualities which make it unique and distinct from other form of fictions which are different from conventional literary texts.

As an approach, historical criticism desires to resolve the riddles behind a literary work by investigating the social, cultural and intellectual context that produced such work. Its main objective is to discover and understand the meaning of the text in literal sense as well as in its historical context, thereby helping to establish a reconstruction of the historical condition of the author and readers of the text. Question like: When was the text written and why? What events are happening when it was written? What was the author's intention when he wrote it. It usually help[s] critics and readers to understand all the events and forces that might affect the authors as he or she is composing the work and this give us a more comprehensive understanding of the work.

***Terra Sonâmbula* as an historical novel**

Terra Sonâmbula, *A Confissão da Leoa*, *O Último Voo do Flamengo* and *A Varanda do Frangipanni* fall into the category of historical novel since they were set and narrated incidents which occurred during the colonial and postindependent Mozambican societies. Mia Couto was not specific about the precise time-frame of *Terra Sonâmbula*, but the story date to a specific period of time – a year after the end of the civil war. Mia Couto historical vision carried sociopolitical weight. Couto was able to perform his functions as an educator and critic who used his work to educate, explain, criticise and reflect on the sociocultural and political situations of his society.

The novel, *Terra Sonâmbula* has an authentic setting which is Mozambique and with credible information about the political, social and religious history of the said country. The characters represented in the novel belong to a specific historical period 1976 and ended in 1992 in Mozambique. Similarly, it accurately demonstrates the values, virtues and prejudices of this period. Additionally, it avoids distorting history for the sake of political correctness or cultural sensitivity of the current time and lastly adheres to established history but can also make reasonable changes for the sake of characterization and plot arrangement.

The novel, *Terra Sonâmbula* was written in Mozambique in 1992 by António Emílio Leite Couto, famously known as Mia Couto, who was born in 1955 at the city of Beira, Sofala province in Mozambique by Portuguese parents that emigrated from Portugal to Mozambique in the mid-20th century. It is important to say that October 4, 1992 was the year in which the peace agreement that brought the civil war to an end was signed in Rome. The book illustrates the tail end of these civil conflicts and the road map to peace.

The book was written during the postwar period popularly regarded as Luta Armada de Libertação Nacional, a period in which the nationalistic Mozambican Liberation Front fought against the Portuguese colonial forces who were ruling and subjecting Mozambicans into obnoxious colonial administration. The war which lasted for ten years started in 1964 and ended in 1974 resulted in the attainment of Mozambican independence in 1975. After this period, the country got entangled in civil wars.

The novel has two Interrelated stories which consists of eleven chapters with the following titles: “A Estrada Morta,” “As Letras do Sonho,” “O Amargo Gosto da Maquela,” “A Lição de Siqueleto,” “O Fazedor de Rios,” “As Idosas Profanadoras,” “Moços Sonhando Mulheres,” “O Suspiro dos Comboios,” “Miragens da Solidão,” “A Doença do Pântano,” and “Ondas Escrever Histórias”- These chapters recount two major stories (the narrative of Kindzu’s life, and Muidin-

ga and Tuahir) having different characters who interact and Interrelate in the novel. The first story has two main characters: Muidinga and Tuahir - Muidinga, the boy who was presumed dead but in actual fact is alive, – but has however lost his memory; Tuahir, the wise old man who finds him, adopts and takes care of him. The second story is the story of Kindzu-whose corpse and a diary were seen while they were running away from the Mozambican civil war. The diary contains the life history of the boy who is abandoned by his mother, his unpleasant experience with his alcoholic father and other characters who maltreated him in the novel. The narrative of Muidinga and Tuahir's trajectory mixes with the narrative of Kindzu's life and the stories end up connecting at the end of the novel. Thus, the work has two plans: present and past. The novel is written in poetic prose and mixes several genres. Mia's poetic narrative reveals the horrors of war in the country. Furthermore, the author makes use of magical realism and mixes reality and fantasy.

Mia Couto, Antonio Emilio Leite, an European with an African Soul

With the pseudonym Mia Couto, Antonio Emilio Leite was born in 1955, in the capital city of the province of Sofal, Beira in Mozambique. Mia Couto was awarded the “Camões Prize” in 2013. He started his studies in the field of medicine, but abandoned the course and started working as a journalist. He becomes director of the Information Agency of Mozambique, but two years later he resigns and continues his studies in biology. Besides, the novelist, Mia Couto has written several works of literary genres such as short stories (*Vozes Anitecidas*, *Cada Homem é uma Raça* and *Contos do Nascer da Terra*), poetry (*Raiz de Orvalho e Tradutor de Chuvas*) and chronicles (*Cronicando, O País do queixa Andar and Pensatempos. Textos de Opinião*).

Mankell cited in Jigga (2015) describes Couto as an “European with an African Soul,” a dualism which often distorts his vision. In his words, Mia Couto confirmed that, he lives in apparently contradictory worlds that he likes to unite because they're part of him. He informs that he is a white guy and an African; a scientist living in a very religious world and a writer living in an oral society, who is a son of Europeans and Mozambicans. He further stresses that when he thinks of a character, it's a black person because 99% of Mozambicans are black. So, he wants to tell stories in the borderlines, which cross frontiers. Jigga (2015).

In an interview given to reporter Elisa Andrade Buzzo, published in *Digestivo Cultural* on September 14, 2006, Mia Couto made the following statement while reflecting on the civil war in Mozambique and the roles of literature:

One thing that afflicts me, that afflicts me a lot, these sixteen years of war, lost a

million people and we are only seventeen million, so it was a painful moment, a moment of mourning. We still haven't mourned and suddenly Mozambique has forgotten, if you go to Mozambique today, nobody talks about what happened. It's a sponge that passed there, there are no traces. And that's not good, it means that we've lost it, that it's no longer ours, we have to have access to that memory. And writers can have another role here when writing, when opening doors, when doing a kind of catharsis on that moment (Couto, 2006:4).

Mia Couto, in this novel, portrays Mozambique at the time of the civil war. It proposes a critique of excluding national identities and questions the spatial and cultural deterritorialisation experienced by individuals, families and populations that were separated, massacred and isolated by wars. It denounces the suffering, atrocities, death and losses of the population in the face of the absurdity in which it is involved. The space covered in the narrative is the "nation-territory" Mozambique, devastated by the war. The narrative incorporates the daily movement of collectivities from "traditional" cultures, and its writing is permeated by the multiplicity of stories, legends, myths, rituals and dreams.

The historical representation of the agony of war

The novel, *Terra Sonâmbula*, presents two similar but different stories in which the characters are travelling in search of their lost loved ones who got displaced due to the on-going conflict. The first story describes the experience of an old man, Tuahir who is accompanied by a boy named Muidinga while the second (notebook/diary), is about the life and history of Kindzu, that was looking for Naparama, a warrior who fought against evil perpetrators in their community. The diary was found by Tuahir at the beginning of his story. The two stories are narrated separately at the beginning of the novel but at the end, we are able to identify their meeting points. They become more approximately related – one can noticed the close relationship between these two narratives, which joined together to confuse the reading public. At the end of the narrative, the old man, Tuahir and the young Muidinga started playing by pretending to be Kindzu, (his uncle), features which reinforce the affinities between the two characters (the young and the old), interconnect the two narrative into a single one.

Explaining the Pre and post war experiences of Lusophone writers like Lída Jorge, Antunes Lobes Antunes and Maria Velho Costa, and the way in which they artistically integrated it in their work, Coelho (2004) highlights the subject matters of the literary texts published by these writers and explained how they managed to transform their experience into literary fictions. So without doubt, Mia Couto tailed their footsteps.

Additionally, he informs that some of these fictions are able to expose the Portuguese obnoxious colonial rule. He laments that though the colonial wars had ended but the wounds and trauma it caused still linger in their memory. Similarly, critics like Pires Laranjeira (2001), Nelly Novaes Coelho (2004) and Brugioni, Elena (2019) are of the opinion that the task of rebuilding the country and transforming the catastrophic and tragic moments into mythical historical event which the generation unborn will regard as the origin of the new time that they will be living as from now.

Based on the above premise, the essay is influenced by the works of notable African critics like Mafalda Leite (2003), Nelly Novaes Coelho (2004) and Brugioni, Elena (2019), who examined periods of war in Mozambique and other African countries. So, *Terra Sonâmbula* will be analysed through the examination of presence of war and its traumatic consequences in its plot. It is easier to understand how and why the novel is separated into two different parts – almost like two stories that formed a single novel.

The first story started when they decided to travel in search of Muidinga's parents, displaced and unnamed family members, loved relatives and friends. They were also in search of a place of refuge against the war that was taking place in their locality. While on the way, they saw many charred bodies. Near to one of the dead bodies was a suitcase that had some written sheets (diary).

According to the author, the war had totally destroyed the road which had become desolated. There were only wild animals looking for food in the ash and dust. He further stated that

The landscape had mixed with sadness never seen before, in colours that clung to the mouth. They were dirty colors, so dirty that they had lost all brightness. Here, burying the dead turned impossible and the living got used to seeing dead bodies all around. (Couto, 2007, p.9).

We are informed by the narrator from the onset that Muidinga lost not only his parents but also his memory, and was in a confused state, desperately searching for his identity. Muidinga was found alone and was taken to the refugee's camp by the old Tuahir. From then, the two characters tried to escape from the war torn zone and at the same time, searched for traces the history of the boy's life. These two objectives invariably ended up uniting the two in a very strong family bond. It is important to state that most of the incidents narrated occurred inside a burned-out bus (with dead bodies of massacred passengers) that was found by the two characters. They remove these dead bodies and later use their space for shelter. For the little boy, the bus serves as a Porto de Abrigo while Tuahir served as the father which he couldn't find.

Terra Sonâmbula as a novel describes war situation, shows several horrible scenes of death in various times and at different ways. The two characters passed by several abandoned bodies while they were walking in search of the boy's family. Sasse da Silva, (2011) is of the opinion that *Terra Sonâmbula* might not have described the war clearly but the book expresses vividly the painful traumatic experience and feelings narrated by the characters. He also informs that in spite of the presence of traces and echoes of war described, the war is not vividly exposed. The battle was always ahead of the characters- it just left her destructive trails like pierced wall, abandoned tanks without the troops, hungers but not the looting (and pillage) of warehouses. In fact, these incidents demonstrate that it is a phantom war which haunts the people but never shows its true colour because it could not be faced and fought but it was present, ephemeral and destructive. (Sasse da Silva, 2011).

While still on their trip, Tuahir and Muidinga find various unidentified dead bodies, which show that the community had lost lot of its inhabitants, among whom were Junhito, his younger brother, his father who died due to alcohol abuse and depression due to the death of Junhito and his mother who suffers mental illness for losing her son and husband. Even after the death of her husband, she continues to prepare foods for him, taking it to a specific location with the assumption that he would come to eat it.

The biggest accusations presented in the novels are directed at politicians and administrators. They are portrayed in *Terra Sonâmbula* by the character Estévã Jonas, a local administrator who diverts donations sent to refugees and then resold them. In addition, he only distributes the little that was left after an official ceremony, which was aimed at self-promotion.)

In the story, Kindzu is surprised by the misery of the refugee camps despite having food spoiling: "The animals were leaking the warehouse with the gluttony of a giant. How was it possible? So much food rotten there while people die in the hundreds in the field?" (COUTO, 2007, p188).

There are presence and integration of Arabians, Portuguese and African cultures in the story. This existence and integration can be regarded as mark of the colonial heritage and diversity of the nation and its people. And at the same time, source of conflict and prejudice experienced by the Mozambican people during this period. For example, one of Kindzu's associates asks himself: how could an African have an Arab and a Portuguese as friends? Unfortunately, this type of friendship is not acceptable by some of the other residents of the region, where the others are seen as dangerous people who therefore should be annihilated. No wonder the offices of two foreigners are looted and so that these foreigners can realise who owns that land, and thus, they can return to the place where they came from.

In *Terra Sonâmbula*, the aspect of denunciation is not only observed with regard to the rulers. Mia Couto touches on the sensitive myth subject, which is contempt and racial intolerance towards foreigners. This practice was very common in postindependence Mozambique, worsened in the civil war. In the aforementioned novel, the issue is dealt with in two moments: first, when the pastor and teacher Afonso, a Portuguese, is murdered and his school burnt. Subsequently, the character Surendra, an Indian merchant friend of Muindinga, is constantly trampled on by the local community, who pejoratively called him monhé, he and his wife are portrayed in humiliating situations. This situation is due to the fact that within the context of a postcolonial society, individuals start to associate the other, the foreigner, with the system and identify him/her as an exploiter.

Due to the death of his loved one, Kindzu realises that he has lost his family and friends, he decides to leave his community to become a Naparama because of what he witnesses after leaving pot of food at the riverbank for the consumption of dead father and notices a group of hyenas approaching. Out of sheer curiosity, he waits and keeps an eye on the pot to know who was really eating the foods. After a while, Kindzu sees a very strange figure coming out of the interior of a hut: "I only glimpsed one arm, all tied up with red cloths and bracelets carrying spells and ribbons carried by the arm" (Couto, 2007, p. 21). After realizing that the being was a Naparama and not his father, Kindzu runs to call his mother to see the man, in order to make her give up her daily burden of preparing food. Upon arriving at his house and starting to tell his mother what happened, Kindzu is surprised to realize that his mother already knew what had happened and now claimed more than ever that the man who appeared, the Naparama, was his late father, who returned as a warrior.

As the story advances, the reader becomes overwhelmed with the dimension of the war, couple with loss of life – which is demonstrated and justified through the numerous dead bodies that are seen along the path. Most of the residents and inhabitants of the cities fearfully left their abodes looking for a safe haven – consequently, cities become deserted and desolated, with walls full of bullets, (un)used bullets on the streets, and grasses grew taking over houses left behind.

In his analysis of the importance of burial rite for human being in his book titled *O Homem e a Morte*, Edgar Morin (1997) observes that man is the only species that believes in life after death and, therefore, they don't abandon their dead loved ones without the rite of passage, except during the time of war. (Morin, 1997, p. 42). According to this scholar, most of African traditionalists believed in the survival and resurrection of the dead they buried, – but if they are not buried, they will go to another communities to start a new life.

He concludes by stating that it is this proximity to where they are buried that makes men fear and feel the agony and pains whenever those closer to them died (Morin, 1997, p. 42).

In actual fact, this incident was well depicted in *Terra Sonâmbula*. There were several dead bodies left unburied, which mixed with the landscapes of the streets along the way. This scene is quite similar to the story of the whale - narrated by Kindzu, - that appeared one day in the Beach. The whale appeared out of nowhere and immediately the people started cutting as much fish (meat) as they could, even when it was still alive until it gave up its ghost on the beach.

The story of the whale could be related to the devastating effects of war on the village that was losing its inhabitants and the daily activities of villagers. It was possible to observe the havoc created through wreckage and the marks that were registered in the landscape.

In the novel, it was also observed how the war is always ahead of the narration. It is always like an event that passes by and leaves its visible marks for the writers and readers to see. The landscape is always changing. The only feature that remains unchanged in the novel is the strong presence of rich traditional African culture. Whenever reference is made to an ancestor –there is always an older man who will be available to narrate the stories of his life to the younger ones, unlike Muindinga, a younger man who tells the stories that are inside Kindzu's notebooks every day as lullaby for Tuahir to sleep.

According to Ana Mafalda Leite (2003), through the action and inaction of Muindinga and Kindzu, the two main characters in *Terra Sonâmbula*, the author made an attempt to conciliate the oral and written systems. While Muindinga loudly read from the notebook to the old Tuahir, Kindzu, on his part, tells his stories by writing them in the notebooks. Through this, these narrators give voices to other secondary narrators who tell their stories (Leite, 2003, p. 51).

The presence and activities of the Oldman and forefathers, responsible for keeping alive the legends of the region was also elaborated. A vivid example is the experience of an old woman named Euzinha who, despite being feared by elders, was motherly and kind-hearted, and was loved by children of her region. One of the narrated tales describes how children used to surround her, eagerly wanting to listen to her story, due to her unique ways of narrating her stories, full of historical deeds, exploits, errors and misdeeds of forgotten ancestors. Through these old people-, the young generation are able to learn about how the past societies, traditional systems and ways of life, the changes that have occurred as well as demonstrate a detailed picture of the current situation of events in their society.

By sharing their good and bad experiences with the youth, it will help them to know about their historical past mistakes and achievements, the interaction

within and between communities, with different ideas and cultures, which may turn the present generation to be useful for their community as well as to help improve the present and the future. Through the stories told by the elders of the community, the youths are influenced and able to have a better understanding of the sociocultural heritage, identity and formation of different historical institutions and their contributions to the development of our society, which can influence our views about our country.

Additionally, it was well demonstrated that Mia Couto shows respect and adoration for the old and ancestors in his novel. He makes us to understand their feelings and ways of seeing the world and the importance of the stories narrated to us. We are able to know more about the culture and traditions of our Ancestors, the belief in the power of dream, the importance of their life history, among others

At a point in time, we observed an encounter between the dead and the living which was depicted in the discussion between Taïmo and his dead father Kindzu talks to him on different issues, particularly on why he writes his book. The passage below justifies this:

– What are you doing with a notebook, what do you write? - I don't know, father. I write as I dream. – And is anyone going to read this? - Maybe. – It's good like this: it teaches someone to dream. – But father, what is wrong with this land of ours? – You don't know, son. But while men sleep, the earth is searching. – Looking for what, father? - It's just that life doesn't like to suffer. The earth is searching inside each person, it is gathering dreams. Yes, make believe she is a seamstress of dreams (COUTO, 2007, p. 182)..

Dreams play an important role not only in the novel but also in the lives of different characters such as Kindzu, his father, among other. His father a dreamer and many times, all his dreams come to pass. Whenever his father seems to be sleeping, his wife (mother) requested that nobody disturbs or disrupt her husband's peace to ensure that he is able to dream without hindrance, which he would narrative to his listeners.

It was because he dreamt about the attainment of independence of his city that makes him named his youngest son Junhito, instead of Vinte cinco de Junho. One day when his father had a dream that his son is going to die. To prevent this occurrence, he decided to transform him to chicken that lives in a chicken coop as a chicken so that those who wanted to kill him will not recognize him. So his mom made a little chicken outfit full of feathers for him while his father constructed a bed for him to sleep in the chicken coop.

During the first few days, his mother would sing him a lullaby. Much lat-

er, Junhito was completely transformed into his new condition (of living with chicken) he loses his voice and could only respond to his family by cooing. One fateful morning, they discover that he had disappeared from the chicken coop and nobody knew his whereabouts till today.

The sea is another important element that was elaborated in the novel. It is constantly mentioned when someone dies or is to be buried in the sea. As was in the case of old Tuahir and Kindzu's when they were buried The funeral ceremonies took place on the water and the men who represent the fathers of the main characters in the two narratives in the novel come to the sea to pay their last respect and are carried away by the waves. Surprisingly, soon after the death of Kindzu's father, an unexpected event happened- the water of the sea he was travelling through dried up within a tinkle of an eye, turning into a plain which is covered by beautiful palm tree with beautiful and succulent fruits. However, as soon as one of the residents of the area decides to feed on these fruits, it turns to back to the sea:

In the place where the blue beach used to be, there was a plain covered with palm trees. Each one was full of fat, appetizing, shiny fruit. They weren't even fruits; they looked like golden gourds, each weighing a thousand riches. Men threw themselves into that valley, running with machetes in hand, in anticipation of that gift. Then a voice was heard that multiplied in echoes, it seemed that each palm tree was using infinite mouths. The men even stopped, for brevity. Was that voice in a dream that figured? For me there was no doubt: it was my father's voice. He asked men to ponder: those were very sacred fruits. His voice knelt, crying out for the trees to be spared: the fate of our world hung on delicate threads. (Couto, 2007, p. 182)

This can be likened to the life and death (life cycle) of men– one of the representations of the sea is the life – the sea takes away what it gives. The sea is seen in many cultures as a symbol of renewal, transformation and rebirth; it is not for nothing that many religions make their baptisms through the waters of the sea. The sea carries the duality in itself, with the images of life and death.

It gives the first impression and at the same time creates anticipation, expectation and perhaps, disinterest. It grabs attention, accurately describes the contents of the book. The title gives the principal idea of the book. It contained only two short and direct words: (*Terra Sonâmbula*, which adequately conveys and describes the objective and intention of the writer. It also has a deep relationship with the work because it depicts the consequences of wars experienced by the people of Mozambique, who are distressed and in shock because they witnessed brutal agony of war; they are restless and cannot sleep – always

keeping an eye out for a possible attack or bombing from the enemy camp. The population cannot rest nor sleep- so the residents are always in alert, – live in eternal vigil – the earth also sleep-works because there is no peace, no rest and no sleep.

The Mozambican land and her people are always under insistent danger coming from the guerrillas and threat coming from the colonizer, represented by Romão Pinto. It was observed that at the concluding part of the novel, Kindzu becomes a Naparama and saves his brother Junhito, who had earlier turned into a chicken in an attempt to cheat death, from the clutches of the character who represent the corruption and violence.

Additionally, while on the trip, Muindinga while-away his time reading Kindzu's stories to survive. It is on his trip, he meets with Tuahir and he starts reading every night for the old man to sleep. At first, the old man who couldn't read nor write but could only manage to draw images of letters on the sand and later realises that he could understand what he wrote.

These Kindzu's narratives not only serve as lullaby but also as a form of distractions from the horrors that was happening around them. These stories were well integrated in the two worlds described in the novel.

It will be responsible for uniting people in family and loving bonds. Like meeting Gaspar, Farida's son, the woman Kindzu fell in love with, along his way. At the end of the story, it is in Gaspar's hands that the work appears:

The notebooks fall from his hands. Moved by a wind that was born not from the air but from the ground itself, the leaves spread across the road. Then, one by one, the letters turn into grains of sand and, little by little, all my writings turn into pages of earth. (Couto, 2007, p. 204).

In the concluding part of the novel, Kindzu spends his time looking for who and what he was missing in his life and at the same time, wishes to rediscover himself - he seeks his brother, his lover, his friends, he seeks to become a great Naparama warrior and, in the midst of it all, he seeks to escape the scenes of violence and terror that surround it. The public-readers are emotionally moved and could easily understand that the writer was denouncing the madness of war and its effects on the people and their community: the deaths, the destruction, the desolation and the loneliness are just too unbearable for the common citizen.

Final considerations

There is no doubt that the author has been able to tell us an interesting educative historical story which transmits realistically the flavour of a unique pe-

riod of the Mozambican historical period by authentically capturing not only war situation and the plight of the people but also their cultural values, beliefs and ways of life. As a Mozambican born Portuguese citizen, Mia Couto faithfully uses his knowledge of Mozambican history appropriately to avoid distortion by authentically and objectively illustrating different sides of the stories without taking side. This enables us to understand the root cause of the modern-day problem and also comprehend the problem of the past which may help us proffer solution to the present

The novels present themselves as a space of resistance, denunciation, contestation and memory. With this statement, I do not intend to disregard the main commitment of this type of narrative, which is in the realm of art of fiction. (Keen, 2007). My intention is to show that these narratives offer much more than literary pleasure (Oatley, 1999). Mozambique and its war histories are stamped on the pages of this novel. The intent of this type of approach is to understand very sensitive issues that are part of the history of Mozambican society so as to educate and guide the readers.

Literature is also directed towards the present and the future. They are discursive spaces where the author projects expectations, creates knowledge and establishes a vision of the world from his position in society (Bamisile, 2007). This particularity allows a connection with the desires of a given moment. The civil war was a watershed in relation to political projects in Mozambique. It changes society and the whole structure of thought about the nation, about national identity. This change was perceived and represented by the literature of the time.

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