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Examining Women's struggle for visibility in post-independence Africa in Kekelwa Nyaywa's Hearthstones

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The research is grounded in African feminism as it focuses on Kekelwa Nyaywa's depiction of Zambian women's lives in her book *Hearthstones.* This is one of the texts that could be said to fall within the postcolonial feminist / womanist sphere.[1]

Synopsis of the Book

Hearthstones was published in 1995. In terms of plot, it is centered on the stories of three female characters and is composed of the autobiographical stories of these three characters i.e. Tengani, Chilufya and Likande. The stories of the three characters are interwoven. Nyaywa makes use of the doubling technique which is ubiquitous in much women's writings. By use of this technique, she invites us to compare and contrast the lives of these characters. The plot begins in the third person narration then moves into the first person as the three main characters narrate their individual stories.

It is a book that is based on friendship. While at Chipembi Boarding School the women make friends with one another. These friendships remain intact even after they have completed their studies at the institution. Education emerges as one of the ways through which people form bonds. Encased in the personal narratives of the three protagonists is the history of Zambia from colonialism to the postindependence era. Chipembi Girls Boarding School is prominent in the plot. So significant is it to the plot that in chapter three we engage with its import in the text.

[1] Pumla Dinego Gqola,'Blackwoman, feminisms and postcoloniality in Africa' in *Agenda* 50 2001, states that this is a project that is aimed at dismantling colonial and patriarchal structures which encumber black women. She further says that the prominent aim of the project is to afford black women new representation and theorisation.

One other aspect that the author has redefined in the text is romance. In western fiction, romance is mostly viewed as less serious literature. Due to its preoccupation with love and sexual affairs, it is dismissed as a preserve of women with interest in matters of the heart. However, in *Hearthstones*, the author infuses romance in the plot and uses it to make statements on issues such as nationalism.[2] Thus chapter two is dedicated to interrogating the significance of romance in the text.

In this text, Nyaywa vouches for the education of the girl child. Upon completing their studies at Chipembi, Likande and Chilufya further their education in the United States of America and Southern Rhodesia respectively. Tengani decides to join the political arena with a bias towards women's rights activism. Later in life she regrets not having gone to university like her friends (136-7). Eventually the three women are portrayed serving their nation with dedication in their respective capacities.

A Brief History of Zambia

Hearthstones is a book that addresses Zambian history going back into the colonial era until the achievement of independence from the British colonialists in 1964. Many of the events that punctuate the text resonate with historical occurrences that one is bound to encounter in most of the literature about the history of this nation.

Mining of copper is said to have began in the early 1900s. In 1924 the British took over the administration of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) as their protectorate. In the late 1920s extensive copper deposits were discovered in what soon became known as the Copper belt. White people from Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) are said to have

[2] See Bryce (1997; 121-122)

ventured into Northern Rhodesia because of the latter's economic interests. Europeans were compelled to form a federation comprising Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Malawi) so as to safeguard their interests within the three countries. Apparently, it was the coming into being of the federation that precipitated protest among Africans who were fighting for better working and living conditions. Africans protested against discrimination and ill treatment to which they were subjected (Andrew 1976**)**. They were not allowed to form unions except self-help groups that brought together persons of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Lack of formal education among many people in Northern Rhodesia is said to have hampered the political revolt against the colonialists. Teachers led by Dr Kenneth Kaunda steered the struggle for independence in that country. Kaunda and his fellow freedom fighters did not take kindly to European racialism. Notably, they challenged the tendency by some Europeans to call Africans 'boys'[3]. Zambians who had participated in the Second World War played a crucial role in arousing nationalist thought among their fellow compatriots.

The Federation

Northern Rhodesian Africans were not in favour of the federation because they believed that it would strengthen the South at the expense of Northern Rhodesia. Southern Rhodesia under white rule was bankrupt and saw Northern Rhodesia, with its copper wealth as a 'milch cow'[4] (Andrew 1976; 214). Despite Africans opposition to the federation, it was introduced regardless. Harry Nkumbula's Northern Rhodesia African National Congress (ANC) could not prevent this.

[3] Robert Andrew, *A History of Zambia*, *Heinemann*, London, 1976.
[4] The Zambian.com / history/

During ten years of the federation's existence, as Zambians had anticipated, hundreds of millions of pounds were siphoned off to Southern Rhodesia. The white settlers there built up an impressive economic structure while the infrastructure in Northern Rhodesia declined. It remained without a single decent tarred highway, let alone a university or an adequate school system or health service. When Nkumbula seemed inadequate to the task, the ANC split. Younger and more dynamic nationalists formed first the Zambia African National Congress (which was banned and its leaders incarcerated) and then in 1958, the United National Independence Party. When he came out of detention, Kenneth David Kaunda, described as "a charismatic activist"[5] was given the leadership of the new party.

Independence

The much-loathed federation eventually dissolved in 1963. Universal suffrage was implemented the following year. In October 1964, Zambia became independent with Kaunda as the president whose reign lasted for 27 years. Kaunda's attempt to nationalize the economy boomeranged as it bred corruption and inefficiency. His philosophy of humanism was more rhetorical than substantive.[6]

Zambia seen through Women's Gaze

The text is predominantly feminine in orientation. We hold this position not because the author is a woman. Neither is it because protagonists in the text are women. It is because the concerns such as the girl child's education the text deals with are predicated on African womanhood. However, we hasten to add that the text

[5] http:// www.encyclopedia.com/html/section/Zambia-History.asp

[6] According to Momba, Humanism was defined by Kaunda as an expression of faith in the common men and women and a non-violent attainment of all goals.

encapsulates general societal concerns in which men are also included. From the start of the novel we get the impression that the author is ushering us into an all women's world. But as the text unfurls we see that it is not only women's issues that the author grapples with. Women simply provide a framework within which Nyaywa discusses socio-economic and political issues in Zambia. One salient feature in the text that lends credence to its feminine bent is the boarding school that forms the fulcrum of the plot. Women seen in the school hail from diverse backgrounds ethnically, socially and racially. Save for the time that Likande meets Jake, her science teacher, no male character features in the school. We gain our impressions of the male characters largely from what the female characters say about them. As such the female characters constitute the prism through which we view the actions and pronouncements of their male counterparts.

Despite male characters being portrayed in a somewhat passive light, the author affirms their indispensability as far as the completeness of this society is concerned. This is a book by an African female author that goes counter to Frank's position that some African women's writings see the solution to women's subjugation lying in a world without men (1987; 15). In keeping with Frank's thinking, Owomoyela (2001) looks at marriage as an institution of subjugation to women. We cannot honestly deny that marriage has, in some instances, been used to subjugate African women. Nevertheless, it is not feasible to pass a sweeping statement on this institution. *Hearthstones* stresses the need for complementarity[7] between the two genders. Where co-existence between the two genders in not possible, Nyaywa unequivocally advocates separation as evidenced by the falling apart of the marital union between

[7] See Arndt (2001; 57- 74)

Zelani and Chilufya (95). Negotiation between men and women is what she champions[8]. Though the patriarchal edifice is portrayed in the text as being heavily responsible for the conflicts and tensions attendant on the lives of womenfolk the author paints a woman's world that is not devoid of tensions (130-140). Her approach neither valorizes womenfolk nor paints Zambian men as villains.

Zambian men, for example, are shown as both good and bad. On one side we see a picture of chauvinistic and seemingly incorrigible male characters such as Zelani, Kafupi, Mwanga and Choba according to whom the role of men seems to be to lord it over their women and flirt with as many women as they can (135). On the other we have a picture of loving and caring men for example Hambala and Scott who eloquently show that to be a man does not entail being a Casanova neither does it involve harping on traditional practices. From the foregoing, it is clear that Nyaywa represents the Zambian society in a balanced manner.

Women's Agency in the Text

The text portrays Zambian women struggling against numerous odds as a result of their interaction with men. These challenges are mostly seen at the marital level. In the wider Zambian society most women are considered lacklustre in what they do simply because they are women. By facing up to the challenge posed by masculinity, these women are portrayed as people in charge of their destiny. They are invested with the abilities to surmount the hurdles that they encounter in their day-to-day lives. The greatest contribution this text makes to the project of African feminism, is that it is a text that does not fall within the victor-victim divide that Davies (1986; 81-6)

[8] Although Obioma Nnaemeka has not theorized in detail about negofeminism, she sheds some light on it in the 'Forward' to *The Dynamics of African Feminism*. At the heart of this brand of feminism is the philosophy of give-and-take and negotiation that she credits Africa for.

talks about. Female characters in the book do not play second fiddle to their male counterparts. Womanhood has a firm presence in the struggle for independence, in the academe as well as in the postcolonial political dispensation. Nyaywa's representation of these women avoids romanticism.

Romantic relationships in the novel cause problems for most women in the Zambian society. They are relationships that are skewed in that most men seem to have been socialised into internalising the view that women in such relationships should perpetually be at their mercy. Chilufya's marriage collapses because of her husband's predilection for marital infidelity. Tengani's romantic relationship with Sifanu breaks down for the very same reason. Through these romantic relationships, men's propensity to patriarchal power is evident. Rather than passively endure gender imbalances within the Zambian society, Zambian women are organized against patriarchy and what they derisively call the 'macho syndrome' (136). It is this syndrome that seems to be pervasive among their men which they hold responsible for the prevalence of the HIV/AIDS scourge, a pandemic that poses a real threat to the lives of women in this society.

Overview of African feminism

In the second part of the *Agenda* trilogy entitled "African feminisms", [9] it is argued that there are various terminological approaches to African challenges and gender issues. As a result it is not possible to assume a homogeneity of feminism in Africa. Consistently, African feminists remind us that there are so many social realities in Africa that necessitate the use of the plural with respect to feminism as it applies to

[9] Mary Eagleton cautions in the Introduction to *Feminist Literary Criticism* (1991), that feminism theory is a broad church with a number of cooperating and competing approaches and therefore it is more appropriate to talk of feminist theories than feminist theory.

Africa (Eagleton 1991, *Agenda* 54 2002; 5). Steady (1981; 8) avers that African patterns of feminism are holistic in orientation and do not thrive on creating a wedge between men and women. According to her, these forms of feminism are acutely aware of the symbiotic relationship that obtains between men and women in this continent. In her attempt to create a distinction between African feminisms and Western feminism, Steady comes up with a near romantic picture of Africa. She would not want to be seen as an apologist of radicalism within the feminist sphere. For 'fear' of causing a ruckus within the masculine domain, most African feminists currently vouch for a compromise between the genders.

African feminisms advocate a blend between relevant aspects within the African and Euro-American set-ups as the text shows (141). Although *Hearthstones* does not brook oppression against women and other practices within African communities which demean women, it unambiguously makes it clear that the lot of African women canonly be improved gradually. We are reminded that even in the West which prides itself as a bastion of feminism, the strides made in addressing gender imbalances have been small (140). Hudson-Weems (1993) was probably in keeping with the perception of the moment when she pointed out that Western feminism was facing a crisis of acceptance in Africa. Then it was seen as being intolerant to the institution of marriage. It is against this background that most feminists in Africa are trying to dismantle the perception that any type of feminism per se is western and hence unAfrican.[10] There is an attempt among them to cut a niche for themselves within the global feminism movement.

[10] Evelyne Tegomoh in 'Experiencing African Feminism' in *Agenda*; 54 2002.

Ojo-Ade is among those critics who are critical of the concept of feminism. He is on record as having been enraged by Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* which according to him epitomizes radical feminism. In his article, 'Still a Victim? Mariama Ba's *So Longer a Letter'*, he acerbically threatens to "tear…up and throw…into the dustbin any such 'letter' should one be written" (86). Even Frank who is considered as an apologist of radical feminism, has reservations about agreeing with Ojo-Ade. Unlike Ojo-Ade, she does not simply see African traditions as the source of African women's oppression with Western values and practices as their means of liberation ('*Women*'18-19). Ojo-Ade's dismissal of the concept of feminism as an occidental concept is untenable (72)[11]. Critics such as Ojo-Ade and a host of others described by Jayawardena (1986; 2) show that African women's struggles to contain gender oppression have to contend with the persistent antiwestern sentiment that punctuates criticism of feminism.

The Beijing conference[12] for one gave those opposed to feminism in Africa ammunition with which to attack the feminism movement in Africa and demonize its activists. In Uganda, for instance, many of the discussions in nightclubs and other nightspots are said to invoke 'that Beijing thing'.[13] It is said that for most members of the public in Uganda, gender is linked to a global women's conference that China hosted. Richard Ssewakinyanga, a feminist critic from Uganda, posits that to many

[11] Kumari Jayawardena debunks the notion that feminism is a recent concept founded in western society because she contends that the word was in common usage in Europe and elsewhere in the 19th and early 20th C to signify agitation for issues concerning women (Jayawardena 1986; 2 cited in *Agenda* No 54 2002; 6).

[12] Spivak (1996) dismisses the numerous world meetings held in the recent past under the aegis of fighting women's oppression. She pours cold water, for instance, on the Beijing conference held some years back terming it as a "global theatre"(Agenda p.19).

[13] Richard Ssewakinyanga 'That Beijing Thing!' challenging transitional feminisms in Kampala, Uganda,' in *Agenda* 54, 2002.

Ugandans, gender notwithstanding, feminism can not be equated to other homegrown and indigenous movements which were in vogue in Africa during the independence struggles in the 60s. Conversely, Alexander and Mohanty (1997 xx) argue that the global feminist movement played a role in the African independence movements.

In some of the recent writings in African literature, it has increasingly been shown that many young women reject the term feminist because to most of them it denotes 'weird' women, who have the tendency to hate men (*Agenda* 19), (Kolawole 1997). In this connection, Sisonke Msimang states that she believes in gender equality but is reluctant to use the word feminist. She does not, however, give us an alternative term that she would prefer to use. From her standpoint, feminism in Africa ought to be concerned with matters such as the Aids pandemic that is wasting so many young women's lives. Apart from that, she is of the view that it should look into women's subjugation in places such as northern Nigeria where women who beget children out of wedlock are sentenced to death.[14] It is not so much the aspect of people in this part of Nigeria being involved in illicit sexual activities as the fact that men involved in these sexual activities either receive a slap on the wrist or get away with what their female counterparts are indicted for.

Within the realm of African feminism, disagreements have been voiced concerning the feminist depiction of Africa. The tag 'feminism' itself has equally generated a lot of debate. Owomoyela (1994) and Ogunyemi (1985) would rather the term 'womanism' was used instead of 'feminism'. The latter is of the conviction that womanism better captures the aspirations of African women. It seems 'feminist' is

[14] Sisonke Msimang, African feminism II: reflections on politics made personal in *Agenda* 54 2002.

repudiated by many African women within the gender movement because they are eager to delink gender matters in Africa from the Euro-American paradigms. To date it is still being viewed as promoting hatred for men, encouraging lesbian love and rejecting the institution of motherhood.[15] Many Africans see any attack against motherhood as an attack against the very essence of African society. (James; 1990; 13)

Some of these African feminists embraced what could covertly be seen as an antifeminist stance because they think that feminism has not been consonant with matters affecting Africans. To them the African woman is not catered for at all in the mainstream feminism. Moreover, they state that African feminism looks exclusionary in the sense that it excludes men from the struggle for political and social transformation in Africa. Therefore advocates of 'womanism' consider it as an alternative to feminism. But womanist critics at times overlook the fact that "the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship"[16] are not attributes that are unique to African womanism.

One would therefore argue that trying to dichotomize feminism from womanism is tantamount to splitting hairs since feminism by whichever name has at its core women's freedom to choose what they wish to do with their lives. Womanists are quick to point out that womanism eschews locking horns with men. They in fact try to enlist men's support and this is what to some extent distinguishes one from the other. As pointed out above due to the heterogeneity of the African continent, it is difficult to see how applicable womanism is to the continent. Architects and apologists of this

[15] *Agenda* 54 2002; 43.
[16] Mwale N. Pascal, 'Where is the Foundation of African Gender? The Case of Malawi' in *Nordic Journal of African Studies*; p.117

alternative philosophy are considered by some of their fellow women as being more Western than 'authentic' African women. By insisting both on autonomy as well as cooperation with men, African womanism in Mwale's words, "wants to have and not to have men at the same time."[17] Ultimately it is a question of semantics because the difference between feminism and womanism seems to obtain only in the corridors of the academy. Only elitist African women know the point where one ends and the other begins.

The Current Perception of Feminism

It is undeniable that feminism is less openly dismissed now as a European import than it was ten or so years ago. Some of the African feminists who currently write and talk passionately about the relevance of feminism in Africa treated the philosophy with reservations at the beginning. It is incumbent to note once more that men and women alike within and outside the academy have approached gender issues in Africa with skepticism. Ama Ata Aidoo for example did not embrace feminism from the very beginning. Initially she was skeptical about it but with time she became its vociferous supporter both in her writings and activism. Aidoo (1989; 34) was quoted denouncing feminism: "Feminism. You know how we feel about that embarrassing western philosophy? The destroyer of homes. Imported mainly from America to ruin nice African homes." With time, she underwent a metamorphosis and came round to embracing the philosophy. Abena Busia in Kolawole (1997; 39) for her part proclaims her unqualified support for feminism. [18]

[17] Ibid. p.118

[18] See Kolawole, 'Transcending incongruities: rethinking feminisms and the dynamics of identity in Africa' in *Agenda* 54 2002; 93.

Emerging Issues in African Feminism

Most African feminists are now departing from looking at patriarchy generally and are zeroing in on specificities while addressing challenges facing African women. In *Gender Violence in Africa*, the thrust of the author's argument is that violence against women is deeply grounded in ancient patriarchy. Green sheds some light on the prevalence of this social malaise in the contemporary society. She cites economic anxieties, political betrayal especially by male leaders, influence from the Western media and African men's tendency to reify masculinity as some of the reasons behind men's recourse to violence in order to exercise control over women in Africa. The author makes special mention of rape and female circumcision [19] as among some of the daunting challenges that many young women in many countries in Africa are facing. Published in the wake of the Rwanda genocide in 1994, the text highlights new forms of violence such as mass rape which is looked at as an instrument of "political terrorism."[20]

AIDS is among the urgent issues that emerge from *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Like in many other texts of this nature, the compelling refrain is that African women have been consigned to the margins in most countries on the African continent**.** Mikell strongly recommends a homegrown African feminism and has no qualms about advising African women to resist attempts to make them buy into Western standards of motherhood and sexuality. She patently recognizes the need to involve African men in the feminist arena if any meaningful

[19]We deliberately use the phrase female circumcision because Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has always been considered as being insensitive to the nuances of cultures obtaining in the African continent. It borders on antagonism and if this practice has to be arrested appreciation of the cultures of those communities that practise it is the first step toward bringing it under control.

[20]Marc Epprecht, 'Theorizing Gender and Feminisms in Contemporary African Studies,' in *South African Feminist Review*; p. 26

strides have to be made. In Hunt et al (1997), the authors make it part of their responsibility to refute the perception that AIDS is prevalent in Africa and especially among African women because the continent is inherently promiscuous (10). They take great exception to the stereotypical paradigms produced by some Euro-American feminists who depict African men and women as brutes and victims respectively.

The need to dismantle the portrayal of African women as victims is also a running theme in Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi (1997). She argues that it is hardly sufficient to look at African women as victims who are perpetually at the receiving end. In fact she argues that by playing the victim, African women are able to gain some advantage opposed to the way the situation would be if they resorted to confrontation.[21] In this text, Abbenyi notes that it is not uncommon for a victim to be an oppressor at the same time. She implicates some African women in abusive relationships. She avoids celebrating feminism simply by virtue of being a woman. Most of us normally think that a victim is in a state of helplessness. Nfah-Abbenyi is of the position that it is possible for a woman to use this state both as a shield and arsenal against gender discrimination**.**

There is one fault line in African feminist analyses that ought to be addressed in order to enhance the appreciation of feminism in Africa. It is the propensity to paint Western feminism as being obsessed with nothing else but individual sexuality. It is a stereotype that lingers among most African feminists' works. Africa is portrayed as having been pristine prior to the advent of colonialism. This analysis has definitely been overcome by time. Feminism in the West could hardly be said still to be steeped

[21] According to Stratton, conformism can be subversive (1994:69). Likewise Obbo (1980:101-125) shows that deference, submission and conformism are skills that allow women to handle men.

in sexuality. Western feminism is currently said to be engaged with other matters such as economics, environment and to depict it as still rooted in the anti-motherhood and sex-obsessed framework is to betray ignorance. The other highlight is that the banner under which feminism in Africa goes is not the most important aspect. The tenets upheld by those out to enhance the welfare of African women is what merits attention.

The AIDS Pandemic and African Women's Vulnerability

The AIDS scourge is increasingly gaining attention among African feminists. Given that it is African women who have been hardest hit by this scourge, African feminists cannot afford to gloss over the issue. Invariably, African feminists hold men responsible for the run away spread of the disease. In *Hearthstones,* Zambian women point accusing fingers at men for the rapid spread of the disease. Many a feminist in Africa has located African women's economic disempowerment as one anomaly that places them at the mercy of their husbands. Even when they realize that their men are cheating on them, there is very little or nothing they could do to safeguard their health. Walking out of such marriages is not an option because most African cultures expect them to be loyal to their husbands and obey them. While discussing the vulnerability of Zambian women to the deadly disease, a journalist, Juliet Ilunga[22], illuminates the dilemma in which most Zambian women find themselves. They are expected by culture to provide their men with sex no matter what happens and at the same time have to protect themselves against AIDS. AIDS engenders poverty in Africa and is in turn fueled by the very same poverty. There is a nexus between the two. What is of concern is that it is women who bear the brunt of the concatenation of

[22] Juliet Ilunga, 'The Vulnerability of Women to AIDS' in *South African Feminist Review*. (107-109)

social malaise in Africa.[23] Given the current crisis in Africa as a result of the AIDS pandemic, chapter four looks into how the challenge is represented in the book.

Romance in African feminism

As observed at the start of this introduction, romance is one issue that is dismissed in various quarters as being trivial. In spite of this several women writers in Africa have used romantic fiction to educate their fellow women about their rights. This approach marks a departure from romance in Western fiction in which it is largely used as a means of emotional therapy especially for the female audience. Women involved in this literary revolution, if we may call it as such, are agreed that though affording their readership pleasure is their cardinal responsibility that is not an end in itself. To them entertainment and information are not mutually exclusive (Bryce quoted in Newell 1997; 49). Bryce advises us that however simplistic popular writing by women in Africa may appear, it behoves us to go beyond this patina and pay critical attention to the underlying concerns that these women grapple with. It is with this in mind that chapter two of this report explores how Nyaywa uses romance to make statements about the concept of nationalism in post independence Zambia.

Analysis of the Text

In analyzing the research topic, focus shall be placed on a close reading of the book. Though being multi-pronged, African feminism shall provide the framework for the theoretical framework and methodology. A number of works have examined African women from a variety of perspectives. One of the formulations for a feminist theory for African women comes from Filomena Steady who after examining the

[23] See Patricia Littiya, 'HIV/Aids Pandemic: The Negative Impact on Women, in Ibid. p.111-113

commonalities of experience and response of African women in Africa and the Diaspora defines African feminism. In her introduction to *Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, she posits that it is a kind of feminism that combines racial, sexual, class and cultural dimensions of oppression to produce a more inclusive brand of feminism through which women are viewed first and foremost as human rather than sexual beings.

Chapter Contents

As the theoretical sections above indicated, contemporary debates in African feminism are diverse and bring a range of issues into focus. The novel *Hearthstones* has been chosen as it likewise deals with a wide range of feminist- related concerns and themes. One key concern within the novel, and indeed broader feminist debate, is the question of romance. The second chapter focuses on the use of romance as an allegory of the nation. If one were to give *Hearthstones* a cursory reading, one might conclude that it is a text steeped in popular literature, particularly since romance is so prominent. Romance is widely seen as a feminine preoccupation. But in this text the author uses it as she discusses nationalism, HIV/AIDS among other pertinent issues that she addresses.

In the third chapter, attention falls on Chipembi Boarding School as a national space. This boarding school is symbolic of the freedom that feminism champions for women the world over. It also plays an important role in bonding among the protagonists besides being a window through which we view the rest of the Zambian society especially during the colonial period.

‘The AIDS Scourge: Macho Syndrome and Women’s Vulnerability’ constitutes the fourth chapter that zeroes in on the threat of masculinist sexuality on Zambian women’s lives. It is a phenomenon that weighs down many women across the African continent. Women in the text lament that men’s refusal to change their sexual lifestyles places their (women’s) lives in serious jeopardy. Without African women’s lives being safeguarded, it would be futile to talk about their emancipation since there would be no woman to be emancipated.

Finally, the conclusion encompasses the author’s engagement with diversity within the feminist realm. One salient feature of the text which is to be highlighted in this concluding chapter is that *Hearthstones* does not prescribe to African women.

CHAPTER TWO

ROMANCE AS AN ALLEGORY OF NATIONALISM

This chapter proceeds from the premise that Kekelwa Nyaywa uses romantic relationships to allegorize the Zambian nation. Taken from the Greek word '*allos*' allegory means the other i.e. in saying one thing you also imply something else. It is a kind of writing that involves, as Slemon puts it, doubling and duplicating extra textual material (1988; 158). In literature, an allegory is defined as "a narrative in which the agent and action and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived both to make coherent sense on the literal or primary level of signification and also to signify a second correlated order of agents, concepts and events" (Abrams: 4). In this case Nyaywa makes use of romance to talk about nationalism. Romance is regarded by some as being frivolous. It is deemed to be a preserve of women both in authorship and audience. Nonetheless *Hearthstones* demonstrates how romance[24] can be used to make significant statements about a given nation.

Parallels can be drawn between the course the Zambian nation takes from the colonial period up to independence and most of the romantic relationships in the text. Tengani and Chilufya for instance are upbeat at the moment each one of them meets the man she regards as her future husband. It is love at first sight between Tengani and Sifanu (109). Zelani exhibits magnanimity by going out of his way to assist Chilufya when he meets her trying to fix her car even though hitherto he had not met her (62-65). Even Sabina whom Tengani meets in Kitwe informs us that her relationship with Kafupi was quite blissful at the beginning (134-35). But as time goes by, some of

[24] See Bryce 1997; 121 and Julien 1992; 47

these romantic relationships are plagued by infidelity and subsequently collapse. The Kafupi-Sabina marriage is held together more by tolerance on the part of the latter than anything else.

Using these romantic relationships to allegorize the Zambian nation, we learn from the text that in colonial Zambia, most Africans receive a raw deal from the British. Racial segregation seems to be the norm rather than the exception. It does not come as a surprise therefore when we see Africans organising under the umbrella of nationalism in search of independence. A celebratory mood engulfs the Zambian nation since the majority of the citizenry especially the masses look forward to great transformations in their collective well being. No sooner is independence attained, than an anticlimax confronts the populace due to shattered hopes and unfulfilled promises. Pledges that those in the vanguard of the political enterprise made to fellow compatriots at the dawn of independence People are unable to decipher the complexities and intricacies involved in romance as well as in the nationalist enterprise. Just as Anderson (1983) questions the reason behind people being so passionately attached to the concept of nationalism, we can also wonder about the alchemy of love. At the end of the day, the masses involved in the Zambian nationalist movement and women in romantic liaisons emerge with shattered hopes because those they so passionately invested their dreams in do not live up to expectations.

Romantic Narratives

Apart from romantic relationships that emerge in the text, there are other narratives that demonstrate a correlation between romance and nationalism in the text. At the

Gregsons, a palatial home owned by a British couple, a scene is created in which the nannies are portrayed sharing romantic stories (9).

One story is about *Bwana* Gregson's sexual escapades. *'Bwana'* as the narrator indicates is a term that denoted deference to white men who symbolized power in the colonial Zambia (7). *Bwana* as the narrator mockingly refers to Gregson, is said to have had a love affair with his nanny whom he would meet after she had finished the day's work. No sooner did his wife get wind of it, than she dismissed the babysitter. The story uncovers the fallibility of *Bwana* and by extension the entire colonial system. It was a romantic affair that mirrored the relationship between the colonial enterprise and Africans in colonial Zambia. In it, the oppressive nature of this system is seen and also the frailty of human nature despite the power and authority one person may wield over another.

Exploitation is the most glaring anomaly that the relationship exposes. We see *Bwana* preying on a naïve girl in the same manner the colonialists invaded Africa whose inhabitants were deemed to be naïve and unaware of the potentialities of their landscape as the story of the African chief and the mineral prospector shows (33). This romance is a metaphor for the disequilibrium that obtains between the colonizer and the colonized in which the former lords it over the latter. Ironically, this lopsided scenario is not only confined to colonial Zambia. It is also present in independent Zambia. The crop of African leaders in the ruling party seems to have exploited the unsuspecting masses in their quest for power[25] (116). *Bwana* is used as an image of

[25] Neil Lazarus in his essay 'Pessimism of Intellect, Optimism of the Will: A Reading of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*,' patently shows that there is no distinction between colonialism and post colonialism. The social maladies that were there during the colonial period are still intact in the era of independence in the fictional African country in which the book is set.

colonialism, a system that is painted as callous and morally wanting. In fact the narrator of the story says that Cook had warned her to be careful about Bwana's lecherous eye (9). It is incongruous that, even African rulers in post independence Zambia cannot escape this kind of indictment. Ken Saro-Wiwa has agued that colonialism predated the advent of whites in Africa[26]. A highly controversial position which nonetheless, cannot be honestly contested.

Reversal Discourse

Through this romantic story, the author seems to be engaged in a reversal discourse whereby in colonial Zambia, the British arrogate to themselves a superior status while Africans are consigned to the fringes of the society. The British for example see African men as stunted in growth and presumably mental capacity, which is why they are referred to as 'boys' (11). Furthermore, when Africans go to buy goods, they do so through the window as is the case at the butcher's premises (105) because the British do not see them as human enough to share a door with them. Nyaywa employs romance to expose British abuse of power.

Though some African feminist critics have denounced the likening of the African woman to the nation especially in Negritude poetry, it would not be far fetched to see the nanny involved in the romantic affair as standing for the Zambian nation while her boss represents colonial rule[27]. *Bwana* has got money hence power over the girl in the same way that the British rule over colonial Zambia. The colonial police crack the whip with devastating repercussions as the demise of Tengani's mother testifies (22).

[26] See Ken Saro-Wiwa 'The Language of African Literature' in *Research in African Literature.*

[27] The negritude poetry that hinged on romanticism is said to have likened the advent of colonialism in Africa as a form of rape, pillage and plunder of the continent. Odhiambo (2001) opines that the nationalist writing was predicated on this image and by so doing portrayed the African women as being at the mercy of their men's sexual aggression.

The moral of the story could also be that collaboration with the colonialists for selfish interests can be self defeating. Apparently the other nannies have no sympathy for what befell their colleague and simply dismiss her.

Mockery is being directed against the colonial establishment in the sense that in spite of the fact that the British lay claim to a superior status, some of their members fail the probity test. Thus this story could also be a metaphor for the freedom movement. One of the deductions that is likely to be arrived at is that *Bwana*'s prurience constitutes the colonialists' underbelly: they are not as invincible as they appear.

Closely linked to the romantic story discussed above, is another which has it that a white woman left her husband and went to live with her gardener in the African compounds. This interracial relationship is significant because it takes place in an atmosphere that is racially polarized pitting the British against the Africans. The white woman makes a bold leap from opulence into deprivation and squalor. Looking at it cursorily one would be hard put to understand why the woman makes such a move. The cosy environment in which the British stay is registered through Chilufya's bewilderment at the sight of the magnificence at the Gregsons' residence (7). Conversely, in the African compounds the residents are lumped together and make use of their facilities communally a lifestyle they do not take kindly to because they hail from diverse ethnic backgrounds (6).

Enmeshed in this romantic story is the question of racism in colonial Zambia. Romance in this context is used to pour scorn on this institution of segregation.

Nyaywa sees it as a creation of people with diabolical intentions. However, racism cannot stand the pull of love which is responsible for bonding among people despite their racial differences. Initially, the white woman faces a crisis of acceptance among the African women. With time, some of these women accept her in their midst. She ceases being a pariah and her husband need not accompany her to the market or wherever she goes (9). Neither materialism nor racism can stand in the way of romance. We are also being cautioned against attaching an insular definition to the concept of nationalism. It is not a provincial concept that can be defined on the basis of the hue of one's skin. The integration of the white woman within the community of Africans signifies therefore that romance can be used as an antidote against racial barriers. This arrangement is a harbinger of a nation in which, though not ideal, every Zambian of means shall be able to live their lives without reference to race (155-6).

Romance and Liberation

At the core of the liberation struggle against the British rule there is a romantic relationship between Chenjerani and Dora. When the former's father learns about it he disapproves of the love affair. In addition to that he dismisses Dora as one of "these cheap street girls" (25). But his son defends her, telling his father that Dora does not fall within his category of girls of easy virtue. Chenjerani is vindicated when Dora is seen playing a role in the agitation for freedom in which her boyfriend is involved. She acts as hostess when members of the Youth Wing meet at their "bachelor's quarters" (25). Besides, we see her in the company of Tengani and other fellow Zambians agitating for the release of Chenjerani and the rest of the arrested youth. Dora's and by extension other female characters' role in the political emancipation of Zambia is, though laudable, not unique. Women have actively

participated in liberation wars in South Africa, the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, in the Portuguese colonies, in Zimbabwe, Namibia among other places in Africa (Catherine Vidrovitch 1997; 195).

The disruptive nature of colonialism, nonetheless, is exposed when we see Dora disappear from the plot never to reappear even after Chenjerani is released (29). Because of being so immersed in the fight for independence, Chenjerani fails at the romantic level. Fidelity to the nationalist cause is portrayed as being so demanding that it exerts pressure on this romantic relationship leading to its disintegration. Chenjerani's is one of the romantic affairs sacrificed on the altar of nationalism.

Sepho, the Zimbabwean young man whom Chilufya meets at the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Salisbury, is equally wedded to the freedom struggle for his country to the extent of forgetting completely about his relationship with Chilufya. When she contacts him after moving back to her country, he replies by stating "his duty was with his people in Zimbabwe."(59) In the final instance, Sepho sticks with the movement and leaves his girlfriend. The urge to throw his weight behind the liberation struggle is so strong that Sepho backtracks on his earlier stated position that not every young person was expected to join the fight by literally going to the battlefield. Initially he had told Chilufya that sticking to one's training was also part of fighting because those who received training in various fields would meaningfully serve the country in the post-independence period. (58).

Tengani is another character who exhibits a similar passion for her nation. She is introduced to us as a restless person who is eager to change things in her country (3-

4). She lives true to this billing and throughout the plot is seen as the most politically conscious of the three protagonists. At the end of the novel she is not involved in any romantic relationship after the one she had with Sifanu floundered. It is as if after being jilted, she abandons intimate relationships to the and dedicates all her energies to trying to right the wrongs in post-independence Zambia. These characters put their lives on the line for the sake of their nations. Imbued with a sense of nationalism, they exemplify what Anderson describes as the 'purest of all deaths' i.e. readiness to die for one's country (Anderson 1983; 132).

Infidelity in Romance and Nationalism

In *Hearthstones*, there is ubiquitous infidelity whereby most of the male characters show that they are averse to the concept of trust and honesty in their romantic relationships and in their marriages. This infidelity is a trope that signifies the betrayal of the nationalist ideals and tenets by the post independence leadership in Zambia.

Zelani for one creates the impression that he is a good-natured person who is genuinely concerned about Chilufya's predicament with regard to her stalled car. He even takes the trouble to take Chilufya out which is perhaps indicative of a loving man willing to cultivate and nurture a romantic relationship. But little does Chilufya know that lying under this patina of generosity and romance is infidelity. No sooner do the two marry than Zelani's philandering emerges. He takes to flirting with young women with the intention of demeaning and humiliating Chilufya (87-9).

In the run up to independence, the atmosphere in Zambia is electrifying. Africans are enthusiastic about attaining their freedom as evidenced by the chanting crowd

gathered at the police station (27). Chilufya is eager to end a life of spinsterhood while Africans cannot wait to be liberated from the yoke of colonialism. Both Chilufya and the Zambian populace are disappointed because those in whom they invest hope squander their trust. On the part of the African leadership, they sink into corruption that seems to percolate through the entire body politic. Tengani decries rampant corruption in the Customs Department at Lusaka Airport (120).

Going by the condescending manner in which Zelani treats her, Chilufya does attract our sympathy. Her husband's so infidelity places her in the position of one wronged. She is nevertheless, not spared the flak that Zelani receives. She is culpable as far as infidelity is concerned. For example she falls for Zelani's sexual overtures long before they wed each other. On an occasion when Zelani calls on her, the two give in to casual sex (77-8). Her behaviour in this instance goes counter to the dictates of moral rectitude that she was socialized into by the Methodist missionaries while at Chipembi Girls Boarding School. It does not help matters because she is a doctor who ought to know better. Against this backdrop, Chilufya is portrayed, as one character among many in postindependence Zambia who cannot help giving in to the lure of gratification.[28]

Long before she is born, Zenai becomes a ground of contest between Chilufya and Zelani. She is at the center of the row between the two concerning whether or not Chilufya should resign from her job after conceiving. It is ironic because rather than the yet to be born baby being a source of harmony and joy in the family, it causes

[28] On the side of the author this depiction of Chilufya could be seen as a subversion of romance as portrayed in romantic fiction in which there is some formulaic approach in that there is a chronology between when a man meets a woman and when the couple starts raising children. 'A man meets a woman, they are attracted to each other, fall in love, get married and then engage in sex and start having children.' (Cited in *English Studies in Africa; 80*)

frictions between the couple. A lot of sacrifice goes into the fight for independence and most Zambians are eager to welcome the birth of a new nation. The atmosphere preceding independence is pregnant with expectations. But once independence is achieved, it is a reversal of those expectations. Balkanization of the nation and squabbles at the family level are hardly what nationalism was intended to achieve. Zambians, like a couple that is expecting a new baby, look forward to independent Zambia. Instead of the nation freed from the shackles of the British domination heralding a new start of equity and fairness, it turns out to be the opposite.

Tengani, like her friend Chilufya, falls head over heels in love with Sifanu. It is love at first sight. Tengani, falls for Sifanu when they meet during a party hosted by Chilufya and her husband (109). 'By the end of evening, I knew I was in love,' she says probably somewhat inebriated (109). It is a repeat of what Chilufya went through. Chilufya and Zelani get married within a record two months. Soon after their marriage hits the rocks. Likewise the relationship between Tengani and Sifanu crumbles when the former finds him in the company of another woman. The author counsels for circumspection and patience in intimate relationships because without weighing out issues, one sets oneself up for disappointment. Women are particularly being advised against being too trusting given that some men are given to capricious behaviour. The manner in which the author handles romance here is typical
of most romantic fiction in that men in these novels are amorous, unfaithful and promiscuous.[29]

[29] Muhomah Catherine in 'What do Women Want?: Versions of Masculinity in Kenyan Romantic Fiction' in *English in Africa 1*(2002; 78)

Before Tengani has her trust in Sifanu smashed, Sifanu gets Tengani to introduce him to influential people in the ruling party who assist him in getting foreign exchange to keep his company afloat. He was out to use Tengani to get what he wanted and thereafter dump her. Sifanu's infidelity neatly ties in with that of the African leadership when we see Zambian women in search of essential items that are in short supply (110). The dearth of these commodities connotes a nonperforming economy due to several reasons one of which is a leadership unresponsive to the people's wellbeing. Sifanu's duplicity unnerves Tengani.

Che Guevara is rumoured to have died because of romance related reasons. Much as the cause of his death is not clear, what is of import to us is the probable involvement of a jilted girlfriend in his assassination. Once again romance gone awry just like in Chunga's husband's case is suspected to have led to Che's demise. The author seems to be using these scenarios to accentuate the fact that fidelity in either a romantic relationship or a marriage is non negotiable.

Similarly, it is not possible for the struggle for independence in Zambia to make a breakthrough if those in the vanguard are not bound by identical objectives and a similar philosophy. Che's non-compromising stand on issues such as neocolonialism had made him unpopular among fellow colleagues in the liberation movement. Consequently, a clique with a neocolonialist mentality had conspired to have him eliminated. This scheme unearths schisms within this movement portraying it as one dominated by mistrust and bad blood.

Romance is not only associated with doom and gloom. We have incidents where we see the positive side of this concept. One of the impressive attributes of romance that emerges in the text is its ability to bring people together. Both Chilufya's and Likande's weddings are attended by multitudes of people from all walks of life, the rich and the poor alike. Likande informs us that her wedding was attended by almost everyone from her maternal grandparents' home (169). In a way the ceremony is a point of convergence for the community.

Honeymoons in *Hearthstones* allegorize the 'feel good' climate that envelops the Zambian nation immediately after the British hand over their former colony to the Africans. It is a period that is characterized by a lot of 'razzmatazz' in the same way for instance that Zelani and Chilufya; Likande and Musa go on honeymoon. The effervescent nature of this period belies the pitfalls that lie not so deep beneath the surface of the Zambian nation. We are made to understand that the year 1970 turns out to be an anticlimax year. It dawns on most Zambians that the political honeymoon was over and what was left is evocatively captured by Likande when she says the mood was similar to stale food left after a huge party (173).

The other side of men folk

Quite a number of male characters we meet in the text such as Zelani, Sifanu and Kafupi are either cheats in their relationships or elect to be influenced by their peers in the way they treat their wives as Sabina tells us about Kafupi her husband. Juxtaposed against these male characters we have Musa who comes across as a man genuinely in love with his wife, Likande.[30] In fact she sees her new marriage as a

[30] See Arndt (2001; 103) in which she analyses the mosaic representation of men in *Efuru*

harbinger of joyous moments to come. “Together we will share happiness and any problems that might come our way.” (99) It is a union that cuts across ethnic lines pointing to the role of love in cementing unity among couples of diverse ethnic origins, a factor that coheres with the tenets of nationalism. Chilufya is half Tonga while her husband is half Tonga and half Lozi.[31]

Until his death, Musa is a foil to the other male characters in the way he conducts his romantic relationship. Together with Hambala they restore the image of male characters. Chilufya’s change of husband serves to bring out a sense of hope and optimism as far as the destiny of Zambians is concerned. All is not lost even if avaricious politicians have squandered the prospects of independence.

There is hope of regeneration from a culture of deceit that afflicts not only romantic relationships but also the body politic. Though Musa’s death seems to spell doom to Likande as an individual, she gets over her loss when she meets David Scott who takes every care to ensure the survival of their marriage which happens to be a second one for both of them.

[31] Anne McClintock (1995) argues that nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space. In ‘Nationalism Gender and Race’ she takes the trouble to look at the word nation etymologically. We gather from her that the term derives from nation which means to be born. Thus we speak of nations as “motherlands” and “fatherlands”.

CHAPTER THREE

CHIPEMBI BOARDING SCHOOL AS A MICROCOSM OF A NATION

In this chapter, the girls' boarding school is analyzed as representative of the Zambian nation. Being an almost women's only world, the chapter proceeds from the premise that the author has used the school to feminize issues in the Zambian society.

Schooling and Women's Emancipation

Nyaywa tackles the concept of education in such a way that she leaves no doubt that she sees it as being crucially important in the improvement of the lot of Zambian women. Owing to Chilufya's mother having missed out on formal education, she is seen as being tied to traditional customs and beliefs which do not in any way enhance the collective wellbeing of the Zambian women. She does not support the girl child's education since she is of the mindset that women are in the world to be good mothers and wives (5). She, for example, still has a soft spot for cultural practices such as puberty rituals that do not serve the cause of empowerment for Zambian women.

Her character underscores the fact that education is an indispensable ingredient in the feminist emancipation project.[32] She espouses an extremely chauvinistic idea that is inimical to the collective welfare of women in the Zambian society. Chilufya's mother compares unfavourably with for example, Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood.* Nnu Ego has not received any formal education but vows to have her

[32] Arndt (2001; 78) identifies education, sisterhood, and solidarity among women as the three crucial concerns that African feminist novels and pamphlets underscore. Besides, these texts lay emphasis on economic and social independence as a prerequisite to the emancipation of women and the realisation of equality of rights and status between the genders.

daughters educated so that they do not end up being as illiterate as she. Ironically, it is Chilufya's father who is passionate about sending his daughter to Chipembi School that is widely considered as a citadel of quality education for the girl child in Zambia. It is imperative for us to note that during and immediately after independence, men in most African communities were known to be against the education of their daughters. To most of them their daughters were avenues for making wealth through early marriages. Nyaywa depicts a scenario where it is a mother who acts as an impediment against her daughter's progress. It does not however come as a surprise that Chilufya's mother epitomizes opposition against the girl child's education because we get to learn that she was socialized within a community that was gender biased. At the time she grew up, most people had no regard for the education of the girl child. Most parents opted to send boys and not girls to school. Basically, girls and women in general were considered as appendages to the society.

Education in both colonial and independence Zambia promotes social stratification. Educated Africans at the mines receive better treatment than the rest of their colleagues. Their facilities, such as housing are better than those of their uneducated fellow Africans. Access to education therefore gives some Africans an edge over their contemporaries and it is for this reason that Chilufya's father attends a night school in order to improve his social and economic status which means helping his family get out of a life of squalor (6).

At Luanshya where he works, we are told that conditions for uneducated Africans are appalling. These Africans are simply lumped together and made to share facilities irrespective of their ethnic and cultural practices. It is only educated Africans who are

given preferential treatment though they still rank lower than the whites. Their facilities such as housing are better than those of the rest of the Africans. The setting at the mines shows the ameliorating effect of education. With access to education, it would be hard for Zambian men to treat women with a cavalier attitude. As is shown in the text, educated women have their social status burnished.

In one of the scenes in the text during a national debate, cohesion among women comes under pressure. A rift emerges between the elite women on one side and the peasant ones on the other. At issue is grumbling among the latter that their educated colleagues have no regard for them. Furthermore, they take the privileged women in their midst to task for failure to appreciate the contribution they made towards the attainment of freedom. It is this freedom, they aver, which led to their colleagues' credentials being recognized. Otherwise as one woman puts it, in colonial Zambia, "it did not matter whether one had a PhD or not." An African was simply an African (137). We have stated that the text is infused with nuances and therefore, much as the author celebrates education for African women, she is cautious enough to project its dividing effect.

Schooling and the Liberation Struggle

Institutions of learning are depicted as breeding grounds for social consciousness both in Zambia and in Southern Rhodesia. While at Chipembi, the three girls engage in discourses centered on the idea of nationalism. From the conversations they hold, some of which put their friendship to test, we realize that they have divergent views on this issue. 'Who cares for school in the face of exploitation?' Tengani retorts in response to her friends when they exhort her to be cautious lest she falls into

disfavour with the school administration (30). Whereas Tengani favours a radical approach in the fight for independence, both Likande and Chilufya are moderate and regard the struggle with sobriety. At the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Salisbury we are told that a number of young people, male and female alike, abandon their studies in order to participate in the fight for freedom for Southern Rhodesia (58).

Besides the struggle against colonialism, education raises Zambian women's state of awareness. It does not only enable them play an important role in the postcolonial political dispensation but also puts them in good stead to challenge institutionalized oppression against their lot from their men folk. Liberation in this context is seen to be two pronged. We are of the view that it is courtesy of formal education that two of these women, Tengani and Chilufya cannot afford to put up with an abusive relationship and marriage respectively. Being self-aware, they come across as assertive women with a say in the direction their lives take as opposed to the near cynical mentality of women in Kitwe such as Sabina. The latter seem to have resigned themselves to their own fate.

At one time while at school, the three protagonists are locked in some debate pertaining to the stand to take in the liberation struggle. Tengani is convinced that it is pointless to read while Africans are being exploited and even incarcerated. Chilufya and Likande hold the position that education is a sine qua non for their future employment prospects. In fact Chilufya redefines the concept of struggle by saying that she wants to become a doctor so that she can serve her people in that capacity

(35). Hence it is not only a person in the battlefield who can lay claim to a struggle. A conscious desire to overcome illiteracy and backwardness fit snugly within the ambit of the concept. Ultimately, education enhances women's social-economic mobility. It is also what Zambian women need in order to navigate their way through the patriarchal web that defines this society.

Tengani incessantly questions the relevance of an education system that perpetrates colonialism through flawed subject matter that is taught to students. Thus it is not simply a question of celebrating education for the girl child within the Zambian society but the substantive value of what is taught that comes under a microscope. Hence Tengani faces a tough choice between being obedient to the school authority and debunking what she considers to be blatant falsehoods against her country's history. She chooses the latter with all its attendant pains**.**

Schooling is also depicted as a ground of contest between the Africans and the British. Chilufya's father wants to make a statement through his daughter's academic excellence. He wants to prove a point to the effect that Africans like their colonialists are capable of intellectual feats. 'This doctor is a beacon of light to us Africans. He is showing the *basungu* that Africans are capable of looking after our own.' (11) To Africans such as Chilufya's father, education also provides space for Africans to assert their capabilities. Academic excellence among the young women at the school goes a long way into helping to disabuse their fellow Africans of a sense of inferiority complex that some of them have internalized through being socialized within a discriminatory racial system. Chilufya's father's gesture though noble and one that endears him to African feminists, is not devoid of a selfish motive. He wants to use

her daughter's academic exploits to settle scores with the colonialists. This attitude fits in well with literary analyses that have depicted African women as grounds of battle between the colonialists and the Africans (Stratton: 39-55).

Chipembi School and African feminism

The school is painted as a miniature nation. It constitutes the lense through which we view the Zambian society. Due to the preponderance of women within this institution, we see that Nyaywa has accorded the Zambian nation a feminine touch. We see the school as a center of emancipation for Zambian women. It is a beacon of hope for women in this country who otherwise would not have a fighting chance in life. Likande's mother for example, is said to have gone through the school. She is now a teacher by profession thus its relevance to the progress of Zambian women and the nation at large cannot be overemphasized.

The school community is a close-knit one. The Methodist missionaries act as mother figures to the young women while the senior students play elder sisters to their junior ones. Soon after the new students arrive at the school, they receive guidance from their senior colleagues. The latter are virtually at the assistance of the former. Mwaba is responsible for Chilufya as she guides her around the school. Nguza the Housemother, like Mwaba assists Chilufya to locate her bearings in this new terrain. There is a sense of camaraderie and sisterhood among the members of the school community. The school is to a large extent a trope for considerateness. This considerateness contrasts with the egocentricity that informs the Zambian society. In the wider Zambian society traces of callousness as a result of the rat race among both the leaders as well as the citizenry are seen. Marita, a colleague of Chilufya's working

as a sales representative, has no qualms about using money as a criterion for identifying a man to enter into a romantic relationship with. Chilufya's father is largely driven by a pecuniary motive in his thirst for education.

One trait among most African women that Nyaywa has portrayed through the school is conscientiousness. Students take responsibilities with a self-motivating drive and so provide a model for It would be much better if the rest of the Zambian society. What we see reigning supreme within the wider Zambian society is social indiscipline. Leaders in this country are depicted as being incorrigibly corrupt. Nyaywa is subtly stating that if the Zambian society was under the governance of women things would probably be better than they are. Women would exercise decorum in the management of public affairs. Both the British and their African successors take pride in riding roughshod over their subjects. In contrast governance by the young women at the school is based on responsibility. It is an indication that leadership by women could be more accountable. Chipembi could be said to embody the seeds of regeneration and rebirth within Zambia.[33]

Women in Africa are mostly depicted as being too religious almost to a fault. It is often said that during a church function in most African communities, women congregants invariably outnumber the male ones. However, in *Hearthstones* we see Tengani taking a swipe at Christendom. Nyaywa seems to be in league with other African feminists who have identified Christianity as one of the props of patriarchy. Christianity has come under criticism for abetting and bolstering the subjugation of

[33] Having stated the foregoing, we do not lose sight of the fact that a government by women does not necessarily connote good governance. Claire Robertson so poignantly brings this out when she argues that some women's organizations have nothing to do with empowering women. They instead pander to the whims of the petty bourgeois class (1986; 137)

women (Ogundipe 1994). Tengani stubbornly refuses to pledge allegiance to Christianity. According to her Christianity was the precursor of colonialism (29). In a near blasphemous tone, she questions where God is amidst all the atrocities visited on Africans by the colonialists. She is particularly galled by the fact that the much preached about God could not go to the aid of her mother at the time she was attacked by the colonial police. Tengani is trying to make sense of an irony: the prevalence of evil in the world that is said to be under an all-powerful God. It is critical to observe as well that missions have afforded women in Africa an escape route from the manacles of "unwanted marriages in particular and patriarchal lineage –based controls in general" (Hofmeyr 1991;132).

Through the school Nyaywa advances her views pertaining to feminism. By portraying some of the Zambian men such as Chilufya's father and Nvula, Tengani's father, as being supportive of their daughters' education, Nyaywa is depicting African feminism as a philosophy that is gender blind. When it comes to African feminism, it is the ideas an individual subscribes to that count rather than the gender of the individual. The nurturing role that African communities have persistently taken to be the prerogative of African women comes under criticism. When Chilufya's father's decision to send her daughter to Chipembi prevails against her mother's protest, we see the cause of the girl child in Zambia triumphing over tradition that would rather Chilufya was instructed in how to be a good mother and wife[34]. Chilufya exhibits tenacity by pursuing her ambition till she qualifies as a doctor. She does this against her principal's advice who tries to dampen her resolve by encouraging her to take to either teaching or secretarial instead. Likande takes umbrage at Tengani's attempt to

[34] Hofmeyr (1993; 27) shows how women in the Transvaal region were subjected to what she calls a "gender specific" education and an initiation process whose intention was to make them obedient wives, ready to donate "their fertility to producing more people."

associate her with the nunnery. What we infer from these scenarios is that African women are today rejecting socially constructed careers that have a tinge of mothering. If they have to find themselves in such professions, it should be out of their own volition not because they are fulfilling societal expectations.

A family-like climate is what the school is grounded upon. The concept of 'mother' as used in the school connotes protection, care, understanding and love. Older students have been socialized to provide these needs to their younger colleagues. Consistently Nyaywa shows in the novel that she has a soft spot for motherhood[35]. Unlike some African feminists who would want to look at motherhood as aburden to African women, the author invests the institution of motherhood with values that make it appear as an island of tranquility in a sea of instability and turmoil. It provides solace to Tengani who after the death of her mother, finds that her father's house no longer feels like home to her. Chipembi is a great relief to her, an escape from a home that is unsettling following the moving in of her late mother's cousin called Mandarena. 'So home was not really home for me' (32). In this connection, Chipembi School is portrayed as a miniature nation modeled along the lines of a family (McClintock 1995.

Indeed the missionaries have renounced even marriage so as to bring up the girls as if they were their own children. There is a distinct dichotomy between African's

[35] Filomena Steady Chioma in *Black Woman Cross Culturally*, states that Motherhood defines womanhood. She furthermore avers that the most important factor with regard to the woman in traditional society is her role as mother and the centrality of this role as a whole. Even in strictly patrilineal societies, women are important as wives and mothers since their reproductive capacity is crucial to the maintenance of the husband's lineage and it because of women that men can have a patrilineage at all. The aspect of motherhood is probably the most fundamental difference between the African woman and her Western counterpart in their common struggle to end discrimination against women.

understanding of feminism and the way the British women conceive of the same philosophy. To the missionaries, it is not mandatory for them to fall within the institution of marriage in order to serve humanity. Among some of the Zambian women, any indication of delay in their daughters' marriages is an anxiety inducing issue as evidenced by Chilufya' mother (65).

This boarding school is represented as an antidote against the vagaries of life for the Zambian woman. The school provides succour to the young women. It moulds and inculcates in them a sense of responsibility in terms of commitment to duty as well as moral rectitude. This is evidenced by the fact that these young women join the school at the age of twelve or thereabout and by the time they leave the institution, they are indebted to it for playing a crucial role in their coming of age. Nvula, Tengani's father together with Dora, something of his daughter-in-law according to the common law, are compelled to have Tengani enroll at Chipembi because of the turbulence at home. After the passing on of her mother, Mandarena, the cousin of her late mother, moves in with her father but ends up being more of an oppressor than a caring woman. To add salt to the wound her brother, Chenjerani to whose place she moves thereafter, gets arrested. But in keeping with the dialectical nature of life, Tengani finds that the school does not afford her any therapy. There are issues she encounters which are at variance with her political convictions. By openly expressing her disquiet against them she rubs up the school authority the wrong way.

The journey the young women make to the school is both a metaphoric as well as a literal one. Metaphorically, it is a journey towards maturity and self-actualisation. Chilufya, for instance, by making the journey succeeds in becoming a doctor thus

fulfilling her lifelong dream that her father has always desired for her. At the end of her stay at the school, Likande confesses that she been transformed from an immature girl into a mature young woman ready to confront the world before her (53). While commenting on the use of the journey in *Pilgrim's Progress*, Ogude (1999) argues that in such a text the journey is a structure within which the main protagonist comes to social awareness. The journeys that these girls make lead them to social awareness. As one of the focal points in the Zambian nation, the institution attracts girls from different parts of the country, which in itself is indicative of the diversity of this nation. Therefore apart from being a place of knowledge, the school accords the students a chance to develop a cosmopolitan outlook on life by interacting with their colleagues from various parts of the country.

Many an African feminist has argued strongly for a sense of sisterhood among African women if they have to surmount the myriad challenges facing them. Nyaywa has not side stepped this issue. She vouches for solidarity among African women. While at Chipembi, Tengani confesses that she has received tremendous assistance from her two friends. She credits them for impressing upon her to the need to exercise industry in her studies. Because the destinies of African women are intertwined, if one of them falters, this is bound to have a ripple effect amongst other African women. One of those features that underpin African feminism is sisterhood and the willingness and readiness for African women to stand by one another. Precisely this is what we see among the three young women at Chipembi.

Chipembi as a space of Integration

Chipembi School is indeed an oasis of integration within colonial Zambia which is polarized along racial and even ethnic lines. Unlike at the mines where Africans who hail from diverse backgrounds find it hard to reconcile their traditions especially when they are required to share facilities, at the school a sense of cohesion holds sway.

Bonding and integration taking place in the school involves women and at the same time is also about bridging the racial divide. From the beginning of the text up to the time the author introduces the school into the picture there is antipathy against the British. They are portrayed as villains because of the treatment to which they subject Africans. Nonetheless, Nyaywa does not create room for the readership to have a one-dimensional view of the British. Chipembi Boarding School is used to caution the readership against falling prey to one-sided views. Before Chilufya's father met the supervisor at the mines, he had this belief that the entire white community in Zambia was immutably bad. The setting of the school serves to rebut such views. We see that her father gets to learn about the existence of the school through Fr Jones. Hence though a brainchild of the British missionaries, the beneficiaries of the school are daughters of Africans.

Nvula, Tengani's father differs with his son Chenjerani who has a deep-seated antipathy against every other Briton in colonial Zambia. According to the father not every white person is bad. He philosophically states that just as there are white people who are bad, so are there black people who are equally bad (29). Put differently, we learn that neither nobility nor wickedness is congenital to a particular race. It is along this line of thinking that Nyaywa avoids oversimplification of issues in the Zambian

society. Although she lays bare the plight of Africans in colonial Zambia, she does not depict the two races as if they are diametrically opposed to one another. She addresses gender issues within this society in the same vein.

Unlike in the wider Zambian society, we do not see racially motivated divisions in the school. The missionaries look at the school as a nursery for moulding young women into future leaders. Chipembi's niche in the Zambian society stands out. The kind of education that the girls receive at the school is an empowering one. It is radically different from the one girls go through during puberty rituals. In the latter case what they are exposed to is a purely tribal form of instruction which if anything entrenches the subjugation of women and promotes their socialization within a narrow tribal cocoon.

In terms of social status, there is differentiation in the school. In Likande's family, education is highly prized and both her parents are teachers. Teachers were among the first African professionals to constitute the petty bourgeoisie class soon after the attainment of independence in most African countries and so unlike the other two friends of hers, Likande hails from a well to do background. She is also part of the royalty in that her maternal grandfather was a tribal chief. Likande's maternal grandfather comes across as a trailblazer in this highly patriarchal society. He took all his daughters to boarding school at a time when it was not fashionable for girls to be educated. Indeed in some cases chiefs were so opposed to anything associated with the colonialists that when asked to send their children to missionary schools, they

would pick on their courtiers or in more ludicrous cases their opponents'.[36] It was only after independence that they came to terms with the cost of their blanket rejection of colonialism because it was those who had accessed missionary education who replaced the departing whites in strategic areas of national responsibility. Similarly, Hofmeyr (1993; 42-3) shows how resistance to missionary education left a lasting effect among the Ndebele compared to the Sothos who having embraced it had an upper hand in the race for the benefits of education while the former 'lagged behind'.

In contrast to Likande, Chilufya's background is a humble one. Her father has a scanty education hence the desire for his children to gain an education. He is among the Africans at the bottom of the heap at the mines. Tengani's family is equally humble; her aunt runs an informal liquor business. This is a kind of venture associated with Africans in both the countryside and urban areas striving to remain afloat economically.

Resilience is another trait that the students at Chipembi display. Initially, Chilufya is overwhelmed by homesickness and taunts from older girls but decides to put all that behind her (16). The school environment acquaints the girls with the challenges of life in general. There are conflicts at the school whereby we see some of the older girls taunting their new colleagues by calling them '*puku*[37]' (15-16), a term which infuriates Tengani. Amidst this tension between the newly admitted students and some of their older colleagues, the House Mother plays the arbitrator and advises one

[36] See (Robertson and Berger (1986:93) in which it is stated that, "Education, in giving access to the most desirable professions, has become the most important factor in social differentiation. The time is long past when the king of Porto Novo, asked to send his son to school judged that this novelty was temporary and sent along some servants' children whom he passed off as his own."
[37] A derogatory term for 'New Girl'.

of the victims to ignore those taunting her, since it is a process every other girl at the school goes through. She plays the quintessential mother who desists from taking sides in squabbles involving her young ones.

Strategy, Struggle and Compromise

In "African Women, Culture and another Development," Ogundipe-Leslie analyses the condition of women and makes some observations on the cultural outcomes that have taken place in political structures:

> Women are naturally excluded from public affairs; they are viewed as unable to hold positions of responsibility, rule men or even be visible when matters of state and society are being discussed. Women are viewed to need tutelage before they can be politically active; politics is considered the absolute realm of men; women are not considered fit for political positions in modern African nationalities, though their enthusiasm and campaign work are exploited by various political parties (1987; 130)

The ideas that Ogundipe talks about are what Nyaywa wishes to repudiate by representing these girls as not only attending school but also learning the ropes in leadership and personal responsibility so that after school they may not be used as pawns by men either in the political arena or in any other sphere of life.

Tengani is one character the author has created and invested with the agency of effecting positive change in this society. Right from a tender age of twelve, she appears precocious with regard to political activism. She is disturbed because her country is under the yoke of colonialism and therefore cannot wait to see it achieve

independence. Tengani challenges her geography teacher when he says that David Livingstone is the one who discovered Victoria Falls. She consistently contests the documentation of her country's history by the British as well as the naming of its geographical features. We can deduce that the school is one of the spaces that Nyaywa uses to right the history and thus the heritage of the Zambian nation. Within the school there is a struggle for the ownership of the Zambian nation. Tengani's stand is representative of the Africans' attempt to repossess the land they feel belongs to them. The struggle that exists at the school is at the intellectual level, which proves that history can be falsified and this falsification imparted into the minds of the young, an anomaly that the young Tengani is contesting. (20)

In spite of their commitment to serving Zambia through this school, the missionaries do get provoked when Tengani projects a nationalistic trait by debunking what she considers as inappropriate form of education. The history teacher for instance, is beside herself with emotion when Tengani tells her that she (Tengani) thought the British tricked the tribal chiefs into surrendering their land. Consequently, she has Tengani sent to the principal. Subtly the author portrays the missionaries as being in league with the colonialists. Though Africans still lock horns with the whites at the school, it is not in a confrontational manner as the situation is in the rest of the Zambian society. Rather than dismissing Tengani for insurbordination, the Principal chooses to help her overcome her tendency to be associated with troubles within the school.

No doubt most readers would admire Tengani's steadfastness and opposition against the colonial rule. Her hatred against injustice and what she deems to be repugnant is

what makes her character admirable to us. However, her near extremist stand against the missionaries in particular and the British in general, makes her appear unreflective. The author deftly weaves the traits of the three protagonists so that the idea of independence is redefined. To Chilufya, the idea of independence transcends merely driving out Britons from Zambia. It begins from a personal level by the individual going out to achieve that which they have set out for themselves. Independence starts with herself accomplishing her ambition of becoming a doctor because this will enable her to be of relevance to her fellow county people after the Britons have surrendered.

Her colleagues constitute the voice of reason so to speak. From what they tell Tengani we gather that they are of the position that fighting without strategies can be counterproductive. Candidly, Likande asks Tengani what would happen in the event of her being dismissed from school due to her political convictions. Being on the threshold of independence, then more than at any other time, Zambia needs skilled men and women and if Tengani were to be dismissed from school, that would dent Zambia's prospects for advancement. Likande brings into the picture a multifaceted struggle which ought to be waged on all fronts; intellectually as well as politically. Whereas Tengani views the liberation struggle as waging war against the British, her friends look at it from a tactical perspective. Making use of the opportunities available to Zambians such as schooling courtesy of the selfsame Britons so as to be strategically placed to play a role in post independence Zambia is fully part of the struggle for emancipation of women and the nation.

CHAPTER FOUR

HIV/AIDS, 'MACHO SYNDROME', VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S VULNERABILITY

In this chapter, the focus shall be on the precarious condition within which women in *Hearthstones* exist as a result of an exaggerated conception of what being a man entails.

It emerges from the text that there is a close connection between what women in this society refer to as 'macho syndrome' in the Zambian society (136) and the threat of violence and HIV/AIDS. A combination of these challenges renders women's existence in this society vulnerable. Machismo makes some male characters in the Zambian society arrogant since they believe that their women should submit to them whatever the case may be.

Romantic relationships that litter the text, apart from being used to allegorize the Zambian nation as seen in chapter three, are portrayed as being inherently risky as far as the lives of Zambian women are concerned. Nyaywa creates a society in which men's sexuality that has as its hallmark, involvement with multiple sexual relationships jeopardizes their lovers' and wives's lives especially in the era of HIV/AIDS pandemic. Apart from young people, the other group within this society at the risk of contracting the deadly disease is that of women. The chapter will focus on the concept of violence against Zambian women as represented in the text before zeroing in on the question of HIV/AIDS.

The Threat of Violence against Zambian Women

Violence in the text is seen physically as well as psychologically. During the colonial era, the two types of violence seem to be a part of the Zambians' daily existence. The appalling conditions under which Africans are compelled to stay at the copper mines in Luashya are violent because, as seen earlier, they impact negatively on the collective psyche of African workers. However, it is the Zambian women who bear the brunt of the physical violence unleashed by the colonialists against the Africans. In one incident the colonial police raid a drinking den and whip Africans found reveling. In the wake of this violence, Tengani's mother is brutally killed (23). It is an attack which accents the Zambian women's vulnerability in a violent society. Ironically, violence against women does not end with the departure of the colonialists but persists even in what ought to be an era of freedom. In a way, Zambian women are perpetually embroiled in a never-ending cycle of subjugation, which merely changes hands from the British to the African men. Most male characters in the text seem to harbour this notion that lording it over their female counterparts is what constitutes a quintessential Zambian man.

One way through which most Zambian men assert their masculinity is by physically assaulting women in their backyards. Quite a number of women have been reduced to punching bags. The chilling state in which the woman who is brought to the University Teaching Hospital, Lusaka, demonstrates the extent of the violence against women. (88)

She typifies female characters in the text who elect to endure oppression under the premise that they do so in the interests of their marriages. The macho syndrome as

women activists call it is so widespread in the Zambian society that some of the women against whom it is used do not see it as posing any threat to their lives. Curiously enough they look at it as something that does not affect the love that their husbands have for them; it should not be allowed to come in between them and their marriages. In the long run this stoicism does more harm than good. It takes some prodding for the badly bruised woman to admit that she had indeed been assaulted by her husband and has not fallen down the stairs as she had initially reported.

> "Please don't call the police!" she pleaded. "He loves me. He only does this to me when he is drunk. I always get better. We've been married ten years, and I can't leave him now. I have to stay for our children's sake."(88)

What is lost on this woman is that there is a likelihood of her children losing their mother, a tragic turn of events that would defeat the reason for her staying in an abusive marriage. In this case as with Sabina and in part Tengani, motherhood is depicted as an imprisoning institution. Female characters in abusive marriages are hesitant to walk out on their abusive husbands because they are not so sure about the fate of their children in the wake of a divorce. Rather than being associated with a state of being single, the battered woman chooses to stick by her violent husband. Nwapa (quoted in James 1990; 114-5) argues that marriage and children are not the defining attributes of a woman. She states that there are "a thousand and one" things that could make a woman happy.

Violence against Zambian women as portrayed in the text is so rampant that one may be tempted to think that it is the sine qua non of manhood. It is as if being caring and

loving toward one's wife is the apogee of weakness. Before his friends Mwanga and Choba make him change his attitude toward his wife, Kafupi is seen as one husband who does not mind being accompanied by his wife to social places such as discos and clubs (135). Immediately his friends start teasing him because of what they consider as effeminate behaviour, he stops taking Sabina out and follows his friends' views: they believe that it is unmanly for a man to be accompanied by his wife to recreational places. According to them, the place of a Zambian woman is in the home and specifically in the kitchen. These two men's influence on Kafupi is so strong that Sabina lives in mortal fear of one day being assaulted by her husband because of the influence of his friends on her husband. "The day he hits me is the day I leave him. I've already warned him that I won't let any man hit me, the way Choba beats his wife."(135)

Sexual Impropriety as a Conduit for the Spread of HIV/AIDS

Some male characters in the text exhibit an amorous trait. Their desire for sexual gratification seems to have no bounds. This sexual impropriety is what women in the text identify as the single biggest threat to their lives. As the chapter progresses, we realize that sexual irresponsibility as represented in the text is not peculiarly masculine. Some of the female characters also aid the transmission of HIV/AIDS in this society. Characters such as Marita and Chilufya fall into this category. Members of the Women Association attribute the prevalence of the disease to the reluctance of their male counterparts to discipline their sexual desires. However, it amounts to an oversimplification to look at the HIV/AIDS challenge from the perspective of 'them' against 'us', that is where one gender lays blame on the other. Most of the male

characters in the text are victims of their own desire but Nyaywa is quick to show that promiscuity is a social malady that cuts across the gender divide.

Failure to subordinate their sexual conduct to the principles of morality on the part of men in this society is attributed to patriarchy. A number of them simply take pride in having multiple sexual partners without caring about for the risk to which they are exposing themselves together with their partners. During a meeting organized by the Women Association, the need for Zambian women to stand up and fight against the AIDS tide features on the top on their agenda. What comes to the fore from their deliberations is that these women have come to terms with the real threat their lives are facing as a result of this scourge and have realized that letting things sort themselves out will in the long run prove costly to them. Their collective action is in tandem with what a feminist, Elizabeth Reid in "Placing Women at the Centre of Analysis" advocates. She pushes forward a case for women's collective action in the face of challenges such as HIV/AIDS.

Ried begins by admitting that it is often the case that women to feel powerless as far as changing men's behaviour is concerned more so when they are working individually. The moment they join hands, she argues, they are capable of effecting changes. She cites the example of women in Maharastra who decided to form vigilante groups in order to contain drunkenness among their men. Their decisive action is said to have paid off since they managed to change their men's drinking habits. Kenyan women are also reported to have come together in order to tame drunkenness among their husbands. In the mid-to late seventies, Mexican women

formed across class to bring down the incidence of rape and sexual assault of women (cited in Bond; 1997).

In the same vein some of the elite women in the Zambian society resolve to assist the less privileged women and their children residing in the shanty towns. This gesture, would go some way towards alleviating the plight of these shantytown dwellers: Schoepf avers that some African women resort to multiple partnering in order to provide for themselves as well as their families. He further contends that it is difficult for economically disempowered women to resist risky sex when their partners refuse to use condoms. Thus in the era of HIV/AIDS what was once a survival strategy for poor women, he concludes, leads to AIDS then death (Schoepf 1988 quoted in Blummelhuis 1995; 31). Some men in *Hearthstones*, contract the HIV virus by indulging in extramarital sexual relationships and in turn infect their wives. This state of affairs has compel female characters in the text to act jointly in order to impress upon their husbands to behave responsibly.[38]

Men who are responsible for the spread of the disease are described as the affluent breed of "macho" men (72) and as we have seen in the preceding chapters, those who have made it financially in the postindependence Zambia are either in mainstream politics or have connections with influential people within the Zambian body politic. Sifanu for instance has his business salvaged after Tengani introduces him to influential people in the political sphere. Chilufya can only afford to marvel at the immense wealth that Zelani has and wonders how an individual can afford to possess

[38] I agree with Baylies and Bujra (1995) who argue that in as much as harnessing their organisational skills in the fight against AIDS is a step in the right direction, women empowerment cannot be attained unless there is an engagement with male power over women. Women in this text seem to have realised this and that is why they try to involve their husbands in the fight against this scourge.

that kind of wealth in the midst of squalor and deprivation (66). It is such a breed of stupendously rich men who act as agents in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Given that they have money, they flaunt their wealth before unsuspecting girls and women. Inequality in the Zambian society coupled with avarice is portrayed as being lethal than the AIDS scourge.

The elite women's assertion that macho men are the only ones responsible for the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world of *Hearthstones* is called in to question through the sexual lifestyles of characters such as Marita. In most African literary works financial incapacity is often cited as the cardinal reason behind women's involvement in promiscuity. Marita is one character who is financially stable but is promiscuous. She has a flashy car, her earning is higher than that of her contemporaries such as Chilufya but ironically enough, she is ready to go out of her way to woo men. She is surprised that Chilufya did not allow Zelani to drive her home after having an adventure with him. "Chilufya, how can you let such a big fish slip away? Being bashful in this day and age? I would have swooned over him!"(66)

Marita is yet to appreciate the gravity of the AIDS situation. It is as if with or without AIDS she couldn't care less. She is one character that Nyaywa uses to demonstrate the contribution of womenfolk in the spread of the scourge. Marita's conversation with Chilufya succinctly drives home her attitude towards romance.

> "So you are prepared to go for any man who comes along?" I asked.
>
> "Not any man. A rich man, yes! Can you introduce me to him the next time you see him? She asked. (66-7)

Thus Marita's behaviour is in tandem with men in this society who have decided to throw caution to the wind and embrace sexual impropriety. Chilufya speaks unfavourably about her,

> Marita was so used to getting her own way that I didn't care. She changed boyfriends every few months and left broken hearts in the process. Her sister warned her several times about her "risky behaviour,"especially in the face of AIDS threat…Marita was trying to beat them at their own game. But at what price? (72)[39]

However, the irony is that Chilufya who exposes Marita's cavalier sexual lifestyle indulges in unsafe premarital sex herself (78). The myths and mysticism that seem to accompany the AIDS scourge prove to be a threat to the stability of the family institution. Couching his real intentions under the AIDS threat, Zelani tries to browbeat Chilufya into resigning her job at the University Teaching Hospital because he argues that there is a likelihood of Chilufya touching an AIDS patient then taking the disease home. Having learned that Zelani is opposed to his wife being a career woman, it is probable that he is invoking the killer disease in a bid to arm twist his wife.

[39] Webner categorizes women engaged in the sex industry in Kampala into three: true 'prostitutes' otherwise known as *Malaya* and 'good time girl'. True prostitutes are women for sex was a business and who charged a pre-set fee for men who could e total strangers. In contrast the *bamaalaya* (plural for *Malaya)* were women who did not consider themselves to be prostitutes but who typically had a number of sexual partners who would give them food, money or other gifts for their subsistence. 'Good time girls' are young women who spent time in bars exchanging sex for companionship (1996; 172-3)

At the mental level, Zelani subjects his wife to psychological torture. Here is a woman who has scaled academic heights and overcome her humble background by qualifying as a doctor. For reasons best known to him, he advises her to concentrate on child rearing and to leave her profession. Chilufya is at a loss as what to make of her husband's position. Zelani feels intimidated by his wife's profession and the only way he can still flex his masculinity in this patriarchal society is by mounting pressure on her so that she may eventually resign from her work. She even takes time off from her work in an attempt to assuage her husband but to no avail. Zelani begins flirting with other women in his effort to humiliate his wife who, according to him, has refused to heed his 'advice'. It is self defeating and counter productive behaviour:

> 'He tried to make me jealous by flirting with other women and telling them in my presence that he no longer loved me (87).'
>
> 'He came home later and later each evening. There were also tell tale signs of where he had been; lipstick on his shirts and the smell of perfume on his clothes (89).

Against this backdrop, Chilufya makes a bold move by walking out on her marriage before she finds herself in a situation similar to the one of the woman who contracts AIDS from her husband who has been having a field day with prostitutes (136).[40] Therefore, the decision she makes is very much an act of salvaging herself. The society seems to have sanctioned inappropriate sexual behaviour among its male members. The ease with which Chilufya is able to detect signs of Zelani's philandering conduct, shows that he is not bothered whether his wife finds out about

[40] In *Efuru*, Nwapa advises women to terminate marriages that are not fulfilling. (Arndt 2001; 102)

his illicit sexual liaisons or not. He seems to be thriving under the premise that it is perfectly in order for men to have multiple sexual partners. (Obbo 1995: 176, McFadden 1992: 160)

Chunga's predicament is a classic example of a society that is so patriarchal that subjugating women is a fact of life. Her husband dies when the love triangle in which he is entangled goes awry. The community finds reason to lay blame on Chunga for her husband's demise. The loss of her husband means loss of her property as well and this depicts this society as being callous and unresponsive to the welfare of the vulnerable members in their midst. Her husband's relatives take away her property, which they imagine belongs to the fallen man. Little do they know that what they cart away belongs to Chunga who has used her savings to acquire them while her husband was busy using his income to maintain his mistress together with her children. Setel et al (1999; 184) brings out the grim picture left by HIV/AIDS within the Zambian society. They observe that women widowed as a result of the pandemic have to contend with numerous burdens including property being taken by their husbands' kin and lengthy negotiations over the proper division of household assets among survivors.[41] The Zambian society is portrayed as being harsh toward women. In connection with Chunga's husband's death, Nyaywa patently shows that indulging in an extra-marital affair is a lose-lose situation because had his rival not killed him, Chunga's husband would most likely have succumbed to HIV/AIDS.

[41] Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stichter (1996; 72) point out that in contemporary Africa there are reports of kinsmen not only claiming all sources of the deceased including household effects, but even goods and income that widows have obtained through their own earnings. They state that the situation is worse off particularly if the deceased was better off financially than the relatives. The Husband's kin can go to great extent to take over the custodial rights of the children so that they may control the property

From the foregoing we see that the Zambian society is so patriarchal that most Zambian men take it for granted that they have the right to involve themselves in forms of behaviour that are life threatening without due regard to their own and their wives' well being. It is as if the Zambian women are under siege and are at the receiving end when it comes to men having their way in this society. As such most Zambian men need reorientation so as to realize that there is nothing macho in practising marital infidelity.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In the introduction to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991; 1-8) Mohanty avers that the term feminism is a contested one. Consequently, it is misleading to talk about a single entity called 'Western feminism' just as it is equally untenable to talk about 'third world feminisms'. Due to its fluid nature, many women in the third world have questioned the relevance and applicability of this term to the gender politics in this territory. Within the African context the term is equally fluid as Mary Eagleton (1991) has points out.

In this concluding chapter we shall focus on some of the trends of feminism that come to the fore in analysis of *Hearthstones.* Nyaywa advocates the liberation of Zambian women from the clutches of cultural practices within this patriarchal[42] society. Some of these practices militate against Zambian women's attempts to realize their potentialities. Nonetheless, she is also acutely aware that efforts aimed at emancipating these women from the encumbrances of culture ought to be responsive to the specificities of this society. It is in this connection that Nyaywa engages with the concept of feminism without privileging one trend over and above the other. We are of the view that throughout this book Nyaywa eschews antagonism in her approach to gender politics. She invariably vouches for a compromise between men and women in the Zambian society. Alice Walker has posited that African feminism is geared towards the survival and wellbeing of all the peoples irrespective of gender and is not in any way adversarial towards men (Walker 1983; xi). Nyaywa's depiction of the institution of marriage patently brings this out. She does not support servitude

[42] Patriarchy as defined by Gerda Lerner is an institutionalized form of dominance over women and children, both within the family and in society in general. It takes different forms in different societies and adapts itself in different periods of time (1986:239).

for women within this institution. Neither does she subscribe to the position that economically independent African women have the latitude to do whatever they wish within or outside this institution.

Within most African communities, women have been socialized to play the 'hunted' in romantic relationships. Patriarchal socialisation dictates that African men have to make advances toward women they have feelings for. Romance in most African communities is carried out in this fashion because it is seen as uncharacteristic of an African woman to go out of her way to try and lure a man into a romantic relationship. In the text there is a redefinition of this norm if we may call it so. Marita, the outgoing sales woman whose character we examined in chapter four does not shy away from approaching men especially those she thinks are well to do. She unapologetically confesses that she is driven by the desire for money in her pursuit of men (66). Arguably her behaviour constitutes a brand of feminism that is hardly associated with most communities in Africa. She is radical in her romantic lifestyle. Marita is an embodiment of a form of extreme feminism. Zelani finds Marita's aggressiveness in her romantic life revolting. In most men and even women would frown upon Marita's refusal to play second fiddle in a romantic relationship. We could argue that Marita is not a stock character. Although portrayed as sexually irresponsible, the author has used Marita's character to confront patriarchy that expects African women always be submissive (Bryce 1997; 122). In Zelani we see an insecure man who feels intimidated and threatened in the face of a woman who is forthright and resolute (75). Her companion Chilufya is equally uncomfortable with

her outgoing nature. Marita does not go about romantic affairs in a straitjacket way as is evidenced by her outspokenness during an outing with Chilufya (68-72).[43]

In spite of Marita's propensity for multiple sexual partners, we get the impression that the institution of marriage is accorded recognition within the society that the author depicts in this text. It is a society that expects a woman to enter this institution even if she is a qualified member of a given profession

> Most African societies believe that a woman must be married and marriage confers on a woman a high degree of respectability in her community. And so whatever her level of education, professional status or economic independence, an African woman would not normally choose to remain single although it is also true to say that high education and professional status confer a very high degree of respectability on a woman *though all in all unless she is ready to be called 'Mrs Somebody' she has no significance*[44] (Abena 1991; 16).

Chilufya's mother is concerned about her daughter's marital status and asks her incessantly when she will get married especially now that she is through with her training. Implied in her mother's concern is the fact that though Zambian women can pursue their dreams to the furthest end possible, marriage is considered as the apogee of all that these women will eventually end up achieving. In fact 'too much' training is seen by the old folk as limiting marital chances for a Zambian woman. Chilufya's mother is concerned that her daughter is educated beyond the reach of most men who

[43] Through Marita, the author subverts Western romances in which there is a stock representation of men as sexual heroes while women simply submit. (Newell 2000; 39)
[44] My own emphasis

would be interested in asking for her hand in marriage (65). Anxieties projected by Chilufya's mother are misplaced because as the text unfolds we realize that characters such as Chilufya and Likande are out to reconcile their careers and their responsibilities as wives and mothers. No clash between these three aspects of their persons emerges. As such the author seems to be saying that educating a woman does not in any way diminish her chances of getting married and discharging her responsibilities at the household level.

It is not just a question of getting married. In most African communities the sex of he baby a woman gives birth to could either endear her to her husband and his kinsfolk or turn her into an object of scorn. In this connection, Chilufya wonders whether it is the fact that she bore Zelani a baby girl that makes him treat her so condescendingly (88). From the foregoing, it is not hard to locate the point Steady is making when she states that it is motherhood that defines womanhood and therefore is crucial to a woman's status in the African society. She opines that for an African woman to marry and bear a child, preferably a son entitles a woman to more respect from her husband's kinsfolk because she can now be addressed as "Mother of___" (Steady 1981; 127). Nevertheless, not every other African woman celebrates motherhood. Elleke Boehmer gives a wide analysis of this concept as is represented in African literature especially by male authors. She notes for instance that most women writers both in Africa and beyond do not like the use to which the concept is put by their male counterparts especially those of a Negritude bent. Mariama Ba is quoted stating that: "We [women] no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African mother whom, in his anxiety, man confuses with mother Africa."(Susheila 1991; 5) The institution of

motherhood, as the above quotations show, is embroiled in controversy so much that not even African women have a uniform view of it.

A balance between professionalism and marital responsibilities is what the author could be advocating through her depiction of the lives of both Likande and Chilufya. Education which African women receive is in no way a substitute for other roles and responsibilities that they play in the society especially within the family set up. It is quite imperative for an African woman to be trained professionally because such a woman becomes even a more beneficial person both at the family level and to the rest of the society at large. This is what Abena (1991) does not lose sight of even as she acknowledges the great premium that most African communities lay on marriage.

On the eve of Likande's wedding, (168-9) the three friends are seen discussing the marriage prospects of Tengani and Chilufya whereupon the former states that it is not only a marriage that is the zenith of a woman's life. She states that even those career women who wish not to enter the institution of marriage have a right to lead their lives as they please. Their lives are not any less fulfilling than those of their fellow women who are married. Tengani contests the privileging of marriage especially when it comes to women's lives. In order to tame the perceived excessive energy that Tengani seems to possess, men suggest that she gets married. Some men in the Zambian society view marriage as the only institution that can be used to curtail women's striving for gender parity.

Though marriage is given prominence in the text, it is not to the complete exclusion of being single. Besides Marita, Tengani comes across as a character the author uses to subvert patriarchal structures erected to reinforce women submission. We see that after her romantic relationship with Sifanu ends she does not enter into any other relationship and dedicates her life to fighting for the rights of her fellow women. She seems to have totally rebelled against the institution of marriage.

Kitwe, a town where Tengani goes to work after going back to Zambia from the USA has its fair share of men who are averse to politically conscious women. Men in this particular area, accuse Tengani of introducing alien ideas from abroad in this rural town. They interpret her involvement in women affairs as a campaign against men's hold on social structures. She is perceived as being out to influence women to turn against their husbands. In this society, it seems that unmarried women are seen as threats to the social stability especially at the family level. It is for this reason that some men in Kitwe think that Tengani is actively involved in mobilization of women because she has scores to settle with men in general as a result of having been jilted by Sifanu. Nonetheless, some men remind her that not every other man should be gauged alongside her abortive relationship with Sifanu. We see the reaction of men to Tengani's bias toward politics being in keeping with Obbo's (1980; 159) observation that a woman who participates in politics is considered as behaving badly. Drawing on the political situation in East Africa, Obbo avers that an intelligent and progressive woman who participates in politics is likened to a hooligan; an embodiment of all that is wrong within womanhood.

Through Tengani we see Zambian women's refusal to play a subordinate role in this society. She points out that most men are reluctant to recognize the crucial role played by Zambian women in the attainment of independence and have instead elected to minimize the dedication these women accorded the liberation struggle. They still expect Zambian women to restrict themselves to domestic chores (59), to be in charge of the hearthstones as it were. Tengani impresses upon Chilufya the need for Zambian women to rise up and claim their rights within this society. She would like them to capitalize on the preponderant discourses about the newly achieved independence. Her fear is that once the euphoric mood dissipates, even women with qualifications shall be seen as mere appendages of the Zambian society best suited to entertain their male counterparts by serving them tea and coffee[45]. After participating in freeing their nation from the manacles of colonialism, Zambian women realize that they have to surmount another hurdle; chauvinistic thinking among some of their male counterparts. It is a state of affairs that women in Guinea Bissau had to face after defeating colonialism. They realized that there was not just one but two colonialisms, the other being their marginalisation from active participation in the political and economic life of the newly liberated state (Obioma 1997; 15-16). Sepho, Chilufya's college mate in Salisbury, thinks that Tengani risks being unpopular with men because of her involvement in politics. Despite his enlightenment, the young man has not been disabused of cultural paradigms within which women in this society are viewed (58). It is the dialectic nature of Zambian women's struggle which the author exposes in this text.

[45] Chinweizu (1990) so controversially dismisses ideas that cooking for men , caring for children and relying on men's salaries are things that engender and reinforce men's oppression against women (cited in Newell 1997; 175).I disagree with him on the aspect of women's economic dependence. African women's reliance on their men for financial support is one reason why most of these women tolerant marriages replete with abuse.

By foregrounding Zambian women's participation in the Freedom Movement, the author paints African feminism as an all-encompassing concept. It does not restrict itself to matters touching on women's lives but strives also to create a society free from all kinds of oppression and injustice. The fight against colonialism and any other form of subjugation directed against either men or women is within the scheme of issues that this brand of feminism tackles. The author raises women and places them on a par with their male compatriots. The thrust of her argument seems to be that any attempt to domicile African women in the home is both limiting and limited. Subtly she asks the readership to note the difference between biological distinctions between the two sexes which need not be conflated with gender that is based on societal constructions. Arguably this is one of the issues feminism takes inordinate amount of time to set clear.

Chipembi Girls' Boarding School symbolizes liberation for women in the society depicted in this fictional world. As Zaynab Alkali demonstrates in *The Stillborn* (1984) a boarding school has always been regarded as a symbol of freedom within most feminist writings. Indeed Chipembi stands for a break with the pre-colonial Zambia in which most women operated within the domestic sphere either as farmers or housekeepers. Commenting on women's education in Africa, Abena states that women's education has always lagged behind that of men in most African societies chiefly because in most traditional African societies, a major role for a woman was to ensure the continuity of a lineage and therefore she was expected to marry soon after puberty. Childbearing, continues Abena, did not presuppose education (1991; 49). In *Hearthstones,* Nyaywa views the girl's child education as a prerequisite to the advancement of African women's cause and that of the entire continent as a whole.

Her position seems to be that it is only through the acquisition of formal education that African women are able to take charge of their own destiny.

Through this institution Nyaywa redefines the concept of leadership because unlike in most African communities whereby leadership was taken as a prerogative of men**,** the missionaries in charge of the school have made it clear that their intention is to help nurture these girls into future leaders of the Zambian nation (13). It is clear that the author uses this institution to debunk the notion that it is only men who can competently handle matters of governance. She punches holes into this belief that was endemic in some African communities in the precolonial as well as the period immediately after the attainment of independence. It is not lost on us though that there were some official positions for women in some African communities prior to the advent of colonialism (Arndt (2001), Margaret; 1984; 142, Ogundipe 1994; 13 and Stanlie et al (eds) (1993)[46]. However, those positions were few and far between and largely ceremonial which means that men were the ones who wielded real power and authority.

Subtly the author makes use of the subjects that these girls read to comment on the whole philosophy of feminism especially as it applies to the African context. Like Wariinga, a character in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* who reads engineering, a discipline that is erroneously taken to be 'masculine', we see Chilufya portrayed as a girl adept in Mathematics. Her friend Likande does confess that she is fascinated by the ease with which Chilufya works out solutions to mathematical problems (45).

[46] Cindy Courville states that Shona and Ndebele women in Zimbabwe wielded formal political power. However, this was a preserve of women of royal descent whereby daughters of kings could be appointed to rule their subordinates due to their privileged class and familial position within the society (1993; 34)

Nyaywa is making a statement to the effect that women just like their male counterparts have the aptitude to excel in the so-called masculine areas of specialization such as medicine.

However, unlike Nyaywa, Ngugi's depiction of Wariinga panders to the subjugation of African women rather than giving them agency since it still clings to the notion that African women do not have any existence outside the lives of their male counterparts and whatever they do has to be gauged against what men. Ngugi's position seems to be that it is only by being able to execute that which their male counterparts are socially identified with that women in Africa can be seen as agents of change (Ngugi 1982; 218-21). Besides reading engineering, Wariinga is adept in martial arts a skill she uses to prevent amorous men making advances toward her.

Ironically, it is within Chipembi that we see what amounts to an opposition to the emancipatory role of African feminism. We see this being projected in the person of the school principal. Going by the stated intention of the missionaries running this school, we are of the view that this is an institution meant to afford Zambian women an opportunity to scale both academic and professional heights without being held back by societal norms and practices that place a ceiling on how far a Zambian woman can go. Rather than being in the forefront of encouraging Chilufya in her ambition, the Principal is the very first person to pour cold water on the girl's ambition.

> "…why would you prefer a dead language to a live and kicking one?" she asked smiling. "I want to be a doctor." I answered. "They say Latin is better for going to the university especially if I want to be a doct …"
>
> "Hah, hah. You want to be a doctor, eh? My dear child I also want to go to the moon but I can't. You've got to separate dreams from reality (56).

The principal comes across as one who still believes that there are particular professions that are out of bounds for Zambian women. Hence her advice to Chilufya to try other professions such as secretarial and teaching. These are careers that have traditionally been perceived as being feminine because they are associated with nurturing. The inference we tease from the principal's advice is that an African woman is in an inextricable bind. When she is at home she is tethered by motherhood bringing up children and performing other household chores. When she ventures outside she is expected by the society to serve in those jobs that fall within the realm of mothering. Cooper, while not suggesting that women should not bear children and participate in nurturing, repudiates the tendency to restrict women's potential to mothering (1992; 77).

Miss Dudley and fellow missionaries within this girls' school may wish to further the cause of Zambian women by according these girls a chance to study but the principal is still not convinced that these girls have the capability of making inroads into careers erroneously perceived to be the prerogative of men. With this attitude the essence of setting up this institution is defeated. It would be edifying if Miss Dudley believed in and encouraged her students to realize their dreams instead of casting aspersions on their abilities. Her attitude is a throwback to colonial Tanzania in which African

women were deemed incapable of carrying out industrial work involving mechanical knowledge because it was assumed that their mental faculties were so underdeveloped that they could not perform such tasks (Berger and Robertson (eds) 1986: 131).

The mission of this school is to mould girls into leaders of the Zambian nation. One would expect it to infuse in the young girls a sense of self-esteem and confidence requisite for the realization of their set goals and objectives in life. By using the analogy of going to the moon, the Principal infers that reading medicine for a Zambian woman is a Herculean task almost. Likande's mother does also ask condescendingly whether her daughter can possibly accomplish anything with a BA which she has attained from the US save for teaching (157). It is this tendency to confine African women either within the domestic sphere or other career pursuits seen to be peculiarly feminine that many an African feminist has always contested.

In spite of Likande's mother having been to school, she is a classic example of women who have been 'brainwashed'. Contrastingly, some male characters emerge as being more supportive of the women's cause. For example, the doctor at the Mine Hospital is pleased to hear that Chilufya wants to be a doctor and is quick to encourage her to go ahead and realize her dream, "So you are the future doctor, hey? Well begin by helping your mummy and daddy to look after the baby. Okay?"(11). There is nothing uniquely female in feminism, if anything some women act as impediments against their fellow women achieving their desired goals.

A chasm does exist as well between the elite women in Zambia and their colleagues who constitute the peasantry. The latter group resents their economically and

academically advanced colleagues for looking down upon them while it was the peasant women who are said to have sacrificed their opportunities in life in order to ensure that the dignity of Zambian women was restored from the lowly position to which it had sunk during the colonial era (137). Hence there is a division between Zambian women on the basis of social status, a phenomenon that puts paid to any attempt to lump these women together as people facing similar challenges. It would be difficult for one trend of feminism to be mooted then used to account for the challenges these women are facing.

African women who lay claim to education and professional training have to contend with some men whose are not responsive to gender parity. Zelani is a classic example of such men whose desire and intention is to lord it over their female counterparts. Zelani's suggestion to the effect that Chilufya resigns her job in order to concentrate on raising their baby could be taken as a vindication of what the latter's mother feared. Prior to her getting married, Chilufya's mother was worried that her daughter was so educated that she risked not getting a man willing to settle down with her. Zelani's suggestion could imply that some Zambian men are more at home with less educated or functionally illiterate women whom they can exercise full control over without the likelihood of facing resistance. Sepho, Chilufya's boyfriend at college in Southern Rhodesia, seems also to have problems with women who are active in agitating for the rights of womanhood. His remark that Tengani will not be popular with "boyfriends and husbands" after he learns from Chilufya that Tengani is busy in Zambia within the Women's Brigade is reminiscent of a man who conceives feminism as being adversarial to the men folk (58).

But we see that Zelani is a minority and therefore his attitude towards enlightened women cannot be taken as symptomatic of the collective attitude that most men in this society have towards their women. Zelani happens to be having his own anxieties when in the company of women who are self-aware. It is highly likely that Zelani is intimidated by Chilufya's qualifications which persuade him to reach the decision that with his wife out of work it would be clear to all and sundry that he is the one in charge of the family. Such an arrangement, he believes, would make his wife subordinate to him, her sound academic qualifications regardless. Macho men in this society view women's emancipation as aimed at putting them in a precarious state. They fear losing their influence and authority within the family which patriarchy bestows upon them.

In the novel, there is a women's gathering centered on the plight of women in Zambia, and from this, new perspectives concerning feminism come to the fore. Tengani is accused of antagonizing men and women in this society as if they are diametrically opposed to each other. A contrast between African feminism and Euro-American feminism is seen. Bwalya for instance, looks at the situation of Zambian women from a global angle and that the tribulations facing them are not peculiarly theirs. She goes ahead to question the relevance of the types of feminisms imported from America and Europe. The irony which does not escape her is that even in the cradle of women's liberation in the US and Europe, women are still encumbered by household chores and other burdens as a result of gender bias. She poignantly poses a question. "If those women in the West are as free and liberated as we are told, why do they continue to fight for women's rights?" (140) Women who wish to see themselves as peasants have valid points but they are not being fair to themselves by using the

West as a point of reference when it comes to addressing their plight. They seem also to have been brainwashed into believing that the feminist enterprise is one aimed at driving a wedge between men and women. Admittedly, there are some forms of feminism that refute the institution of marriage and radically advocate a life where women exist on their own (Frank 1984). Such have to be shunned. What is lost to these women is that feminism is a multipronged philosophy some of whose offshoots are geared toward engendering a better society for men and women.

Having listened to their views, Tengani realizes that there is a need for selecting from both cultures so that what is relevant within the Zambian tradition is retained while any outmoded practices are jettisoned. Again she realizes that it is not enough to dismiss everything that comes from the West as being incongruous with the Zambian setting. Crucially, Tengani reveals that the struggle for women's liberation in Zambia is a matter of justice and justice is not a gender specific concept. As such it is a struggle that encompasses the interests and wellbeing of Zambian men as well.

In spite of the strides some Zambian women have made in terms of career advancement and academic advancement, the objectification of women in this society is an anomaly that comes to the fore through the characterization of some of the men that inhabit the fictional world Nyaywa has created. Callously, we see Zelani pouring scorn on her wife's competence as a medical doctor by dismissing her and the entire hospital that she works. It is a remark grounded in malice and driven by hatred against Chilufya for the simple reason that she has refused to throw down the drain the many years she has spent training as a medical doctor. If she gave in to Zelani's way it would amount to reverting to the era of her mother which was characterized by a

perception that women were there in the society to serve men from the domestic realm and perpetuate their husbands' lineage. When Chilufya refuses to buy into her husband's directive, Zelani finds reason to dismiss her as a useless doctor, mother, and wife and associates her with everything that is wrong (90).

Hambala serves as a foil to Zelani. He is one character that we see being used to redefine the whole concept of manhood. The way he behaves shows that both men and women can share household chores. Unlike the other characters such as those in Kitwe plus Zelani, who find some forms of behaviour effeminate, Hambala has no problem helping Chilufya in laundry work or cleaning the latter's apartment, a gesture which though fueled by romantic attraction, demonstrates that there are male characters in the text who are governed less by machismo and have a fair engagement with issues affecting both men and women in Zambia (96). On one occasion, Hambala invites Chilufya and her daughter Zenai for lunch and when they arrive at his place they find him preparing a meal, a gesture which shows that there is nothing gender specific about household chores.

Likande's words at the end of the novel sum up the non-prescriptive tone of the book:

> Life is not only about careers and making money. We all have the right to choose what is best for ourselves and those we love. If a woman wants to be a career woman and not to be "tied down by children and husband," then the choice should be respected. If, on the other hand, a woman wishes to juggle her time between the two, a job and family __ "the tummy track", as someone once called it, then they, too, should be respected. … Those who opt for "full-time housewife and mother" deserve as much respect for their decision. I have

done both, first a career, then combining the two, and finally spending most of my time at home with the children (205) .

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