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The Family as a Contested Arena: Voices of Discontent in Charles Mungoshi's Works in Shona and English

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg, June 2011

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Thabisani Ndlovu

-------- DAY OF ------- 2011

Dedication

To my wife Siphathisiwe and our sons, Malcolm and Thando.

If there are words to thank you for your love and patience, I haven't found them yet.

Abstract

This thesis explores ideologies of intimate attachments and offers an overall critique of the ideology(ies) of family as evinced by Mungoshi's ironic treatment of this theme. A close reading of Zimbabwe through the oft-cherished institution of family, an argument is made here, multiplies fields and possibilities of meaning beyond the struggle against colonialism and cultural imperialism. It is suggested that instead of viewing the family as political allegory and unitary, it is profitable to perceive it as consisting of a multiplicity of contesting voices and/or interests. These voices include those of children, women, young adults, lone parents, homosexuals and heterosexual men with thwarted gender identities. Through familial contestation and conflict, Mungoshi offers for critique various matrices of power located within the family and affords us an opportunity to read a country and its literature from the "everydayness" of characters' lived experience especially the confusions, anxieties and ambiguities. Thus, much as the thesis is cognizant of wider socio-political contexts in the work of Charles Mungoshi, more attention is given to conflict or contestation within the institution of the family in which, as Mungoshi suggests, there is a fluid configuration of power and authority. Conflict and contestation express a desire to reformulate familial and, by extension, social relationships. Similarly, Mungoshi suggests that gendered identities are subject to various claims, negotiations, resistance and refutations. This thesis is the one attempt that discusses Mungoshi's work in one volume, across the two languages and three genres he writes in to generate a more subtle, more layered reading by examining the family trope. In other words, there has been no systematic and lengthy discussion of the family and its related concepts of home, belonging, childhood, parenthood, gender and sexualities – all of which Mungoshi explores to address particular familial and societal concerns. This thesis then is an attempt to systematically evaluate Mungoshi's representation of family and issues attendant to this subject by paying particular attention to voices of discontent.

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My foremost debt is to my supervisor, Dr Dan Ojwang for his mentorship as well as thoughtful and meticulous reading of my ideas. Thanks are also due to the Financial Aid Office and the Tothill Scholarship for three years of financial support. I am likewise indebted to Robert Muponde for pointers and advice. To *mzala*, Fortune Thembo, thanks for the too numerous to mention kindnesses that made the writing of this thesis possible.

Note on Translation

This study necessitated a translation from Shona into English. In spite of the challenges of translation, I am competent in both languages. All the Shona to English translations in this thesis, with the exception of some titles of Mungoshi's texts, are mine.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Aim and Rationale of the Study

By focusing on family, this thesis suggests another and less frequently thought of way of reading Zimbabwe and its literature and argues that the family trope offers multiple and significant entry points into the scrutiny of social and political concerns not only in Mungoshi's writing, but Zimbabwean literature as a whole. Mungoshi's enduring interest in the family, especially strife-torn ones, affords us an opportunity to read a country and its literature from their "weakest" positions as compared to, for example, the grand theme of political resistance which tends to occlude the "everydayness" of characters' lived experience. Themes of dominance and subordination within the family as well as overt and subtle ways of fighting against subordination comprise most of Mungoshi's writing. Power and authority in both filial and conjugal relations are contested and both emerge as not unidirectional.

Family as an analytic paradigm foregrounds crucial issues such as bodies and their gendering, given that family is the primary site for gendering processes. The bodies, to borrow from Butler (1990), "that matter" in the construction and practice of familial relationships, are both sexualized and gendered, and their lives have import on the wider community and citizenship given that citizenship is both an inclusionary and exclusionary mechanism which is largely based on gender and sexuality. Thus, this thesis also explores how family is an arena for reconceptualising routes to citizenship as will be demonstrated particularly in Chapter Six which dwells on homosexuality and lone parent families.

The writing and discussion of Zimbabwean literature have both tended and continue to focus rather disproportionately on wider political and economic concerns such as colonization, post-independence economic malaise and political repression, in the process

suppressing meaning(s) associated with interpersonal intimacies or relationships (Kahari, 1980; Zimunya, 1982; Stratton, 1986; Zhuwarara, 2001). Consequently, key issues attached to human intimacies such as gender relations and sexuality continue to be downplayed yet dialogue on gender and sexuality forms a crucial component of the African literary tradition. Most of the human intimacies in Zimbabwean literature are located in the institution of family. The use of "family" in the title of this thesis and not the plural "families," is not an essentialisation of this institution given that families are diverse. The singular form signals instead, family as concept and that this concept has had an enduring grip on the imaginaries of people across history, geographical space and culture. Family then, will be deployed with the knowledge that it is a term that refers to a unity of multiple and at times contradictory meanings within this term.

The focus on family signposts the desire to centre this topic and others related to it which have tended to take a backseat to the politics of nationalist struggle in the criticism of Zimbabwean literature. Reading Zimbabwe through the oft-cherished institution of family, an argument is made here, multiplies fields and possibilities of reading and meaning beyond resistance to colonialism and cultural imperialism. In other words, this thesis acknowledges but at the same time moves away from the idea of the family "writ large" in which the nation is construed as "metaphoric kinship" (Smith, 1991:79).

Mungoshi's keen interest in the family sees him focus on marginal, almost invisible people and signals his unwavering preoccupation with codes and assumptions that govern interpersonal behaviour. In exploring the intricacies of interpersonal relationships in different familial constellations, Mungoshi resides in and thrives on human anxieties in a manner that brings to the fore and for scrutiny, core issues such as heterosexual marriage, patriarchy, gender and sexuality – issues located and entrenched in the heterosexual family. These issues are not written about in a nuanced way in most Zimbabwean fiction, and similarly, not well commented on by many critics of Zimbabwean literature. One notices for example, how heteronormativity and its core social institution, the family, are both treated as unproblematic categories.

This thesis also explores and critiques Mungoshi's abiding interest in diverse familial forms and relations between family members, paying particular attention to voices of discontent or oppositional voices within this social unit. It is an exercise in listening to oft-ignored voices. These voices include those of children, women, young adults, lone parents, homosexuals and heterosexual men whose claim to and identity of manhood is challenged. Much as the thesis is cognizant of wider socio-political contexts in the work of Charles Mungoshi, due attention is given to conflict or contestation within the institution of the family given that conflict expresses a desire to reformulate familial and, by extension, social relationships in ways conducive to the interests of those expressing discontent. Some of the contested issues suggest a desire for better intimacies which can only become possible through the demolition of oppressive ideologies and/or practices.

Vulnerability of men at various levels and the presence of powerful women are two themes in Mungoshi's writing that open up the possibility for a more nuanced understanding of gender relations and diverse masculinities and femininities. He subjects gender relations and heterosexuality to scrutiny beyond the oft-cited oppression of women by men. By teasing apart ideologies of intimacies and their accompanying familial tensions, Mungoshi forces the reader to theorise further, power inequalities in the institution of family whose bedrock is heterosexism. He suggests a fluid configuration of authority and power in this institution. Critics of Zimbabwean literature tend to overlook the vulnerability of men in Mungoshi's work and thereby produce a clichéd criticism of power inequalities that fails to go beyond acknowledging the structural oppression of women by men. In the various incidences of contestation that Mungoshi portrays, he hardly offers a unified and predictable world view but rather, a clash of voices and positions located in the family, pointing to an inward-looking critique which suggests that the criticism of Zimbabwean literature itself must become self-critical. Thus, tensions in Mungoshi's work are fertile sites for critique, chief of which is cultural critique.

The overall questions that will direct this thesis are: (1) What is the significance of Mungoshi's enduring concern with family? (2) What kind of familial representations does Mungoshi's work evince, through what literary techniques and of what discursive

significance are both to his work and Zimbabwean literature? (3) How does Mungoshi script childhood, adolescence and adulthood? (4) How does Mungoshi handle gender with particular attention to the representation of masculinities and femininities? (5) What are Mungoshi's personal interjections/authorial consciousness in his texts?

The study is done across the two languages Mungoshi writes in – Shona and English – and the three genres he employs: fiction (both the short story and the novel), poetry and drama. Generally, the study aims to energise and expand the study of Mungoshi who is one of the key figures in Zimbabwean literature yet is not given the close critical attention he deserves. It draws on and departs from previous scholarship on Mungoshi's work and Zimbabwean literature in general. Similarly, one of the main research questions that this thesis aims to answer is: In what ways does Mungoshi's writing in content and style depart from his predecessors and contemporaries?

In reading Mungoshi's work, certain realisations crept up surreptitiously and so stubbornly that I was forced to ask a series of questions and ultimately notice some gaps not only in the study of Mungoshi's work but also in regard to his stature in both Zimbabwean and African literature in general. The realisations referred to prompted the subject matter as well as the approach taken by this study. A general realisation was that there is a meagre corpus of critique on Mungoshi, a situation which does not reflect his skill and range. There is a dearth of critical works that deal with Mungoshi's corpus in one monograph or thesis, with only two such efforts to date. The first is a book edited by Vambe and Chirere – *Charles Mungoshi: A Critical Reader* (2006) and Malaba's *Charles Mungoshi: Collected Essays* (2007). This study aims to augment the critical work on Mungoshi's writing and suggest more nuanced readings of this writer's texts. Thus, the exploration of patterns and shifts in the reading of Mungoshi's work is undergirded by ideas that suggest more profitable ways of reading his work and by extension, Zimbabwean literature.

There was also a realisation that critique of Mungoshi's work has often been limited to sections of his output, framed by language (Shona or English) and further subdivided by

genre or theme. Not much English commentary has been done on Mungoshi's work in Shona, thereby depriving those who cannot read the language a rich opportunity to engage with some of the issues that Mungoshi raises in his writing in either one language and not the other or those issues he raises in both languages. The paucity of critical material in this regard is shown by three essays in Vambe and Chirere (2006) which target specific texts or short stories and hardly make reference to other works by Mungoshi. These are Vambe's (2006) "History and ideology of narrative in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva*," Ravengai's (2006) "Issues and Implications in Staging Mungoshi's *Inongova Njakenjake*" and Magosvongwe's (2006) "The Portrayal of VaNhanga in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura*?"

The most common themes in the criticism of Mungoshi's work have been the position of women as seen, for example, in Gaidzanwa's (1985) cursory address of Mungoshi's work in *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature*. Another theme has been childhood, which Muponde (2005) competently but briefly addresses in *Childhood, History and Resistance: A Critical Study of the Images of Children and Childhood in Zimbabwean Literature*, perhaps understandably so because his focus is on Zimbabwean literature in general. The latest thematic offering on Mungoshi's work focuses on fatherhood in *Manning the Nation: Father Figures in Zimbabwean Literature and Society* (2007), a book edited by Muchemwa and Muponde. In other words, there has been a parcelling of knowledge that does not give a comprehensive coverage of Mungoshi's oeuvre. This study provides the opportunity for a holistic approach to reading Mungoshi's work by investigating his scripting of familial representations in both English and Shona, across three genres in a search for confluence or divergence and the significance of both these patterns. Thus, key areas or issues in Zimbabwean literature such as childhood, gender, sex and sexuality, masculinities and femininities which have hitherto been (under)studied and presented as disparate entities are brought together in this thesis under the organizing idea of family in an attempt to produce a nuanced reading of these issues based on *relationships* in Mungoshi's work.

In reading Mungoshi, it also becomes patently clear that his abiding concern is the family as a social institution with its internal dynamics and not as disparate segments (children, mothers, and fathers) as the approach of critics to his works seems to suggest. In any case, Mungoshi's most enduring concern, the family, has largely been ignored by most critics who have demonstrated a keenness to read his representations of this social unit within the grand narrative of Zimbabwe's liberation, nationhood and family "disintegration" occasioned by colonialism. There is nothing amiss in that approach per se, except that it is a limited and limiting enquiry. This study recognises the painstaking detail with which Mungoshi offers subjectivities in diverse familial ties, roles and identities such as male and female children, parents (sole parents and married ones), grandparents and so on. That is why this study is a close reading and critique of Mungoshi's abiding concern – the subtle dramas of family life – intrapersonal, intergenerational and spousal conflict, especially the performance or non-performance of obligations in family constellations.

The thesis acknowledges that conflict or contestation within the family is inevitable, normal and quite natural but what matters is the nature and magnitude of the conflict and most of all how that conflict is managed or resolved. The resolution of conflict or lack of such in Mungoshi's work invites commentary about socio-political issues. The thesis aims to go deeper in its analysis of the family, into the emotional lives of characters and the paradoxes of emotional life. It is these intimate concerns that give rise to alienation between characters and the resultant familial tensions. Through the investigation of intrafamily tensions, the study investigates ideas tied up with family, such as childhood, adolescence, femininities and masculinities.

This study is also conceived through the realisation that there is no systematic and lengthy discussion of the family and its related concepts of home, belonging, childhood, parenthood, gender and sexualities – all of which Mungoshi explores to address particular familial and societal concerns. This thesis then evaluates Mungoshi's representation of family and issues attendant to this subject, especially power, given that power relations underlie every social interaction. The study does not treat the family as different from the

polity and economy but rather as an expression of these two but with more salience placed on interpersonal relationships. This follows the idea that family embodies historically and socially institutionalized relations of power. In a sense then, the personal in familial relations and any other relations for that matter, is political in the sense that personal experiences are shaped by their location within social structures and histories. This explains why each chapter offers a brief socio-historical, economic and at times literary background to provide a point of entry into the subject of the chapter. The chapter headings that will serve this thesis correspond to key areas of interest and they are: "The Battle for Children;" "Adolescents and Young men;" "Of Wives, Mothers, Daughters and Female Patriarchs;" "The Burden of Manhood: A Matrix of Threatened Masculinities," and finally, "Lone Parenting and Transgressive Sexualities."

1.1 The Concept of Family and Mungoshi's Interest in Conflicted Familial Relationships

Many critics agree on the centrality of the family trope in Mungoshi's work. Zimunya (1982:85) views *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) as a book about "the disintegration of the African family." Kahari (1990) describes the same book as "a protest against the disintegration of the nucleus of the human race, the family" (170). Both these critics view family as the core of social life and a major preoccupation of most Zimbabwean authors. Zimunya (1982:6) in discussing Zimbabwean literature and the dominance of the family trope writes:

> One principal motif running through most, if not all of these works [of Zimbabwean literature] is that of the African family. It is generally accepted that the African outlook begins with the traditional family: the family with its complex unifying extensions. The fate of the individual, child or elder, and that of the family are regarded as one.

In spite of the acknowledgement of the centrality of the theme of family in Zimbabwean literature in general and in Mungoshi's work in particular, this area is undertheorised, especially the discursive significance of conflict within this social unit. Most of the conflict in Mungoshi's work is centered on some of the assumptions Zimunya (1982)

highlights about family above. The ideals of stability, succour and genealogy are destabilized by Mungoshi who portrays strained, distorted and violent family relations.

Barring religion, family is the most popular and formally developed social institution (Goode 1964) hence Chiwome's (1996:136) remark that "the family is the microcosm of Shona society." Institution in this thesis is used to mean "a set of relationships and /or practices which are expressions of mainstream social values and beliefs, and have the support – explicit and implicit – of other social and cultural institutions" (Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropoulous & Kirkby, 2003:14). As such, the just mentioned scholars aptly observe, family as an institution tends to define and exclude different formulations, "with the consequent disapprobation of those who cannot or will not participate." As an institution, the family is supported, through economic and other institutional advantage, by the general populace although not unanimously. In other words, family is a fluid construct with historical, social and economic determinants whose definition and practice differs from one epoch to another and between cultures. Through its inclusion and exclusion mechanisms as well as its internal conflicts, family itself is a vexed concept and troubled institution. It is as Alanen (1988) points out that "the frequent reduction of the family to a natural or biological unit" is responsible for the atheoretical view of family as unitary, fixed and unproblematic. In focusing on diverse familial units with their largely gendered conflicts, Mungoshi raises critical questions about the "- hoods" that make up family namely childhood, brotherhood and sisterhood, motherhood, fatherhood and grandparenthood.

Most of the common thoughts concerning the family centre on the idea that family is composed of different but special relationships that hinge on sexual relations, child-rearing and division of labour as cardinal points. Over many ages, philosophers have shared a general view that society is a structure made up of "families" with the implication that almost every individual lives in a network of family relations and that peculiarities of each society can be studied through outlining its family relations. Thus, there is generally, the idea that "family" signifies a distinct social unit, widely regarded as the "nucleus" of any society (Inyama, 1998). The uniqueness of this smaller social unit

which is part of a broader social and cultural milieu implies that "there is a boundary around the family unit separating it from other units" (Fine, 1995:12), which of course, is a myth. At the same time, family is not a unitary entity given that "there are invisible boundaries within the family, between the different generations and between different subgroups in the unit" (Fine, 1995:12).

The subject of family has been and remains an emotive one. As Roseneil and Budgeon (2004:135) observe, "the idea of 'family' retains an almost unparalleled ability to move people, both emotionally and politically." The discussion of family is fraught with contradictory feelings and conceptions especially when one considers that the family is the "primary source of all experience, both positive and negative" (Inyama, 1998: 36). On one hand, the family is seen as a source of affection, succour and safety. On the other, as the very site of anxiety and unhappiness, a "place of suffocating, emotional intensity where beneath the surface calm, a nightmare of complicated webs ensnare the members in complex and painful patterns" (Leonard & Hood-Williams, 1992:5). This echoes Zimunya's observation about the family in some of Mungoshi's short stories and in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), that at times in Mungoshi's writing, "The family becomes a sort of god of wrath and jealousy, exacting punishment from the non-conformist" (1982:64).

Seen another way, family refers to kinship through descent and the role relations within these kinships. Following this view, family becomes an agglomeration of both instrumental and cultural expectations as the key determinants to membership. Goode (1964) makes an incisive comment that is pertinent to this study:

> In all known societies, almost everyone lives his life enmeshed in a network of family rights and obligations called role relations. A person is made aware of his role relations through a long period of socialization during his childhood, a process in which he learns how others in his family expect him to behave, and in which he himself feels this is both the right and the desirable way to act. Some however, find their obligations a burden or do not care to take advantage of their rights (1).

In Mungoshi's representations of families, conflict springs, amongst other things, from the subordination of certain members of the family, unfulfilled social roles, desires and expectations as well as spurned or unclaimed rights.

Amoateng and Heaton (2007:13), quoting White (1991:7), offer a useful working definition of a family: "A family is an integrational social group organised and governed by social norms regarding descent and affinity, reproduction, and the nurturant socialization of the young." Although this definition is not all-encompassing, considering changes in society such as same sex families and so on, it is useful for the purposes of this study. Amoateng and Heaton (2007:4) also reveal the following instructive assumptions about the normative family: the dominance of men as heads of families (assuming the centrality of heterosexuality); the head of the family must provide, and when children are economically able in African families, it is assumed they will provide for the economic welfare of their parents irrespective of the presence or absence of a social security system. The last point, that of filial reciprocity, is very central in Mungoshi's writing and is explored in detail in Chapter Three.

With regard to the Shona, whom Mungoshi writes about, Kahari (1990) comments that "The Shona concept of family is embodied in the word *mhuri*, which is loosely translated into English as the "family." This equivalent, however, does not give an adequate representation of the meaning because the word *mhuri* for "family" as Gelfand (1979:50) observes, goes beyond both the conjugal and extended family to include the dead or ancestors, "believed to watch over people of their blood and exercise a powerful and intimate influence in all affairs concerning the family." The living and the dead are both concerned with the well being and perpetuation of the family. It is just as one of the elders in Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1979:97) says, that "the spirits are not dead. The spirits are alive in us. They are part of us and we are part of them. They are the Departed in whom we derive our being and existence." Family relations amongst the living, are as complex as "basket-weaving", to borrow from Old Mandisa in Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* (1975:125). The following extract serves to illustrate this point:

"Is that you, Kondo? Of course he is the man of all of us daughters of Kadengwa –

through his father who took our eldest sister –"

"But mother," Raina interjects, "didn't you tell me that Kondo was your son-in-law through the daughter of your cousin whom he married?

Old Mandisa remembers and says: "Of course. We are related in many different ways."

Mungoshi's stories and poems demonstrate a keen awareness of this belief which informs the psyche and actions of his characters. He seems to suggest that much as human behaviour is multiply determined, the family is the chief determinant through its insistence on cohesion based on consanguinity, heteronormativity, moral and material obligations. This can create rancour and conflict through for example, the strain of extended family relations on the formally educated which may result in filial rebellion.

Mungoshi conceptualises the family at two levels – structure and function. Concerning structure, he portrays the extended family. Fine (1995:64) offers a helpful observation when she writes that "In extended families, members of different generations or a number of family units live closely together. They may not live within the same family home but they do have strong emotional bonds and feel responsible for each other." In Mungoshi's representations of the family, there are usually three generations – the grandparents as in the Old Man in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), fathers and mothers as in Tongoona and Raina in the same book, and children typified by Garabha, Lucifer and Betty – all Tongoona and Raina's children. The families are mostly patriarchal, in which fathers have normative authority over and primary responsibility for the welfare and propagation of this social unit. The social dominance of males appears to be a cultural given which nonetheless is contested and threatened by some women's voices of discontent. Patrilineal kinship is the norm. One notices for example that when Mrs Pfende's first husband dies in the story "The Day the Bread Van Didn't Come" (Mungoshi 1980), her children are taken away from her by her late husband's relations. Sekuru (grandfather) in "Who Will Stop the Dark" (Mungoshi 1980:38) reminds Zakeo's mother, "Children belong to the man, *you* know that" (emphasis in original). The patrilineal kinship follows patri-local residence in which upon marriage, a woman moves to live with the husband's patri-kin and is formally and legally absorbed into this group.

The family units Mungoshi portrays are invariably characterised by internal strife. Discord or contestation manifests itself through voices or strains of thought that challenge authority, uniform "truth" and hegemonic discourses. Thus, these voices of discontent, captured largely through characterization in prose and drama, and reflection in Mungoshi's poetry, are premised primarily in the family. Neil ten Kortenaar's (2007: 37) observation that *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), published in the middle of the Zimbabwean liberation war and "set around the same time, ignores politics almost altogether in order to focus on a single and singularly dysfunctional family" and that therefore kinship and not nation is important to Mungoshi's characters, is useful to the extent that it points out Mungoshi's focus but misleading in as far as it depoliticizes the family, as if a family is a purely "private" sphere. The family remains part of the larger society, acts on it and is acted upon. Mungoshi's stance is one of looking outside from inside the family. This inward-looking stance suggests more of an internal critique of Zimbabwe and its literature as opposed to writing back to the imperial centre. The focus on the family is a shift from the militant, national resistance approach (opposition between coloniser and colonised) to one of "dissidence" (Coundouriotis, 1999: 20). Thus, "Dissidence subverts from within. It orients our attention toward the internal dynamics of a community where it is most difficult to look" (20).

The family in Mungoshi's work then, emerges as an arena of contestation through which generational and gender politics bring to the fore differences from within and "shatter the cohesion of a national community" resisting colonisation and neo-colonisation (20). Neil ten Kortenaar (2007:45) makes the salient point that,

> Mungoshi has much to tell us about family, the preserve of some of the strongest values and the cause of the most deeply penetrating anxiety and pain. If we critics accept as our task the analysis of the literary imagination, then the family would play an important position in our analyses and Mungoshi would occupy the canonical position he deserves.

Thus, Mungoshi's area of specialty, the family, is a primary site for the scripting of gender and generational politics, both important categories in the study of Zimbabwean

literature, especially when one considers that these categories span crucial phases and areas of human experience such as childhood, adolescence, masculinities and femininities.

In view of the above, this thesis realises the need to shift the reading of Mungoshi's work in English beyond the patriarchal nationalist discourse that tends to read literature as a narrative of nationhood in the context of decolonisation, in which the metaphor of kinship is deployed to stand for the nation. The language used to critique Mungoshi's writing under this approach, what Muchemwa (2006:38) calls "the nationalist aesthetic", is a language of social mappings of crude exclusions and omissions. Discontented voices in the family set-up are either "disappeared" or pathologised. This is done in a manner reminiscent of the Marxian idea that any ideology inherently contains contradictions but strives to disappear that which tends to contradict or expose its repression. Inconvenient facts are written out.

The somewhat inordinate attention given to political conflict during and after Zimbabwe's fight against colonialism meant, for the most part, that analytical attention was directed away from patterns and processes of competition, (in)equality, conflict and exploitation within the family which was largely viewed as an aproblematic unit or an extension of the nation. Inyama (1998) makes a prescient remark in this regard when he comments about the criticism of African literature and the neglect of familial issues:

> …although family and the dynamics of its relationships constitute powerful thematic under-currents in novels by Achebe, Armah, Ngugi, Beti… and others, much of the criticism of these authors' works focuses predominantly on such issues as conflict of cultures, the colonial experience, post-colonial political dilemmas, public corruption, alienation and technical aspects such as language and narrative structure. Issues such as marital, parent-child, and kinship relationships and conflicts, as well as childhood experiences have either been totally ignored or have only been peripherally hinted at by critics concerned with more "significant" issues.

> African novels are extremely dependent for the complexity of their plots and thematic success on the degree to which the authors have interwoven their public themes with the more intimate themes of family life and experience. (36)

Inyama's observation above, applies most fittingly to most criticisms of Mungoshi's work which have tended to overstretch the coloniser-colonised conflict under the grand theme of the fight for political and cultural independence. Such analyses have their uses but tend to close the possibility of more nuanced readings. Consequently, this thesis draws on and departs from some of the observations made in earlier analyses of Mungoshi's work and Zimbabwean literature.

A change in times and intellectual interests must usher in different emphases in scholarly focus. As the importance conferred on the liberation struggle wanes in literary criticism, this thesis aims therefore, to go beyond "patriotic" criticism, guided by what Ranger (2005: 218) terms "patriotic history," meaning "history written by men – more specifically, by old men." In this patriotic history, there is "the equation of history with the liberation war" (Bryce, 2005:39). This history is tied up with dominant and exacting father figures, an important category in Zimbabwean history and literature. These father figures aim to control the younger generation as well as women. Similarly, the older male characters in Mungoshi's work are obsessed with heirs who should inherit patrimonial narratives unquestioningly. This is not surprising given that the family has an authority system and patriarchy is firmly located and finds expression in this social unit. The attention has been on fathers or to borrow from Ranger (2004), on the "old men" to the exclusion of sons, daughters and women. In short, the focus has not been on the family as an entity offering disparate voices internally. For the most part, young men in Mungoshi's writing question or spurn patrimonial narratives. By the same token, there is a category of women that subverts patriarchy, "the rule of the father" (Morrel 2006:14). Similarly, bi/homosexuals and straight men and women who spurn the heteronormative demand to procreate destabilize the notion of family in several ways, suggesting among other things, that the family must not be looked at as a static and normative phenomenon and concept.

Generally, there is a need to re-appraise Mungoshi's works. Most readings of Mungoshi have been reductivist, characterised by "a tendency to emphasise pessimism as the ideological hallmark of aesthetics of Mungoshi's creative narratives" (Motsa, 2006:14). As such, the criticism of Mungoshi's writing has largely been monologic, depending on a master narrative generated by Kahari (1980), strengthened by Zimunya (1982), further shored by Veit-Wild (1993) and partially revised by Zhuwarara (2001). In all these analyses, undue stress has been put on the metaphysical "drought" and "hunger" as seen in Mungoshi's titles such as *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972), *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) and Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978). Most of the familial problems have largely been seen as the result of the debilitating effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Admittedly, Mungoshi's fiction is framed by particular socio-historical moments and some of these arguments make sense. However, they tend to simplify the internal dynamics within the family set-up. These dynamics suggest a more robust and rigorous analysis. I hope this thesis will encourage further rethinking and reframing of research and scholarship on Mungoshi's work and Zimbabwean literature in general.

1.2 Charles Mungoshi and his Works – a Brief Profile

It is ironic that Charles Mungoshi, with eleven notable publications to his name and hailed by some critics as "Zimbabwe's most accomplished writer" (Motsa, 2006:12) and acclaimed by others as "Zimbabwe's finest and consistent creative writer" (Malaba, 1997:301), is scarcely known and his works hardly taught outside Zimbabwe. This anomaly becomes more glaring when one considers that in spite of two facts – that there is no doubting Mungoshi's artistic merits and that he writes in two languages, English and Shona, making him, in Veit-Wild's words, "Zimbabwe's most prolific writer in two languages and the most innovative in that regard" (1993:231) – he is eclipsed by his flamboyant compatriots such as Dambudzo Marechera and Yvonne Vera, both dead. The reasons for this situation will be discussed later in this chapter.

There seems, however, to be a steady increase, both inside and outside Zimbabwe, in the recognition of the value of Mungoshi's work. Over the years, there have been piecemeal efforts at studying his works in both Shona and English. A few journal articles discuss works in English and a couple of book chapters focus disparately on the English works, the Shona ones or on a specific genre in either language. Kahari (1980) initiates a discussion of *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) underscored by "family disintegration" (22). Zimunya (1982), although staying with Kahari's focus on "Roots and the disintegration of the African family" (68), offers a more nuanced and stimulating discussion of Mungoshi's collection of short stories, *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) and Mungoshi's only novel in English, *Waiting for the Rain* (1975). The efforts of these two writers are heavily inflected with the cultural nationalist fervour that accompanied Zimbabwe's gaining of political independence in 1980. This project points out and illustrates that there is more to reading Mungoshi's work than persistently mining it for protest against colonialism and its attendant ills on the oppressed, and that with the passage of time, interests in literary criticism change and expand.

Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1993) makes a brave leap by interfacing Mungoshi's biography and his writing in both Shona and English. Biography and social history tend to override and occlude critical analysis. Also missing is an effort to create a dialogue between the English and Shona works as they are treated as two separate entities. In *An Introduction to Zimbabwean Literature in English* (2001), Zhuwarara devotes a substantial chapter that is a close reading of Mungoshi's writing in English. As an entry point for readers of Mungoshi it is satisfactory. However, those in search of rigorously theorised work will find it wanting. What comes close to comprehensive work on Mungoshi is *Charles Mungoshi: A Critical Reader* (2006) edited by Memory Chirere and Maurice Vambe. Much as Vambe and Chirere (2006) must be commended for putting together the first Charles Mungoshi reader, the disparate contributions tend to parcel Mungoshi's work through a series of narrow foci such as one piece of work, a few selected short stories, work in English (in which *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) is popular) or occasionally, Shona works and other such divisions that do not cut across language and genre. The result is a

fragmented view of Mungoshi's literary output and some gaps in this body of knowledge are glaringly visible.

Mbongeni Malaba's thin volume of six essays, *Charles Mungoshi: Collected Essays* (2007) is the latest attempt at putting together in one book, perspectives on Mungoshi's work in English. Malaba's (2007) six essays largely take a thematic approach namely gender roles, father-son relationships, religion, race, tradition and modernity, and the sixth chapter explores Mungoshi's poetry. Malaba in his efforts suggests more rigour in the analysis of Mungoshi's work. One notices however, the paucity of theory in the six essays which tend to rely on long quotes and assertions. The essays do not venture into Mungoshi's works in Shona. The writing of this thesis then, is an attempt at a comprehensive analysis of Mungoshi's work through the most consistent theme in his works, the family, with particular emphasis on the discontents in this social group. This is one of many efforts required to accord Mungoshi the international recognition he deserves (ten Kortenaar, 2007).

Born on 2 December 1947 in Manyene Tribal Trust Lands in the then Rhodesia, Charles Muzuva Mungoshi is a versatile, prolific and prodigiously talented writer in both Shona and English, his first and second language respectively. He is the first born in a family of eight children. He was a cattle herder in his youth and claims that the long hours of solitude in the veldt turned him into an observant person and finally into a writer (Veit-Wild, 1993). He attended All Saints Primary School and completed his Ordinary Level education at St Augustine's Mission School. Of all the well-known Zimbabwean writers in English, he is the least educated since he did not proceed beyond Ordinary Level, the barest minimum secondary school qualification with reference to Zimbabwean education. He could not qualify for Sixth Form because he was only interested in English and writing his own stories and as such his overall examination results were mediocre, meaning he could not secure a Sixth Form place. Whilst at school, he was an introverted pupil, avid reader and good actor. Mungoshi worked as a Research Assistant for the Forestry Commission, invoice clerk for a textbook sales shop and editor for the Zimbabwe/Rhodesia Literature Bureau both before and after independence, as well as

editing for the Zimbabwe Publishing House. He was writer-in-residence at the University of Zimbabwe in 1985.

Mungoshi's Shona publications are: *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (*Brooding Breeds Despair/Heart Break*) (1970), *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (*That's How Time Passes*) (1975), *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (*Is Silence Not Speech?*) (1983) and a play *Inongova Njakenjake* (*Each One Does His Own Thing/Free for All)* (1980) which was acted in schools and colleges and also adapted for television. Mungoshi also translated Ngugi waThiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), rendered as *Tsanga Yembeu* (1987). In English, Mungoshi has published a novel, *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), three short story compilations: *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972), *Some Kinds of Wounds* (1980) and *Walking Still* (1997). He has an unfairly neglected poetry publication, *The Milkman Doesn't Only Deliver Milk* (1998), which has received sparse critical attention so far. He also has two books of children's stories, *Stories from a Shona Childhood* (1989) and *One Day Long Ago*: *More Stories from a Shona Childhood* (1991). The latter won the Noma Award for African writing in 1992 in the Children's Literature category. However, because of the nature of their content, these two children's books will not be considered in this study. Apart from writing, Mungoshi has also acted in films such as *Your Child Too* (1991) and written and directed another, *Abide by Me* (1992).

Mungoshi's achievements are a reflection of his great artistry. They include the International PEN Award (1977) for *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) and the 1976 Rhodesian Book Centre Award (Best Book) for *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975). In 1980, he won the PEN Longman Award for best book of the year in English with the first publication of his poetry anthology, *The Milkman Doesn't Only Deliver Milk*, which was republished with a few more poems in 1998. In 1988, *The Setting Sun and the Rolling World* (1987), which combined selected stories from *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) and *Some Kinds of Wounds* (1980) won the Commonwealth Literature Prize, Africa Region. Other achievements include the Noma Children's Book Award twice, in 1990 and 1992. *Walking Still* (1997) was voted *The New York Times* Notable Book of the Year in 1998. Mungoshi also had three Honourable Noma Mentions in 1981, 1984 and 1990.

In the Silver Jubilee Awards in 2005, "given to people considered to have been the cream in their own fields of practice in the past twenty-five years of Zimbabwean Independence" (Chirere, 2006:16), Mungoshi beat "hot nominees" such as Chenjerai Hove, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Dambudzo Marechera and Yvonne Vera, confirming him according to the awards, as Zimbabwe's best writer up to that moment. Some of Mungoshi's works have been translated into Hungarian, Norwegian, Russian, German, Japanese and French. He has been a visiting lecturer at institutions such as the University of Florida and given papers at the University of Iowa, Durham University and Cambridge, to name a few. In honour of his contribution to Zimbabwean literature, the University of Zimbabwe conferred on him the Doctor of Letters degree in 2003.

1.3 Paradigms and Paradoxes of Writing in both Shona and English

That Charles Mungoshi writes in both Shona and English, and across three genres – fiction, poetry and drama, presents two main problems in this study. The first has to do with the dynamics involved in the production and consumption of vernacular literature in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe under the Literature Bureau. The second is reading for continuity in both Shona and English and across the three genres that Mungoshi explores.

During colonial rule in Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, English was the dominant language of power in commerce and instruction at every level of schooling. Indigenous languages, Shona and Ndebele, the two most widely used languages in ranking order, were peripheral in this regard although there had been efforts to codify these two languages. In fact, the desire to codify indigenous languages created some distortions beyond language(s) and orthography. The word Shona itself, "is an artificial term used by linguists to refer to an agglomeration of mostly but not completely, mutually intelligible dialects found within and outside Zimbabwe" (Kahari, 1990:5). It is thought that the word "Shona" came from a derogatory Ndebele word, "Ama-Swina," meaning "the dirty ones" (Gelfand, 1979:5). Although the word "Shona" has been adopted to denote a standardized language modeled on the Zezuru dialect, following Clement Doke's *Report*

on the Unification of the Shona Dialects (1931) whose aim was to create a single orthography for Shona (Chimhundu, 1992), most of the people the term is supposed to refer to tend and prefer to identify themselves through their chiefdoms or dialect groups such as Karanga, Zezuru, Korekore, Manyika and so on. As such, the extension of the term Shona to all these disparate people and the codification of Shona orthography both "appear to have been a British innovation" (Bourdilon, 1976:32). Much as there are common cultural practices and beliefs amongst the Shona, the observation just made here means that some of the generalizations about Shona culture and language may not be inclusive of the whole group so denoted by that name.

Veit-Wild (1993) observes that the majority (about 90%) of Zimbabwean writers in her survey of 96 writers, "felt more at home in their mother tongue" and found it "easier to express themselves" in their mother languages (229). One cannot quarrel with this observation as most, if not all black Zimbabwean writers in her survey had to learn English at school and some found the subject very challenging. However, her assertion that "The use of either the vernacular or English as a language cannot be considered a real choice because it is largely determined by the writer's familiarity with the language" (229) is a simplification. For some writers such as Dambudzo Marechera, it *was* a choice. Marechera admitted being competent in both Shona and English, but when asked if he had ever thought of writing in Shona, he replied, "It never occurred to me. Shona had been placed within the context of a degraded mindwrenching experience from which apparently the only escape was into the English language and education" (Veit-Wild, 1988:7). That, however, was not Mungoshi's view or choice. Mungoshi, like Marechera, was competent in the two languages. Unlike Marechera, he embraced Shona as a language of creativity and used it alongside English.

In the 1970s, Charles Mungoshi could publish his Shona works locally but not so the English ones, which he had to publish outside the country. Kahari (1990) posits as the reason for this scenario the racism and oppression of the white establishment that was bent on hiding the fact that a black person could write well in English. Primorac (2003:50) concurs with this observation in writing that "At the time the choice of English

[by black writers] as a medium of novelistic expression amounted, in Rhodesia, to a declaration of equality."

Black writers had to publish work in indigenous languages through the Literature Bureau. Set up in 1953, the Rhodesia Literature Bureau functioned as a censorship board that "made it clear from the beginning that politics and religion were taboo in publishing" (Veit-Wild, 1993:72). Primorac (2003) offers insightful and comprehensive commentary on the Literature Bureau:

> The Bureau, founded in the early 1950s, had an ambiguous role: it functioned as a literary agency with an inbuilt, multi-layered censorship mechanism. The Bureau encouraged would-be writers through literary contests and sponsored publication of manuscripts by commercial publishers. Its declared aim was to promote literacy, create a body of work in African languages, and transform Shona and Ndebele into fully-fledged parts of school curricula (schools became the greatest market for Bureau-sponsored books). At the same time however, it controlled the structure and thematic range of such manuscripts in order to discourage Shona and Ndebele texts that were practically unacceptable to the state. The Bureau's editors encouraged narratives constructed around elaborate but schematic plots dealing with love, crime and family intrigue. (53)

The result was a very nostalgic, didactic, moralistic and apolitical vernacular literature. Some of the vernacular literature did not show much creativity. Thus for the most part, vernacular literature took a different trajectory from that of literature in English by black Zimbabwean writers. Whereas nationalist writers such as Ndabaningi Sithole and Stanlake Samkange were publishing historical novels of protest in England and America, vernacular literature remained, for the most part pastoral and romantic in outlook, glorifying the rural area and depicting the city as the den of iniquity with snares cleverly laid out to corrupt the naive African. It was a literature that reacted to rapid urbanization with its concomitant social problems through moral panics. The novelists, playwrights and poets writing in vernacular felt the need to enact fictional solutions to broad social issues.

There was an over-reliance on the narrative techniques of the folktale, formulaic plots, mundane narrative techniques (to which Mungoshi is an exception) and the limited set of themes was undergirded by apolitical stances since the scripts were vetted by Native Commissioners. Of interest here is the fact that Mungoshi's work in Shona and English did not show, in a radical sense, the different paths that vernacular and English writing took. That *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) which had been published by Oxford University Press in Nairobi, was banned in Rhodesia in 1974, says more about the paranoia of the colonial government than the political content in the one story of contention, "The Accident." The authorities felt that the story "would bring the colonial police into disrepute" (Zhuwarara, 2001:29).

The achievements of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau were typically of a mixed kind. The passion with which vernacular writers cultivated writing in Shona and Ndebele was double-edged. On the one hand, it was a revival, promotion and "preservation" of local languages. On the other, this very same process played into the hands of the colonialists whose aim was to create a safe apolitical discourse of "native" literature (Veit-Wild, 1993). Kahari (1990:281) agrees with Veit-Wild to a certain extent. His assessment of 112 Shona novels up to 1984, made him conclude that, "about 70 per cent of the Shona novels are moralistic and didactic in tone. The authors have achieved this by making use of plots where consequences are seen as a direct commentary on the morality of characters' actions. The closures of the narratives are therefore moral statements." In other words, 30 percent of Shona novels analysed by Kahari were not, in his opinion, explicitly didactic and the thirty per cent according to Kahari, included all of Mungoshi's Shona texts. Contrary to Kahari's conclusion, this study will argue later on that there is a fairly strong element of didacticism in all the four Shona texts by Mungoshi. This last point brings out the idea that there are divergent views concerning the didacticism of Bureau-sponsored literature. Primorac (2003), for example, cites as one of the key reasons for didacticism, writers' missionary education but is quick to warn, and correctly too, that "This is not to say that this is a body of texts that is monolithic; neither are critical assessments of it" (53).

To attribute all the didacticism found in vernacular literature to the Literature Bureau hides the complexity of the production and distribution of such literature. Kahari (1990) adds to our understanding of this situation by writing that

> Didactic literature, with an explicit teaching message, arose in Zimbabwe out of a desire to change local conditions and thus satisfy local needs…. To begin with, didactic and propagandistic literature had its genesis in traditional oral literature with its emphasis on the teaching of moral ideals… to children lest they should forget the values of their people. Secondly, as most of the authors [of didactic vernacular literature] are involved in education and [are] conservative members of their society, they feel it is their duty to instill the proper values of their society in their readers. (304)

Kahari's observation alerts us to the fact that the Bureau, wittingly or not, tapped into already existing modes of communication and ethical codes. At the same time, he reveals how some of the writers fully embraced the Bureau's ideas since there was a confluence of purpose – moral edification.

Apart from the official censorship of the Literature Bureau (which Mungoshi ironically worked for before and after independence) there was self-censorship. Talking about *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) Mungoshi once commented:

> *Waiting for the Rain* is more subjective and autobiographical, it reflects my feelings towards my home in the rural areas. In the Shona novels, there is a certain falseness because one didn't bring oneself into the books. I felt more myself when writing in English because I knew it wouldn't be published in Rhodesia. In Shona, you would always look out to compromise. (Veit-Wild, 1993:287)

Although Mungoshi contradicts himself in saying he could not bring himself into his Shona books, as proved by his remark on the character Rex in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1972), "I did put myself in a bit in the figure of Rex, especially the drinking bit" (Veit-Wild, 1993:280), the point still stands that there is a certain restraint imposed by readers and Mungoshi is hinting at pleasing the Literature Bureau or conforming to Shona etiquette or both. One example that comes to mind is the portrayal of Eric in

Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura (1983). Eric is a "been-to" version of Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975). Whereas Lucifer is given a voice in the latter book, Eric in the Shona novel, is not. One notices that Mungoshi deliberately gives every other significant character voice in the form of an internal monologue except the anti-hero himself, Eric, who is having an affair with his half-brother's wife inside the couple's house. There is a certain shying away from getting into Eric's thoughts and rendering them in Shona as this would have touched on sex, which is still a relatively taboo subject amongst the Shona and other ethnic groups in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa. We only get to know Eric's character by piecing together what the rest of the characters say and think about him, which touches on but shies away from a direct engagement with Eric's sexual transgressions.

The self-censorship that Mungoshi refers to above is more complex than he makes it out to be. The avoidance of sensitive issues and direct engagement with explicitly political issues also had to do with the readership of vernacular literature. High levels of illiteracy amongst black people, then, meant a limited readership located mostly in schools. Thus, writers came to know, whether through the direct advice or censorship of the Literature Bureau or an awareness of the fact that they were writing for the school market, what was acceptable and not acceptable at school level. Perhaps this might explain some of the stunted imagination in some of these texts given that the writers would be targeting a certain age group. Furthermore, publishers of educational books could not afford to upset the Rhodesian government because they were dependent on it for approval and purchase of texts to be used at schools.

There was and still continues to be limited criticism of Zimbabwe's vernacular literature. There have only been a couple of decent efforts in the criticism of Shona literature. Up to date, there is no single book that analyses Ndebele literature. This low level of criticism also explains why vernacular writing is not as robust as it can be in Zimbabwe. Trenchant criticism would engage with writers in a way that challenges them to be innovative and hence improve their writing. The country's failed economy has contributed towards the

dearth of new publications of both creative works and criticism, and contributed towards the re-printing of already existing, and in some cases, uninspired texts.

Whichever way one looks at the efforts of writers in Shona and Ndebele under the Literature Bureau, it should be borne in mind that in spite of their moralistic tone, this was in essence, an inverted form of social criticism because the roots of difficulties and conflict are implied. The gaining of political independence in Zimbabwe did not result in a radical change of literary output from the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau which was disbanded in 1998. Apart from war novels vilifying the erstwhile colonisers, manuscripts that were critical of the Mugabe regime never saw the light of day (Veit-Wild, 1993). The still limited market for vernacular literature, which has further shrunk because of general poverty, together with the absence of robust criticism, look set to stagnate the writing of vernacular works of high literary merit. This situation has been worsened by the fact that the once intermittent drive to improve the writing of vernacular literatures through the holding of sponsored but nonetheless sporadic writing competitions, seems to have come to a halt.

1.4 Mungoshi's Craft, Vision and Stature in Zimbabwean Literature

How Mungoshi ended up writing in both English and Shona and the effects of this undertaking on his craft and vision can be best understood in light of the education system that obtained in colonial Rhodesia. Like most Zimbabwean writers of his time, Mungoshi attended a mission school, St Augustine's, for his secondary school education. The secondary school years were crucial since they were the formative years of serious writing, inspired by books and missionary teachers. For Charles Mungoshi, it was the heavy diet of European and American authors that sparked his imagination. He would later on with the encouragement of some of his teachers, especially Father Daniel Pearce, his teacher of English, read Russian authors and appreciate Japanese art and Japanese literature in translation. Mungoshi's favourite authors, as cited by him in 1992, included James Joyce, Anton Chekhov, Ernest Hemingway, Franz Kafka and many others (Veit-Wild, 1993). When he was still at school, Mungoshi read a few books from Heinemann's African Writers Series such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Ngugi waThiongo's *The River Between* (1965). This is just a representative sample of some of

the influences which in no way captures the entirety of Mungoshi's voracious reading then and later, nor does it suggest in any particular way that his craft and vision can simply and solely be attributed to this limited set of influences.

Mungoshi's wide reading made him innovative in handling narrative technique, language and the vision evinced in his work in both Shona and English. His borrowing from Western literary traditions influenced his work to an appreciable degree regarding content and style. The harnessing of Western novelistic techniques to write Shona novels initially caused Mungoshi some problems. For example, as Mapara (2007: 32) shows, *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) was initially rejected by the Literature Bureau as "formless," yet when it was published by Zimbabwe Publishing House, it became one of the most widely read books in Zimbabwe, inspiring writers such as Mabasa to write *Mapenzi* (1990). Mungoshi's novel was chosen as one of Zimbabwe's best 75 books of the twentieth century.

Kahari (1990) is of the opinion that of all Shona writers, Mungoshi is the least moralistic and didactic. Nyawaranda (2006) concurs and cites an example in which Mungoshi was forced by the Literature Bureau to change the ending of *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983), which Mungoshi had left open-ended. The Bureau preferred a neatly wrapped up plot, suggesting a restoration of the prevailing social order. Generally, Mungoshi's stories in English tend to be open-ended, corresponding to Mungoshi's view that "there is no single and definitive truth" (Veit-Wild, 1993:280), whereas the Shona writings are neatly rounded off or as in some cases, have forced and consequently, disingenuous endings. This discrepancy will be examined in chapters to follow.

Charles Mungoshi and Thompson Tsodzo are widely believed to have "started to introduce new, psychological dimensions to the Shona novel (Kahari 1990; Veit-Wild 1993; Magosvongwe 2006; Nyawaranda 2006). This is reflected in the narrative techniques that Mungoshi employs, for example, in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975). In this novel, omniscient and first person narration, together with the epistolary method, are "ironically juxtaposed to show the inadequacies of a single individual's

perception of human reality" (Kahari, 1990:270). The dominant literary technique in this novel "is the internal monologue or stream of consciousness" (Nyawaranda, 2006:211). *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) also goes into the minds of the characters through the utilization of multiple viewpoints as Culwick (2005:8) observes:

> Each character is an individualized, partially autonomous consciousness….
> The common strategy of multiple viewpoints within the narrative voice is also used by having a major character's viewpoint dominate each chapter, so that the story is successively half-seen through their eyes *to convey the clashing internal dynamics of the community.* [emphasis added]

Additionally, the novel is written in the present tense to make the events immediate and according to Culwick (2005:8), to render them "open; indeterminate – or give the appearance of being so." *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983) is composed entirely of interior monologues from six different characters, five of whom are interestingly women, plus a newspaper report giving the book a multivoiced narrative structure.

The fact that Mungoshi is steeped in both Shona and English writing traditions has resulted in a mutual enrichment of both languages. He is widely credited with rescuing Shona writing from pedestrian and stilted language, replete with gratuitous idioms and proverbs to a point where there was a jarring disjuncture between language and content (Kahari 1990). Veit-Wild adds that "Mungoshi has adapted Shona to render it a literary language for modern psychological realism. While preserving richness and vividness of the language, he has developed it further by introducing new patterns of thought borrowed from city life and modern literature" (1993:286). The new realities that Mungoshi deals with in his Shona writing such as rapid urbanization required a shift from traditional plots and registers, a situation Mungoshi was attuned to.

Mungoshi's writing in two languages resulted in a creative use of English in which he "Africanises it and bends it to imitate Shona patterns of Speech" (Veit-Wild, 1993:295). Phrases such as "Your wife tells me you don't sleep with that back of yours" (Mungoshi, 1975:12) and "I don't have a mouth to say it" (16) attest to this. In a way Mungoshi set a trend that was to blossom in the writing of fellow Zimbabwean Chenjerai Hove,

especially in his Noma Award winning novel, *Bones* (1988) which uses "Shonalised" English. Hove also uses, in the same novel, another technique Mungoshi had already used to great effect – the use of characters' names as chapter headings as seen in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) and *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983). There has been so much interest in *Bones* (1988) that the book has been translated into Japanese, German, French, Danish, Norwegian and Dutch (Zhuwarara, 2001).

Concerning writing itself, Mungoshi is quoted saying, "Mainly it's a kind of study of myself. I always have a clearer picture of what is happening inside me when I put it down in a story" (Veit-Wild, 1993:267). Writing emerges as a conduit of self-exploration for Mungoshi. That largely explains why his writing is dominated by an exploration of psychological tensions, what Veit-Wild (1993:297) calls Mungoshi's "individualistic and socio-psychological approach." She qualifies her observation, and in the process raises a crucial point between the public and private by writing that,

> Though the later [Zimbabwean] writers have been driven by heightened individualism, their writings have never been lost in mere self-contemplation; the individual has always been viewed within the context of the contradictions of a concrete social and political setting. Of all the writers, Mungoshi has excelled in penetrating social reality through the most minute observations and intricate analysis. (268)

In other words, Mungoshi's "individualistic" approach is not a mere navel-gazing exercise but a channel for the exploration of wider social issues giving his writing "social and political relevance" (Veit-Wild, 1993:268).

Much as Mungoshi's writing has political and social relevance, there is a clear frustration expressed by some critics, as Motsa (2006) points out, that Mungoshi is reluctant to proclaim what he believes in. This is largely as a result of the absence of explicit moral or political evaluation. Thus, some critics such as Stratton (1986:12) would like to see outright commitment to the anti-colonial and anti-neocolonial struggles in Mungoshi's work when she writes, "it seems important to open up the question of Mungoshi's attitude to, or vision of, his nation's future." Similarly, Zimunya (1982) would be

happier if Mungoshi had shown in his work, a commitment to Zimbabwe as a "new" nation. It is however, this ambivalence in Mungoshi's vision that gives his work resonance. His intense grappling with intimate human relations makes Stratton (1986:19) concede that "although *Waiting for the Rain* was written well before Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Mungoshi's vision is less strictly political than it is social and thus it remains highly relevant today."

Amongst those who vociferously object to Charles Mungoshi's vision is Muhwati (2005: 1) who takes great exception to what he perceives as the writer's "undeviating obsession with victimhood." Muhwati is very perturbed because "At the heart of this victimhood are Shona people, their culture and institutions particularly the family" (1). Much as Muhwati acknowledges Mungoshi's artistry, he is concerned with how Mungoshi's depiction of families in his Shona novels speaks of "hopelessness, meaninglessness, resignation and above all, negation of action and creation" (2). That Mungoshi focalises some dysfunctional families and highly conflicted relations and personalities is a sore point for Muhwati who sees Mungoshi as betraying his role as a writer, that of healing the Shona family from the buffeting by colonialism and urbanization and in the process instilling "positive thinking and positive living" (6).

This perceived travesty is attributed to Mungoshi's "nihilism from other cultures" (9) which he imposes on the Shona one. According to Muhwati, this is detrimental to "nation building" (10) since "Fragmentation, dislocation and disintegration are presented as the universal qualities of a Shona family" (13). The reason for this deviance, Muhwati is convinced, lies in Mungoshi's "Euro-modernist sensibilities and aesthetics" (15) both of which make Mungoshi's vision "very unfair" and guilty of "imperialist gestures both in sensibility, commitment, orientation and aesthetic direction" (8).

Muhwati's strident condemnation of Mungoshi's craft and vision is typical of other such reductive criticisms. Muhwati fails to appreciate Mungoshi's skepticism and focus on dystopian families. Through these two literary techniques, Mungoshi explores the unexpected, incongruous or disconcerting and in the process questions taken-for-granted

social relations and categories. He challenges the sentimentalization of values and ideas about "Shona" culture and family, raising questions about the adequacies of both. As Chenjerai Hove (1991:2) points out, the role of the artist is to "teach us to doubt our perspective" because that is what "makes society humane, alive, debating, breathing." If Mungoshi offers "distorted" families, it is so that society gets annoyed but in the process realise a need to re-appraise certain relational arrangements within it. Thus, unlike Muhwati's monolithic argument that depends on assertions and re-assertions, symptomatic of what Vambe (2005:93) decries as the "poverty of theory" in the criticism of Zimbabwean literature, Mungoshi's work suggests polyphonic readings which can only be apprehended through a multiplicity of non complacent critical perspectives.

Regarding his position and stature in Zimbabwean literature, Mungoshi has made a telling mark. One is bound to agree that in the following remark Veit-Wild is not praising Mungoshi unduly when she writes, "Mungoshi's writing is outstanding in Zimbabwean and even African literature for its sensitivity, depth and density of thought and style. Mungoshi is quite unique attaining an equal maturity and accomplishment in both Shona, his mother tongue and English" (1993:268). Zhuwarara concurs and adds,

> Mungoshi is a versatile and prolific Zimbabwean writer who has not only pioneered in the writing techniques of the Shona novel but also made a lasting impact on the writing of short stories and novels in English. His overall contribution is bound to influence generations to come and as such his works deserve to be examined in detail. (2001:28)

Thus, Charles Mungoshi's immense contribution to the development of Zimbabwean literature in both English and Shona is beyond any doubt. Some of his books, in both languages, have enjoyed wide readership in schools, teachers' colleges and universities in Zimbabwe.

Mungoshi's stature as a poet is positively acknowledged by Malaba (2007) and Wild (1998:12) cites him as "the most accomplished and mature" amongst a group of poets in *Patterns of Poetry in Zimbabwe* (1998) including Chenjerai Hove, Dambudzo Marechera, Musaemura Zimunya, Kristina Rungano and Hopewell Seyaseya. One tends to agree with

Wild that whilst other poets in the collection are still searching for a voice, Mungoshi has found his and shows a "kind of confidence and steadiness" (Wild, 1998:12).

Brown (1982) also notes Mungoshi's rare talent when he writes,

> Mungoshi has, if one considers all that he has published in English, a great talent as a writer of both poetry and prose fiction. His work is characterized not only by the ease and sophistication with which he uses language in its literary modes but by a comprehensiveness of vision, a wide range of sympathies and an uncommon thoughtfulness. (68)

However, in spite of all this, as said already, Mungoshi is still little known outside Zimbabwe.

Regardless of the numerous accolades Mungoshi has received, he is usually overshadowed by Dambudzo Marechera and Yvonne Vera. Three reasons are behind this. The first is that the bulk of Mungoshi's writing in English takes the form of the short story, with more than thirty published. The short story has suffered, and continues to suffer, critical neglect because of its lowly origins that have led to its treatment with condescension as a poor relation of longer fiction and poetry. Yet short fiction deserves attention as much as the novel does. Reid (1977) comments on this situation:

> Small-scale prose fiction deserves much more careful criticism, theoretical and practical, than it has usually had. It gets elbowed out of curricular at universities and elsewhere by its heftier relatives, novel, poetry and drama; and of the countless academic journals very few regularly give space to essays on this neglected genre. Good books about the novel are legion; good books about the short story are extremely scarce. (3)

Thus, the short story is regarded as an essentially inferior form and its practitioners, as Hollingshead (1999) points out, young apprentices workshopping for a novel, practising on a lighter form so as to tackle a more complex one, the novel. Consequently, as Shaw (1983:1) observes, "Comment on the short story has tended to be rueful or patronizing, even among writers who have proved themselves experts in the form." Shaw is also

correct in observing that "the notion that the short story deserves respectful… treatment was slow to develop and is still fairly unstable" (7).

It was Edgar Allan Poe, a short story writer himself, who set the tradition of practitioner commentary by declaring that the short story was superior to the novel (Allen, 1981). Poe was wrong regarding the privileging of the short story form over the novel given that some short stories can be argued to be better than some novels whereas some novels can be said to be better than other short stories. Poe's assertion did not change the general standing of the short story versus the novel.

The misconception that the short story is inherently inferior to other genres, especially the novel, has historical and form-related reasons. The short story first became popular and still is, in magazine publications (Hunter, 2007). Ferguson (1989:178) observes that "Like short poems, short stories must be printed with something else to make their circulation profitable. What they come with, other stories or other kinds of printed material – may distract readers from perceiving them as discrete works of art." The parceling of the short story, amongst other reasons, has denied it the prestige that the novel has and the other reasons are best captured by Shaw (1983:18) when she writes:

> The short story suffers particular disadvantages; it is not readily associated with a developing tradition represented by literary figures about whose major stature there is wide agreement. There is still a good deal of wariness about reputations founded entirely on short fiction, besides which, influences are hard to trace and schools difficult to locate. What is more, in the case of authors whose storywriting is not a brief interlude in a novelistic career, it is by no means easy to chart individual progress.

Ironically, the short story has enjoyed a lot of fame in Zimbabwe and Africa in general. It is true that the writing careers of most of Zimbabwe's and indeed Africa's famous writers started with the short story and that some of the ideas and techniques in some of the short stories were later amplified in novels or certain parts of novels. Examples abound in Zimbabwe, with Mungoshi leading the way through his short story collection, *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972). Some of the stories in *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) are

developed in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975). One has in mind stories such as "The Mountain" (1972) and "The Setting Sun and the Rolling World" (1972) which form the basis for the exploration of Lucifer, the main character's psyche in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975). "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) is iconic in the sense that it announces Mungoshi's handling of the heavily conflicted father-son dyad which is typical of his writing not only in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) but of his short stories and poems in English as well as some of his Shona novels. In West Africa, Chinua Achebe, widely hailed as the "father of African literature" in English, amplified his short story "The Voter" into the novel *A Man of the People* (1966).

Mungoshi differs from Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiongo in that a huge part of his reputation regarding his work in English is firmly founded on his success with the short story. Mungoshi is the master of the short story and transcends the so-called limited scope of the short story in much the same way that writers like Chekhov and Munro did with the genre. McLoughlin (1990: vii) observes, and rightly, that in the hands of a competent writer, the short story "is a powerful medium in its own right with its own peculiar qualities." Mungoshi emerges as one of those writers who has learnt to treat the brevity of the short story as an enhancing and positive attribute.

The second reason for the inadequate attention to Mungoshi's work is that it fell foul of Marxist Leninist criticism which had become the official lens of literary analysis in Zimbabwe just before and after independence. The genesis and development of literary criticism in Zimbabwe was inextricably linked with the country's history and efforts at creating a national identity. For some critics, the line between literature and politics is blurred. This is not peculiar to Zimbabwean literary criticism for as Muchemwa (1990:24) observes, "For a long time African Literature has been and continues to be seen in some quarters as political protest." From the outset then, Zimbabwean writing in English was a strong political project whose aim in the words of Kahari (1980:50) was a "recovery of identity" which is synonymous with the recovery of the land and by implication, nationhood. The newly independent state of Zimbabwe, with its socialist drive, underlined this. The then minister of education, Fay Chung, categorically stated:

"Writers cannot play a truly positive and constructive role in the building of Socialism in Zimbabwe unless they take it upon themselves to be informed about the forms and functions of literature in a socialist society" (Shaw, 1999:13-14). Thus, Socialist realism was officially adopted and promoted as the literary aesthetic of Zimbabwe. The chief exponents were Fay Chung and Emmanuel Ngara.

Mungoshi's writing did not fit the "commitment" espoused by Marxist-Leninist criticism. Asked if he thought that Zimbabwean literature had gone past the stage of literature for education and social/political values, Mungoshi replied in the following vein, worthy of full reproduction here for it sheds light on the lukewarm to dismissive reception he received from Marxist-Leninist criticism:

> …looking at literature in Zimbabwe, all books like my *Waiting for the Rain*, Stanley Nyamfukudza's *Non-Believer's Journey*, Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger* and other books – they were seen as books without political ideologies, without any historical content, and as books that are individual [sic] or egotistic, and all kinds of things…. And our only response was that it's at least an analysis of and we were looking into the individual to see how and why the individual suffers and could you at least offer an answer, if there is an answer. It's simply a laying open of what is bothering, a diagnosis of what's wrong with us and they [critics and nationalists] said, "No, ideologically this is empty." (Palmberg, 2003:4)

The ideological emptiness that was once appended to the criticism of Mungoshi's work was as a result of his ambivalent vision in his writing both during and after Zimbabwe's liberation war. Mungoshi "refuses to take a palpable 'political' position in relation to the history, culture and lives of his characters" (Motsa 2006:17). It is this evasiveness, ambiguity and ambivalence that was said to be ideologically empty. However, it is this very same ambiguity, the refusal to categorically apportion blame and fix meaning that has generated interest in Mungoshi's work today. Mungoshi comments, "But then, only recently, I hear, and it's the same university [of Zimbabwe]…they are talking of this same book of mine again [*Waiting for the Rain* (1975)]. I haven't changed a single word, but now they say it means something" (Palmberg, 2003:4).

The third reason why Mungoshi is eclipsed by Marechera and Vera is because Mungoshi's writing is not heavily stylized as to call attention to itself, which is the case especially with Marechera who regarded linguistic flair as the hallmark of creativity. In fact, Mungoshi is a minimalist whose motto is: "suggest little and leave the rest open" (Veit-Wild 1993: 287). He is quoted as saying that he is intrigued by and strives towards "writing a story in a manner that leaves a lot unsaid" (Palmberg, 2003:3). Underlining the depth of understatement, Freedman (1989:A23) calls Mungoshi's writing "deceptively simple," and goes on to add, "The reason I say 'deceptively' is that unlike many American practitioners of minimalism, Mr. Mungoshi proves that spare prose need not equal small ideas. The transitional moments he freezes in [his] stories – leaving for the city, hearing of a mother's death, being discharged from school – form a disturbing picture of dislocation" (A32). Thus, the unresolved tensions in Mungoshi's work, largely located in the family, are of profound discursive significance.

Like every writer, Mungoshi has techniques that he deploys to organise and interpret human experience. Muchemwa (2001) identifies understatement and irony as the hallmark of Mungoshi's techniques and further comments on Mungoshi's minimalist style, indirection and other stylistic features:

> In Mungoshi's style there is a meticulous paring down of inessentials, frills, hyperbole and direct social criticism.
>
> ….
>
> His novels and short stories have narratives that operate on two levels: the chronological, linear, literal, realist plot on the surface; and beneath a metaphoric one that triggers suggestions and connotations making the reader interpret the realist details in new light. The titling of the texts, the unforced imagery and symbolism, and the use of focalization techniques give Mungoshi's fiction a resonance not found in other Zimbabwean writers in the realist school. (28-29)

Thus, Mungoshi's style, shorn of flamboyance and hyperbole, creates deep meanings in its own way and his works must be studied with this observation in mind. It becomes possible then, to view the popularity of Mungoshi's compatriots such as Dambudzo

Marechera and Yvonne Vera as a case of hyper-canonization, especially given that Mungoshi's minimalism is not appreciated by all. Such minimalism moves Zimunya (1982:68) to say that Mungoshi tends "too regularly towards a terse style. Such uniform brevity of artistic operation reduces the creative art to an artificial engagement, thereby constraining the natural development of profound ideas." Zimunya seems to suggest that a terse style speaks of truncated ideas. With regard to Mungoshi's writing however, the deliberate choice and successful execution of a terse style is what makes the work unique, appealing and significant in Zimbabwean writing. Through little authorial commentary or intrusion, Mungoshi's prose suggests that the plots to his prose are quite thin but characters are given a lot of space to convey different perspectives on the same issue.

Mungoshi's craft in poetry is quite similar to his prose. The language is simple and the poems are largely narrative, what Ojaide (1999:585) calls "story poems." Again we find that as with the stories, "Beneath the veneer of simple narration [in the poems] and descriptions of people, scenes, and experiences, there is a subtext of meaning" (585). Narrative is so unmistakably in the forefront of Mungoshi's craft across genres, hence Mupfudza's (2006:252) observation that "Mungoshi's first calling is to tell stories."
Sometimes this predilection is, according to Ravengai (2006), to the detriment of Mungoshi's art, especially in drama. Mungoshi's drama text, *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) as Ravengai (2006:232) indicates, is characterised by "lack of adequate complications and crises" and tends to rely on "reportage rather than a balance of dialogue and action/events." There is, Ravengai adds, an over-reliance on words to a point where, "Most of the thirty-four speeches [in the play] are a spectacular example of how not to write for the theatre" (231). Much as Ravengai's view rings true, there is more to the play than issues of genre-appropriateness as will be shown later.

Mungoshi's creative touchstone is irony, which he deploys deftly to psychologically penetrate situations and characters. He is always keenly aware of the discrepancies between the expectations of cultural beliefs that run deep and life as lived; between ideologies of intimate attachments and the conflictful unraveling of such in the process of living; between insistencies on clear moral, gender and other boundaries, and the

complex overlaps that obtain in life experiences and in the process creating a richness of meaning that can be read at several levels. As Di Palma and Ferguson (2006:128) observe, "counterpoint and irony… multiply fields of meaning [and] keep contrary impulses in play so they can enrich and contest one another." In the words of Wild (1988:12) Mungoshi "has got an eye for the strange, the unusual, the incompatibilities in people and in life." In short, Mungoshi focuses on revealing the unexpected, incongruous or disconcerting through exposing contradictions, paradoxes and ambiguities. At times he uses wit to mock rigid beliefs and views.

1.5 Reading for Intertextuality

This research is based on a close analysis of nine primary texts by Charles Mungoshi – five in English and four in Shona. The English texts comprise three short story collections, a novel and one poetry collection. The Shona works are three novels and one play. The exploration of such a medley of genres motivates a brief reflection on how these disparate genres are read for meaning and continuity as well as how they arrange and communicate meaning. The cardinal approach takes the form of exploring voices of discontent in familial settings in all the genres. "Voices" here is used to refer to strains of thought that express certain attitudes, feelings or opinions. These voices take the form of children, young men (sons), young women (daughters), career and non career women as well as those that suggest alternative families such as lone parents and same sex partners. The research focuses on these discontented voices, voices at variance with familial, societal and in some cases, national expectations and ready-made roles. The voices manifest themselves largely through characterization in the novel, drama and short story. In Mungoshi's poetry, where some of the poems are constructed like stories, the same obtains. For the main, voices in poetry manifest themselves through a moment's reflection and come across as distilled meditations, and connected thematically to some of Mungoshi's concerns. A brief discussion of these genres will be instructive at this point.

The novel and the short story rely on the basic story elements of plot, characters, setting, conflict, crisis and resolution. Some critics such as Forster (1949) view these two kinds of

fiction as distinct in purpose and method, whose demands and satisfactions are different. Both forms share the same prose medium, but, perhaps, different artistic methods. Whether each has its own unique methods of construction and aesthetic is contentious (Allen, 1981). Be that as it may, generally, the novel is a long work of fiction involving for the most part, many characters, with numerous shifts in time, place and focus of interest. The short story on the other hand is characterised by brevity of compass in the form of a stricter economy of time and space and with fewer characters. The novel, then, tends to be leisurely in its exploration of issues whereas the short story is tighter.

As pointed out already, the last observation above is a generalization concerning the short story and the novel and should be seen as such. Any definition of a short story must be tentative for in the first place, "short story" is a very elastic term. Second, there are some critics who question if the short story is really a distinct form from the novel and indeed, the lyric (Friedman, 1989). Such scholars argue that the differences between the short story and other forms could be of degree rather than kind since definitions of any form depend on key aspects rather than absolutes, giving rise to numerous overlaps. That short stories have tendencies rather than absolutes is borne out by the fact that much as Mungoshi focuses on one incident in his short stories as is normally expected of a short story, that single incident tends to be amplified beyond a single point of experience through flashbacks, change in point of view within the same story as well as the use of monologues. One such story is "Who Will Stop the Dark?" (1980).

Mungoshi's short stories are complex stories of character, meaning that they focus on characterization or are character driven. Most, if not all characters in his stories are not abstract human categories but complex individuals just as one finds in his novels. The stories direct the reader's attention towards the psychological motivation of individual characters, with the family as the main canvas. This is not to say that the plot is not important. Plot is vital in as far as the characters have to make a decision of one kind or another. Otherwise for the most part, in Mungoshi's fiction, there is little action and the rest happens in the minds of the characters. Thus, steeped in psychological realism, Mungoshi's forte in terms of characterization is his ability to "[throw] his characters into

a moral dilemma where they attempt to make difficult choices. It is this mental inferno that Mungoshi is fond of in his writings" (Nyawaranda, 2006:212). Nevertheless, Nyawaranda limits the dilemmas to moral ones when in fact they take a myriad of forms. Actually, Mungoshi prefers, especially in his work in English, not to reduce any conflict to moral considerations. The point remains however, that the psychological thrust is typical of Mungoshi's writing across languages and genres.

Mungoshi's techniques and vision of fracture offer multiple perspectives, vignettes or voices which sometimes form a pattern and in some instances clash. Some of the themes and characters migrate across the three genres, offering not only chronological contiguity but different vantage points as well. At the same time, some events are logically and causally connected. Thus, some individual stories are unified by interconnecting themes, motifs and characters in what is called a "short story sequence" (Luscher, 1989:148). Luscher defines the short story sequence as

> …a volume of stories, collected and organised by their author, in which the reader successively realises underlying patterns of coherence by continual modifications of his perceptions of pattern of theme. Within the context of the sequence, each short story is thus not a completely closed formal experience…. The volume as a whole thus becomes an open book, inviting the reader to construct a network of associations that binds the stories together and lends them cumulative thematic impact. (148-149)

On top of the organic textual strategies such as common narrators, characters and themes, locale and images, there are some technical textual strategies such as a title, epigraph and preface that can be used by a writer to achieve unity and coherence in a short story sequence. Mungoshi achieves more than just short story sequence as most of his themes and characters permeate his writing across language and genres.

Characters are key to Mungoshi's strategies of coherence and unity, for through character, theme is also expressed. Ogude's (1996:2) idea that character is a "major vehicle for meaning" is helpful since through characterization, "the writer seeks to give us some insight into life as he sees it and feels. The author's insight is expressed in the

characters he creates and the historical situation in which he places them." In light of the above, one notes that Mungoshi's characters may be in a similar situation or share common convictions across time and genre or they may change and grow. Childless characters are an example. Barrenness is a problem for the Agricultural Demonstrator's wife in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) as it is for Mrs Pfende in "The Day the Bread Van Didn't Come" (Mungoshi, 1980), and as it is for the career woman who is "Thirty-five and childless" in the poem "Career Woman" (Mungoshi, 1998). The same problem makes Mushayazano in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970) divorce his first wife as it does Tafi in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980). These are just a few examples of characters who face similar situations in Mungoshi's writing in both English and Shona and across genres.

Some of the characters are developed across time and space, offering an opportunity to explore the development of Mungoshi's ideas. For example, Nharo in "The Mountain" becomes Nhamo in "The Setting Sun and the Rolling World" (Mungoshi 1972) who turns out to be a more complex version in the form of Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975). Lucifer in turn can be seen as Eric, the been-to in the Shona novel, *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983). One notices also, that the first five stories in *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) are set in the rural areas whilst the last five are set in an urban area. This shift also corresponds to the physical and psychological growth of the characters – all faced with difficult decisions to make regarding themselves and their normative roles and obligations in the family.

The issues of displacement, economic deprivation, the hunger for formal education and a crisis of religious and moral values are progressively explored in Mungoshi's work. As Zimunya (1982:68) aptly observes, the stories in *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) "can be seen as Mungoshi's workshop for *Waiting for the Rain*" (1975). Max in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) is another been-to who returns home after twenty years overseas. We get a chance to examine the theme of formal education and its effects on family ties from diverse angles and situations through the representations of these been-tos.

The tireless, ambitious and tough mothers who can be as exacting and manipulative as they are loving and courageous find expression through VaChingweru in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970), Raina in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), Zakeo's mother in "Who will Stop the Dark?" (1980), Mangazva's mother in "The Flood" (1980) and the mother in the poem "Letter to a Son" (1998). Some of the characters retain their names and some of their functions. Old Mandisa in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) has the same name in "The Homecoming" (1997), still carries the same curse of *ngozi*, is old and about to die, with only one relative left. Whereas Old Mandisa in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) has only her daughter Raina, after losing ten children to mysterious deaths, she is surrounded by her in-laws in a rural space. Old Mandisa in "The Homecoming" has had all her numerous children die and is left with a grandson.

Plot is another unifying strategy. The plot is the novel's or short story's unfolding of events and the underlying meanings for such developments. Forster (1949:33) describes plot as "narrative of events, emphasis falling on causality." Some characters in Mungoshi's writing share similar fates but may differ in the way they handle their situations. A good example is the intelligent young woman, full of promise, whose education and prospective career are cut short by an unplanned pregnancy or an early and troublesome marriage. Such is Magi in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975), Rindai in the same book, Sheila in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980), Martha in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) and Sarah in "The Hare" (1997). Yet these women react so differently to essentially the same problem. A comparison of these disparate reactions to a similar problem becomes discursively significant.

1.6 Reading across Different Genres

With regard to poetry and prose, McLoughlin and Mhonyera (1984: x) offer a useful observation when they opine that "there is no intention to argue that poetry is an art form totally different from prose. Since the time of D.H. Lawrence and Joyce, of Okara and Tutuola, no critic worth his salt would say only prose appears in novels and only poetry in poems." In other words, the main difference between the two genres is in form. A poet organises language into a shape or form that demands more attention than prose since

poetry is usually characterised by stanzas, idiosyncratic line length, word order, punctuation and rhythm depending on each poet. Whether it is narrative or reflective, the primary aim of a poem is to communicate meaning through capturing a feeling.

Mungoshi's view on poetry reveals his conflation of poetry and prose. Poetry for him is a "mere finger-exercise for his prose writing in the attempt to attain an always higher grade of condensation and concentration" (Wild, 1998:12). The two feed off each other and the reader is not surprised to find similar and recurrent themes in both forms. Artistically, the poetry shows similar sparseness as the short stories, using simple but precise metaphors. Some of the poems read like short stories. Wild (1998: 12) gives an example of the poem "Location Miracle" (1998) and comments: "Concentrating on the main facts, leaving out any kind of clue for the reader, the poem is indeed very similar to a short story." Chirere (2003:2) also talks about "Mungoshi's subtle ability to fracture and condense the short story and tell it effortlessly in verse."

Ultimately one would have to ask: what then is the connection between Mungoshi's fiction and poetry? Chirere (2003:3) answers this question succinctly:

> Mungoshi's poetry calls for attention as it is closely related to the essence and philosophy of his more celebrated prose. When properly read, his poetry may be seen as the quintessence of his art – capturing subtly and briefly what he achieves in more elaborate ways in his prose.

This does not mean that the poetry reflects the prose point for point. Rather, some subjects and insights are developed and completely new ones tackled. The issues he raises in his one play can also be linked to those in prose and poetry. Some old themes are invigorated and tackled in a fresher and more nuanced manner in later publications.

Drama signifies action on a stage. There are two schools of thought on this issue, what will be called here, the "stage" school and "page" school. The "stage" school insists that the full intent and effectiveness of drama can only find expression in performance; that drama is not the portrayal of action but action itself, what some term "word being made flesh" (Redmond, 1991:76). The argument is that the text of the play or words on a page

cannot be the same as words on a stage. As Stylan (1960:2) puts it, "we are not judging the text, but what the text makes the actor make the audience do." On that score, Stylan's opinion echoes Ravengai's (2006) assessment of Mungoshi's play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) for, in Stylan's (1960) words, bad playwrights end up with "animated novels" (3).

On the other hand, the "page" school acknowledges "literary drama" or "unacted drama" (Redmond, 1991:74). This is not a new concept as it started with some Elizabethan critics such as Doctor Johnson and continued in time with likeminded critics who firmly believed that all Shakespeare stage productions were doing Shakespeare's plays a huge disservice. Hazlitt is quoted as saying, "The reader of Shakespeare is almost always disappointed in seeing them [plays] acted" (Redmond, 1991:62). Coupled with the vulgarities of the audience, there was a move to write plays "for the imagination of the reader who was safely isolated in an armchair" since "people who bought tickets for the nineteenth century theatre could be…offensive to the playwright and the performer" (Redmond, 1991:64). Thus, in 1898, George Bernard Shaw talked of "an escape into the library" through the writing of "plays intended for the library" which he called "literary drama;" works "that could be read but not acted" (Redmond 1991:64).

Charles Mungoshi's play is more of a literary than conventional play of action. One understands Ravengai's (2006:223) concern that *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) is "characterised by the domination of the word at the expense of the visual dimension creating serious technical problems for the prospective director and performer," but one tends not to agree with the points made in lambasting the play since most of these are based solely on the arguments of the "stage" school. Nonetheless, the fact that *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) is more of literary than stage drama means that the play is propitious for the purposes of this study. The sparse action means that the playtext demands to be read as literature or literary drama. As with other pieces of writing by Mungoshi, familial conflict takes centre stage in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) and most of the themes such as intergenerational and spousal conflict resonate with other Mungoshi texts.

1.7 Chapters

Chapter One of this thesis, as seen already, is the introduction to the study. It gives the aim and rationale of the study, briefly discusses Mungoshi's life and works, dualism of audience as implied in his use of both Shona and English, his novelistic and poetic techniques, the influence of the Literature Bureau in colonial Rhodesia and post-independence Zimbabwe in the production of vernacular literature, as well Mungoshi's stature in Zimbabwean literature. The chapter dwells on the consistency and importance of the family trope in Mungoshi's work, emphasizing that through it, Mungoshi problematizes key concepts and life experiences such as childhood, adolescence, femininity, masculinity, alternative families and sexualities.

Chapter Two discusses Mungoshi's representation of children and childhood. The thesis starts with childhood because as Diptee and Klen (2010) observe, "children are the means by which all societies not only biologically, but also culturally, reproduce themselves" (3). As such, a literary analysis of children and childhood can expose to scrutiny, common priorities and values of a particular society, given that ideas about children and childhood are socially constructed. Childhood as a set of ideas about a particular existential time is a rich but oftentimes neglected or undertheorised source of memory and archive in the criticism of Zimbabwean literature. This period of early self-formation can be explored for fears and repressions that may shed light on the construction of familial relationships, obligations and resultant character traits when children become adults. Childhood also emerges as the initial stage of processing socially approved gender roles. Mungoshi makes it clear that childhood is problematically gendered. Boys are early candidates for *machismo* or hypermasculinity and the concomitant bifurcation of affect into "masculine" and "feminine". The "masculinization" of boys results in estrangement between children and their parents, especially their fathers.

Although the thesis is structured following stages in the human life cycle, that is childhood, adolescence and adulthood, there is no strict adherence to these stages given that most of Mungoshi's stories are cause-effect stories. For example, Joe's childhood background in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) serves to reveal why he is regarded

by his father as inappropriately gendered. Hence Joe's story is discussed under childhood although in the "real time" narrative/action of the play he is a young man of twenty. Mungoshi's interest is Joe's childhood upbringing which is responsible for his "effeminate" nature. Generally though, the thesis will differentiate between a child and adolescent. A child is used to refer to a character who has not yet reached puberty, under the age of thirteen.

Regarding style or the use of literary devices, this chapter points out that most of Mungoshi's short stories are either told from a child's point of view or the child is the subject of focalization. A discussion of the genesis of this technique in both European and African literature is given, as well as an examination of the efficacy of this technique as employed by Mungoshi.

Chapter Three deals with adolescents and young men. Adolescents are the middle-stage candidates for learning socially approved scripts of masculinity and femininity. Adolescence is the stage between the ages of thirteen and nineteen (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2002) and is a key and more gendered stage compared to childhood owing to increased identity formation. Adolescence and young adulthood both offer, in relation to children, more articulate, evaluative and critical voices that further complicate issues and concerns such as parent-child relationships, filial (dis)obedience and expected filial reciprocity already raised by children in Chapter Two. Home also becomes a major issue as adolescents and young adults attempt to place themselves within the home as both a physical and affective environment or escape should they feel they do not fit in. Some of the young men in Mungoshi's writing continue the dissent shown by children, except the former's becomes an articulate opposition to their parents' wishes, especially their fathers' hypermasculinity. These young men have reached a difficult stage in which they must inherit paternal, family, tribal or national narratives. They either question or outrightly reject these. Hence issues of identity and belonging are crucial in this chapter that operates as a pivotal section in the study. Young women on the other hand, are important in as far as they problematise the assumption that their main

role is that of child-bearing. "Tradition" such as *ngozi* (appeasement of wronged spirits through offering the wronged family a virgin girl) is put under scrutiny.

Chapter Four focuses on Mungoshi's representation of women. In their multiple identities as daughters, wives, mothers, peasants and career women, they contest culturally prescribed feminine gender scripts. Daughters are not pliant, wives mount scathing attacks on their husbands and young upwardly mobile women embody the future. The chapter focuses mostly on wives who in most Zimbabwean literature have been depicted as docile and accommodating. Most of Mungoshi's representations of wives however, evince women who are more than confrontational to their husbands as they expose the latter as non-performers of the very markers of their "manhood" such as sexual virility, resourcefulness and independence. Mungoshi portrays an incremental shift and complexity of thought with regard to single women in the city. Earlier characters in this category strive to be financially independent but are overwhelmed by singlehood and desperately need marriage irrespective of the quality of marital relationship that may result. Later characters strive towards both financial and sexual autonomy in a way that signals the uncoupling of womanhood and dependence as well as motherhood and wifehood.

Chapter Five focuses on manhood and masculinities, and largely reveals the hubris of masculine "superiority" mostly through the trope of male bodily incapacitation as both a private and public confirmation of male *lack*. Together with other forms of 'castration' such as job loss, Mungoshi opens up space to consider men's vulnerability to women and forces us to theorize further, power inequalities in heterosexual relationships. Through deft use of irony, Mungoshi explores the double-bind in which men who feel that their masculinity or manhood is threatened also face women who read back to them a phallocentric and masculinist script. The women's demand for virile and socially approved manhood, it will be argued, destabilises treasured notions of successful masculinity, suggesting a fluid configuration of power and authority in heterosexual relationships.

Chapter Six discusses alternative sexualities and lone parenting. Mungoshi presents alternative families outside the conjugal, extended and heterosexual family. This chapter discusses how Mungoshi complicates heteronormativity by exploring bi/homosexuality and single motherhood, both of which are regarded as a threat to the normative heterosexual family. The idea of oddity and perverseness associated with homosexuality is questioned as much as the idea of "lack" in single motherhood.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion.

Chapter 2

The Battle for Children

"You know that children belong to the man."

2.0 Introduction

The point has been made in the previous chapter that family is central to Charles Mungoshi's writing. Not only are characters introduced in relation to family but all of Mungoshi's plots in his fiction revolve around family ties and obligations. The child occupies a key role in this familial matrix, so key, in fact, that the child throws into sharp relief significant questions about parenthood, diverse conceptions of childhood, gender and sexuality. As Burman (1994:58) observes, "definitions of childhood are relational, they exist in relation to definitions of adults, of mothers and fathers, of families, of the State." Of great interest to this chapter will be the gendering of boys in a familial context. This may sound sexist just as Gaidzanwa (2006) charges that Mungoshi tends to ignore girls completely in his work and focuses on boys. It is not fair in the first place to make that charge given that Mungoshi does explore conflicts with girls as the focalized characters. Second, Mungoshi's consistent focus on boys is instructive inasmuch as it reveals that the oft taken for granted growing up of boys into adolescents and then into patriarchal and oppressive men is, in fact, a most problematic one and may explain some of the adult behaviours that are heavily criticised by feminist informed critics such as Gaidzanwa (1985) and Moyana (2006).

The aim of this chapter is to provide a close reading of Mungoshi's constructions of childhood through his works in both Shona and English. This chapter seeks to answer the following questions: (1). What are the dominant scholarly and literary views/images of childhood in European and African literature? (2).What images of childhood does Mungoshi's writing evince and through what literary devices? (3). How do Mungoshi's representations of childhood compare to those of other African and in particular, Zimbabwean writers? (4). What is the quality of the relationships between children and

their parents and what deductions can be made about parenthood and childhood as gendered discourses? (5). What do Mungoshi's representations of childhood bring to our understanding of the ideology of family and related concepts vis-à-vis our reading of Zimbabwean and, by extension, African literature?

The epigraph to this chapter is a warning by Zakeo's grandfather to his daughter-in-law, Zakeo's mother, in the story "Who Will Stop the Dark?" (Mungoshi, 1980). It highlights the normative custodial relation between parent and child, further suggesting rights and duties aimed at and justified by the welfare of the child. Most significantly, the remark by Zakeo's grandfather speaks of the contestation over children by their fathers and mothers, suggesting the instability of patriarchy. It is as if Mungoshi is asking the question: Beyond the cultural idea of giving the child the father's surname and the legalities surrounding this process, what does the "ownership" of children mean? One of the things that emerges is how fathers attempt to bring up sons as their "boys" – in other words, to become "men" through the repudiation of the "feminine." Such repudiation does not only become the fathers' projects but can also be seen enacted by boys amongst themselves in their own space, away from adults. Such actions become rites of passage into manhood.

The fact that Zakeo's grandfather sees his daughter-in-law as transgressing a deep-rooted social norm by making decisions about her son's future instead of the husband, is one way in which Mungoshi unsettles patriarchy from its assumed privilege. The marital fight over children, the most desired products of a heterosexual marriage in Zimbabwean literature and Shona society in general, reveals the troubled and gendered nature of parenthood and childhood and is a recurrent trope in Mungoshi's writing. Thus, this chapter argues that much as Mungoshi identifies the family as the bedrock of patriarchal values, the parents' fight to control children points at the need to examine women's individual agency as well as that of children in such situations. This contest also brings to the fore the concept of "gender bending" as seen through mothers who wrest their sons from their fathers and bring them up in a way that is perceived by fathers as gender inappropriate. Similarly, there are strict disciplinarian mothers who firmly control their children in a way that is reminiscent of strict and heavy-handed fathers.

While it does not require special acuteness to observe that the notion of a child or childhood is historically and culturally conditioned, it should be pointed out that some of the social attitudes toward, and literary representations of, children have remained consistent across time and cultures. The adage that children are the future encapsulates the significance of childhood as both a biological stage and socially constructed idea. Children, as well as the idea of childhood are both marshaled by societies in order to shape the kind of present and future society deemed the most desirable since children are largely regarded as the "starting point or supposedly raw material for social development" (Burman, 2008:96). Thus, the study of childhood in the literary arts and social sciences, foregrounds social contexts within which individuals mature, with particular attention to parenting and the development of personhood. These processes produce and reproduce gendered discourses, given that the family is widely regarded as the prime social context within which physical, cognitive and emotional development take place. As such, the control of children and discourses about childhood are both key to a holistic understanding of the family as a prime socialization unit and ultimately, to a more nuanced apprehension of human experience in general.

Stearns (2005) aptly notes that studying childhood is one of the most difficult endeavors in scholarship largely because children hardly get a chance to express their ideas as directly as they would like and hardly leave any direct records compared to adults. The corollary of this is that childhood is mostly a concept "shaped heavily by adults – rather than children" (Stearns, 2005:3). This point underlines the fact that childhood is more than just a biological phase – it is a social construction. As Burman (2008:95) also observes, "irrespective of what children are 'really' like – we cannot know them or about them except through particular cultural and historical frames, or discourses, that structure that 'reality.'" James and James (2004) emphasize this point by observing that the interpretation of childhood is dependent on local meanings and practice, as well as on various ways children engage with such meanings in their daily lives. These two scholars suggest three useful factors that influence the politics and practice of childhood. The first one is that the determination of notions of childhood is done by both adults and children.

This brings to light the vital point that much as children occupy a position of subordination, they are also agents in the negotiation of their allotted status. Mungoshi's writing evinces many instances in which children challenge adult authority both openly and discretely. The second factor James and James (2004) highlight is that discourses of childhood are put into practice by means of the law. Law, as used by the two authors here, refers to law in its broadest sense to include "tradition" and formal legal codes since both these aspects define the boundaries of childhood. Some of the fathers' "laws" such as learning gender appropriate behaviour become the source of conflict between fathers and sons in Mungoshi's works. The third critical factor that James and James (2004) single out is that children's experiences and responses to notions of childhood are different according to socio-cultural contexts although they can also differ within the same context. In this regard, Mungoshi offers two different outcomes – the hyper-masculinised boy on the one end, and on the other extreme what is popularly known as "mama's boy" or effeminate boy/man. These two extremes question essentialised notions of gender.

Granted that there are differing opinions on childhood, it is incontestable, however, as pointed out above, that most, if not all scholars have come to agree that childhood is a socially constructed phenomenon. Scheper-Hughes and Sargent (1998) highlight the significance of childhood as a concept and life phase. The significance stressed by these two scholars is in tandem with why this thesis starts its examination of family conflict with an examination of childhood. The two scholars just cited above hold, and appropriately, that childhood integrates both biological and social processes, especially the transmission of genes, ideas, identities and property. They further comment:

> Childhood also involves cultural notions of personhood, morality, and social order and disorder. In all, childhood represents a cluster of discourses and practices surrounding sexuality and reproduction, love and protection, power and authority, and their potential abuses. (2)

Thus childhood is a loaded point of entry into this thesis given that the concept exposes the construction of childhood for social organisation purposes from both a literary and socio-political perspective. The concept of childhood also serves as a vehicle for

scrutinizing child narration as a tool of perspective as well as examining notions of power with regard to parenting and gender.

Children as a literary subject in Mungoshi's poetry and fiction represent questing figures in search of elusive peace. In their various quests for meaningful relationships with their family members, especially their parents (fathers in particular), children in Mungoshi's writing simultaneously acknowledge and challenge their identification as inferior or insignificant in the family set up. They strike oppositional stances that problematize family roles, obligations and privileges, consequently forcing the reader to quiz the construction of "the family" and by extension, society in general. Children thus destabilize assumed cohesions and truths and their role as questing figures is underlined by Lawson (1982:43) who observes that,

> We always strive for cohesion and structure and reach out for some meaning that can be imposed upon the bewildering flow of experience. But the comforting order we struggle to create can destroy us by its very stability. So the presence of the questing figure who cannot find peace is vital.

The children in Mungoshi's art are different from other children in Zimbabwean fiction, especially Shona and Ndebele fiction, in that they do not, even as they acknowledge their subordinate positions, come across as overly self-effacing. Self-effacement is largely regarded as a form of respect in children in Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa and its performance is almost synonymous with happy acquiescence. The absence of complaisant children is responsible for the ubiquitous tension between children and parents in Charles Mungoshi's writing. Before going into a detailed examination of Mungoshi's handling of childhood in his work, it is necessary to discuss some ideas of childhood first.

2.1 Dominant Imaginaries of Childhood

The title of this subsection is taken from Burman's (2008:11) useful idea that dominant imaginaries of childhood are "the sets of cultural associations and affective relations mobilized around 'the child.'" Historically, parenthood has more often than not, been regarded as a proprietary relationship – children being viewed as the property of the parents. In fact, the Greek Aristotle declared that the child is the property of the father

(Coveney, 1967), thus echoing the epigraph of this chapter. Such "ownership" has been used as the basis of parental authority and power. Mungoshi problematises the normative ownership of children by the father through women who openly contest "ownership" and children who deliberately alienate themselves from their parents, especially fathers. Thus children challenge the assumed authority of parents over them.

The possessory relationship between parents and children stems from a long held conception that regards childhood and adulthood as two states of existence in direct antithesis. Aristotle's idea of the human child as an immature species of the human with the potential to develop into a mature specimen with the structure, form and function of a normal or standard adult is informative (Pattison, 1978). This is not to say that Aristotle's pronouncement of the idea that childhood is a prospective state is a novel one that has influenced mankind for ages but rather, it is a recognition of the pervasiveness of the thought across time and place to the extent that it continues to inform people's conceptions of childhood and adulthood, and people's relationships toward children across races and cultures. In other words, reference to Aristotle's idea about the father's "ownership" of a child, is to show how commonplace that idea was and continues to be in varying degrees, through different historical periods and cultures.

Whilst according to Aristotle, the child belonged to the father, in Plato's view, the child was the property of the state (Pattison, 1978). Plato categorized the parents' role as custodial and also one of trusteeship. In practice, it would appear that both Plato's and Aristotle's ideas are intertwined and continue to be relevant. There are many respects in which legally and morally children are still treated as the property of their parents and at the same time parents are charged with the responsibility of producing decent and productive citizens.

Whichever way we may look at it, parents and children are involved in what is largely a domination/subservience relationship. To that end, de Castro's (2004:469) observation is pertinent:

> The child's identity is conceived as a *difference* with respect to the adult's identity: what the adult is, the child is not yet, but will be; what the adult was, and has successfully overcome, the child is. To enter in the social world of work, leisure and so on and to be considered competent to act fully as a subject, the child is supposed to overcome his/her childish-ness." (original emphasis)

This dualism, de Castro (2004:471) reflects, creates a situation in which "Child and adult become tacit terms of a dichotomy that sets them apart in a hierarchical scale that naturalises the oppression and inferiority of children." Thus, even as adults may notice the agency of children, the former tend to override such agency. Mungoshi's work suggests that children are more active in their processing of different kinds of social stimuli to create "self" than what the idea of parental custodianship and trusteeship implies. Mungoshi challenges adult insensitivity to children and, through such, reveals limitations about certain beliefs and practices on parenting and some long held but perhaps deficient ideas about family especially in a rapidly changing social situation. Before looking at literary representations of childhood in the European and African context, it is crucial to discuss the significance of children and fertility in Shona society and Charles Mungoshi's work.

2.2 Significance of Children and Fertility in Shona Society and Mungoshi's writing

Kahari (1990) makes a prescient remark regarding children and fertility when he writes:

> There is no value that transcends the Shona love for children, for children, especially boys, will perpetuate the family name. There is no limit although nine children seem to be the minimum accepted by custom or tradition. If a man's wife bore him two or three children of either sex, or all of whom were girls, he had the right to approach his father-in-law and ask for another wife. If this failed, he had the right to ask for part of the nine head of cattle that he offered when he married his wife. (167)

There have been numerous socio-historical changes in Zimbabwe that make Kahari's statement less true. There has been a marked change in people's perceptions especially the formally educated, about the number of children that a couple should have. Weinrich

(1982) correctly points out that socio-economic conditions largely determine the desirable number of children. On the one hand, where children are part of the production unit, such as in an agrarian set up where they are valued for their labour, birth rates are likely to be high. On the other, where children are seen as consumers and not producers, for example in urban areas, the value placed on children declines resulting in lower birth rates. Family planning campaigns spearheaded by the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council have also led to lower birth rates in general owing to the promotion of both short and long term birth control methods (Kim, Marangwanda and Kols, 1996).

Notwithstanding these changes, some aspects, both explicit and implicit in Kahari's (1990) observation above, have endured – that the main function of marriage in Shona society is largely regarded as procreation; that male children are preferred to girls and that a woman's worth is measured through her fertility although the number of children she is expected to bear has decreased. As Kanyongo and Onyango (1984) observe,

> One of the things that has not changed much in the African family is the value placed on children. Children are still seen as a security system of most Africans in old age. It is even better if among the children there are sons. In fact, the status of an African woman improves if she has sons. This means that in situations where a couple fails to have any children for various reasons, many problems are faced. (60).

Thus, the need to procreate and how it is largely viewed as a marker of complete manhood and womanhood, has not diminished. *Lobola* or *roora* itself, the nine head of cattle Kahari refers to above, is paid in anticipation of the birth of children so that in the true sense of the custom, *lobola* was paid not as indemnity for the loss of a woman in one family, but rather, for the children that she would bear for the man. Thus, the man's claim on the children is based on the payment of *lobola.* As Bourdillon (1976:57) puts it, *lobola* or *roora* "is associated with the rights over the children born to the woman." Mungoshi's writing dramatises the inadequacy of this claim when fathering emerges as a process more defined by the quality of the father's *relationship* with his children than the right of ownership accorded him by the payment of *roora.*

Mungoshi's writing displays a keen awareness of the ideas above concerning marriage and children and how they determine filial and spousal relations. Tafi in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981) divorced his first wife because she could not bear him any children. Sheila, his second wife, sees their marriage as loveless. She is convinced Tafi married her so she could bear him children. Tafi's own father is polygamous because his first wife, Tafi's mother, bore only one child, Tafi. VaChingweru, Mushayazano's wife in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970) is a second wife because the first wife was barren. Mr and Mrs Pfende's marriage in the short story "The Day the Bread Van Didn't Come" (1980) is about to end because of childlessness. Similarly, The District Agricultural Demonstrator's marriage in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) is under intense strain because his wife cannot bear children. Actually, to prove that it is his wife's fault, the Agricultural Demonstrator impregnates a young woman, Betty. Gelfand (1979:19) writes that a "man's status in Shona society depends on the possession of a wife or wives and the number of children he has." Apart from the fact that Gelfand's reference to a man "owning" a woman is reminiscent of the colonialist idea that *roora* was equivalent to buying a wife, he is not exaggerating the significance of children in enhancing a man's status in a Shona marriage. Similarly, women gain respect from the status that motherhood accords them.

The importance of children in Shona society is also explained by the fact that sterility in a man is shameful (Bourdillon, 1976) and at the same time a man is not allowed to go without issue (Kahari, 1990). A sterile man can disguise his condition by making secret arrangements with a close kinsman to impregnate his wife in his name. Having seen the significance of children in Shona society, a brief section on how the child became of significant literary interest in European and African literature follows. The European dimension is necessary given that the development of African literature was influenced by European writing in terms of either writing back or a confluence of themes. In addition, Charles Mungoshi borrows many European literary techniques in writing his Shona works.

2.3 Images of Childhood in Literature

Coveney (1967) and Pattison (1978) concur that childhood became an important and sustained theme in English literature in the last decades of the eighteenth century with the leading authors being Blake and Wordsworth. Debates in the early Christian church between the Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin and the Pelagian refutation of the same doctrine made the child a centrepiece where before, the child had not commanded much attention and had been dismissed as devoid of reason. Aristotle's view that "Both children and lower animals share in voluntary action, but not choice" (Pattison, 1978:1) came under scrutiny. Augustine's doctrine of original sin made the child an adult of sorts by declaring the child's fallen nature from which he/she could be saved through a second birth in baptism.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Swiss philosopher, writer and composer of the Enlightenment, is credited with influencing the Romantic movement through his two books, *Julie ou la nouvelle Heloise* (*Julie or the new Heloise*) (1761) and *Emile; or On Education* (1762) in which he argues for and illustrates the innocence of the child. Rousseau's first book cited above advocated spontaneity or authenticity over moral principles. The second argued against the Christian "fallen state," proffering instead, the inherent goodness of a child in a corrupt society. This semi autobiographical work is an exercise in social and pedagogical philosophy, offering ideas on how to educate and raise children. In short, Rousseau's ideas "removed the natural behaviour of children from an atmosphere of religious abomination and sin" (Coveney, 1967:45). The idea of an innocent child in a corrupt society took root and colored the creative imagination of pre-Romantics and Romantics who so emphasised the frailty and innocence of the child that "In childhood lay the perfect image of insecurity and isolation, of fear and bewilderment, of vulnerability and potential violation" (Coveney, 1967:32).

For some pre-Romantic and Romantic poets, the child was equated to nature and both were either symbolic or identical. In other words, the child became a much fetishised symbol in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus for poets such as William Blake for example, "children were no occasional interest, no vehicle for a mere personal

nostalgia. They were for him a symbol of innocence, without which, as a religious artist he could not have worked" (Coveney, 1967:52).

Amongst the British novelists, Coveney (1967:111) argues, none shows an enduring interest in children more than Charles Dickens for, "To write of the child in Dickens is not only to survey Victorian childhood; it is to write of Dickens himself, both as a man and artist. The child was at the heart of his interest; at the centre of the Dickens world." Dickens uses the child "as an evocative literary device…as an object of sentiment" (Pattison, 1978:78). His novels highlight the appalling conditions of child labour, defenceless orphans and so on during the Industrial Revolution. His prime objective was to reform the condition of the child and he could do this by writing works that at the beginning of the twenty-first century appear full of sentimental gush. Nonetheless, the Romantic idea fed into the Victorian imagination of the child resulting in "the child as a vehicle for social commentary, as a symbol of innocence and the life of the imagination, as an expression also of nostalgia, insecurity and… introspective self-pity" (Coveney, 1967:92). But the sentimentalisation of the child was bound to end up as a blunt instrument through overuse. The moribund child figure needed a breath of new life and this it would find through psychoanalysis and the stream of consciousness writing technique.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Freud's psychoanalysis both subverted and perpetuated some concepts of childhood innocence. The idea of a child battling with his/ her sexuality suggested that children were not that innocent after all (Pattison, 1978). It also gave children an agency hitherto unarticulated, casting further doubt on the doctrine of original sin. In spite of Freud's subversion of the notion of original sin, just like the Romantics, he recognised the centrality of childhood in human existence and children's vulnerability to social victimization. He emphasised the acute damage that could be inflicted on the child's innocent sexuality through mindless prohibitions by significant others such as parents, teachers and priests.

Freud's ideas, together with the birth of the stream of consciousness writing technique resulted in a livelier and more nuanced representation of childhood in literature in English. The stream of consciousness technique is a narrative mode that aims to capture an individual's thought processes and normally uses the interior monologue to do so (Pattison, 1978). The interior monologue is important to this study given that Mungoshi uses it to great effect in his Shona and English works. Generally, he uses it to present individuated subjectivities, giving rise to different forms of irony which can be fruitfully mined for hidden scripts regarding key issues such as filial and gender relations.

The stream of consciousness technique became popular at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe and probably peaked in the middle of the twentieth century and continues to be employed by writers all over the world. James Joyce is credited with perfecting this form of narrative especially through his portrayal of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). What the technique meant for the representation of childhood is that,

> The child would no longer be used for a romantic "message" or as the vehicle for self-pity, indulgent pathos, or escape. If he were "impure," malicious, cruel, tender, kind, painfully sensitive and most often an amalgam of all these qualities – then he would be presented in his reality. He would no longer be used as the guiltless "angel" of a romantic, moralizing idyll; or the child of the Puritans' sin and the Devil; a child neither of "purity" nor "wrath" nor necessarily "happy" in a fallacious, romanticized Nature nor poignantly and inevitably "unhappy" as the "victim" of industrial society. He would be conveyed as a child, with his awareness conveyed as it was experienced, from within. (Coveney, 1967:306)

Thus, a precedent was set for authors to attempt to present experience through a child's eyes, reconstructing the language, tone and diction of a young person. This attempt at constructing a child's voice is still susceptible to sentimentality and artificiality, perhaps not as much as it was in the Victorian era but by its very nature it poses challenges to writers and readers alike. Be that as it may, it is worth pointing out at this stage that the description of the child's point of view through the stream of consciousness technique by Coveney (1967) above, closely approximates Mungoshi's methods in both his Shona and

English writing. He prefers, as indicated earlier, the interior monologue whether he is writing from a child's or adult's point of view.

The representation of childhood in African literature was and possibly still is largely characterised by, if one may borrow from Blake, the innocence/experience dichotomy. On the one hand there are creative writers who see childhood as "a privileged phase of growing up…[a] magic world of innocence…often used as intimate, passion-packed subject matter in fiction" (Okolie, 1998:29). On the other hand there are those African writers who problematize childhood beyond mere nostalgia and thereby expose "a grim reality of cruelty, harshness, parental (particularly paternal) egocentricism and extraordinary bruisings of the vulnerable child psyche" (Jones, 1998:7). Among such authors is Mungoshi.

Okolie (1998) locates the birth of childhood as a distinct theme in African writing in the early 1950s for both French and English writing in Africa. According to Okolie (1998), the treatment of childhood in African literature started as a writing back project – a tool of reflection, correction and empowerment. Okolie writes:

> Shrouded in myth, rash generalizations, patent untruths and ethnological insinuations the personality and inner realities of the African child badly needed clarification and highlighting. Often perceived by foreign observers, misinformed tourists and anthropologists as a subject of pity, a victim of environment and therefore a miserable being in a "hostile" world, African children had to be presented in their true light through the novels, in order to clear such doubts as to whether they have any childhood to remember or savour. (1998:30)

A good example of such a project is Camara Laye's *The African Child* (1954) which portrays a tension-free childhood. It is no strange coincidence then that childhood in African writing in colonial languages occurs at a time when Negritude, a literary and political movement that sought to assert and celebrate blackness, was at its peak.

Whereas in England, Blake and other Romantics and later Dickens, used the child as a symbol of protest against industrial development, child labour, the collapse of the public

system for relief of poverty (Coveney, 1967), suggesting a prelapsarian period synonymous with childhood or as with Dickens, using the death of child characters as an escape to "another world where sin and sorrow never come" (Pattison, 1978:83), in the African context, the desire for a prelapsarian childhood was also historically conditioned. The desire was occasioned not necessarily by colonialism but Westernisation, according to Okolie (1998):

> …trapped between a disappearing familiar world, and an invidiously pervading Westernism, [some African novelists] sought refuge and psychological compensation in the evocation of their childhood. There, in the Elysium of their ancestors, in the intimate details of their environment, activities and close relations, they rediscovered the security and confidence that were gradually being eroded by colonization. (34)

Charles Mungoshi's representation of children does not fit the "paradise lost" script. At the same time he does not present children as meek acquiescent victims. Instead, like other African writers, Mungoshi shows that "African childhood is not always absolute submission to parental will or willingness to allow others to dispose of his life. Conflicts, sometimes complex in nature, arise between father and daughter or son or more rarely between mother and daughter" (Okolie, 1998:34). Although Mungoshi does not portray completely joyless childhoods, strained and distorted family relations produce angry, broody and disenchanted children. Some of the children exercise brute force on animals or other children in a manner that suggests a burgeoning hypermasculinity.

Thus, children in Mungoshi's work are depicted as showing strong emotional responses to affective attachments in the process of constructing their personhoods. Like de Castro (2004:474) observes,

> As any other notion, be it a mathematical notion, scientific or relational, children's conceptions of self and other are engendered in social practices permeated by issues of love, hate, desire and anxiety. In this sense, discursive practices are not neutral emotionally, but are prey to issues of power, dominance and exploitation.

Mungoshi displays a keen awareness of this idea through his special attention to the articulation of child characters' feelings concerning themselves and familial relations.

2.4 Child Narration as a Tool

Mungoshi, like some Zimbabwean authors, uses the child as an evocative literary device. Woodward (2000:726) comments on the efficacy of this technique by observing that "Children's perspectives are immensely useful as a literary strategy: they dramatise or defamiliarise the ordinary; they may project ideal socio-political dispensations or provide original critiques of the status quo." Mungoshi's deployment of this literary tool of perspective, pitted against mature adult narratives gives the reader two vantage points from which to examine diverse intimacies.

Malaba (2007: vi) is of the opinion that Mungoshi's "handling of the child's eye narrative viewpoint is unmatched in Zimbabwean literature to date and in fact, his achievements in this realm merit international acclaim." Much as Mungoshi employs this technique extensively, he is not the only Zimbabwean or African writer to explore it. As Riemenschnieder (1998:406) observes, the child or adolescent is a "paradigmatic protagonist in Zimbabwean short fiction." The reason for this is that children and adolescents (especially the latter) are the ones who feel, most keenly, socio-economic and cultural changes and can to some extent, be regarded as barometers for such changes.

Elsewhere, African texts that feature child protagonists abound. They include Camara Laye's *The African Child* (1959), Ferdinand Oyono's *House Boy* (1966) and Mongo Beti's two texts – *Mission to Kala* (1957; rpt. 1971) and *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (1956; rpt. 1971). All the texts just mentioned are written by Francophone writers. In Southern Africa, Mozambique's Loui Bernado Honwana uses the technique effectively in *We Killed Mangy Dog* (1972) and South African Njabulo Ndebele employs this narrative technique in *Fools and Other Stories* (1983).

With regard to the focalization of children in literature, Javangwe's (2006:71) observation is most pertinent as he also demonstrates a keen awareness of Mungoshi's preference for this technique:

> By using the child's perspective in analyzing human relationships on the domestic space Mungoshi achieves great effect. He opens up for criticism of institutions, structures and values that the adult world normally accepts as having passed the test of time, and hence unassailable. The effect is to bring up those values for close inspection and not accept them at face value. It also affords a movement from the grand narratives of modernity, the nation or tradition, to the individual, or the smaller units such as the family, or those small groups that inhabit the margins of society.

Perceptive as Javangwe's remark is, it does not capture the dialectical way in which Mungoshi's representation of children and their familial matrices narrows the discursive space in order to amplify contradictions and conflicts so that these two re-engage and interrogate grand narratives even more critically. This is what, speaking of Mungoshi's poetry, Marechera once called "a microscopic effect which enlarges" (Wild, 1998:134).

Before detailing Mungoshi's representation of children in a family set-up, it is important to briefly outline how other Zimbabwean authors have deployed childhood for particular ends. In Zimbabwean writing in English, Wilson Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976), Geofrey Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1979) and Shimmer Chinodya's *Dew in the Morning* (1982) are examples of texts that deal with childhood. Katiyo's is unmistakably a nationalist text in which the child, Alexio, is deliberately located within a grand narrative of colonial resistance in need of completion through armed struggle. Thus, this text is strongly embedded in "historical continuity" (Zimunya, 1982:96). Of the hero in Katiyo's novel, Alexio, Zimunya (1982:96) writes: "From the start the boy is marked out by fate for a heroic quest for truth and freedom. Consequently, his youth is an epic odyssean adventure fraught with hazards and obstacles." As such, Zimunya (1982) admits that although aesthetically, Katiyo's book is "less well-written" compared to Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), he finds Katiyo's a "more socially and historically fulfilling vision" (93) chiefly because Alexio is a "heroic seeker of freedom" (95). Following

Zimunya's argument, the child embodies the spirit of the age, and childhood becomes an allegory of the nation in an exercise of cultural retrieval and struggle for political liberation.

In Ndhlala's allegorical *Jikinya* (1979), Chedu, a warrior of the Ngara people, strays beyond the mountains regarded as the boundary of the world and comes back with a white girl child abandoned in a war. The girl grows up like any other Ngara child in what appears an Edenic African space, and except for her physical appearance, Jikinya is no different from any other Ngara child. Chedu's family becomes her family and the Ngara people her people as she is put through rituals at various stages of growth like any other Ngara girl child. Jikinya's childhood is a happy one and so is her family. All is well until John Brown, an explorer, spots a white child amongst what he considers "savages" and marshals an army to "rescue" her, resulting in war and the death of Jikinya herself. As in Katiyo's novel, the child is clearly a functional character, a vehicle for ideas.

Chinodya's novel, *Dew in the Morning* (1982) is nostalgic in its recollection of childhood under colonialism. Godi, the narrator, has fond memories of the places of his childhood and indeed, the hardships that the family went through. The parents live separately – the mother in the rural areas tending to the fields and the father in town earning money to buy farming inputs and to pay the children's school fees. The loneliness that the parents endure and the sacrifices they make are more than compensated as their children get good grades at school and appear set to escape poverty and rescue the whole family. The parents clearly support and love their children and the children appreciate the parents' affection and efforts. Childhood in this novel can be said to be "normal."

On the contrary, for the most part, the children Mungoshi depicts have "dystopic" childhoods and families, following Stotesbury's (1994:68) idea of a dystopic family, meaning "the family flawed, broken and disrupted, the inversion of the popular image of the idealized, unified…family." There is a profound alienation between children and their parents in Mungoshi's work, especially between sons and fathers. Physical distance and silence become metaphors for the emotional rift between these two male members of

families. The mother-child dyad is not without its problems either. The salient point to be made here is that Mungoshi does not deploy children for the achievement of grand political objectives such as decolonisation but rather, for social commentary at the lower level of family and in the latter regard, focuses on how fathers "claim" sons or attempt to apply the dictum: the child belongs to the father. In the words of Muponde (2005:100), the children Mungoshi portrays do not have a "Christ-like significance" although they may make us think about wider society beyond family given that childhood is a "site of multiple emotional as well as political investments" (Burman, 2008:13). Some of the characters in *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) however, are mildly critical of colonialism and in Mupondi's (2006:188) opinion, "could become part of the hope for liberation of the country from colonial rule as they have the potential to join the revolution in future."

The acrimony between children and parents in Mungoshi's work is a rich site of enquiry. The childhood voice is used as an instrument of subversion. As such, Muponde's (2005:2) suggestion that "instead of seeing childhood in romantic or idyllic terms, it is possible to see it as a contested terrain, one in which the larger tensions and conflicts of the society manifest themselves" is exceedingly helpful. Muponde's comment springs from the realization that the discord between children and parents in Zimbabwean creative texts has been read by a number of Zimbabwean critics, namely Kahari (1980), Zimunya (1982) and recently, Vambe (2004) as an expression of fragility, painful vulnerability and victimhood in both pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe. Significant historical events are often blamed for causing rancorous filial relationships. Granted that there is an element of truth in this sort of reading, it is however, a crass generalization of Mungoshi's representation of this theme. One such simplistic approach is expressed by Culwick (2005:3) in a sweeping statement `a la Kahari (1980) and Zimunya (1982) in which, "The baleful influence of colonialism" makes "husbands clash with wives, brother with brother, parents with children, family with family." Such broad-brush arguments write out the internal conflicts in these relationships, foreclosing sound analysis, viz, to scrutinize those problems that appear to be inherent in the family set-up. Instead of such narrow conceptions of familial conflict, this thesis acknowledges factors that define and

influence family, for example colonialism and indigenous practices, and goes further to deliberate on how the combination of these factors influences spousal units, parent-child relationships, gender and sexuality. Thus, there is a closer examination of these facets in a manner that acknowledges wider socio-historical forces without losing sight of the nuances in the interpersonal relationships that Mungoshi depicts in his works.

To stress Muponde's (2005) acuity in *Childhood, History and Resistance: A Critical Study of the Images of Children and Childhood in Zimbabwean Literature* is not to deny some problematic aspects in this work. The individual agency in children is overemphasised to a point where, in dissociating himself from the "victimhood" thesis of childhood, Muponde swings from one extreme to another. His criticism is useful in as far as it ventilates a critical space that had become clichéd regarding the theorisation of childhood in Zimbabwean literature. However, the element of vulnerability is one that is inherent in childhood, given that childhood as a phase in life's development means children are dependent on adults for their sustenance and moral edification. This point not only needs acknowledgement but also enriches the enquiry into childhood. Thus, whilst aware of the intensity and vitality of children in Mungoshi's writing, this thesis is also aware of how in confronting adult authority and intransigent filial roles, children are still prone to victimisation. Read this way, Mungoshi's writing problematises, simultaneously, childhood and parenthood, for one notices that although viewed as in a position of power structurally, fathers prove to be vulnerable to the very same ideas that purportedly accord them authority and power, such as "successful" masculinity. This idea is explored in detail in Chapter Five, "The Burden of Manhood: a Matrix of Threatened Masculinities."

2. 5 When Fathers Claim Sons

The father-son dyad is a recurrent theme in Mungoshi's writing. Malaba (2007) makes a similar observation when he comments,

> Charles Mungoshi's works often focus on the problematic relationships between fathers and sons. His fiction teases out the complex nature of the notion of fatherhood, in a Zimbabwean context, which revolves around the roles of being

> the "head" of the family, the principal decision maker and protector of the family unit, both within the nuclear and the extended family. (15)

Through the father-son trope, Mungoshi draws our attention to three key words: "father," "fatherhood" and "fathering." "Father" refers to the identification or location of a man in social space whereas "fatherhood" refers to discourses that entail statements of rights, duties and responsibilities on the one hand and statuses attached to fathers on the other. In this regard, "fathering" marks those practices associated with fathers.

In the following stories to be discussed in this section, "Shadows on the Wall" (1972), "The Mount of Moriah" (1980) and "Who Will Stop the Dark?" (1980), Mungoshi puts to a litmus test paternal authority and the dictum that a child belongs to the father. Bourdillon's (1976) comment on the father-child relationship in Shona society, although general and contestable, does shed light on this issue when he writes,

> Perhaps the most important relationship to the Shona is that between father and child. The father has absolute authority over his children and complete responsibility for them. A child "fears" his father and always displays an attitude of deference and respect. [The child] should always maintain a respectful posture in the presence of his father, reverently clapping his hands when they meet. Father and children never eat together…. (44-45)

This observation suggests that the father commands undisputed authority over the child and that the child respects or reveres the figure of the father. In fact, this implies self-effacement on the part of the child. It also suggests an uncontested status quo. But Mungoshi inverts this normative situation through a negative family trope, especially negative father figures and disgruntled children. Mungoshi's argument here is that fathers' adherence to a hypermasculine gender script causes conflict not only between fathers and sons but within the sons' psyches as well.

In the stories "Shadows on the Wall" (1972), "The Mount of Moriah" (1980) and "Who Will Stop the Dark?" (1980), instead of the ideal family – the family as a site of primal love and unselfishness – the family is the very site of emotional suffocation for children. The institution of marriage itself, responsible for the procreation and socialization of

children, "is not seen as a partnership, but a battlefield, a struggle for mastery, control" (Malaba, 2007:2). At the centre of these parental battles are children, as mother and father overtly or covertly compete to emotionally, and in some cases, physically wrest the child(ren) from the other. Fathers rely on their customary claim, based on the payment of *roora*. Mothers on the other hand rely on biology and custom – the fact that they carried the children for nine months in their wombs and the customary idea of *ngozi*; that should mothers die angry with their sons, the latter will be jinxed for all their lives until certain propitiatory ceremonies are performed to appease the angry spirits of the mothers. At the same time, Mungoshi uses the alienation between children and their parents to explore issues of gender and sexuality (this is explored in greater detail in Chapter Three and Five).

"Shadows on the Wall" (1972), the first story in *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972), sets the tone for the whole collection through its dramatisation of familial conflict. It also typifies Mungoshi's exploration of the child's point of view for subversion through irony. All the characters in this story – father, mother, step-mother and the boy narrator are nameless, a ploy Mungoshi uses to draw close attention to the most significant aspect in the story, the *relationship(s)* amongst these four characters. The boy's mother is removed from the temporal narrative through her physical absence in most of the story. The boy perceives his mother as a victim of the father's emotional abuse and sympathises with her. The father is left with a son that he had been emotionally wresting from the mother before she left. The father's victory is a pyrrhic one given that no sooner does he have his son to himself than the emotional chasm between the two shows glaringly. The son falls ill and is feverish. Disease and physical distance are used to capture the possible stultification of the boy's life as well as the insuperable emotional distance between him and his father. The narrator observes: "Father is sitting just inside the hut near the door and I am sitting far across the hut near the opposite wall" (1).

Before the boy's mother left, the father had made constant attempts to endear himself to his son by "making mother look despicable and mean" (3). The father performs this in the name of fatherly responsibility – bringing up his son in a masculine or manly way. The

father's definition of masculinity is a relentless repudiation of the mother, of the feminine, what Whitehead and Barret (2001:20) call "flight from the feminine." In fact, the father adheres to hypermasculinity and is sexist. He is sexist because he is prejudiced against women and thinks only in terms of "masculine and superior," and "feminine and inferior." The father instructs his son to be always near him and inversely far away from the mother. The sum of this is what the precocious child narrator sees: "He taught me to avoid mother" (3). The subtext is that the narrator's father is teaching him to eschew everything feminine. But the boy does not learn this lesson from the "Okonkwo-like father" (Zhuwarara, 2001:29) because the father's actions make the man lose credibility and authority, and in the process earn the scorn of his son. The boy recoils from and rebels against his father. Thus fatherhood becomes a contested and disputed display of affinity and authority and the script of hypermasculinity the boy is expected to learn, the very cause of alienation.

According to the boy narrator, the father's shortcomings, especially his insensitivity to the needs of others, are legion. The boy remembers a day he and his parents were walking home from the fields. The boy's foot was so sore that he could not walk anymore. His mother could not carry him because she was carrying a basket of mealies on her head and pieces of firewood in her arms, physically overburdened as she was psychologically and emotionally from the father's abuse of both mother and son. The father insisted that the boy should walk but eventually relented to carry his son. The narrator relates:

> At first Father grumbled. He didn't like to carry me and he didn't like receiving orders from mother: she was there to listen to him always, he said. He carried me all the same although he didn't like to and worse, I didn't like him to carry me. His hands were hard and pinchy and his arms felt as rough and barky as logs. I preferred mother's soft warm back. He knew too, that I didn't want him to carry me because I made my body stiff …. His breath was harsh and foul. He wore his battered hat that stank of dirt, sweat and soil. He was trying to talk to me but I was not listening to him. (2-3)

Thus the battle lines for a silent war between father and son are drawn. The son reacts by silently fighting the father through a body language the boy is sure the father can read.

The incident above is not the only incident of this nature in the short story "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) in which the father is callous to the boy's distress, all in he name of making the boy into a "real man." When the boy has an acute fever, prompting the mother to say, "His body is all on fire," (5) the father insists that the boy is lazy and comments, "Lies. He is a man and you want to turn him into a woman" (5). In attempting to claim his son, the father passes onto the boy "the burden of demonstrating difference" (Bird, 1996:12) in the schema of gender dualisms that the father overplays. The father does not want to display emotion on his part (except anger) and wants to stop the boy's emotionality that he associates with femininity and weakness.

The son's focus on the father's least attractive details such as foul breath, the stench of sweat and so on makes the father an odious and despicable character and not the mother as intended by the father. The cumulative detail of images the child draws about his father speaks of a lost authority. The boy likens his father to "a black scarecrow in a deserted field after the harvest" (1). Instead of looking at his father, the boy chooses to look at the father's shadow "reproduced in caricature on the floor and half-way up the wall" (1). The mention of a scarecrow underlines the child's subconscious awareness of the father not as a live and therefore responsive and responsible father, but as an imitation of the human, a comic imitation. The shadow of the father also suggests lack of substance, the essence of a father as an accessible and therefore *real* person. The discourse of lack with regard to men is examined in detail in Chapter Four from the perspective of wives.

In an ironic twist to learning the lesson that "being masculine…means being not-female…[that] the masculinity ideal involves detachment and independence" (Bird, 1996:122), the boy applies this precept to his father. The boy "withdraws into a sulky, rebellious oedipal silence" (Zimunya, 1982:62) which he uses as a weapon and in so doing becomes more than mere victimized innocence. After the father's attempt to have another woman take the boy's mother's place fails because the new woman has run away four times, the father gives up sexual control of women and attempts a meaningful

relationship with his son through conversation. But the son does not want to engage his father as seen through the boy's utterances such as, "He has tried five times to talk to me but I don't know what he wants" (1), and "He is talking. I am not listening. He gives up" (1). Muponde (2005) goes as far as saying that,

> The boy in "Shadows…" denies the father certainty of continued genealogy by rejecting meaningful contact with his sire.
>
> …..
>
> The child has therefore subverted the age-old tradition of submitting to the authority of the father, in the manner of the biblical Isaac. (209)

It is a strong point indeed that Muponde makes. One is not so sure, however, if the boy's silence can be read at the level of repudiating genealogy. What the boy clearly repudiates is the father's obsession with an exaggerated idea of masculinity which is ruining the family. Nevertheless, the point remains that the trope of silence as rebellion or discontent is central to Mungoshi's writing.

Silence and monologue speak of seemingly irreparable tensions and differences. Refusing to speak becomes an act of resistance that signals the unwillingness to be drawn into a relationship, in fact, an act aimed at denying that relationship. In this case, children in Mungoshi's work willfully appropriate a space of silence which speaks resoundingly of their quest for better familial relationships. This explains Mungoshi's frequent use of monologues where the reader is privy to what characters think of each other but the characters themselves do not know of the other's thoughts. Monologues are symbolic of situations in which a character is using silence or withdrawal as a weapon. One only has to look at Mungoshi's titles to appreciate the significance of silence: *Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo* (Brooding Breeds Despair) (1970) and *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (Is Silence not a Way of Speaking?) (1975). Another Zimbabwean writer who employs the trope of silence as symbolic of protest, breaking or broken relationships, is Shimmer Chinodya, as epitomised by the titular story of his short story collection, *Can We Talk and Other Stories* (1998). As used by Chinodya in this title, the meaning of silence coincides with Nnaemeka's (1997:12) idea that "Silence can mean…both a refusal to talk

and an invitation to talk." In the latter case, the invitation to talk suggests a possibility for a better relationship.

Inadvertently, the father in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) gives the boy a somewhat autistic character – reduced social sensitivity and interpersonal communication. Mupondi (2006:189) however, appraises this situation differently and puts the blame solely on colonialism because "Western values put a strain on the relationships in African families." This, Mupondi continues, "led to conflicts between married couples" and these conflicts "sometimes ended in divorce as happened in 'Shadows on the Wall'" (189). This reading is not completely unacceptable. However, it attempts to account for complex human relationships through the blame mode.

Eventually, the boy dismisses his father, language and the chance of a healthy father-son relationship when he declares, "…he was too late. He had taught me silence….I cannot talk to him. I don't know how I should talk to him" (6). One tends to agree with Malaba (2007:16) that the father in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) "is an example of how not to do things." Mungoshi's writing here, however, especially the reflective tone in "he was too late" and the clearly mature comment, "He had taught me silence" both betray the child's point of view as an artifice and point to a more complex handling of this literary technique by Mungoshi. Generally, the child's point of view is "necessarily more unrefined, and underdeveloped than an adult's" (Pattison, 1978:119). In Mungoshi's case however, there is a combination of both the naivety and unrefined voice of a child and a mature evaluative voice captured through dense or more suggestive language. Mungoshi's aim here is to underline the alienation of the boy from his father, with the boy psychologically erasing his father from his memory, a process that also obtains in "Mount of Moriah" (1980).

"Mount of Moriah" (1980) in *Some Kinds of Wounds* (1980) captures a similarly acute alienation between father and son through the father's repudiation of the mother or the feminine principle. Hama's father cohabits with and throws away women "as if they were worn-out clothes" (7). Hama's mother is one of these women. Hama has no recollection

of his mother and feels a deep emptiness inside. He remembers Aunt Rudo whom he stayed with for a while and who represents a mother figure in his life. Hama's amputated leg, as a result of a drink-driving accident in which his father had picked up a prostitute who died on the scene, speaks of more than just the absence of a leg. His crippled state, the incompleteness of his body and the resultant immobility all signify the crippling absence of the mother or the "feminine." Hama's name, meaning "relation or relative," is ironic in calling attention to Hama's dire need of a proper relation and not the poor excuse for a father that he has.

Zhuwarara (2001:67) aptly sums up Hama's father as "reckless, unstable, unloving and unlovable." The father neglects his son, keeping him in a room reminiscent of medieval dungeons or the Victorian attic for the mad relative who must be kept out of view. Mungoshi writes of Hama:

> He couldn't remember how long he had been in this hateful room with its flecking yellow walls and damp, rotting corners curtained off with spider netting studded with dead flies and cockroaches. He couldn't remember how long he had been fighting the bedbugs and the fleas and the lice and the other tiny things that gave him sleepless nights, biting, bloodsucking and irritating him.
>
> ….
>
> Once he had tried to complain about them to his father and all he got in answer was a very cold wordless look. (9-10)

Hama retaliates through silence like the nameless narrator in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) and an acrimonious tacit battle ensues:

> Even on the bad days when his father would come home complaining of how badly things were going with him, trying to trap Hama into talking, he would keep quiet. That had become a form of revenge on his father – and he could tell that his father hated him for it. (10)

Thus the emotional rift and animosity are captured through silence and physical distance just like in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972). Hama's father always stands "close to the door [of Hama's room] as if ready to bolt at the slightest hint of a threat to his life" and can only cough as a "way of saying good morning to his son" (13). Consequently, Hama

is “ashamed to be ashamed of his father” (13), but not even that will make Hama less adversarial toward his father as he emotionally shuts him out. In the words of the narrator, “Hama was tired of his father [and] had learned to forget that his father existed” (10).

Hama’s father wants to kill his son so he can use the boy’s liver, heart and genitals as *muti* or a “good luck prescription” to win at gambling, especially at horses. Much as Zhuwarara (2001) is not impressed by Hama’s father, he comes close to exonerating him by writing, “The recourse to grisly magic by Hama’s father in his bid to survive in the harsh and insecure capitalist world introduced by the settlers is all too common in Zimbabwe today” (70). That may be so. One also notices that the problems children face in Mungoshi’s writing are often attributed to political repression and poverty. That is only one view. In the poem, “Little Rich boy” (Mungoshi 1998:20), another dimension to this issue is shown. The poem tells the story of a young boy whose rich father drives a “shiny black Benz” (20), buys his son all the things money can buy but the little boy keeps coming to the persona’s door until the latter realizes, “This little boy wants me to give him/ something his rich parents cannot give him” (20). The little boy wants “something more solid,/ something more – substantial” (21). But this forces the persona to agonise, “what do you give the children of rich parents/who have everything you don’t have?” (21). Eventually he decides to teach the boy the twist, a type of dance which the boy initially thinks is “some kind of cane, or whip or belt” all objects associated with inflicting pain. The dance signifies warmth and affection, two things missing in the little rich boy’s life.

Having discussed how fathers attempt to claim or raise their sons and how generally they fail at both, the thesis now turns to explore Mungoshi’s writings that feature boy children in their “own space,’ which nonetheless can be seen as dogged by the ideology of hypermasculinity or as the very arena for the performance of nascent hypermasculinity.

2.6 Macho Boys: "Boys will be Boys"

This subtitle is significant for two reasons. The first is the concept or ideology of *machismo*. Although of Spanish origin, this idea is helpful to understand what drives the actions of child characters in Mungoshi's work and the consequences of such in their adult lives. Mosher and Tomkins (1988) define *machismo* as 'a system of ideas informing a world view that chauvinistically exalts male dominance by assuming masculinity, virility, and physicality to be the ideal essence of real men" (64). They add that "The cultural ideology of machismo ordains and supports the socialization of males by parents into an exaggerated, hypermasculine gender script – the macho script" (65). The second idea in the subtitle, "boys will be boys," is a common expression that amongst other things, speaks of a tolerance, in fact, expectation that boys will be "rough" or "naughty." Both these ideas apply to the following section in which, the boys do not embody morality and innocence but rather a nascent or thwarted *machismo*

"The Crow" (1972) and "Did You Have to Go That Far?" (1997) both capture children amongst themselves in their "own space." In "The Crow" (1972) set in a rural area, the space is the bush and in "Did You Have To Go That Far?" (1997) set in a town, the streets. Both stories capture what can be called the beginning of a boys-becoming-men exercise in which they test boundaries and seek control not only of others but themselves as well by demonstrating a lack of fear through exorcising that emotion. In "The Crow' (1972) the boys attempt to impose themselves on, or to tame nature. They defy their parents' order to attend church and go hunting instead. In "Did You Have To Go That Far?" (1997), Damba and Pamba are not just denizens of the street but "the terror of Bise Crescent" (45) as they beat up other children, kill and maim pets in a manner reminiscent of the violence of children in Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978).

"The Crow" (1972) can be regarded as a rites of passage story with the two boys standing in judgment of each other, to see who is manlier than the other. Their nascent idea of masculinity is based on overcoming fear. Like the narrator says, "We were both afraid but it was a code between us not to show each other that we were afraid" (8). One is reminded of William Golding's (1957) *Lord of the Flies*. Apart from defying their

parents' directive to go to church, the two boys in Mungoshi's story decide to kill a crow knowing very well that the bird is "associated with the night and witchcraft" and that because of its black colour it was "always frightening and safer to leave it alone" (7). The conflicting impulse between obeying taboos or civility and by extension, weakness on the one hand and assuming bravery (savagery) on the other, and overcoming fear, hence passing into "manhood," produces extreme fear in the boys which can only be allayed through the performance of nascent excessive masculinity.

It is palpable fear that pervades the story – fear of the bird, but more so the more gripping fear of showing fear. As the narrator recounts, "again each one of us was… afraid of the other and we pretended that we were not afraid of a crow" (8). They entrap themselves: "there were only the two of us, our obsession, our fears and the crow" (8). In typical macho style, the boys attempt a power solution to impose themselves on the bird. They pound the bird into a "bloody mess." It refuses to die and the boys realize that they may have "started something that was beyond [them]" (11). In utter despair, Chiko, the other boy, capitulates not only to the bird but the boy narrator as he breaks down, cries and throws the crow and his catapult into the river. The story significantly ends with the narrator saying, "There was no more fun in proving myself tougher than he was, so to be equal I threw my catapult after Chiko's into the river. I suddenly smelled hot blood in my nose but I wasn't bleeding. It is the way I feel when everything goes wrong and I am afraid" (12). The fear has not been exorcised, meaning that it was not just a fear induced by the crow, but a fear of "weakness" that the boy narrator still carries with him.

Zhuwarara (2001:32) takes an ethical stance on "The Crow" (1972) and calls the boys' attempt to kill the crow "morally wrong" because it is "unwarranted brutality against innocent creatures." To that end, he is satisfied that the boys are humbled by the experience. This is a somewhat unsatisfactory reading for it assumes that the children who had strayed from the straight and narrow or parental control will revert to being "good boys" again. Muponde's reading is more satisfactory as he writes that the boys' action,

> …is a demonstration of the child's attempt to escape a set of taboos meant to preserve the authority of tradition and the status of children in that tradition. By killing the crow, the two boys engage with a figure of tradition as a site of entanglement with history and culture. (2005:42)

Useful as this reading is, it too, does not account for the fear that pervades the story. In both readings, there is no attention to the masculinity contest between the two boys in which the boys affect a callous toughness by not wanting to admit fear and distress to each other. One can almost imagine these boys growing up with a masculinist father like the one in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972). It is by no strange coincidence that these stories follow each other in the collection, "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) first and then "The Crow" (1972). This is where Luscher's idea (1989) of the short story sequence applies for one notices that the juxtaposition of these two stories speaks of a thematic development.

In "Did You Have To Go That Far?" (1997), Damba, the narrator, and his friend Pamba, identify themselves through violence, nasty pranks and all kinds of anti-social behaviour, including theft and rape. They are macho aspirants. Damba, who comes from a "musical family," composes their theme songs, "tunes and lyrics" (45) as he calls them, one of which goes:

> Pamba is king of the Hill
> Who says "No" he will kill
> Damba is Cock of the Roost
> "No"? Kick up dust before you roast.

The song is not just an empty boast. The two boys, in typical gangster fashion extort "protection money" (58) from other children and coerce them to follow the two. It is quite clear that Pamba is the leader as Damba reflects:

> At times I thought a demon possessed Pamba. One day we broke into the old couple's house and shat all over their bare furnitureless lounge. For this my father caned me raw.
>
> ….

> On another occasion the headmaster brought us home himself. We had stolen some books from the school storeroom and sold them for pinball money. My father threatened to stop me from going to school and he caned me again. But we seemed to thrive on these thrashings. We would boast about them to our mates. And many boys wanted to be friends with us so they could escape the protection fee. (51)

In typical macho fashion, the boys have learnt to intimidate and aggress. They model themselves after their gladiatorial heroes, for example, Pamba is a "kung-fu fanatic" (45). The boys' bravado and exhibitionist behaviour finds practical expression in graffiti in the old couple's house mentioned above: "*Pamba and Damba were here*, we wrote and signed our names in shit on the walls" (46).

The boys make their first attempt at sex and do it violently. Although Rose, the girl in question, cannot say what Damba and Pamba did to her in front of her livid father and Damba's parents, it is apparent that the two boys either raped her or attempted to. Thus apart from an obsession with "manly" heroics of daring, toughness and callousness, the boys add violent sex, completing what Mosher and Tomkins (1988: 61) call "the macho personality constellation…which consists of three behavioural dispositions justified by beliefs: (1) entitlement to callous sex, (2) violence as manly, and (3) danger as exciting." Mungoshi also puts to scrutiny in this story, the cherished idea of the desirability of the nuclear family. One notes that the two boys, Damba and Pamba, come from two nuclear families but are less sociable and responsible compared to Dura raised by a single mother. This idea is pursued in detail in Chapter Six. What concerns the thesis for now is the other extreme of macho or "real boys." This is the timid, domesticated "mama's boy" as discussed below.

2.7 When a Boy will not be a Boy and When Mothers become "Fathers"

In the last sub-section of this thesis, fathers lay claim on their sons through attempting to teach them gender appropriate roles through the privileging of machismo or hypermasculinity. There is resistance to learning these roles and where the lesson seems to have been learnt willingly or inadvertently, the boys show nascent or clear signs of

machismo. The process of "learning" hypermasculinity however, is not as simple as stated here. A more nuanced discussion is offered in chapter Three and Five.

Sheila in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) and VaChingweru in the novel *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970) offer an opportunity to examine what may happen in the event that a mother has more control than the father in raising children. Joe's mother is determined to raise her son to become an educated and financially successful individual. She literally takes over Joe's life who she thoroughly domesticates as symbolised by the fact that even as a young adult, Joe eats from the same plate as his mother and does all the household chores. He is more than what is commonly known as "mama's boy." He is the opposite of the boy in Mungoshi's poem, "Before the Sun." In this poem, a young boy is cutting a big log outdoors and relishes his bodily vigour in the lines:

> It is a big log:
> but when you are fourteen
> big logs
> are what you want. (1983:3)

On the other hand, Joe is associated with the indoors, "softness" and domesticity.

Inongova Njakenjake (1980) is woven by an intricate web of conflicting stances and emotions. Joe is distressed, anxious, ashamed and confused. In one of his epiphanies he blames Sheila, his mother, for dominating and domesticating him. Joe muses:

> *Hapana wandinoziva.* Twenty years *shamwari kana…. Upwere wangu hwese, handina wandaitamba naye,ndichingova namai chete.* (46)
>
> I know basically nobody. At twenty I don't have even a single friend. Throughout all my childhood I had no playmate. I was stuck and still am stuck with mother. (My own translation from Shona)

Being tied to his mother's apron strings distresses Joe because of the pressure from his father, Tafireyi (Tafi for short). There is gender panic from Tafi who sees gender as strictly a binary. He is greatly perturbed by Joe whom he thinks has taken up a feminine

instead of masculine role. As such, the father sees his son as unacceptably gendered and Sheila's parenting as going against heterosexual logic. Unlike other Okonkwo-like fathers in Mungoshi's work such as Rwafa in the short story "Sins of the Fathers" (2003), Tafi is not openly confrontational although he expresses a calmer contempt for his son. The theme of macho fathers full of contempt and at times hatred for their sons will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Tafi's thinly veiled contempt for Joe comes through when he asks him:

> *Urikufungei chaizvo? Unofunga unosvika kupi uchiswerogwesha nemba uchisukiswa ndiro namai vako?*
>
> ....
>
> *Ndati uri kuda kuzoita sei kana uchiswerotumwa kumagirosa kunotenga sauiti namai vako?* (12)
>
> What are you really thinking? What good will this arrangement bring you when you spend all your time indoors, perpetually washing plates and dishes for your mother?
>
> ….
>
> I'm asking you exactly what you think you'll achieve from running mundane errands for your mother such as buying salt from the grocery shops? (My own translation from Shona)

Apart from blaming Joe for what he has become, Tafi also blames Sheila's parenting for producing an "effeminate" son who is too passive and lacks the aggression and self-assurance expected of a boy or young man. In short, Joe has grown up in a manner that can be said to be the exact opposite of the rugged and rambunctious boys in "The Crow" and "Did You Have to Go that Far?" (1997). Mungoshi critiques a society that sharply differentiates space and assigns it to specific gender categories. Bodies are also consigned to specific spaces and genders and the routines that the bodies perform are strongly attached to normative gender.

Thus Joe disconcerts his father because apart from the son's gender non-conformity, as seen for example by occupying the "wrong" gender space of the house, the kitchen in

particular, he lets his mother control him. One also notices that Joe is the only family member who offers emotional support to his mother, which can be likened to the emotionally expressive "care work," largely regarded as feminine. At another level then, Sheila's control of Joe signals not only Mungoshi's interest in parenting but his questioning of normative gender norms. Joe's case also alerts us to the relationship between gender and sexuality, especially as both Lucy, Joe's sister, and Tafi, are of the opinion that Joe has failed to perform male gender and is therefore not normal, hinting at the possibility that he might be gay. Joe's uniqueness extends to how his body and by extension, his sexuality is placed within heteronormativity. The subjects of gender and sexuality are dealt with at length in Chapter Six.

One could also argue that through Sheila's parenting of Joe, Mungoshi suggests alternative constructions of masculinity. Joe's emotional expressiveness, his confinement indoors and his love for cooking are not in themselves, feminine. For example, instead of Sheila insisting that Joe should pass his Ordinary Level examinations which he has failed three times, Joe can easily become a successful chef where men are validated for the good work they do there. Ironically, even Sheila herself thinks that Joe should get a "masculine" job, meaning one that is higher up in corporate management as opposed to Tafi's menial job as a messenger. Whereas Tafi infantilises and feminises Joe because the father sees gender in polar terms and valorises socially approved masculinity, Sheila infantilises and by the same token emasculates Tafi for holding, in Sheila's estimation, a "boy's" job as a messenger. Whilst Tafi exhorts his son to "grow up," his wife has condemned the husband to boyhood. In other words, Tafi views Joe as a 'wimp,' the very same label that his wife gives him. Through this story, Mungoshi is suggesting that the dichotomy between "masculine" and "feminine" is not only problematic but unhelpful as well, and as such, there ought to be something sharable across gender.

Mungoshi complicates the situation above by showing that 'wimps' are not created through mothers only but by fathers who uphold a tough and martial masculinity. The masculinization project discussed under the story "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) is played out in a more intense manner in "Sins of the Fathers" (2003). Rondo lives in

perpetual fear of his father, even as he moves into adulthood and has established a family of his own. Rondo lacks self-confidence so much that his wife, Selina tells him that "he apologized too much" (143) whilst everyone seems to be telling Rondo to "Grow up. Get a life" (140), a language that mirrors that of Joe's father to his son. Rondo's fears, lack of confidence and indecisiveness have as their source his father's violence as captured through one early childhood memory:

> …an uncle had given Rondo an old guitar. He was only four then. His father had come home…found him strumming tunelessly on the instrument. His father had broken the strings and thrown the whole contraption into the fire saying, "No Mick Jaggers or John Whites in my house! Scum! They have no sense of responsibility those people.
>
> ….
>
> The flames of that burning guitar had gutted all the courage out of him. He had been only a child – and he didn't have any idea who Mick Jagger or John White were. But he had remembered the fear that was planted in him then. (He'd peed in his shorts – he'd told Selina!" (143-144)

Such incidents, coupled with the father's constant beatings of his son during childhood have turned Rondo into a neurotic individual.

Mungoshi further destabilises the idea that there is a stable gendered behaviour for men and women by giving us a woman who, perhaps in a manner more vigorous than Sheila's in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) wrests her daughter from the father. VaChingweru in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970), like Sheila in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) has a fierce determination to see Monika obtain a professional qualification that would lead to the upward social mobility of her daughter and by implication, hers too. Monika's education becomes VaChingweru's preoccupation, almost a vocation. For that reason, she sees the need to wrest her daughter from the influence of, according to the mother, a lazy husband aptly named Mushayazano (clueless). She also bans her daughter from having friends, especially lovers. She lays full claim on Monika and makes this patently clear to her husband when she tells him, "*Mwana wangu; ndinoita zvandinoda naye*" (She is my daughter and I'll do as I please with her) challenging the supposed power a

husband has over his wife and the absolute power and authority a father is supposed to have over his daughter. Elsewhere, VaChingweru is seen musing about Monica:

> *...uyu ndiye wangu chaiye wandakapiwa naNyadenga. Kana anomuroora ngirozi chaiyo. Ndinoda kumutsvagira murume ini ndega; kwete kuti aroorwe nezvikekeke zvomuno izvi. Ndinoda kuti aroorwe nomurume chaiye; kwete zvandakaita ini zvokuroorwa noruharahwa rwava kuda kufa zvaro.* (7)
>
> …this is my real child; the one God gave to me. Even the man who will marry her will marry a real angel. I want to find her a man myself, so that she doesn't get married to the riffraff in this area. I want her to be married by a real man. Not to marry as badly as I did, marrying an old man with one foot in the grave. (My own translation from Shona)

So instead of the common situation in which the father pledges his daughter for marriage as seen for example, in Simango's novel *Zviuya Zviri Mberi* (1974), it is the wife who does so. Similarly, this is a twist to Moyana's (2006) claim that the pledging of girl children for marriage is motivated by "the need to satisfy men's basic needs" (114). In Monika's case, it is the mother who wants to profit by pledging her daughter to Mujubheki, one of the wealthiest men in the village. In both Joe's and VaChingweru's case, there appears to be no room for certain kinds of masculinities that contain the 'feminine' and similarly, no room for kinds of femininities that contain the 'masculine.

The one example of good parenting that Mungoshi offers the readers is in the form of a conscientious mother whose efforts are nonetheless thwarted by village gossip and a dead-beat father. Rindai in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) offers exemplary parenthood to her nine-year-old daughter, Rangarirai. We are told,

> *Rangarirai akanga asinganyanyi kutya kutukwa namai vake nokuti vaiti vakamutuka vozopedza vachinyanyomutsanangurira zvakanga zvaita kuti vamutuke.* (14)

> Rangarirai was not overly worried about being scolded by her mother because her mother would later explain in detail to her daughter the reason for the scolding. (My own translation from Shona)

In fact, mother and daughter are on very friendly terms. However, the village rumour mill upsets not only the relationship between mother and daughter but the daughter's schooling as well. Rangarirai plays truant at school because other children start saying embarrassing things about her mother, such as the fact that her mother is having an affair with one of the local school teachers, Maswera. Amongst other things, the other pupils call Rangarirai's mother a bitch, a witch and a home destroyer. She is accused of bewitching Mr Maswera's wife, making her barren in the process. Much as "gossip and slander, ridicule and shame and the fear of negative sanctions are common mechanisms of social control in all societies" (Seigel, 1996:232), in Rangarirai's case however, it proves pernicious.

The taunting of Rangarirai by other students becomes so unbearable that she starts asking herself many questions and doubting her parentage:

> *Sabhina andituka achiti mai varoyi, vanoroya masikati. Mai vangu varoyi here? Ndizvo zvavakarambirwa na baba here? Mai vangu vanodanana na Ticha Maswera here? Ini ndiri mwana wani?* (71)

> Sabhina [one of the most spiteful pupils] insulted me saying my mother is a shameless witch who practices her craft in broad daylight. Is my mother really a witch? Is that why my father left her? Is my mother in love with Teacher Maswera? Whose child am I? (My own translation from Shona)

Rangarirai loses interest in school and slides from being top of her class to settle at the bottom. Mr Maswera beats her and so does her mother to no avail until Rangarirai becomes immune to any beating.

The cause of the mother-daughter conflict is the dead-beat father, Rex Mbare. Rex works in town and has since stopped coming to visit his family at their rural home for quite some time and has banned the wife and children from visiting him. When Teacher

Maswera visits Rindai for advice on his marital problems and later offers to help her with chores regarded as "men's jobs," VaKwiripi, Rindai's mother-in-law spreads a rumour that Rindai is having an affair with Maswera. Ironically, it is Rex who is having an affair in town with Magi, Rindai's friend. According to Va Kwiripi and virtually the entire village, a woman, especially a married woman whose husband seems to have neglected, cannot be friends with a man without the two having sexual relations. Thus, Rindai becomes a threatening evil to a phallocentric community that thinks she has unmanned her husband. In a sense, according to the village, Rindai now has two sexual partners and is a bad example to other women who may also want to unleash their sexuality like she supposedly has. The child, Rangarirai, gets caught up in the process. The rumour mill's gathering momentum and how eventually it ends up as general knowledge even to primary school children marks the anxieties of a community that is very keen to control women's sexuality and in the process damages a child's psyche. This proves the point made at the beginning of the chapter that relations between children and adults function in mutually dependent ways, sometimes to the detriment of children.

2.8 Conclusion

Whilst the Shona society places great premium on fertility and children, Mungoshi's works show a discrepancy between such a value and the sometimes appalling treatment of children. A reading of Mungoshi's representation of male children, whose growing up is thought to be less problematic than that of girls, is a crucial addition to our understanding of gender. The childhood of these boy characters emerges as troubled largely through the hypermasculine ideals that their fathers want the boys to acquire and adhere to. On their part, children in Mungoshi's writing show a great deal of agency in processing gender scripts and interpersonal affect. On the one hand, they spurn hypermasculinist scripts and on the other, embrace them. Even in those situations where they emerge as victims, children are not hapless victims.

Mungoshi's writing about children also points to the iconography of children in the establishment, maintenance and dissolution of relationship networks. Just as family is emotionally charged and politicized, so is childhood. Whereas some of Mungoshi's

contemporaries such as Katiyo (1976) deploy childhood as political allegory in a decolonisation project, Mungoshi uses childhood to mine issues of growing up and the performance of valorised gender appropriate roles. Through irony and dystopic families, Mungoshi complicates the very claim of patriarchy, that children belong to the men. Sons are estranged from their fathers owing to the masculinist script that fathers want their sons to inherit. Under this script, the fathers emphasise flight from the feminine. Relying on both first person narration such as in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) and third person narration as seen in "The Mount of Moriah" (1980) and "Sins of the Fathers" (2003), Mungoshi uses physical distance, silence and illness of children as metaphors for the emotional chasm between fathers and sons. When in their own space, young boys perform acts undergirded by *machismo* in incidents that are calculated at repressing and overcoming fear and indecisiveness. This is seen in the story "The Crow" (1972) which is a rites of passage story in which two boys dare each other to suppress fear and flout taboos. Stories that feature two boys or adolescents are used by Mungoshi to capture the acquisition and performance of hypermasculinity with each boy standing in judgement of the other. Similar stories include "The Mountain" (1972) and "Did You Have to Go that Far?" (1997).

The hypermasculinist script that fathers are eager to pass on their sons produces either the rancorous relationships alluded to above or young men such as Joe in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) who is considered inappropriately gendered by his father. This story signals Mungoshi's intention to subject gender relations and heterosexuality to scrutiny beyond the oft-cited oppression of women by men. Whereas Joe's father, Tafi imagines himself as "masculine," his wife Sheila refers to his achievements as "boyish," denying her husband the satisfaction of having achieved a successful masculinity. The "feminisation" of Joe by his mother is thus most ambiguous given that by keeping Joe in the house to study, Sheila hopes that her son will have a better job than Tafi and escape the "boyhood" that she has condemned Tafi to. In a sense Joe is Sheila's "project" to make a better man of her son compared to the father. Ironically, Joe according to his father and sister, is too feminine, hence the suspicion that he could be gay. This story foreshadows ideas of masculinity in the context of formal education versus normative

gender roles. One example of this is the feminisation of the intellectual and intellectual labour in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Adolescents and Young Men

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is a logical, chronological progression from the previous one which focuses on the conflicts between parents and discontented children. It also mirrors Charles Mungoshi's interest in time and change as reflected for example, in the titles of his poems in *The Milkman Doesn't Only Deliver Milk* (1998): "Growing up," "Before the sun," "To those long gone," "Slow Progress" and "After the rain." The one poem whose title does not immediately indicate its fascination with the passage of time but perhaps captures this concept better than the rest mentioned here is "Two photographs" in which Mungoshi writes,

> In this one I am nineteen:
> the future is still ahead
> …..
> The second one alarms me:
> I am thirty, perplexedly solid
> as if anchored in quicksand.

Similarly, *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) is a good example of this fascination with the passage of time. As Zimunya (1982:67) observes, "The collection of short stories focuses on the plight of young people going through the shocks of growing up." The stories are arranged in such a way that we first encounter those that focalize young children, followed by those that focus on adolescents and finally, young adults. Walker (1999:24) shares this view and comments that "*Coming of the Dry Season* is… about growing up – the successive stories are about different boys at a slightly later physical and social development." This is an example of the concept of "short story sequence" (Luscher, 1989) referred to in the last two chapters. The characters and conflicts in the stories are connected and deepen with chronological age reflecting a growing social awareness as the characters go through adolescence and then young adulthood. This

chapter focuses mostly on male adolescents and young men to further rerhearse the construction and acquisition of masculinities, some of which are challenged by women characters in the next chapter.

Key issues of adolescence and young adulthood are centered around the concepts of home and belonging, for these two concepts ask characters in this category to wrestle with self and group identity, all underlined by conventional and some competing gender imaginaries. The common themes in this stage of the life cycle include a yearning for authority which is at times conflated with a search for an ideal family and heroes, the effects of formal education (especially biculturation), filial obligations and reciprocity, and intergenerational conflict. Typically, adolescence and adulthood is the terrain where the theme of tradition versus modernity finds its most powerful expression given that standing on the threshold of manhood and womanhood, adolescents and young adults are the ones most affected by social change. Just like childhood, adolescence and young adulthood as a time of transition to adulthood are socio-historical constructs. Burman (2008:147) correctly points out that generally, the ideas of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood "can be linked to processes of industrialization, with the introduction of compulsory schooling working to create a dependent… workforce rather than a young and active, economically autonomous population." Of importance is that these life stages are also gendered, like adulthood. As Macleod (2006:122) points out, "The assumption in the discourse of adolescence is that adolescents will eventually achieve adulthood and that the adulthood achieved by men is different from that achieved by women."

Adolescence and young adulthood are generally thought of as representing the "storm and stress stage of life" (Brown and Larson, 2002). However, as these two scholars advise, adolescence and young adulthood are culturally bound ideas which do not exist in the languages and practices of some societies. The two also observe that the same historical and cultural period may have diverse variations of, and differing emphases on adolescence and young adulthood. As such, the questions that will guide this chapter include the following: (1) Are there clearly discernible stages of adolescence and young adulthood in Mungoshi's writing and if so, what are their main characteristics? (2) What

is the connection between issues of childhood and those of adolescence and young adulthood? (3) How has adolescence been depicted in Zimbabwean literature and how do these compare to Mungoshi's depictions? (4). What insights can be gained from reading Mungoshi's representation of adolescence and young adulthood in familial settings?

This chapter contends that there tends to be a narrow thematic conception in most analyses of Mungoshi's work regarding adolescence and early adulthood. Themes are tapered down to the psychologically damaging effect of colonial education on the young African mind and the devastating effects of land alienation. Much as these ideas have currency regarding the explication of Mungoshi's youthful characters and their interaction with their families and the land, these ideas tend to be very quick to put sole blame for familial disharmony and the dissolution of family life on the effects of the colonial encounter. As in a morality play, "tradition" in most of these analyses is an example of good and filial rebellion, evil. Above all, most of the readings disregard gender.

Mungoshi's representation of adolescence and early adulthood is more complex and speculative than the overtextualization of colonial concerns alluded to above. The point is made here that what is needed is a sharp focus on how characters grapple with self and group identity, the *quality* of relationships forged between adolescents/young adults and their parents or family, and what the quality of these relationships reveals about wider textual issues. The reading of youthful voices, instead of being sensitive and exploratory tends to be harsh, dismissive, and at times patronising as shown in the work of Kahari (1980), Zimunya (1982), Stratton (1986) and Zhuwarara (2001). Elided in these analyses are the anxieties attendant to the construction of self during this life period and what we can learn regarding the family and some issues in general. An instructive warning is given by ten Kortenaar (2007:44) that "family is not merely a metaphor for nation, and it is a mistake to focus critical analysis solely on political ideology" because any historical epoch "involves all aspects of the self and the psyche."

3.1 Mapping Adolescence

Dreyer (1988) gives the following useful definition of adolescence:

> adolescence is derived from the Latin verb *adolescere* which means "to ripen," "to grow to maturity." This term is actually derived from the present participle, *adolescens*, which refers to the process of growing up, or growing toward or into maturity. The adolescent period is therefore, the period of growth and development from the end of childhood to the beginning of adult manhood or womanhood. (28)

The past participle of adolescence is *adultus*, and this means 'full grown or mature" (Keil, 1959: 260). There is a congruence of terms with the Shona *kuyaruka* which means to grow up and mature, taken from the verb *kuyarutsa* meaning to nurture to maturity. Adulthood is called *kukura* and a mature person is called *munhu akura*. The adage *kura uone* (literally "grow up and see for yourself"), used specifically with adolescents or young people, is both a warning and acknowledgement of the complexities that come with the responsibilities and difficulties of adulthood. The significance then of adolescence is largely that it is a life phase in which society expects to pass on the baton of cherished beliefs and visions. The problem arises when the values of the parents or older generation clash with those of adolescents and young adults.

In spite of this confluence in terms, the term adolescence is contentious – both in terms of its existence as denoting a clearly defined life stage and the ages it should cover. Brown and Larson (2002:4) comment that "one can learn a lot about the nature of adolescence in a given culture simply from the way it is defined. In some cases there is simply no term to describe adolescence, a certain sign that the society does not regard it as a distinct stage of the life cycle." In Shona society, as already indicated above, adolescence does exist and is clearly delineated with specific roles assigned those in this stage. Adolescents are expected to do most of the housework in the case of girls or young women and all the difficult or manly tasks if they are boys or young men (Gelfand, 1979). In fact, both sexes are regarded as standing on the threshold of manhood and womanhood which latter two stages may include marriage, working for one's family and in the case of young men,

inheriting the family's customary practices and propagating the family name (Bourdillon, 1976). Above all, adolescents and young adults are expected to look after the welfare of their parents in old age (Kahari, 1990). Mungoshi's interest in adolescence, however, is not idiosyncratic in Zimbabwean writing as Riemenschneider (1989:403) observes that "to choose an adolescent as a central character occurs frequently in Zimbabwean short fiction and reflects the writers' concerns with the problem of growing up in the widest sense of the word."

Adolescence is thought to "comprise most of the second decade of life from age 10 to the end of secondary school at 18 or (often in Europe) 19" (Arnett, 2002:309). There are slight differences with some scholars insisting that this period covers the age ten to twenty-five (Fussel and Greene, 2002). This research will adopt Arnett's (2002) demarcation which recognises two periods – adolescence and early adulthood. The first period starts from puberty, which is a period of physical maturation covering the 10 to 14 years stage, up to the beginning of late teens. Early adulthood extends "from the end of adolescence (in the late teens) to the mid-to-late 20s" (Arnett, 2002:309). This demarcation is being insisted on because of the different psychosocial developments in these stages. It is generally thought that social awareness increases sharply when one is about to assume adult roles for this involves making decisions and choices. Some tasks and responsibilities may differ in the two stages. Scholars such as Fussel and Greene (2002:21) prefer to use the term "youth" which covers the second and third decade of life which is "an eventful time, a period in which young people experience changes in their roles and shifts in social expectations of them." This delineation will not be used in this study because it is too broad and vague.

Historical and cultural contexts give rise to variegated forms of adolescence and early adulthood. Most of the scholarship on this subject is dominated by American and European views. Brown and Larson (2002) make a relevant point when they observe that there must be an awareness of intercultural variability:

> The truth is that a disproportionate number (if not most) of our images of what happens in adolescence are based on the American and European "teenager." In

> reality there are markedly different "adolescences" in other parts of the world that stand apart from Western accounts of what does or should happen during this transition period between childhood and adulthood. (2)

Nsamenang (2002:61) expresses the same point quite strongly when he writes that "Adolescence is a Eurocentric enterprise. Western social scientists have, with a few recent exceptions, presented their findings as relevant to the human race." Nsamenang's (2002) observation is useful in as far as it raises an awareness of intercultural variability. It must be pointed out however, that some of the "Eurocentric, universalistic notions of adolescence" (62) that this scholar refers to, are valuable in the study of African literature and in this case, Mungoshi's work.

Generally, adolescence and young adulthood in Mungoshi's work express themselves as an oscillation between contradictory tendencies in the struggle for selfhood which largely manifests as a striving toward emotional autonomy and disengagement from the family. The need to wean oneself psychologically from parents and significant others is fraught with contradictions in the making of interpersonal, ideological and other adjustments. There is a general tendency to want to assert oneself as a "real man" in the case of males. The family and the home situation in general, prove inadequate and stultifying. This is followed by a need to escape the physical space of home, family relations considered oppressive and pernicious to emotional well being, an ascribed socio-economic status such as the parents' poverty, world views or responsibilities, parents' values as well as particular familial narratives deemed either archaic or not to the interests of the adolescents and young adults.

3.2 The Search for an Ideal Family and Heroes

One crucial feature of adolescence is the emergence of self-perception in which gender and family are critical contexts. There seems to be a striving towards and desire for a conventionally approved masculinity and a "perfect family." The desired family is one characterised by peaceful existence, harmonious interrelations and with sufficient material resources, including food. Even the possession of material comforts proves not

to be enough as demonstrated in "A Need for Shelter" (1972). This story together with "The Homecoming" (1997), underscore the centrality of acquiring "real manhood," family and home in the male adolescent's psyche. Different as the economic and social situations of Lyn Talbot and Musa are in the respective stories, most of the concerns the stories raise are similar and prefigure later discussions about the adolescents' and young adults' concept of self, home and belonging.

Whereas Lyn Talbot in "A Need for Shelter" (1980) has a near fanatic desire to identify with his father, a rich industrialist and therefore a symbol of successful masculinity, this is not enough as Lyn also wants to identify with "the grandeur that is Western Civilization" (133) and find his place in it. On the other hand, Musa, a poor sixteen year old boy whose only relation is his poor grandmother, is keen to distance himself from family in "The Homecoming" (1997) in search of "manliness." The title, "A Need for Shelter" (1980) speaks of an internal void, a deep-seated need to identify and locate one's self socially – a theme which is echoed in "The Homecoming" (1997). There is a need to be housed physically as well as to feel at home emotionally. The preoccupation with home or shelter in Mungoshi' writing is expressive of a quest to insert oneself in society and inevitably, this is a gendered exercise.

Lyn Talbot in "A Need for Shelter" (1980) is materially secure and his prospects in life are very bright, as indicated by the fact that soon he will become one of the junior managers in his father's firm and that there is already the prospect of marrying a beautiful white girl. Thus, at nineteen and self-satisfied, with the segregatory politics of race on his side, Lyn "was surprised that there were people his age who relied on drugs to get through a single minute of their lives" (133). Incidentally, Musa in "The Homecoming" (1997) relies on alcohol to get through each day and this eventually earns him an expulsion from school.

Lyn is proud of his father whom he regards as one of his heroes as signified by the way the son constantly quotes his father's aphorisms and tries to imitate his father's voice. Lyn's is an incipient militaristic masculinity based on conquest as he feels a desperate

need to embrace the nebulous idea of "Western civilization" (133) through another abstract concept, history, in the form of books which he regards as "preserved civilization" (133). Mungoshi writes that Lyn "almost had a fanatic's respect for western civilization. And civilization to him meant history: the defeats, conquests, discoveries. He would be feeling low in spirits but a paragraph out of history's greatest people would put him back into his normal cheerful self" (133).

In a somewhat too literal and *macho* embrace of "Western Civilisation" with its conquests and heroes, Lyn steals and hides under his shirt, *The Great War Speeches of Sir Winston Churchill* from a bookshop. He imagines his theft as an act of defiance or heroism and casts it as a battle. Discovered by a black shop attendant, Lyn becomes determined to win this "battle" (136) and assailed by the word "defeat" (136), becomes defiant and steals a second book. His sense of manhood will not let Lyn admit defeat, especially by a black shop assistant whom he tries to infantilise by giving a bribe so he can buy his "wives" some trinkets. One is reminded of the comment by Mosher and Tomkins (1988:60) that "The ideological script of *machismo* descends from the ideology of the warrior and the stratifications following warfare." When bribing the shop assistant fails, Lyn is overwhelmed by the imaginary "voices of parents, friends – the voices of society – already screaming at him" (136). The events of the story ask Lyn just who he is at this point of his life. What he thought were adequate descriptors and concepts, including his nascent sense of masculinity, prove inadequate in real life. The story thus goes beyond exploding the racist myth of white supremacist rhetoric and stereotypes. It provides a useful entry point to the exploration of adolescent self-definition.

On the other hand, instead of the predominance of hubris as seen in Lyn's case, in "The Homecoming" (1997) Mungoshi explores in detail feelings of shame, guilt, fear and puzzlement as Musa attempts to distance himself from his grandmother, who represents all the family he has. Musa in the story seeks validation as a man-to-be by "growing up wild" (27). Single-handedly raised by his loving grandmother and only relative, Old Mandisa, Musa is expelled from school for drinking alcohol, an action which speaks of his desire to affirm his nascent sense of masculinity. Another example in this regard is his

symbolic preference for the beer container that used to be his grandfather's over numerous other beer containers his grandmother has. Musa in his attempt to claim "manhood," has also gained notoriety in the village through daring actions such as persistent stealing. His behaviour has unwittingly put a lot of pressure on himself and his grandmother, forcing the community to either expel both of them from the village or gruesomely kill Musa given that "The last thief in the village, a boy barely ten years old, had been locked up in a hut which had then been set on fire." (27-28). Even such a possibly dreadful end does not dissuade Musa from his antics of claiming what he thinks is manhood.

With unstinting love, Old Mandisa has raised Musa, coaxing and cajoling him to attend school and obtain a pass so he can have a bright future. Although she does her best to see to it that Musa is provided for, Musa remains recalcitrant and frustrated that he is under the care of a frail old woman who has, according to Musa, nothing to recommend her as a figure of authority of any kind. Musa attempts to play the role of the inaccessible male and head of the family. He is puzzled by his family history and ashamed of his loving grandmother. Old Mandisa, like Old Mandisa in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), has seen all eleven of her children die, including all her grandchildren from the family curse of *ngozi*. Musa finds it difficult to reconcile himself to his fate, the fact that Old Mandisa is the only relative he has. Essentially this means no male figure to emulate (for good or bad), abject poverty, living under the family curse and having to deal with pernicious village gossip. Musa is so acutely sensitive to these aspects of his life that one is reminded of Keil's (1959:171) statement that "The adolescent is sensitive about his person, his appearance, his clothes, his feelings but especially about his family."

Musa's family history is threatened with erasure through the death of his only surviving and poor grandmother who has nothing material to bequeath to him except "dilapidated little huts and the rat manure in her dozen clay pots" (28). Poverty exercises such a keen influence in the imaginations of adolescents and young adults as will be shown later in this chapter through the discussion of other characters such as Nhamo in the short story, "The Setting Sun and the Rolling World" (1972) and Lucifer in the novel *Waiting for the*

Rain (1975). In the following outburst, sixteen year old Musa reveals his deep-rooted fears:

> What are you, an old woman, doing still hanging about on this earth? Where are your children? How could they all die? All of them! You must know something about it. And now you are onto me. I know you watch every cent you spend on me. I'm going to pay it all back one day. All of it. Every cent of it. I'm going to give it all back to you. Sooner or later. Why otherwise would you want me around you like a fly over rotten meat, or a louse in your rags? (29)

It is not true that Musa fears for his life and feels threatened by his grandmother. Poverty and slander amount to shame, and a sense of a threatened manhood assails him. Old Mandisa, Mungoshi writes, "didn't think those were [Musa's] own words. Those were too grown-up for the boy's mouth. Either a bad spirit was sitting inside him, or someone, somewhere wanted to get at her through the boy" (30). One thing that mortifies Musa is that people in the village say that amongst other things, he has sex with his grandmother. Here, as in the Shona novel, *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) with reference to Rangarirai's case cited in the last chapter, the rumour mill is harmful to the psyche of the child or adolescent inducing shame and guilt. Above all, it symbolically emasculates Musa and not surprisingly, he reacts through anger.

Seen another way, Musa's burden of shame and guilt, his desire to shun his home is a result of the fact that "at a subconscious level [he] is looking for a home that he can relate to and possibly feel proud of" (Zhuwarara, 2001:99-100). The search for such a home is explored later in this chapter through Lucifer in the English novel, *Waiting for the Rain* (1975). At this stage of his life, Musa does not have the cognitive or social ability to process and manage all the facts and innuendos about his situation. He is also at that stage of his life where he cannot understand that the only thing he can be heir to is the family narrative and that his idea of virile manhood, a manhood he sees as threatened by his Grandmother, is not at all. Fittingly, Old Mandisa comments that the source of the strain in their relationship, the source of misunderstanding is too little time spent together, time necessary for the growing of a strong relationship. She tells Musa,

> I wish both your mother and father had had a little more time with each other. Time. That's what everyone in this family has never had with each other. Time. I've not had it with you and maybe that's why you always leave me and why you think the people that you meet are your own people. I am the only one left of your own people. (30)

At the end of the story, Musa accepts his grandmother and takes care of her during her last days, characterised by immobility and incontinence because he has had the time to listen to and appreciate the history of his family. He accepts the responsibility of caring for his grandmother because through understanding, he has disabused himself of the fallacy that his Grandmother is an emasculating presence and that if he takes care of his grandmother he would be doing a feminine job. He cares for his grandmother just as she cared for him in his infancy. This reversal of roles and Musa's "bending" of his gender mark a rare happy ending in Mungoshi's stories that deal with adolescents. Musa then, does come home and find shelter as indicated by the title of the story, "The Homecoming" (1997).

Whereas Lyn and Musa appear not to lack love from their families, Julius in the short story "The Hero" (1972) does. The story focuses on Julius's over-pitched rebellion against school authorities in order to gain the admiration of his peers. Initially, his case appears to be a tactless egocentricism or the goallessness that is sometimes associated with adolescence (Verma and Saraswathi, 2002). Lack of familial love sees Julius involved in exhibitionist macho behaviour which earns him an expulsion from school.

In a desperate attempt to distinguish himself amongst his peers so as to gain their recognition Julius embraces one of the three aspects identified by Mosher & Tomkins (1988:61) in the "macho personality constellation," which is, "danger as exciting." The other two as indicated earlier, are "entitlement to callous sex" and "violence as manly" (61). Assailed with ordinariness and a vague emptiness, Julius makes a "blunt and tactless speech that is more calculated to grab attention while offending authorities to the maximum" (Zhuwarara 2001:35). That the food at his boarding school is poor is evident but he overshoots the mark when he says to the authorities:

> I am not going to eat what you yourself would not willingly throw to your dog. I pay for the food here and I must have my money's worth. For a long time we have complained about the poor diet at this school but you have plugged your ears with sealing wax. (23)

True to the macho script, when Julius leaves the principal's office, he imagines he is a hero as he walks with a "defiant limp" and has "the feeling of walking through a battlefield, looking at the dead bodies of the conquered," also feeling "contempt for all the conquered, whoever they were" (22). Julius is attention seeking and in search of validation, in a manner that is reminiscent of Lyn Talbot in "A Need for Shelter" (1972). Both rely on masculinist or macho strategies that draw from militaristic language in which there is only space for the victor and the vanquished. Julius imagines that his rebellion has made him unique, turned him into a hero: "He was not one of them. He led his own mysterious life. Mystery and danger, the key words. He was unique. He saw all the girls despising their boyfriends, throwing them away for him" (24). He relishes being labeled a "dangerous element in the school" (24) and mistakes his having been nicknamed "Julius Little Caesar" (24) by the Headmaster as the man's high regard and respect for him when it is just something inconsequential that springs from his name.

Julius trades his humiliation at sport (he remembers being laughed at for missing the ball in soccer, for example) for a short-lived moment of rebellion with its equally short-lived glory. The pyrrhic victory starts being apparent when "He was disappointed that the girls did not rush to him as the boys had done but he was pleased to see that all their starry eyes, especially Dora's – his lovely deskmate's – were on him" (22). His rebellion is miscalculated bravado to bolster his flagging self-esteem. He dares himself and has his school mates as the "jury" to confer on him the manliness he is eager to acquire. He does not get that. Muponde (2005) is of the opinion that Julius's rebellion is pitilessly quashed by an insensitive adult world. But the story reveals that Julius's problem is his stepmother whom he cannot face or displace his anger on perhaps because of the forbidding presence of the father. The school, he seems to think, will not have far reaching consequences compared to facing his father and step mother. The story demystifies Julius's behaviour and I tend to agree with Zhuwarara (2001:36) that "From a psychological point of view it

appears that Julius comes from a deprived family background in which love and recognition were hard to come by." Hence the epiphany at the end of the story as he reflects that "The only time he has ever been happy was when he was at school," and that realisation illuminates the rest of his action: "What he had done, he felt, had been very childish. It was not as big as he had thought. He had achieved nothing" (26). The assertion that "During adolescent years the need to have friends, to belong to groups and in general to strive for status and recognition is particularly strong" (Dreyer, 1980:36) fits Julius's rebellion. Significantly, this section ends with Julius's expulsion from school, hinting at how through expulsion, he has lost the only place and community that made him happy. The next section looks at more than just the value of formal education in both pre and post independent Zimbabwe. It examines the complications of acculturation and how these impact on interpersonal relationships in the family as well as the concepts of home and belonging.

3.3 Formal Education – Alienation as Illumination

Formal education is a consistent theme in Mungoshi's work and Zimbabwean literature in general. It tends to play an ambiguous role in Mungoshi's work. Highly sought after, it functions as a tool for social advancement as it bestows prestige on the receiver and can open doors to economic success for both the individual receiver as well as their family. At the same time, however, it has an alienating effect on the learned as the learned tends to attempt to break away from traditional commensality by disassociating him/herself from family and neglecting or renouncing certain responsibilities. One significant point is that the knowledge the educated acquire interrogates long held beliefs and customs. There are obvious socio-historical explanations for this, such as Christianity that was the strong arm of Missionary education as well as middle class values that these schools imparted (Morrel, 1998). This section of the thesis is interested in the less researched aspect of the intimate decisions to question certain long-held cultural codes. The questioning and at times abandonment of these beliefs and customs can be read as both alienation and illumination as the reader is forced to evaluate, alongside the educated and youthful characters, the usefulness or otherwise of certain traditional customs and beliefs.

Hence formal education is attached to issues such as self-concept, the role of the intellectual, leaving home for the city or leaving home to study overseas.

The man or woman of letters, just like the education s/he obtains, occupies an ambivalent position in Mungoshi's work. On the one hand, he or she is perceived as a hero or heroine for first, having "conquered" education and secondly, putting him/herself in a position where he /she can uplift the family economically. In going overseas to study, Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) is likened to a hunter who will bring home enough meat for all. Thus, the educated can be seen as a saviour. On the other hand, the hero can turn into an anti-hero for failing to honour what are perceived as familial obligations when the educated abdicates the responsibility of filial responsibility, largely conceived of as providing for the extended family and upholding certain beliefs and cultural practices. Depending on character and circumstance, the strain of the extended family – the financial and emotional drain, can overwhelm the educated. This last mentioned point will be explored later in this chapter.

Most analyses of the educated character in Zimbabwean literature (Kahari, 1980; Zimunya, 1982; Zhuwarara, 2001) tend to peremptorily condemn and pathologise the educated as suffering from colonial brainwashing. It is true that colonial education did carry some doses of colonial doctrine pernicious to the psychological development and outlook of the colonised. However, a condemnatory and dismissive approach keen to establish ideological certainties elides the characters' conflicted reactions to colonial education and what we can glean from these psychological conflicts and anxieties.

The hunger for education drives most of the plots in Mungoshi's works as well as the work of other Zimbabwean writers. Parents place a high premium on education and make numerous sacrifices in a relentless effort to get their children educated. Mungoshi's peculiarity in the portrayal of this theme is that he offers parents who are keen on the education of both female and male children whereas other writers such as Dangarembga in *Nervous Conditions* (1989) and Hove in *Bones* (1988) portray parents who prefer to educate over girls, boy children. These parents are guided by the idea that the primal

destination of girls is marriage to another family and hence educating girls is a bad investment if not a waste. VaChingweru, Monica's mother in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970) is ahead of her time in this respect. She gets into a pact with Mujubheki, the wealthiest man in the village, for the latter to sponsor her daughter's education because the family cannot afford to send Monica to school. According to the agreement, Mujubheki will be reimbursed from Monica's salary when she finishes her training as a nurse and starts working. Mujubheki takes advantage of the situation and instead of money, insists on having Monica as his wife, just before she finishes school.

Tongoona in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) sells ten head of cattle towards the education of his son, Lucifer and is left with only two. Musa's grandmother, Old Mandisa in "The Homecoming" (1997) has nothing to bequeath her grandson except a family narrative and formal education as seen through Old Mandisa's determination to send her grandson to school. In Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1989) Babamukuru adopts his nephew, Nhamo, with the prime objective of equipping the boy with a "good" education at the mission school where Babamukuru is headmaster so that Nhamo can uplift his "father's branch of the family" (87). Nhamo's sister, Tambu, even in early childhood, identifies education as a route to self-realisation and material emancipation. When her uncle, Babamukuru, overlooks her because of her sex and decides to sponsor her brother instead, and when her parents also fail to send her to school due to lack of school fees, she cultivates mealies that she sells to raise school fees. She shows a lot of tenacity as she also fights her brother when he steals her mealies to sabotage her quest for education.

Elsewhere in Africa, Achebe (1964) in *Arrow of God* gives us Ezeulu who by virtue of his position as the Chief Priest of Ulu is expected by most fellow villagers to resist formal education as a gesture of colonial resistance and cultural incursion. However, Ezeulu sends his first born son, Oduche, to school. Ezeulu comments, "My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the whiteman today will be saying *had we known* tomorrow" (62; original emphasis). One is also reminded of Azaro's mother in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1992:38) who encourages her son to work hard at school because "Only those who go to school can eat good food."

The hunger for formal certificated education and the need to excel during its acquisition is central in Zimbabwean literature and life, irrespective of the possible alienating effect of education. It would appear that the main drive is to obtain formal education first before examining its demerits. Of this situation, Dambudzo Marechera was once asked about how he had obtained a stunning mastery of English. He replied in his trademark tongue-in-cheek style: "I was a keen accomplice in my own mental colonisation" (Veit-Wild, 1998:7). Marechera was referring to the Zimbabwean hunger for formal education through the English medium and the thoroughness with which it was and continues to be pursued. Not surprisingly, whoever is perceived to be educated, in Shona, "*akadya ma 'b'"*, meaning he/she ate/swallowed letters. There is no image better than this intimate one of ingestion to portray the Zimbabweans' love of education through the English medium. Perhaps there is no sharper illustration of this veneration of education than the scene in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1989) where Jeremiah praises his brother, Babamukuru, when the former returns from England an educated man. Jeremiah's eulogy runs thus: "Our father and benefactor has returned appeased, having devoured English letters with a ferocious appetite! Did you think degrees were indigestible? If so, look at my brother. He has digested them" (36). This level of fanaticism regarding formal education is echoed by the late Ndabaningi Sithole, one of Zimbabwe's early nationalists who once reflected: "The study of European languages had roused such a keen interest in [black Zimbabweans] that at times it bordered on fanaticism. No [black Zimbabwean] considered himself modern unless he had mastered some European language" (1968:92).

Mungoshi's story, "The Mountain" (1972) foregrounds numerous education related themes. In the story, Nharo (meaning "stubbornness"), an "incipient Lucifer-like rebel," is, Zhuwarara (2001:34) continues, "a newly educated African who is keen to distance himself from his own people and traditions." Nharo, like his name suggests, pooh-poohs the existence of spirits of the mountain. His early childhood friend Chemai (meaning "cry" or "complain") is adamant that amongst other things, there is a place on the mountain where his father "met witches eating human bones, riding on their husbands" (Mungoshi, 1972:18). Nharo calls this "rot and superstition" although Chemai's fear rubs

off him. Nharo laughs at a black goat in the early hours of the morning and this goat follows the two boys, escapes from a church when they lock it in until Nharo realizes that the goat is a wronged spirit in need of appeasement. The two boys eventually go to Nharo's grandmother's hut for help. Nharo would not have visited his grandmother with her "lice-infested blankets that were coarse and warmly itchy and very uncomfortable" (20) had it not been for the goat following them and the fear that the goat would behave as if it were his wife. Very soon, the grandmother is "eating medicines" (21) and Nharo is sure that she will appease the spirit in the goat since "Somebody who knew was taking care of things at last" (21).

What emerges from this story is that Nharo's formal education has changed him to some extent with respect to how he relates to his local environment, people and perceptions or beliefs. One can argue, like Zhuwarara (2001:33) that,

> Being underlined by Nharo's attitude towards Chemai is the elitist and snobbish disposition that characterises most of those in Africa who have been exposed to formal western education as an aspect of modernity. Like Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* and Nhamo in *Nervous Conditions* (1989). Nharo feels that he is superior to his less educated brethren whom he thinks are still steeped in traditional beliefs and primitive practices that are backward and outdated.

But that is one possible and staple analysis. In Mungoshi's writing, nothing is as simple as it looks.

Mungoshi's characters, which include Nharo in "The Mountain" (1972), Nhamo in "The Setting Sun and the Rolling World" (1972) and Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) are different from Dangarembga's Nhamo in *Nervous Conditions* (1989). The common denominator amongst all these characters is that they receive formal English medium education. Their reactions to the same phenomenon differ. Gorle (1997:181) makes an insightful comment that

> …the effects of English schooling and acculturation [appear] in their diversity, since foreign influences will always be mediated to some degree by each person's

particular circumstances (especially gender and early childhood experiences), personality, and coping strategies.

Nhamo in *Nervous Conditions* (1989) wants to obliterate his past. He willfully undergoes linguistic amnesia by choosing to talk only in English and pretending to have forgotten his mother tongue, Shona. In short, Nhamo embarks on an exercise of *self-consciously* distancing himself from his poor family by undermining the very vehicle of communication and connection – language. He falls prey to the implied association between English medium education and urban advancement and between indigenous languages and rural backwardness.

Nhamo is virtually blind to his alienation – the very epitome of a brainwashed African adolescent in colonial Rhodesia. His peasant father encourages his son's linguistic alienation by talking to Nhamo in broken English. Nhamo's linguistic amnesia, is nothing but a performance for Tambu remembers that "When a significant issue did arise so that it was necessary to discuss matters in depth, Nhamo's Shona – grammar, vocabulary, accent and all – would miraculously return for the duration of the discussion, only to disappear again mysteriously once the issue was settled" (53). Nhamo shows no sign of guilt or any attempt to reconcile his uncertain grasp of western values and African ones. When he dies from mumps, his mother is not entirely wrong, at another level, that he died from the "Englishness" (202) that he picked up from his uncle's home at the Mission school. Nhamo is a stock character Dangarembga uses to poke fun at the shallowness of the so-called educated. In fact, he is reminiscent of the buffoonery of been-to characters in Zimbabwean television drama soon after independence on programmes such as *The Mukadota Family.*

Mungoshi's adolescent characters on the other hand, even as they start feeling estranged from home because of their education, are not blind to their alienation. They have clearly articulated doubts that manifest themselves as psychic burdens, and they mediate their being through the same language as the rest of the characters they interact with. Caught between two epistemic systems, the Western as symbolized by the school and the African, Nharo in "The Mountain" (1972) tests his acquired knowledge against the

indigenous one in a way that hardly smacks of snobbishness. His is a case of sheer adolescent bravado because he does not want Chemai to see that he is frightened of the dark and the spirits of the mountain. He admits to himself:

> You are not quite sure of where you are at night. You see too many things and all of them dark so you don't know what these things are, for they have no voice. They will neither move nor talk and so you are afraid. It is then you want someone older, like father, to take care of things for you. (16)

Much as Nharo's formal education privileges logical and rational thinking as captured in his utterance that "Nothing happens but fear in your head" (15), he has so much cultural baggage that no sooner has he spoken about the irrationality of fear than he is assailed by "the childhood fear of pointing at a grave lest your hand got cut off" (16). In the end he admits his dilemma between two contesting ideological positions and comments, "Of course the teachers said this [the fear of the night and belief in ancestral spirits] was all nonsense. I wished it were so easy to say so here as at school or in your heart as in your mouth" (16).

In his discussion of stories such as "The Mountain" (1972), Benson (1990:396) is worried about "unwelcome didacticism [that] sometimes intrudes in Mungoshi's stories." Even as tradition appears to be validated by the invincibility of the "goat in body but a human being in spirit" (Mungoshi, 1972:19), Mungoshi does subvert the idea of the ubiquity of the belief in ancestral spirits for he also writes that in the old village from which Nharo's grandmother has refused to move with the rest of the family, "those not stuck to old ancestral ways" had long left (19). The key issue is not so much didacticism or lack of it as the ambivalence shown by Mungoshi's adolescent characters; an ambivalence that captures some form of alienation or another and how Mungoshi uses alienation as illumination. Illumination is taken here, to mean that the alienation asks questions instead of providing neat answers and expands enquiry instead of narrowing it. The tensions inherent in the alienation-illumination tug are largely premised on the concept of home.

3.4 Escaping Home

Home is a very vexed notion in Mungoshi's work, more so in his English than Shona works and it is through the adolescent or young adult that this notion is dramatised. Home is a multidimensional concept and in Mungoshi's literary representations it is conflated with house(s) and family. Home is more than just a physical dwelling place or structure(s) for a family. It also denotes more than a place where one hails from; it signifies an interaction between place and social relationships. It further implies community and not an enclosed private space but an expression of social meaning and identities. The most important factor in the discursive construction of home is emotion, whether it be positive such as intimacy or negative, such as anger. Mallet (2004:83) gives a succinct summation of home as an "emotional environment, a culture, a geographical location, a political system, a historical time and place, a house etc. and a combination of all of the above."

Home for Mungoshi's characters, is a challenging physical and emotional space, from which the youth feel a dire need to escape. Yet home-leaving is one of the least theorised aspects of Mungoshi's writing. Tied to home-leaving are salient issues such as land alienation, deracination and intrafamilial conflict. Freedman (1989:A32) makes a useful observation that "Home for most of Mungoshi's characters is a land of subsistence farming and barren prospects." Generally, there is an ambiguous repulsion/attraction about home. For example, passengers going home in the same bus with Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) are bound and compelled by family ties to travel home from the city. Most feel a sense of both duty and belonging, a connection with home that at times brings feelings of excitement. But these feelings are soon subverted when they behold the physical landscape that is "home." Mungoshi writes, "those who have been singing all the way from Salisbury [modern day Harare] with the drunken excitement of going home seem to be regretting their having come at all" (39). The harsh reality of home is sobering. There is oppressive and enervating heat in an "empty scenery" (39) characterised by dust. Relatives who come to meet those alighting from the bus are "heat-drunk" (39). Objects referred to emphasise grinding poverty and the drudgery of rural life:

> Not until you cross Chambara River into the old village with roofless huts and gaping doorways and the smell of dog-shit and burnt rags are you at home. And then the signature of time truly appears in the work-scarred body of an abandoned oxcart with its shaft pointing an accusing finger at the empty heavens, and the inevitably thin dog – all ribs and the fur worn down to the sore skin – rummaging for something to eat among the ruins.
>
> Not until you look towards the east and see the tall sun-bleached rocks of Manyene Hills casting foreboding shadows over the land beyond like sentinels over some fairy-tale land of the dead, are you really at home. (40)

There is clearly a need to reconcile the psychic tension that home induces. In his poem, "If you don't stay bitter for too long" (1998) Mungoshi addresses this dilemma:

> If you don't stay bitter
> and angry for too long
> you might finally salvage
> something useful
> from the old country…. (6)

This extract helps bring out the love-hate relationship that Mungoshi's characters have in general with home.

Ambiguities about home engender two polarized attitudes. Whereas the adults or elders want the youth to stay at home, in the countryside, the youth want to leave for the city or overseas. This observation runs the risk of oversimplifying what in essence is a complicated situation because the rural home, barren and harsh as it is, still remains emotionally charged for both the young and old. There is an attachment that cannot be wished away even by those who feel an urgent need to escape home.

For the older generation, home is regarded as a haven, a source of refuge, personal and family security. In this case, home or the physical space on which the house(s) stand, becomes synonymous with family as Mallet (2004:73) observes that some scholars "suggest that the link between home and family is so strong that the terms are almost interchangeable." Old Musoni, Nhamo's father in "The Setting Sun and the Rolling

World" (1972) harps on this idea when he says to his son, "Nothing is more certain to hold you together than the land and a home, a family" (28).

Most analyses of home as a concept in Mungoshi's writing are quick to point out that Manyene is a crippling environment because it is a colonial construct and that the infertile land signifies land alienation and attendant problems. In *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), the "sudden transition from the rolling ranches of Hampshire Estates, with their tall dry grass and the fertile soil under that grass, into the scorched nothing-between-here-and-the-horizon white lands of Manyene Tribal Trust Land, with the inevitable tattered scarecrow waving a silent dirge in an empty field" (39), hints that Mungoshi's characters have settled in Manyene involuntarily. They are, as most critics correctly point out, victims of land dispossession following settler rule founded in 1890 and dismantled in 1980. The impact of this displacement had numerous overarching repercussions, some of which Mungoshi dramatizes in his work. Zhuwarara (2001) writes that,

> Removing the African from his land was tantamount to a severe disruption of the meaning and coherence which the ancestral lands had always provided. It also undermined the dialogue between him and tribal history, between one generation and its oral literature; in brief, the crucial dialogue between the African and his past, out of which he derived, was severely disrupted. (13)

To underscore the extent of disruption caused by land alienation, Stratton (1986:12) describes the land as a "powerful deity in its own right, the creator of life and the owner of everything that resides on its surface." While these views have currency, and are acknowledged, this study suggests a close analysis of the anxieties and family disruptions that are represented by Mungoshi in his writing by paying particular attention to his representation of adolescents and young adults.

Lucifer's poem about home bears quoting at length as it capsulates the contentious issues about home as understood by both Mungoshi's characters and critics of Zimbabwean literature:

> Home….
> Aftermath of an invisible war

A heap of dust and rubble
White immobile heat on the sweltering land
Home….
The sharp-nosed vulture
already smells carrion –
the ancient woman's skirts
give off an odour of trapped time
Home….
Return science to its owners
The witch demands a ransom for your soul
Your roots claim their rightful pound of clay
Home…?
Home sweet home?
muffled thuds of soft earth on dead wood
on the nailed
despair within
Home….
Eternal crick-crack of oxcart wheels against gravel
along the shortest road of the village
– a road that goes nowhere –
the Earth takes back its gift.

Commenting on this poem, Zimunya (1982) writes, "Anxiety about home brings out the poet in Lucifer. The poem itself depicts home as a decrepit and treacherous den concealing succubic horrors" (84). Zimunya (1982) grossly understates the meaning of the poem and its significance in the text as a whole.

The poem captures emotional tension about home by highlighting the harsh physical and psychological landscape. Lucifer is so disenchanted that he concludes, "Home is where you come back to die, having lived your life elsewhere" making home "the failure's junk/ heap" (162). In this respect, he shares a similar view with Nhamo in "The Setting Sun

and the Rolling World" (1972) who sees home as a "rubbish heap" where people "scrape for a living" (29).

Lucifer and Nhamo respond to the challenges of home by leaving. Escaping home is a common theme in Zimbabwean literature in English as typified by the first line in Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1986:1), "I got my things and left." This course of action is condemned by Zhuwarara (2001), especially with regard to Lucifer who wants to go overseas as the armed struggle for liberation is gathering momentum. Vambe (2004:63) echoes the same sentiment in opining that,

> the problem arises when Lucifer and those educated like him refuse to commit themselves to transform the poverty of home and country. By refusing to commit himself to work to transform the poverty of home and country, Lucifer is actually supporting the continued domination of his people by the settler system.

Vambe proposes that "As an educated and therefore enlightened individual [Lucifer] should have spearheaded the liberation of the country" (63). This change-facilitating criticism has its uses. However, it is an absolutist stance that prescribes what is politically correct at the expense of the psychological tension Mungoshi evinces around the idea of home and the decision to leave. It also skims on the surface of the text.

Lucifer and Nhamo perceive both family and home as oppressive and restrictive. The source of this disenchantment is largely the family and the land, the physical landscape, which exacerbates this emotional tension. On the contrary, Zimunya (1982:92) writes that "Mungoshi sees the family as an ideal mask, a cushion for individual worries. The horror of life is suddenly revealed to the individual as soon as the security of the family is removed." Nothing could be further from the truth. In Mungoshi's work danger, insecurity, fear, anger and depression are located in the family or home. Home can be a source of oppression and tyranny to a point that one does not think of home as a haven, forcing the youthful characters to either flee home or refuse to assume their allotted responsibilities. In other words, "Family has the capacity to inflict the deepest wounds precisely because it is where one looks for security and trust" (ten Kortenaar, 2007:44).

Education, as noted earlier, is one of the foremost causes of social estrangement in Mungoshi's works and the work of other Zimbabwean writers such as Dambudzo Marechera and Tsitsi Dangarembga. The acculturation that accompanies education brings into sharp focus concerns such as the value of formal education, familial ties, urbanization and above all, the meaning of home and home-leaving. Mungoshi complicates the role of formal education beyond the Manichean view that the formally educated are estranged from and rebellious against traditional culture whereas the non-formally educated are still steeped in their traditional culture. Mungoshi's approach is one of ambiguity, blurring the line between these two camps. Most analyses however, are predicated on intellectual cultural nationalist aesthetics and tend to be caustic towards and dismissive of the formally educated, giving rise to a unitary reading that emphasizes the importance of upholding one's "culture." Difference is acknowledged mostly in a condemnatory mode. There is a lack of self-reflexive theory in this regard. Mungoshi's work quizzes such binary oppositions by presenting a plethora of contradictions and ambiguities. His sensitive portrayal of the educated young man, through Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) suggests paying closer attention to the educated young characters beyond condemning or lampooning them.

Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) continues to generate a lot of critical interest so much that Chirere (2003:7) comments, "You can't speak of a Zimbabwean writing tradition without placing at its centre the classic *Waiting for the Rain*." Much as the novel is a mosaic of multiple viewpoints in which each major character dominates a certain chapter, Lucifer, the most educated of the Mandengus, is at the centre of the narrative. Veit-Wild (1993) underscores the centrality of the formally educated young man by writing that the novel has "hardly any plot. It observes the life of the Mandengu family over three days (two and a half to be exact). The major event during this period is that the son Lucifer comes home after two years of absence before going overseas for further education" (288). Lucifer's leave-taking and his perceptions of home problematize the very idea of what comprises home and family, just like Nhamo's in "The Setting Sun and the Rolling World" (1972).

3.5 Family Histories, Legacies and Feuds

Like most family novels, *Waiting for the Rain* (1972) is characterised by the pattern of births and deaths, legacies and betrayals. Lucifer, Zimunya (1982) charges, "rebels militantly against the African family" (64) because he has received a "supercilious western education" (82). Lucifer is aloof and very self-conscious. Stratton (1986), Zhuwarara (2001) and Culwick (2005) locate the cause of Lucifer's aloofness and skepticism in Lucifer's missionary school education. Lucifer is deeply dissatisfied with his parentage and home. He is skeptical not only of traditional cultural beliefs, but Christianity as well. This too, Stratton (1986:17) opines, is because "Lucifer's education has so estranged him from his cultural heritage that he is contemptuous of its values and indifferent toward those whom he sees as its relics."

Lucifer's spurning of responsibility to become the "Father of the family" (Mungoshi, 1975:15), his social disengagement, that he is leaving for overseas just as the war of liberation is gathering momentum, and the fact that he smashes the bottle of medicine that is supposed to protect him from evil spirits when he goes overseas, all contribute towards the view that he is a "social, cultural, political and spiritual renegade…who tramples upon the images of his traditional faith into the dust" (Zimunya, 1982:74-75). Stratton (1986:22) calls Lucifer a "lost soul" whereas Veit-Wild (1993:289) dubs him "the fallen angel anti-hero" and Zhuwarara (2001:50) labels Lucifer a "cultural renegade fallen from grace" and concludes that Lucifer "suffers from ideological and philosophical bankruptcy" (53). Lamming into Lucifer is so commonplace that Dube (2006:175) appositely comments that "Lucifer bashing has become second nature to many critics." There is a need to reappraise this inside-outside schema of analysis. There is a need to investigate such antipathy and suggest another more open and fruitful reading. If Lucifer is a renegade, what is he rebelling against? If he is an angel fallen from grace, what is that grace? There is a need to pay attention to finer aspects of the text instead of vilifying colonial education at the expense of examining how that education is processed by an individual.

Before Lucifer leaves for overseas to study art, Tongoona, his father, formally confers on Lucifer the title of "Father of the Family" (Mungoshi, 1975:15). This is in violation of traditional primogeniture which dictates that Tongoona should bestow this title and responsibility on Lucifer's elder brother, Garabha. Stratton (1986), Zhuwarara (2001) Culwick (2005) and Vambe (2004) pit Lucifer against his brother Garabha and his grandfather the Old Man. Garabha and the Old Man have no formal schooling and are at times projected as the epitome of an autochthonous Shona culture, present and past respectively. They are both seen by the critics mentioned above as embodiments of familial and national history, identity and aspirations. Garabha, the Old Man's eldest son, is the Old Man's disciple and tends to be read in the "son of the soil" mould – as one with nature and in touch with his cultural heritage. Garabha quits school very early, much to his father's disappointment and anger because Tongoona has a fervent belief in formal education as a panacea to the family's economic and spiritual problems. Garabha's dissent largely explains the strained relationship between father and son to the point of Tongoona denying Garabha his status as heir apparent.

Garabha is not only allergic to school, but to tea as well. According to Old Mandisa, tea, together with sugar and other "foreign luxuries" such as biscuits have brought "more harm than the spear" (26). If Garabha drinks tea, he vomits and this gesture is widely viewed as Garabha's refusal to ingest colonial signifiers. Zhuwarara (1986:2) calls it Garabha's "rejection of Westernisation." The Old Man, "a visionary…a Shona version of Achebe's Ezeulu" (Zimunya, 1982:69) is identified through the drum as is Garabha who is very adept at playing the drum, leading to possession by spirits. Zimunya comments that,

> The drum is a metaphor for the Old Man's faith in the old traditional values of Africa. It is at once a symbol of individual identity as well as the collective hieroglyph of his culture…. [The drum provides] a positively exuberant communion for the living with the dead. (1982:70)

One notices that the drum is pitted against the radio, or the "tin toy" (Mungoshi, 1975: 32) as the Old Man puts it. John, Lucifer's cousin who works in town, fairly educated

himself, brings Lucifer a radio as a farewell present, further emphasizing the difference between the formally educated and those that are not.

Thus, the master of the "drum culture" (Zimunya, 1982:69), the Old Man, sees Lucifer as an outsider as do several critics. The Old Man says Lucifer "is wrong somehow" largely due to his "keep-your-distance attitude" (110). The Old Man, a veteran of the First Chimurenga, the first anti-colonial war declares of Lucifer, "He is no longer ours," and to underscore what the Old Man perceives as a permanent rupture between Lucifer, his family and ancestral heritage, the Old Man uses the trope of the land and says Lucifer has "become something not the colour of this soil" (110). By invoking the land, which has "spiritual associations such as the fact that one's relatives are buried in it" (Bull-Christiansen, 2004:73), there can be no doubting the Old Man's earnestness here. The old man puts the blame on formal education, underlining his distrust and lack of regard for this process by disparagingly remarking, "Education, they call it" (110). Garabha finds it difficult to place a finger on what is wrong with his brother. "The trouble is that," Garabha opines, "he does nothing wrong. It's not anything in his hand, but in his heart" (110). Both grandfather and brother feel a disconnect with Lucifer. In Garabha's words, "It's as if he were inside an invisible wall and you can't get to him" (110).

A close analysis of the narrative in *Waiting for the Rain* (1972) reveals more contradictions than the certainties asserted or suggested above. According to family legend, Samambwa (meaning "the man of many dogs"), the great ancestor of the Mandengus, Lucifer's family, was a surly and aloof character throughout his life, spurning presents, human contact and making more enemies than friends. His true friends and relations were his dogs. Mungoshi writes, "He was a hunter and all he had were his dogs and nothing more: no family, no tribe, no law except the law of survival…. He had nothing at all but his wanderer's heart and his dogs" (Mungoshi, 1975:128-29). Samambwa rebuffed all efforts by various tribes who begged him to marry and settle among and lead them until he was tricked by a beautiful maiden to drink beer until he was helplessly drunk. He was then trussed and forced to marry the maiden who had given

him beer and to lead her people. Samambwa disappeared and drowned himself in a pool because he could not stand the feebleness of old age.

By shifting the space of the narrative to a primordial time in a book about genealogies, Mungoshi subverts opinions such as Lucifer's selfishness or the impact of formal education. For here is the founder of the clan, the quintessence of restlessness, of outsiderness even unto death. Zhuwarara (2001:61) on the other hand makes the observation that, "Paradoxically, Lucifer's rebellion against tradition is a paltry version of the great Samambwa." Samambwa's greatness over Lucifer, Zhuwarara continues, stems from the fact that the former "was a great hunter who broke away from the human family, traveled across desert plains, crossed great rivers" (61) and so on. If we are to follow Zimunya's (1982:4) idea that, "For the Mandengu family, the myth of Samambwa is similar to that of [the biblical] Adam", that "it is temporal and transcendental," then Zhuwarara is denying Lucifer his genealogical link. Zhuwarara (2001) chooses instead, to privilege Lucifer's link with another ancestor, Magaba, who following the trope of the wanderer as well, follows the lure of a strange bird and dies in a plain covered with human skulls and bones. Muchemwa comments on this strategy:

> …in texts contributing to the Zimbabwean nationalist narrative…there is an insistence on memory as a sacred set of absolute meanings, owned by a privileged group. When so considered, memory becomes a set of instruments used to expel the undeserving from the ancestral house. (2005:195)

To borrow from Appiah (1992), Lucifer is expelled from the "father's house." But Mungoshi problematizes this "house" to the point that its claim to authenticity and ideological purity is highly questionable, if not dismissible.

The Mandengu family is experiencing all kinds of trouble because apart from *ngozi*, brought upon the Mandengus by Old Mandisa, Lucifer's maternal grandmother, there is a wronged ancestor, Makiwa (white people), so called because he fled home to work for pioneer settlers in Gatooma (present day Kadoma). Makiwa is an angry and aggrieved ancestor, according to Matandangoma the diviner. This angry ancestor can only be appeased by bringing it back home. Thus, even errant spirits belonging to those who may

have appeared to betray the family, demand to belong to the family or they can bring untold harm to and disharmony in the family. Following this logic, it would appear that Lucifer, in spite of his differences with the family, is part of it in life and in death. The Old Man's skepticism over Matandangoma's divination – his suspicion that the diviner is prophesying doom so as to be paid more for her services, further questions Lucifer's status as a doomed figure in the family.

The family in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) emerges as one plagued by interminable quarrels, dogged by *ngozi* (avenging spirits) and mothers with exacting demands on sons and daughters. In fact, the atmosphere of suspicion and discord extends beyond the family and Muchemwa (2006:44) is apt to observe that the society depicted in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) is "mired in a web of mistrust and jealous rivals and vindictive witches, the ill-will and transgressions of relatives and the vengeance of unappeased ancestors." We observe that Kuruku's wife, Rhoda, Lucifer's aunt, is accused of having poisoned to death Lucifer's brother Tichafa (we will die), a long time ago. So when Rhoda brings Lucifer some rice and chicken so he can eat the food on his journey back to town, Lucifer is stopped from eating the food because Kuruku (Shona version for "Crook") and his wife are thought to be so jealous of Lucifer's education they would stop at nothing to spite Tongoona, Lucifer's father, by poisoning Lucifer to death. Curiously, Rhoda's rice and chicken is not thrown away but eaten by Raina, Old Mandisa and Japi. Such events make Lucifer feel "he is being used to widen the gap already existing between the two families" (Mungoshi, 1975:75)

Garabha, Lucifer's elder brother who is pro-tradition and a wanderer, feels the same way as Lucifer about the extended family feuds. These feuds also involve what are perceived to be jealous neighbours like Kutsvaka (the seeker). Malaba (1997:307) observes this when he writes, "Garabha the oldest is a rolling stone; at thirty, he does not know what he wants in life but is opposed to the climate of suspicion and mistrust that pervades the village." That is why Garabha is hardly at home, for in his words, he is "tired of the hate, superstitions, and the mentioning of names behind closed doors" (Mungoshi, 1975:133). Garabha's need to establish intimate relations with his immediate and wider family is

thus curtailed. The hatred, plots and counter-plots in the family make both Garabha and Lucifer fail to establish intimacy. It is largely the same reason Lucifer has stayed away from home for two years and not answered the letters written to him for these letters would indirectly ask him to believe the sources of the squabbles and bickering and to take sides. The atmosphere of hate also accounts for Lucifer's genuine fear of witchcraft "in spite of his knowledge of modern psychology which he [takes] to reading so avidly" (Mungoshi, 1975:52). At the same time, Lucifer understands the complexity of his situation as he thinks: "It's silly and childish of course [to believe in witchcraft but]…he can never seem to completely dig up and cut the roots that plant him in the earth of this dark arid country" (52).

Lucifer's reflection above speaks of his psychological links and ties with home, most of which, as already stated, he shares with Garabha. In fact, there are more similarities than differences between these two brothers but the main similarity is their shirking of familial responsibilities. Cultural nationalist arguments however, stress what they perceive to be differences between these two characters, privileging Garabha. Through these examples, one starts questioning conclusions that Lucifer, for example, is "one of a kind one comes across in Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1962), a black who emasculates himself by zealously struggling to acquire the culture of conquerors" (Zhuwarara, 2001:53) simply because Lucifer is critical of his parents, home and heritage. If anything, the narrative of Lucifer's ancestry is so ambiguous that it is not so easy to separate those who have been loyal to the family and those who have betrayed it – those who can be deemed insiders and those who can be regarded as outsiders with destructive intent.

What emerges from this section is that it is not exceedingly helpful to view characters as pro or anti-tradition and then taking sides with "tradition" for Mungoshi problematises the "traditional" as he does the modern. Garabha, the character that some critics (Stratton, 1986; Zhuwarara, 2001) feel should lead the Mandengu family because of his identification with his grandfather and the drum, does not want to be a patriarch and to perpetuate the Mandengu name. He is petrified by the idea of marriage. "Crippling, that's a wife and children" (Mungoshi, 1975: 85) he muses. Similarly, Tongoona's break with

tradition in naming Lucifer as head of the Mandengus is a creative solution given that financially, Lucifer can be in a position to uplift the family and this decision makes sense in the context of land dispossession. Much as there are admirable qualities about the Old Man, his largely binaristic and insular approach to life is not of much help to himself and to others. Lucifer on the other hand, worrisome as his ideas about home may be, his brutal honesty brings up for scrutiny some cherished but perhaps dated customs and thoughts.

3.6 Tough Masculinities and Young Adults' Search for Affectionate and Sensitive Fathers

> Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his *obi*, and he told them stories of the land – masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent, but still somehow he preferred the stories that his mother used to tell, and which she no doubt still told her younger children. (Achebe, 1958:37)

> Mr Rwafa talked of betrayals. He talked of traditional enemies of the people since time immemorial. Enemies of the state. Enemies of the clan, of the family. Looters and cattle thieves. Personal enemies. People who spat in the faces of their own people. Child thieves. Baby snatchers. He talked of his waking up to his mission. He talked without any shame of his personal prowess. His voice rose higher, hurt – terribly, terribly hurt – by effeminate, spineless sons of the family who marry into the families of their enemies, poisoning the pure blood of the Rwafa clan. Rondo looked at the children, six and five years old. He looked at their open-mouthed, wide-eyed innocence as the old man rambled on: "They need to be smoked out, flushed out, blasted out of their hiding places, the impostors!" (Mungoshi, 2003: 157-158)

While it requires no special acuteness to observe that stories are fundamental to one's sense of identity and to dealing with experience, the point can never be overemphasized. Stories offer guide posts for life. Through stories, fictional or real, people's identities – their beliefs, attitudes and values are created and maintained, needless to say the attitudes and values can be constructive or destructive. The two epigraphs above, the first from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and the other, from Charles Mungoshi's short story, "Sins of the Fathers" (2003) capture masculinist and martial narratives of two powerful fathers being passed on to their children and grandchildren.

Young men in Mungoshi's writing are haunted by the violence of their childhood perpetrated against them by male figures of authority such as fathers or elder brothers. Some young men are forced to rebel against the monarchical power of fathers. Through Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), the short stories "The Empty House" (1997) and "Sins of the Fathers" (2003), as well as the character Mazarura in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (*Is Silence Not Speech?*) (1983), Mungoshi explores the conflict between dissenting young adults and dominant powerful father figures intent on feminizing and punishing sons who disagree with them. The fathers validate their masculinity by dominating their sons and have a paternal omnipotence that makes them emerge as tyrannous fathers who judge and punish sons. In some instances the fathers are filled with contempt for their sons and treat the latter as a macho warrior would the vanquished – they attempt to or manage to have sex with their sons' wives. Sons who fail to abide by their fathers' dictates are menaced with feminisation or disinheritance or a combination of both. What is consistent in these cases is that the young men wish for affectionate and sensitive fathers.

Lucifer's aloofness for example, stems more from his harsh upbringing than the effects of his formal education. The uneasiness between Lucifer and his father is edifying. The son has an awkward relationship with his father owing to Tongoona's over-reliance on corporal punishment as a necessary part of inducing respect for authority. Even as Lucifer approaches adulthood, he regards his father as a punitive figure. As he alights from the bus to meet his father who has been waiting for him at the bus stop, Lucifer is "already confused between embarrassment and pity, resentment and guilt" (42) because his father has made a nuisance of himself by excitedly jumping in front of the bus before it could stop, shouting at the driver if he has Lucifer on board. When Tongoona asks Lucifer why he did not reply to his letters, "Lucifer doesn't answer. *His flesh crawls, getting ready for the first slap.* None comes. That the slap doesn't come comes as a surprise to Lucifer" (43; emphasis added). For the first time Tongoona attempts decent conversation with Lucifer, "in one of their rare relaxed moments" (43) but the son does not know "how to balance one kind word or deed against the hundred-and one scoldings and hidings that

were his normal fare from his father in those days" (76). Thus, even as Tongoona treats Lucifer as a grown up, attempting to joke with him even, the memory of his father's beatings, scorn and gruffness makes him either clumsy or unresponsive.

In a typical replay of the father-son relationship in the short story "Shadows on the Wall" (1972), discussed in the last chapter, Lucifer harbours both fear and resentment for his father. In fact, Lucifer is a complex grown-up version of the boy in the short story "Shadows on the Wall" (1972). Whereas the nameless boy narrator in the short story is alienated from his father only, Lucifer is alienated from both parents. He has learnt too well his father's lesson that gentleness equals psychological failure and that he must eschew everything associated with femininity. For that reason as well, mother and son have a cagey relationship. Lucifer asks his father why his mother is wary of him. Tongoona's response and Lucifer's thoughts in the following passage are instructive:

> "She thinks I am the reason why you don't want to talk to her. She says it's because *I* don't want you to talk to her. But I can't think of a single day I have ever said that." Lucifer suddenly looks at his father. He knows that what his mother says about his father is true. He remembers it since he was just a little boy: *He is a man, not a woman. Don't spoil him with these female softies.* And that's why his mother can only talk to him when there are other people about. (Mungoshi, 1975:75; original emphasis)

Tongoona, in the quotation above, continues to fumble for appropriate and effective expression of affect. On top of the violent upbringing of his son, he cannot confess that he has doubts, uncertainties and insecurities because he thinks admitting to these will tarnish his image as a father and by implication, his manhood. Lucifer's relationship with his mother becomes pitifully warped as captured in his mother's attempt to embrace him before he leaves for overseas: "Raina starts forward and in a sudden outburst of motherly passion grabs and clasps Lucifer to her breast. Lucifer quickly wrenches away from her and hurriedly enters the metal security of the car" (Mungoshi, 1975:179) although he would have preferred a kinder reaction to his mother's gesture of love. One is reminded of Sawyer's (2004:26) remark that where men "are not permitted to play freely or show affect, they are prevented from really coming in touch with their emotions."

Lucifer's damaged psyche should be attributed more to his upbringing than his formal education. This is elided in Zhuwarara's (2001:52) summation of Lucifer that "There is a pitilessness about him that stems from his self-centred, self-serving individualism that disturbs one." Mungoshi devotes a lot of time and space to exploring Lucifer's anxieties which do not point to selfishness. To his father's question whether he has been reading his books lately, Lucifer 'feels a cheat and he feels he has to confess" but he cannot because "that would be cruel to his father" who has a fetishistic worship of the act of reading books (43). Even as he is about to leave home, Lucifer demonstrates a lot of consideration for "He feels a stab of pain at his thoughtlessness, cruelty to want to go overseas, leaving [his parents] alone, without anyone to look after them" (44). Lucifer is keenly aware of the silent code of reciprocity – that in spite of his conflicted relationship with his parents, he is expected to take care of the very same parents he cannot relate to meaningfully plus the extended family as a whole.

Lucifer is also anguished, confused and overwhelmed by the idea that

> …he has become a man on his own, independent. The realisation is saddening for some strange reason to Lucifer, and the fact of his independence is almost frightening. He feels humble, weighed down with a responsibility he cannot understand. Somehow, the slap of his father's open palm now seems to him infinitely easier to bear than this responsibility of his independence.
>
> ….
>
> The weight of his responsibility is crushing him. Now he wishes his father would slap him, take away that weight and have it done with. But his father doesn't. The pain is unbearable. And Lucifer follows behind, dragging his feet under the weight of his independence, wishing his father would take it away. (44)

Lucifer's responsibility comes all too suddenly, is heavy for him and his father's clumsiness does not make matters any easier. Tongoona muses: "Why is it that whenever he wants to talk to the boy he has this strange feeling of taking a plunge into cold water? And why does he feel that the boy does not want him – his own father – to ask him questions?" (44).

Tongoona does not get any answers to his questions although when one looks at this situation, the most plausible answer is that Tongoona is, in his clumsy way, grappling with his loss of power and authority over Lucifer. He can no longer hit his son at will like he used to. He now, like the father in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972), has to rely on something that he has had very little use for – language or meaningful communication. This need comes when both fathers need to bond with their sons emotionally but find that their harsh parenting styles have created a chasm between them and their sons. Tongoona especially, has relied on the excessive use of corporal punishment to raise his children, resulting in what Giddens (1997:58) calls "parental toxicity," a situation in which parental upbringing and the resultant parent-child relationship is to the detriment of the child's psyche.

Tongoona's relationships with his other less educated children are just as strained as the one he has with the educated Lucifer. Malaba (2007:20) makes an incisive observation that "Tongoona is a victim of his own warped notion of male authority, which dismisses negotiation and sees compromise as a sign of weakness. As a result, he cannot communicate with his older children, Garabha, Lucifer and Betty." A parallel situation is found in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1981). Eric, a been-to, returns to Zimbabwe from England and decides not to stay with his elder brother but chooses instead, his half-brother, Paul. Eric's argument is that there is more space at Paul's house and that there is no congruence of views between him and his brother, Mazarura, who is a Christian zealot. Eric says,

> *Chandinoronga namudhara Mazarura chiiko iwe? Upenyu hwake nehwangu zvatosiyana sesadza nesamende. Zvese zvaanoita anotanga abvunza kuna mwari. (44)*
>
> What can I possibly share in common with old Mazarura. Our lives are now as radically different as *sadza*[1] and cement. He can't do anything before asking from God. (My own translation from Shona)

[1] A thick porridge made from maize-meal, Zimbabwe's staple food.

It is not precisely his brother's religiosity that Eric has a problem with, rather, the constant floggings Eric used to receive from his brother when he was growing up. Mazarura's religiosity is used by Eric as an excuse for the latter clearly remembers that,

> *Mukoma Mazarura aitanga asungirira mumwe wedu pamuti uya uri muyadi make ku Jerusalem, achiitira kuti mumwe wedu arege kutiza paanenge achirova mumwe.(74)*
>
> My brother Mazarura would first tie one of us [either Eric or Paul] to that tree that still stands in his yard in Jerusalem township so that the one tied to the tree would not run away whilst he thrashed the other. (My own translation from Shona)

Ruth, Mazarura's wife, in her search for answers why Eric shuns his brother's house, correctly suspects that it could be the frequent and savage beatings and scoldings that Eric received from Mazarura when the former was young. Thus, when authority is reversed, that is, when the educated stand in a position of prestige and authority conferred on them by their education and the possibility of highly paid jobs, the tables are turned. The erstwhile powerful figures who had relied on their authority as parents or guardians become powerless. The young adults on the other hand find it difficult to deal with their newly found authority, which is fraught with painful memories of ill treatment. Both parties realise the change in circumstances but do not know how to handle the situation successfully.

In the story "The Sins of the Fathers" (2003), Rondo (clay) spurns his father's version of militarized masculinity, tribalistic definition of the nation and racist motivation in seizing a white couple's farm during Zimbabwe's (in)famous "fast track" land redistribution programme. Rondo marries a woman from an "enemy" tribe and he and his wife have two daughters, much to Mr Rwafa's chagrin. Rondo further incurs the wrath of his father when he refuses to help his father to forcefully evict white farmers who have been family friends for a long time, off their farm. The Okonkwo-like father is a former Minister of Security who "seemed to have pursued his duties so zealously that he hadn't been able to distinguish Party from family. And people had suffered" (145). Thus, he is a domestic tyrant as well. He is very stern, austere and emotionally inexpressive except for anger.

The story dramatises a situation in which the father "elevates both patriarchal supremacy as the ideal political and familial value and adversarial physicality and toughness as the essence of masculinity" (Mosher and Tomkins, 1988:64).

The Okonkwo-Nwoye script, the acrimonious father-son relationship and eventual spurning of the father's narrative, replays itself in numerous Charles Mungoshi stories and finds its most potent expression in the story under consideration here. Rwafa, just like Okonkwo, thinks his son is not sufficiently masculine because he fears blood. Both patriarchs cannot stand any form of dissent, not even from their sons. Rwafa thinks that by virtue of being his son, Rondo (clay) as his name suggests, must be malleable or blindly acquiescent. One way Rwafa aims to achieve this is through striking terror in Rondo who develops a stammer each time he talks to his father, a gesture similar to Nwoye's turning into a "sad-faced youth" because of constant beatings from Okonkwo (Achebe, 1958:10). Rwafa's rough-shod approach to all relationships makes Rondo wish for a different father and "if he had to choose, he would pick out his father-in-law as his father" (148) for the former's accessibility and kindness. Similarly, if the same thought occurred to Nwoye, he would have chosen Obierika – the very epitome of moderation and reason.

Mr Rwafa thus represents excesses of intolerance and brutality whilst the son becomes an antagonist or a foil to his father's excesses. The father's ire as enshrined in his tribalistic narrative, betrays his part in which as the Minister of Security, he zealously spearheaded the systematic massacre of more than twenty thousand "innocent, unarmed civilians" in Matabeleland (Ncube, 2007:xi) during Gukurahundi. Mr Rwafa is so blinded by tribalism that he employs the same ploy of killing "enemies of the state" (157) on Rondo's father-in-law and Rondo's daughters who according to Mr Rwafa are useless because they are half-bloods and girls. Rwafa has a very narrow, exclusionary and dangerous definition of nation and family. His brand of nationalism is of the virulent sort, reminding one of Nagel's (2000:110) remark that "Nationalism is commonly viewed as a particular kind of ethnically based social identity or mobilization generally involving claims to statehood or political autonomy, and most often rooted in assertions of cultural distinctiveness, a

unique history, and ethnic or racial purity." Rwafa symbolises the exercise of power in its most naked forms and hypermasculinity at its most extreme. He becomes hypermasculine in ideology and action. When Rondo discovers that his children died in a "typical Second Street accident" (Mungoshi, 1997:147) engineered by his father to eliminate his political opponents, he ceases to be a cowed and repressed son and decides to confront his father. Rondo decides not to be malleable any more or to be part of a warped nationalist narrative he eschews. He makes it clear that his murderous father's mission is not his, especially when he discovers that it is his own father who has killed his family. Thus, compared to Lucifer who appears willing to forgive his father, Rondo will not and cannot.

In "The Empty House" (1997), Gwizo, the only son of Mark Maneto, a successful businessman drops out of school to pursue painting much to his father's disappointment and anger. Maneto views painting as an irresponsible, nonproductive and effeminate undertaking. In fact, he spits on it as a "foreign thing, a disease, something you didn't want to be associated with. It was like syphilis or some mental aberration" (83). Gwizo commits what his father regards as further treachery – marrying a white woman against his father's disapproval of the union. Maneto publicly disowns his son and stays away from the wedding because amongst other things, "Just the thought of the potential colour of his grandchildren gave Gwizo's father a heartburn" (89). Agatha, Gwizo's wife, markets Gwizo's art so successfully that he becomes rich and famous. But he becomes abusive towards his wife, turns alcoholic and the relationship suffers further because try as much as they want to have a child, the two remain childless and drift further apart. To prove his manhood, that he is indeed "*bhuru rokwa* Nyashanu" (the bull of the Nyashanu kraal) and to feminize his errant son, Maneto impregnates Agatha. It becomes the old man's "warrior-contempt" over his effeminate son and "disciplines" him through the spoliation of his son's wife.

In *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (*Is Silence Not Speech?*) (1983) Mazarura's father attempts several times to rape his son's wife after Mazarura, whom his father has always regarded as effeminate, defies his father and decides to go to town to find a job. To

"punish" his son, the father attempts to feminize him by having sex with the son's wife. Mazarura decides to leave home and not return. Gwizo however, has no answer to his father's perverted domination of him. At this point, the thesis will turn to mothers, to show that they too have a hold over their sons from which the latter attempt to escape.

3.7 Demanding and Dangerous Mothers

Whilst fathers use force in an attempt to mould or coerce their sons, mothers rely on subtle means such as the threat of *ngozi* (avenging spirits), against which sons express discontent. The ominous threat of *ngozi*, is linked to the exacting influence of mothers. Tongoona, Lucifer's father, warns his son to appease his mother whilst she is still alive. She must not die angry with him because she will come back as an avenging spirit and "there won't be any laughing then" (Mungoshi, 1975:159). According to Shona cultural beliefs, as Tongoona explains, "a wife – still belongs to her own parents and family even after she is married or dead, and if you wrong her, it is the whole family you have wronged. And it is her family – the dead fathers – who want wrong made right" (159). Thus, mothers are perpetual outsiders but their spirit is the strongest and is controlled elsewhere, by her people, her fathers to be precise. That is why some mothers in Mungoshi's writing are so demanding and manipulative that they haunt their sons.

We see this maternal over-involvement with sons in the poem "Letter to a Son" (Mungoshi, 1998) in which the mother starts her letter placidly, talking of abundance in the fields as seen through, "Now the pumpkin is ripe" and "cows are giving... lots of milk" before she starts enumerating a chain of problems at home. The son is overwhelmed. Tambu (trouble/sorrow), reads, "Your father's back is back again" (22) and all the work has fallen on the mother's shoulders. This poem echoes Tongoona's back problem in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) and is also reminiscent of Zakeo's father's broken back. The trope of men's physical disabilities, especially broken backs, is explored in detail in Chapter Five.

The mother in the poem "Letter to a Son" (Mungoshi, 1998) continues and says the father's problematic back is not the real problem she is writing to her son. It is Tambu's

sister, Rindai (wait) who has not been going to school because of a lack of school fees owing to the father's persistent illness. Rindai "spends most of her time crying by the well" (22). The son has not replied to the mother's letters written earlier and she asks if he saw them and reminds him that he has been away from home for a long time. The mother says she is not asking for money "although we had to borrow a little from/those who have got it to get your father to hospital-/ and you know how he hates having to borrow!" (23). This is a case of emotional blackmail in which the mother appeals to the son's sense of gratitude and reciprocity, to take care of his parents and their problems. Gunduza (2006: 242) writes, "No doubt as soon as the son [Tambu] finishes reading this letter he will do something urgently." Given that the son has not responded positively to his mother's requests in the past, it is most unlikely that he will this time. To understand the son's silent protest, we need a brief look at the short story "Coming of the Dry Season" (Mungoshi, 1972).

In this story, Moab Gwati finds work in the city after his mother has burnt so many roots and charms so he can get employed. Like a dutiful son, Moab reciprocates by giving a large part of his first salary to his mother but she keeps asking for more money and more of his company at home, in the countryside. His mother's voice, which "asked for more than he could give" (45) always rings in his head:

> He would hear over and over the small mousy voice that was a protest: "Zindoga [the only one] remember where you come from." A warning, a remonstrance, a curse and an epitaph. With it, he could never have a good time in peace. Guilt, frustration and fury ate at his nerves (45).

If this does not speak of emotional blackmail, then the following clearly does:

> She had said once, when he had let her come to the city, "Couldn't you find work somewhere near me? You know it won't be long and you are my first born *you must know all that you must do for me – for your own good – before I am gone.* When I am gone you won't ever set anything right by yourself. (45-46; emphasis added)

The sentiments expressed through Moab's thoughts and actions mirror Lucifer's who senses that his parents' love is stultifying because they "want something from him,

something that he doesn't know how to give" (Mungoshi, 1975:72) and this applies more to his mother than father. In Moab's case, one is more than tempted to think that the mother is wielding the cultural knowledge of a dead mother's curse to her advantage and what should be reciprocity is being turned into exploitation.

When Moab gets a message that his mother is seriously ill at home, he goes into a drinking spree and spends the weekend with a prostitute. When he gets news of his mother's death, he is broke. Zimunya (1982) and Zhuwarara (2001) blame the city, poor pay for Africans during colonialism and the consequent frustration manifesting itself as dissipation and debauchery. Partly true as some of these claims are, these two scholars are oblivious to Moab's protest against a manipulative mother, in the same fashion as the son in "Letter to a Son" (1998). Moab throws out the prostitute he had picked up for the weekend when she comes back during the week because "She was talking like his mother, suffering" (48). One is immediately reminded of Garabha, Lucifer's brother in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) who tells his mother to stop suffering for him, concluding that "She looked like all mothers anywhere: harsh and spiteful, overworried about their children – smothering them with what they call love, always taking out on their children what they receive from their husbands" (105). Similarly, when Moab eventually gets to cry, "He cried for something that was not the death of his mother" (49). It is the mother who is "seen as a haunting, oppressive, demanding, unreasonable ununderstanding and blackmailing exploiter – a representative of an oppressive and exploiting family tradition" (Zimunya, 1982:64) that the youth in Mungoshi's writing also rebel against. But the rebellion comes at a psychological cost. The young men are aware of the tug between the psychological debt of gratitude and the exploitative nature of mothers. Moab's story is also reminiscent of Moyo, the narrator in "The Victim" (Mungoshi, 1980) who attempts to escape his parents when he expresses relief: "Now my parents were over three hundred miles away, a distance I had deliberately calculated to put between us" (115).

3.8 Conclusion

It should be apparent by now that this thesis is structured from a life-course perspective in which adolescence and young adulthood are pivotal. This symbolically marked length of time or life stage, as pointed out, does exist among the Shona and is largely perceived as a rehearsal for adulthood and hence the salience of issues such as family histories, legacies and feuds. Home becomes central as it firmly places the adolescents and young men in families but simultaneously induces the contradictory impulse to escape, hence Mungoshi's portrayal of adolescents' conflicted characters in search of self and firm establishments. Shame, guilt and confusion abound in the stories Mungoshi scripts about adolescents and young men.

The main issues that Mungoshi explores in this life stage therefore, include familial relations, peers, school and work. The importance of achievement and a need for autonomy are both played out as a continuation of the macho script that boys in the previous chapter attempt to learn. Lyn Talbot in "A Need for Shelter" (1972) represents a white and privileged young man who nonetheless validates himself through militaristic language just as Julius, a poor and dispossessed boy does in "The Hero" (1972). Significantly, both young men are in search of heroes and their ideas of heroism are founded on masculine ideas of conquest. This is not surprising when one notices the dominance of hypermasculinity in the fathers portrayed in this chapter. Alpha male parents expect complete submission to paternal authority from their sons and punish the latter if they do not submit to authority. In spite of their rebellion, most of the sons in this category do not win against their fathers although their discontent is clearly registered.

Formal education however, complicates the simple binaries of gender and masculinity. Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), is regarded as effeminate by his brother Garabha in the same way that VaNhanga in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983) regards her degreed been-to son as lacking quintessential aspects of masculinity. Ironically, Lucifer is made "Father of the Family by his father, Tongoona and Eric is preferred by Lorna over her husband, Paul.

The chapter also discusses how formal education, well sought after, creates rifts in the family structured along lines of "class." This largely results in profound dissatisfaction with home and what it stands for. At the same time, as adolescents and young men attempt or break away from traditional commensality and its values they clash with parents who want continuity in values and norms. Thus, the questioning of some of these enduring mores and beliefs operates as both alienation with regard to the ideological distance between the educated and the non educated, and as illumination in questioning mores and beliefs, suggesting that some of these could be discarded or re-examined. One of these beliefs is *ngozi,* which mothers yield to their selfish advantage.

The family emerges as a site for an individual's initial sense of self through interaction with parents and significant others. The inevitable conflict between parents and adolescents/ young men is traced an acknowledged. A suggestion is made and followed, that instead of an over reliance on the debilitating effects of colonialism to examine such conflicts and conflicted personalities, a critique of internal family dynamics yields new interpretations.

Chapter 4

Of Daughters, Wives, Mothers, and Female Patriarchs

4.0 Introduction

The foregoing chapters have revealed that Mungoshi's unwavering interest in the family sees him focus on those relations that disguise what are essentially power relations. He portrays the family as the site of strained intimacies, and his sympathies lie with the underdog, typified in the last two chapters by children, adolescents and young adults. Mungoshi depicts the underdog not as helpless but fighting. In that fight, the underdog destabilizes some "certainties" about interpersonal affect and about society in general. Mungoshi's sensitivities and concerns extend to the plight of women. Although he does not directly and fervently support women's rights and causes, he has produced some of the most searching work in this regard. Through his exploration of the ideologies of femininity and the preeminence of the sexualized female body in social and cultural interaction, Mungoshi further questions ideas of intimate social attachments.

One of the most noticeable aspects of Mungoshi's oeuvre in both Shona and English is that he explores a significant number of female-focused narratives, portraying a wide range of women characters. Through this strategy, Mungoshi signals his view, and a crucial one too, that women are not a unitary entity but rather individuals whose subjectivity is not stable, consistent or unambiguous. That is why in his work, women are not put into any allegorical scheme or frame. He depicts women of diverse ages, social stations and temperaments. The experiences of these women are played out in multiple ways and locations corresponding to the uneven consciousness of these characters and their relations with others, showing that women have both shared as well as unique experiences. This is propitious for this research for it goes a long way in accommodating the complexity of women or woman who, in the words of Vidrovitch (1997:1), "is also a peasant or a city dweller, intellectual or working class, overburdened and overworked mother, independent, single, or divorced. And these life circumstances are experienced differently by women in Africa than in the West." Likewise, Mungoshi's women

characters are not a unitary category and thus he does not treat women characters through the "Mother Africa trope" (Stratton, 1990:117) or as having a unitary identity embedded in their femaleness. This capter then, in focusing on female voices of discontent, stresses more, the difference and diversity amongst women than simuilarity. The diversity of female characters in Mungoshi's work is reflected by some of the subheadings that inform this chapter: "Maidens with a Mark," "Marriage, Wifehood and Motherhood," Ambitious Wives and Mothers," "Disaffected Wives" and so on.

Each of Mungoshi's women characters is multidimensional, at times embodying contradictory representations. Thus their expenditure of emotion on others is also conflicted – both nurturing and harmful. In short, Mungoshi has a vast and colourful tableau of female figures. Indefatigable and dedicated mothers, for example, want the best for their children but may use unorthodox or morally questionable ways to achieve this. What is crucial to note is that first, Mungoshi allots women characters sizeable textual space, and in some of his work, such as *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983), significantly more space than that allotted male characters. Second, the portrayal of women characters is not static. It shows an incremental construction of their subjectivity and a change in female self-image is clearly discernible over time and generations. Third, women do not, overall, emerge as docile and pitifully ancillary to men. As such, one of the aims of this chapter is to investigate how much Mungoshi privileges the female voice and the implications for this privileging.

One of the devices that Mungoshi uses to signal his intention of giving female characters sizeable textual space is the use of character's names as headings in the two Shona novels *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) and *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983). In the former novel, there are two female voices under the chapters "Rindai" (the wife and mother's name) and Rangarirai (the daughter). The father and husband has one chapter named after him, "Rex Mbare." The last chapter, "*Nhuma Yomuonekedzano*" means conclusion. In *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983), Mungoshi increases the ratio of female to male voices. The chapters "Vanhanga" (mother, wife and mother-in law), "Sharon" (daughter, sister), "Martha" (fiancé, single mother), "Ruth" (wife, mother, daughter-in-

law), “Lorna” (wife, daughter-in-law) indicates a presence of five women voices versus one male voice, “Shaky.”

Some of the women characters that Mungoshi depicts relate to men in specifiable and predictable ways but for the most part, they do not. In all these scenarios however, Mungoshi does not portray womanliness as meekness and docility in the cramped confines of a hostile patriarchal space. Women, irrespective of their levels of formal education, relate to men in challenging ways that suggest the redefinition of woman, which by extension, becomes the redefinition of man. This chapter then, also challenges the ubiquity of male power and privilege. Mungoshi seems to suggest that the process of everyday living between the sexes is a process of gender boubdary negotiation, an idea that also informs the next chapter.

While recognising that macroinstitutional forces such as colonialism, especially through its three most influential arms of Christianity, formal education and wage labour re-ordered African societies, including gender, this chapter focuses sharply on the microinstitution of the family which remains undertheorised in the criticism of Zimbabwean literature. This is aimed at unraveling inherent, long term and persistent tensions in the Shona family pertaining to gender and filial relationships as portrayed in Mungoshi. The chapter grapples with specifics regarding the character and quality of gender and filial relationships in Mungoshi’s work, and in the process unravels immediate contextual variables that create, sustain and subvert lived gender knowledges. As Nnaemeka (1997:117) points out, “The issue of specificity is extremely important because criticism of African literature has the tendency to naturalize, ‘normativise’ and generalise the behaviours, inclinations and actions of characters in the literary works.”

4.1 Images of Women in African and Zimbabwean literature

Before discussing in detail Mungoshi’s representation of women characters, there is a need to briefly outline the common images of women in African literature generally and Zimbabwean literature in particular.

In the influential book, *Ngambika: Studies of African Women in African Literature* (1986), Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves put together eighteen articles that critique the male perspective in the criticism of African literature as well as images of African women by both male and female authors. The aim of the book, as Graves (1986: ix) puts it, is "to correct the faulty vision through which the African woman in literature has been seen." Apart from accounting for the marginalisation of women's issues and voices in the writing and criticism of African literature, the book exposes and castigates stereotypical representations of women. The stereotypical images include women as mothers, wives, mistresses, prostitutes and so on, presented in a non-complicated manner and in subservient roles. Such representations, most of the contributors in this text opine, are negative images. Most of the authors suggest, directly or obliquely, the need for positive images. On this issue, Davies (1986) observes:

> A positive image, then, is one that is in tune with African historical realities and does not stereotype or limit women into postures of dependence or submergence. Instead it searches for more accurate portrayals and ones which suggest the possibility of transcendence. Writers like Ngugi wa Thiongo and Ousmane Sembene have demonsrated this possibility in their creations of characters like Waaringa and N'Deye Touti. Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, Mariama Ba, Buchi Emecheta and other women writers have worked to provide truthful assessments of women's lives, the positive and negative and to demonstrate the specific choices that women must often make. (15)

Three key issues emerge from this quote. First, that the creation of "positive" female images can be done by both male and female authors, hence implying as well that both male and female writers can create "negative" images of women. Second, the observation by Davies about "truthful assessments" that take into account both "positive" and "negative" images suggests that there may not be a clear line between positive and negative images of women. Thus, the third issue emerges from this last mentioned point – critics are bound to disagree on what constitutes a positive or negative image of women. This further suggests that these two polar terms may not be that helpful in discussing the portrayal of women.

In her perceptive paper, " 'Periodic Embodi-ments' : a Ubiquitous Trope in African Men's Writing" (1990), Florence Stratton dismisses the claims made by Davies (1986) that writers like Ousmane Sembene and Ngugi Wa Thiongo present "positive" images of women. Instead, Stratton (1990) argues that these two male writers, together with others, in their efforts to create liberated women create, instead, stereotypes that entrench the exploitation of the female body for patriarchal gains. Stratton argues that through the embodiment of Africa… in the figure of a woman," (112) even those male authored texts credited with portraying "positive" images of women are guilty of "textual sexploitation" (124) in which the woman's body functions as an "emblem of male potency or power," resulting in what is supposed to be a woman's story being a man's story (123). Stratton argues that this happens through two means. The first she calls "the pot of culture" strand which "analogizes woman to traditional values or a bygone culture" (112). The second is "the sweep of history strand" which treats woman "as an index of the changing state of the nation" (112). The overall result of this trope, Stratton ably demonstrates, is that it "operates against the interests of women, excluding them, implicitly if not explicitly, from authorship and citizenship" (112) since inscribed in this trope is the perpetuation of women's subordination in patriarchal cultures. In other words, it is not enough to transform women characters from spectators to actors if their actions are framed or proscribed in a manner that turns women into exploitable symbols for the benefit of, for example, a deeply patriarchal nationhood.

Thus, Stratton (1990) in the article above reveals how even those authors lauded by some African feminists for creating "positive" images of women are in fact doing the opposite because women are denied individual agency and function instead as vehicles for ideas, and sometimes are cast as ideal mothers or prostitutes or a conflation of both in a "sexual/political allegory" (123). Similarly, Mohanty (1988) raises a crucial point that Third World Women tend to be considered (by Western feminists) in relation to the effects of certain social institutions and systems and thereby constructing a singular "Third World Woman" (67). Mohanty's (1988) point also applies to certain criticisms of African literature that tend to talk about "the African woman," (the very same language

Graves (1986) uses in the quote above) and in the process essentialising what in essence are women in different geographical settings with disparate cultures, different classes, persuasions and dreams. This point is useful in this chapter as it warns that just as there is no "African woman," there is no singular "Shona woman" in the works of Charles Mungoshi.

The foregoing discussion leads to the presentation of questions that will guide this chapter. They include: (1).What are the dominant images of women in Zimbabwean literature with regard to diverse familial relations? (2). In what sense are these images similar to or different from the ones that Mungoshi evinces in his work? (3). In particular, how do women express their agency and subjectivities in different familial relations? (4). What forms of power are available to both men and women in towns and in the country side? (5). What is Mungoshi's overall statement about gender relations and what does it add to our understanding of Zimbabwean literature in particular and African literature in general?

In *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature* (1985), Gaidzanwa observes that in Zimbabwean literature in English and the two most popular vernaculars, Shona and Ndebele, "Women are depicted as mothers, wives, divorcees, widows, single, jilted and prostitute women" (11). She arrives at the conclusion that overall, Zimbabwean literature abounds with "negative" images of women although there are some "positive" ones, a similar premise arrived at by the editors of *Ngambika: Studies of African Women in African Literature* (1986). Gaidzanwa (1985) further comments that "The works in English depart from the main body of Shona and Ndebele literature in that they are not heavily moralistic, condemning and punitive of female behaviour that deviates from the norm" (7). However, Gaidzanwa's deployment of the labels "positive" and "negative" is simplistic given that some of the representations she labels stereotypical and hence negative do not fit these latter two descriptions. For example, she regards as negatively portrayed Mrs Pfende in Mungoshi's story, "The Day the Bread Van Didn't Come" (1980), because she is harsh in her treatment of her husband. Gaidzanwa (1985) does not

explore how and why that is the case and this approach typifies her treatment of just about every woman character she discusses.

There are several other images of women in Zimbabwean literature, some identified by Gaidzanwa (1985) and some not. They include the diligent and patient rural wife; wicked city woman, invariably found in bars or shebeens; unfaithful wives, young and brilliant school girls whose academic careers and future prospects are cut short by pregnancy and/or marriage; young and ambitious career women, as well as young girls offered as sacrifice to appease *ngozi* (wronged spirits) or offered as "wives" to old men. Mungoshi depicts some of these categories of women in both his English and Shona works in a manner more complex than most Zimbabwean writers do.

Through his depiction of shifting gender images and ideologies, Mungoshi suggests an institutional weakening of patriarchy as men lose control of their bodies, property, space and culture, largely through the trope of physical disability and the proletarianisation of women. Above all, in his portrayal of both male and female characters, Mungoshi suggests that character traits are not as gender-specific as they are crudely made to seem at times, and that female aspirations are not limited to sexual roles. In this regard, Armstrong (2000:8) aptly notes that "gender explanations…have limitations, because not all men and women respond in the same way to gender socialization" and the corollary is that, "Some women are 'submissive' because of gendered socialization, others are so by nature, while others are rebellious regardless of socialization."

Adept at irony, Mungoshi offers no clear liberationist message for women characters. By portraying conflicted intimacies between men and women, Mungoshi suggests redefinitions of masculinity and femininity as seen in Chapter Two for example, through the discussion of the "feminisation" of the male characters Joe and Rondo in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) and the short story "Sins of the Fathers" (2003) respectively. What is incontestable in this chapter is the discontent of female characters in their spousal, filial and other capacities and how they embrace changing strategies to further their interests as women largely at individual and to some extent, collective level. In his

depiction of female characters as single women, single mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, paternal aunts and mother-in-laws, Mungoshi dramatises the contestations between women in their social capacities and whatever obstacle stands in the way of their needs and wants. Although structurally subordinated in patriarchal settings, the women characters show agency guided by their needs and self-conceptualization.

Both men and women do not outrightly repudiate the other. For women who express discontent about their relations with men, the line between resistance against and accommodation to patriarchy is difficult to draw. Women's resistance in this context is subtle and does not take the form of a crusade or consciously controlled action. Violence is a key aspect in male-female relations in Mungoshi's work. Men and women inflict different kinds of violence on each other in a manner that suggests victims are equally agents and those perceived as oppressors can simultaneously be victims. It would appear that Mungoshi's argument is that violence is not a male but human problem.

Maidenhood, childlessness, motherhood and marriage are useful categories that will frame this chapter. Before one explores these categories, it is imperative to give a socio-historical background of women in Shona society pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe, given that relations between men and women are mediated, amongst other factors, by history, culture and morality.

4.2 Gender (In) equality through History

It is crucial to understand macroinstitutional forces that have shaped and continue to shape gender relations in Zimbabwe. Such forces include colonialism, for example. Literary commentary abounds in this area (Gaidzanwa, 1985; Veit-Wild, 1993; Zhuwarara, 2001). These forces undergird the gender relationships that Mungoshi evinces in his works, set both in pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe. What is lacking is criticism that pays attention to immediate contextual variables that create gender in daily life, such as "tradition" or the discourse on tradition that may or may not lead to the internalization of common gender roles as stable personality traits. Mungoshi's writing invites critics to acknowledge the macroinstitutional forces behind gender relations but

most importantly, to critique gender-role socialization at a familial level. For that reason, this section of the research will offer an overview of those macroinstitutional forces that have shaped gender relations in Zimbabwe before moving on to analyse the microinstitution of the family, or how interpersonal relationships are affected by macroinstitutional forces.

It is widely believed that much as pre-colonial Shona society was patriarchal, women had a limited set of rights and a degree of autonomy (Kahari, 1990; Furusa 2006). In other words, women were no mere chattel under pre-colonial patriarchy and it is possible that there were some women who were powerful in their individual capacities either in their families or wider society. In any case, Appiah (1993:184) warns against hackneyed views of women under patriarchy: "Never assume that individual women cannot gain power under patriarchy" and by the same token, "Never confuse matrilineal society with a society where women are in public control."

The rights referred to above (Kahari, 1990; Furusa 2006) included the ownership of livestock which accrued from the payment of *roora* through *mombe yeumai* (mother's cow). Such livestock would belong to the married woman and if she died, to her maternal relations. Another right was the disposal of crops or income from crops as women saw fit. Women also had the right to refuse marriage upon widowhood (Moss, 2002). Magosvongwe (2006) argues that the idea of pre-colonial patriarchal villainy was part of the grammar of "civilizing" Africans, or saving them from self-destruction, a cornerstone pretext for the brutalities of colonialism. Magosvongwe (2006) and Mguni (2006) stress the complementarity of sexes in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, insisting that the view of Shona or African women as carnal chattels, downtrodden slaves and beasts of burden was that of colonialists, ill-informed anthropologists and missionaries. Much as that may be true, too much emphasis on the complementarity of the sexes tends to occlude contestation between them.

Most scholars of Zimbabwean literature and history also concur that colonialism reshaped gender amongst Africans by entrenching female subordination (Schmidt, 1992; Zhuwarara, 2001; Moss, 2002; Matshakayile-Ndlovu, 2006). According to the scholars

just cited above, female subordination was enhanced by land alienation through the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 which saw many families removed from fertile to barren areas. The land could no longer yield substantial food to feed families. Then followed proletarianisation and further colonial legislation. However, that colonialism worsened the position of African women should be accepted with caution for one notices that formal education, a strong arm of the colonial enterprise, had some liberating effect on women who received it. Similarly, Morrel (1998:629) observes that "Colonial rule undermined indigenous authority structures, giving African women greater freedom over their sexuality and mobility."

Jobs in the cities were created with men in mind and this gave rise to a situation in which most women were left in the rural areas tilling land that yielded very little while men migrated to cities for wage employment. Thus, as wage earners pitted against rural women who could hardly realise any surplus from their agriculture, men became breadwinners and hence financially and more socially privileged. Capitalist development led to the control of women's mobility, as well as legally barring them from wage employment. Matshakayile-Ndlovu writes,

> …colonial government policy on urbanisation regarded urban areas as permanent residential areas for white settlers, and temporary homes for black male workers who were expected to return to their rural areas when they were on leave, out of employment or after retirement. Black females were expected to visit urban areas only at the invitation of their husbands who would do so after obtaining a permit from the city authorities. This is supported by the existence of such townships as Makokoba in Bulawayo, which were built as single rooms to house working males. (139)

Thus, much as blacks were generally denied civil liberties, it was worse for women specifically. Their position was further compromised by rapid urbanisation. The city, largely through a black male perspective, began to be seen as a den of inequity to which no properly brought up and self-respecting woman would go. There was huge parental pressure to bar or discourage girls from going to town, a men's place where girls or women would fall into the trap of beer drinking and prostitution (Barnes, 1999). Thus,

women's urbanisation carried a strong moral stigma which is explored at length in the last section of this Chapter, "Single Women in the City" and in Chapter Six, "Lone Parenting." To make matters worse, all the jobs, including the care of white children and cooking, were largely done by men (Furusa, 2006).

The colonial government in Zimbabwe also erected a dual legal system comprising General and Customary Law. General Law was based on Roman-Dutch common law whereas Customary Law saw black women "legally constructed as perpetual minors under the guardianship of men" (Ballard-Reisch, Turner and Sarratea, 2001: 69). These three scholars add that this law gave men rights to property and children upon divorce. They add,

> Further, land consolidation and settlement policies gave title deeds to men as heads of households even when they were absent from the farm….With this policy men now had legal rights to the proceeds of the land, including the products of women's labour, which women had traditionally controlled. Additionally, the introduction of cash cropping and a wage economy during colonialism further enhanced men's status and prestige. Changes such as these diminished the value ascribed to women's work, even though women often worked continuously and for more hours than men. (69)

Thus, women's self-reliance was further undermined by this piece of legislation which was the colonialist's warped interpretation and codification of traditional African law. It was highly flawed as seen through the example that Mguni, Furusa and Magosvongwe (2006) give, that through such legislation, a woman could not open a savings account in her own name. It had to be through a man's, whether a brother, father or husband.

Concerning the uneven education chances and levels of education between black males and females in colonial Zimbabwe, Musiyiwa (2006) notes that,

> Both colonial and African patriarchal beliefs combined to deprive women of education. African fathers were suspicious of providing their daughters with education, fearing that this would give them freedom to go into urban areas and abandon their conventional roles [of marriage, childbearing and working in the

> fields]. The underlying reason for this uneasiness is, of course, the fact that some African men were afraid of losing economic benefits associated with the marriage of their daughters. (155)

Tsitsi Dangarembga dramatises this situation in *Nervous Conditions* (1989). Tambu is overlooked for education in favour of her brother, Nhamo. When Nhamo, dies, Tambu is not sorry for the death of Nhamo affords her an opportunity to attend school through Babamukuru's benefaction, something that she had striven to do through her own limited efforts.

Tambu's determination to get an education in spite of the odds stacked against her resonates with Wells's (2003) idea that Zimbabwean women fought against such discrimination by raising their daughters' fees through self-help projects such as small scale agriculture, crocheting, baking and informal trading. Generally, women in Mungoshi's work are keener than their male counterparts to see their children, both male and female, educated. Sheila in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981) and Zakeo's mother in "Who Will Stop the Dark?" (1980) are two such women as mentioned earlier in the last chapter. The examples above encapsulate how initially, schooling in colonial Rhodesia was a male prerogative with a few females having restricted entry and most totally barred from it. The limited access that women had to education at primary school level was perpetuated at secondary school and tapered to an exceedingly narrow bottle-neck at tertiary level. This resulted in the underrepresentation of women in formal employment, academia and key decision-making bodies such as parliament at independence.

The gaining of political independence in Zimbabwe saw an opening up of public life for women and the passing of enabling legislation that protects women's rights. Those women who had been actively involved in the liberation war in different capacities expected life to be better for them as women in post colonial Zimbabwe (Staunton, 1990). This was so especially given that soon after independence, the then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe suggested an indissoluble link between the nationalist struggle and the emancipation of women when he said, "The national struggle… became as much a

process towards the liberation of the nation as towards the emancipation of women" (Ballard-Reisch, Turner and Sarratea, 2001: 67).

However, as these three scholars just mentioned above correctly observe, there has been a "paradox of emancipations" owing to "the interpretations of the concepts emancipation, liberation and traditional African values" (67). Whereas the laws of the country regarding women can be read as progressive and designed to advance the status of women, in practical terms there is a reluctance to act in ways that speak of a regard for the full emancipation and respect of women to the effect that,

> In a sweeping decision in March 1999, the Zimbabwe Supreme Court decided on a 5-0 vote that the nature of African society dictates that women are not equal to men, especially in family relationships. The court referred to unwritten African cultural norms in both the Shona and Ndebele tribes that viewed women as minors within the family who could never rise above the status of "junior males" or teen-agers. They further noted that, although this may be viewed as discriminatory, the anti- discrimination clause in the Zimbabwe constitution (Section 230) does not in fact, refer to discrimination based on sex. (68)

In this case, customary law, which had been disadvantageous to women was being evoked and upheld. Robert Mugabe, the President, was also of the opinion that feminist ideas were foreign and pernicious, aimed at undermining the culture and traditions of Zimbabwe. He made this statement in his negative response to a request that women be permitted to own property jointly with their husbands (Matimba-Mumba, 1994). This kind of ambivalence has for example, seen the harassment of women wearing miniskirts in Zimbabwe. One case happened in 1997 at the University of Zimbabwe, the country's highest institution of learning where one would expect high levels of tolerance or regard for ideas of individual choice and freedoms (Ballard-Reisch, Turner and Sarratea, 2001).

Notwithstanding grey areas of the law and its application, gender relations have changed and continue to change in Zimbabwe. There has been a huge decrease in the practice of earlier customs such as arranged marriages, pledging of infant girls to men much older than them, polygamy and the levirate system – all of which were not always in the best

interests of women. The amelioration of gender relations in Zimbabwe, Wells (2003) accurately points out, was largely through women's own agency. Writes Wells (2003):

> …few academics have asked the question of why or how this [the betterment of the woman's position] came about. For most it remains an unexamined issue, implying that such changes reflect a *natural* socio-economic evolution of African societies under the influence, for better and for worse, of colonialism. Or the post-independence legislation tends to be portrayed as the benevolent gift of idealistic revolutionaries. Only a few… identify women as agents in changing their own status. (102; original emphasis)

Through his writing, Mungoshi is one of the few male writers in Zimbabwean literature who gives female subjectivity and emancipation endeavours, special attention.

To read Mungoshi most fruitfully requires going beyond the identification of "positive" and "negative" images of women in his works. Dogmatically insisting on such a schematic reading leads to a straitjacketing of complex issues. In its extreme form, this binary frame often produces a reading reminiscent of the deficiencies of vulgar Marxist criticism that insisted on viewing characters and writers as strictly either "progressive" or "reactionary" (Borev, 1985). In some instances, the words "conservative" and "progressive" are used in feminist circles. But, as Walker (1995) points out,

> these labels … are not particularly useful for understanding women's behaviour. They are normative and they discount both process (the way in which identities may shift and change in relation to concrete historical developments) and women's own part in constructing their identities which…extend beyond relationships with men." (437)

Textual ironies in Mungoshi's works defy a simplistic polarisation of gender relations.

4.3 Maidens with a Mark: The Imperative to Produce Children

The enduring value placed on the fertility of women is a significant departure point to understanding gender conflict in Mungoshi's work. The woman's biological ability to conceive, gestate, give birth and lactate is culturally organised and given meaning in Shona society and we see this at work in regard to the potential fertility of maidens or

unmarried young women. Thus, women's capacity to bear children has great salience in Mungoshi's work given that this capacity is at the root of the foundation of families of various kinds. This aspect puts women in an ambiguous position. On the one hand it can be argued that they are fulfilling their roles in a patriarchal society as patriarchy demands and yet on the other, the ability to bear a child or children is tied up with a desirable socially recognised personhood as a mother. The story "Sacrifice" (1997) and Betty in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) dramatise this conflict. In "Sacrifice" (1997), Tayeva, a young woman, is forced into motherhood through *kupira ngozi* (reparation for family wrongs) whereas in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), Betty defies *ngozi* to become a mother.

Childbearing in Zimbabwe was and still is, to a greater degree, virtually obligatory for women and that being the case, men and indeed some women in positions of authority have sought to control, in diverse ways, bodies of women for agnatic good. Women occupy a central position with regard to physical and social reproduction. Thus, motherhood emerges in most instances as community's most cherished value, hence the view that childless women are failed women. Commenting on the centrality of fertility to the definition of womanhood, Walker (1995) writes:

> The social and economic context in which motherhood was lived in the precolonial period was first undermined, then destroyed as the region [Southern Africa] was engulfed by the related forces of capitalism and colonialism. Yet what has persisted with remarkable tenacity from the precolonial period into the present is the importance that continues to be attached to women's fertility, not just by patriarchs but by African women themselves and this…structures a certain continuity in feelings of self-worth, celebration and power in many African women's identity as mothers. Fertility – the capacity to bear children and assume the social identity of motherhood – continues to be very highly valued by women and to inform their choices. (431)

Walker elaborates on the importance of child bearing pointing out that the idea was inherited from pre-colonial agrarian Southern Africa in which "the production of people (rather than things) was central and an enormous significance attached to women's fertility as a result" (430). Socio-economic changes do not seem to have been

accompanied in all instances, by a corresponding change in outlook regarding women's fertility, resulting in a time warp that is responsible for some filial and spousal conflicts in Mungoshi's writing. For example, Sheila in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981) cannot forgive her husband Tafi for insisting that they have more children than is economically sensible. On his part, Tafi accuses Sheila of wanting to "lower [his] name" (24) through giving birth to a few children.

Owing to its centrality, female fertility can be a burden, resulting in one negative mark that society in Mungoshi's writing places on women – the curse of *ngozi*. Simply put, a girl, preferably a virgin, is given to a wronged family, especially in a situation where the transgression was the murder of a member of the wronged family, as reparation for family wrongs in the past. The girl is given as a sacrifice so she can bear children for the wronged family and no *roora* or *lobola* is required. The choice of a girl and not a boy is enlightening as it underlines how biology becomes a sphere of difference and used for social organization purposes. Here, just as in the payment of *lobola* in marriage, women are invested with an exchange value that can form alliances between families and clans. The problem with *ngozi* is that the maiden earmarked for sacrifice has no choice in the matter.

Although briefly mentioned before, the concept of *ngozi* needs further elaboration here. Zhuwarara (2001) comments that *kupira ngozi* is "an important and deep-seated belief that partly shapes the outlook of the Shona, if not African people in general" (116). In short, *ngozi* refers to the spirit of someone who was murdered or died in extreme anger or bitterness. Such a spirit never finds rest until full retribution has been made. The spirit continues to haunt until it is fully placated. Owomoyela (2002:37) identifies four types of *ngozi*:

> …the spirit of a murdered person; the spirit of a servant who was not paid for his services, or of someone for whom something was taken or borrowed and not returned; the spirit of a husband or wife who died unhappy by the spouse's treatment of him or her; and the spirit of a parent wronged by his or her child. The spirit of a murdered person is usually placated by the customary practice of *kupira*

> *ngozi* – the offering of a young girl as compensatory payment in inter-family disputes. The girl is made wife to one of the aggrieved clan's or family's members.

Tayeva in "Sacrifice" (1997) is one such maiden earmarked for the reparation of *ngozi*. In many respects, Tayeva's story is one of arrested development as a consequence, largely, of a character's femaleness, a recurrent theme in Mungoshi's works. Sixteen year old Tayeva we are told, "had excelled at netball and the egg-and-spoon race; she had taken leading roles in school plays and sung a beautiful soprano in the school choir; and, at the end of the year, she had walked away with first prize in English and History" (Mungoshi, 1997:127). Tayeva, who has embraced Christianity, finds herself at the centre of a feud involving three families – hers and those of her two uncles, one of whom is vociferous that Tayeva must be given away to placate the spirit of a person murdered by one of the family's ancestors.

This, indubitably, is control of women's sexuality given that Tayeva has no choice regarding who she will marry. One tends to agree with Moyana (2006:164) that "It is actually a form of violence perpetrated against women's sexuality similar to rape." However, with regard to this story and others, it is difficult to share her opinion that in Mungoshi's works, "women are generally portrayed negatively" (152). Zhuwarara (2001) on the other hand sees *ngozi* as "central in preserving life and maintaining social harmony" (116). One assumes he means that the fear of *ngozi* acts as a deterrent to would-be wrong doers and that once an offence has been committed, the wrong can be set right by sacrificing a virgin girl. That explains why according to Zhuwarara, "The question is: will Tayeva escape the demands of African tradition and remain a devout Christian?" (117). When Tayeva chooses to go with the Old Man, "a frail grey-haired old man almost the same age as Headman Muza" (Mungoshi, 1997: 149-150), Zhuwarara (2001:118) concludes that "African traditional beliefs turn out triumphant over Christianity." Thus, according to this reading, Tayeva is treated as a vehicle for ideas; a functionary in a religious allegory that strips her of her personhood.

One needs to pay attention to Mungoshi's narrative technique in order to produce a nuanced reading. "Sacrifice" (1997) is told from Tayeva's point of view. Her final realisation of the gravity of the situation facing the three Mutunga families is as poignant as her decision to give herself away. Mungoshi writes that one of Tayeva's "games as a child involved paying visits to the family graveyard and counting the number of graves" (122). Tayeva's decision to go with the old man, although problematic in that it appears to be a divine rather than human intervention, is Mungoshi's way of evoking a sense of indignation especially as we witness a wasted life so full of promise. Much as Tayeva decides to end the high death rate in her family, the reader is still aware of a wasted intellect. Moyana (2006) would rather Tayeva refused to be sacrificed for as she exclaims about the old man who has come to fetch Tayeva and will probably be her husband, "What a husband for a sixteen-year old virgin!!" (164). Ironically, Moyana (2006) acknowledges the efficacy of Mungoshi's ironic style, and that Mungoshi does *not* approve of *kupira ngozi* through sacrificing a virgin girl.

Whereas Tayeva appears to embrace the implications of *ngozi*, so to speak, Betty in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) acts to break the confines of the curse of *ngozi*. Betty is, according to the divination of the spirit medium, Matandangoma, fated to die single and childless unless she is given to the wronged family to bear children for them. Should Betty decide to be pregnant by anyone not of the wronged family, she will have a string of still-borns. The solutions open to Betty's family include resigning themselves to continued numerous and strange deaths in the family, handing her over to the wronged family or performing a ritual that involves killing a neighbour's innocent daughter who has no part in this ancient wrong.

Assailed by a sense of emptiness and loneliness because no man in the village wants to marry her for fear that the offspring of such a union will die, Betty does not wallow in self-pity nor does she leave the solution to spiritual intervention like Old Mandisa, her maternal grandmother does. It is, in fact, Old Mandisa who introduces the *ngozi* into the Mandengu family because her ancestors killed an innocent person. Betty refuses to be a scapegoat and victim of past wrongs. In the early stages of the novel, she vows, "Well, I

will get some man to marry me if it's the last thing I ever do" (Mungoshi, 1975:34). She decides to have sex with the Agricultural Demonstrator, a married man, and this act becomes a "defiant transgression of traditional sexual norms" (Chennells, 2006:28).

According to Zimunya (1982:2) Betty "symbolizes moral degeneration." What remains hidden to Zimunya is Betty's determination to overcome the curse of *ngozi* as well as the emptiness and self-disgust over the prospect of childlessness which makes her feel incomplete as a woman. To create the illusion that she is desirable, she embraces a somewhat perverted way of asserting her normality as a woman – she writes love letters to herself which she shows to her sympathetic brother, Garabha. Of this situation, Chennells (2006:28) comments that Betty's "alienation is pathetically registered in self-authored texts that she claims to have been authored by others; literacy allows her to provide evidence, through the written word of her 'normality', of the interest she provokes in men." Although she embraces a modern solution to "normalize" herself, she realizes the inadequacy of such a solution and goes a step further and has sex with the Agricultural Demonstrator just to prove that she can have a child and is therefore a "normal" woman.

Thus, Betty's decision to get pregnant by the Agricultural Demonstrator, a man who has struggled to have children with his wife, must be seen beyond issues of morality for in any case, her alienation,

> is the alienation of the childless woman, which she reads as an alienation from life itself, the alienation of a living death.
>
> ….
>
> Her culture teaches her that the telos of her humanity is to move from girlhood to motherhood; unsaid is that unless she becomes a mother she will be locked in perpetual childhood. (Chennells, 2006: 29)

In fighting the threat of infantilisation, refuting futility, family burdens and history, Betty manages to get pregnant by the Agricultural Demonstrator.

It is through the intuition of another woman, Raina, Betty's mother, that we get an insight into the injustice of Betty's burden. Mungoshi writes,

> She [Raina] feels that Betty has suffered unjustly. And to order her about, to dictate to her – the way Tongoona [Betty's father] does – is cruel. Betty is no longer a child. And without realizing it, Raina ends up being angry with men in general – who don't know a well-brought-up girl when they see one. (33)

Tongoona more that infantilizes Betty. He humiliates her. He makes it clear to Betty that she is a dependant and ought to be beholden to him. When Betty warns one of her siblings not to bed-wet her blankets, Tongoona's callous response to her is, "Since when have you ever owned a blanket in this place? Was it your money that bought those blankets?" (57).

In the end Betty, like her two brothers, Garabha and Lucifer, wants to escape home but seems to lack the final resolve to. She spends most of her time at the local shops. The idea of leaving home is a quest for a non-condemnatory space. Mungoshi writes, "The village is there with its black laugh, blacker than death. Her parents are there with their heavy name, heavier than death" (38). Faced with this situation, Betty realises that categories of right and wrong should cease to apply: "She is past questioning herself whether what she has done is right or wrong…. It's all the same. At least when she dies, there will be that satisfaction (touching her belly). She *is* a woman. And isn't that the only difference between dead and alive? She *is* a mother. And isn't that what she was made for?" (38; original emphasis). Betty's blurring of the morality divide implies that she is not worried about distinguishing between her desire for a child and the possibility that this desire may be a woman's role as defined by patriarchy in order to limit and control women. One is reminded of Nwapa's (1998) statement that for some women, "the desire to be pregnant, to procreate is an overpowering one in the life of the woman. She is ready to do anything to have a child, be she single or married." Thus, Betty lets fertility override legitimacy, *for her own sake*, for the purpose of controlling her destiny the best way she thinks she can in the proscribed space of a blighted family history and overarching patriarchy. For her, motherhood emerges as an index of a positive and assertive self-dignity. In Betty's case, Walker's (1995:417) remark that "Motherhood

cannot be reduced simply to a role imposed on women by men" is most appropriate. This scholar makes a meaningful suggestion that motherhood "should be seen as embracing both resistance and complicity with dominant norms" (428). This last mentioned point flags and takes us to the examination of concepts around reproduction such as marriage, wifehood and motherhood.

4.4 Marriage, Wifehood and Motherhood – a General Overview

Marriage is central in Mungoshi's work. It emerges as a key cultural sphere dedicated to sanctioned physical and social reproduction. Matambirofa (2006) makes a salient point in observing that,

> While certain fine points, elements and emphases and focuses might have shifted over the many years of colonial onslaught, it remains true to this day that Zimbabwean women (and men) still find social security and dignity in marriage. For the overwhelming majority of people, (heterosexual) marriage remains a highly respected social unit and procreation is its *sine quanon* (sic). (96)

In other words, as pointed out in Chapter Two, motherhood is widely regarded as a social identity, cultural mandate and privilege from which respect and authority come as it also marks the attainment of adult social status. This observation can apply to a myriad of societies. Ezeigbo (1997:97) writes of the Igbo of Nigeria, "to be an eligible but unmarried woman is considered disastrous. While a single adult man is regarded with disapproval, perhaps disrespect an unmarried woman is regarded as unfulfilled and a pariah." Be that as it may, the issue of *roora* in marriage or bride price as it is not so aptly called in English, is a dimension worth explaining here for it does have a bearing on gender roles in the Shona marriages evinced by Mungoshi.

The payment of *roora* on its own or combined with a registered marriage signifies the commercial and cultural constitution of marriage. In the words of Comaroff (1980:38), "the physical fact of cohabitation is transformed into a social fact." The woman who gets married through the payment of *roora*, "acquires the socially recognised status of a wife to the man in question, a status which obliges her to supply the man with various domestic, sexual and procreative services" (Turton, 1980:69). Marriage payments emerge

as a foundation of cognation, hence the centrality of fertility in the definition of marriage. This aspect was raised in Chapter Two in which it is pointed out that the *roora* was paid in anticipation of children to be born from the marriage. Whichever way one looks at it, in its uncorrupted form, *roora* is not equivalent to buying a woman for as Hadebe (2006) correctly observes, "estimating the monetary value of a human being is not only undesirable but impossible" (173).

Motherhood is both an institution and experience (Rich, 1976), metaphor and practice. This explains why in African fiction, at times there is the conflation of motherhood and the nation through the fetishization of the body of the mother, what Stratton (1990:113) calls the "Mother Africa trope." Motherhood in most of Mungoshi's work is yoked with marriage. The uncoupling of motherhood and wifehood, such as single motherhood, is dealt with in Chapter 6, "Lone Parenting and Transgressive Sexualities." In a sense then, Mungoshi does not treat women and motherhood as co-terminous. His portrayal of women raises questions such as the expected nature and function of married women in a family, amongst which is: what constitutes a good mother? Other areas of interest in this regard involve motherhood and maternal politics as sources of power in relation to women and their children and most significantly, their husbands.

Walker (1995) makes a prescient remark that motherhood is a "dense identity-cum-occupation" (419). For this reason, Walker (1995) proposes three terrains of motherhood which are very helpful to the reading of Mungoshi's work. The first is "mothering work – the practice of motherhood"; second, "the discourse of motherhood embracing norms, values and ideas about the 'Good Mother' that operate in any one society or sub-group," and last, "motherhood as a social identity" (424). Generally, mothers are regarded as the bedrock of the family in Shona society. Their pivotal presence is widely acknowledged in most cultures yet at times the much cherished ideas about motherhood and womanhood are the ones that oppress mothers. The mother ideal amongst the Shona is a woman who first bears children for her husband, nurtures these children with love and raises them as decent citizens (Moss, 2002). She must be a good wife, meaning she must possess domestic competence and resilience. She must, above all, be diligent, especially in the

rural areas where she has to till the land. She is also perceived as a peacemaker, an attribute thought to emanate from women's mothering instinct. As an emotional centre of the family, an ideal mother is also expected to be patient, indeed stoical in handling maternal distresses originating directly from her marriage and problems that her children may have or cause. This explains why Shona and Ndebele literature are both replete with images of the mother as long-suffering and self-denying (Gaidzanwa, 1985).

Above all, a mother is expected to be resourceful and provide for her family. Moss (2002) observes that generally,

> For the African woman, the word *mother* is synonymous with 'mother who provides.' A mother is responsible for the children's care, providing food, clothing and shelter. She is not expected to depend upon the children's father for these necessities. Motherhood carries with it a heavy economic burden. Women thus find themselves in the ambiguous position of being esteemed for their reproduction contribution to society but encumbered by the weight of it. (145)

The idea of a "mother who provides' is a remnant of the precolonial agrarian society in which a wife was given access to her own land on top of that which officially belonged to the husband's family and she could work on both, deciding what to do with the proceeds from both fields or her own field. This idea of the mother as a provider becomes incongruent in the context of impoverished land or women's joblessness in the city, especially in the case of women with little or no formal education.

Regarding their overall attitude towards their husbands, Armstrong (2000) writes, "The traditional ideal is that women should be quietly deferential to their husbands" (22). While on the one hand a wife and mother is perceived as a paragon of emotional strength and virtue, on the other, she is stereotyped by both male and female authors in Zimbabwean literature as deceitful and dangerous (Dube, 2006). There seems to be a general belief, Dube (2006) is convinced, that women in general are considered intellectually, morally and physically weak but sexually deceitful and dangerous and tend to be motivated by anger, envy and greed. As far as women's sexuality is concerned, the

ideal is female restraint, near passionlessness as compared to male lasciviousness. Mungoshi's writing questions virtually all these assumptions about women.

4.5 Ambitious Wives and Mothers

Mungoshi explores wives and mothers who intend to escape poverty by all means necessary. The main means though, is through educating their children with the hope that the children will get well-paid jobs after school and reciprocate by taking care of the parents. Strong, self-assured and at times fierce, these women tend to despise their husbands who are incapacitated, especially in a bodily sense. The husband-wife conflict in this context will be explored later in this chapter. In a sense, through their authority and ability to strike fear, these women become the men in their families. It is as if Mungoshi is directly mocking Bourdillon's (1976) remark that in the Shona family, "The father has absolute authority over his children and complete responsibility for them" (44).

Of interest to Mungoshi is not the "villainy" of such powerful and/or manipulative women but their protest and fight against poverty and thriftless husbands. One is bound to agree with Malaba (2007) who writes that "Mungoshi's admirable characters are generally female and their strength, determination and authority overshadow the men's" (17). These women include VaChingweru in *Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo* (1970), Zakeo's mother in "Who Will Stop the Dark?" (1980) and Sheila in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981). Perhaps no better example captures the single-mindedness with which mothers go about educating their children for upward social mobility than the following explanation given by Va Chingweru to her daughter Monika:

> *Unoziva here kuti chakandipa shungu dzokuti udzidze chii? Kusekwa navamwe vakadzi. Ini ndaisverosekwa kunzi runonhuhwa nhamu; ndokusaka ndakaitawo shungu dzokuti uyende kuchikoro*. (76)
>
> Do you know the reason behind my determination to see you get an education? It was being laughed at by other women. They scorned me non-stop saying that I reeked of poverty and that's why I got very determined to put you through school. (My own translation from Shona)

Veit-Wild (1993) in her study of Zimbabwean writers who went to school in the 1970s also concluded that mothers were more instrumental than fathers in sending their children (regardless of sex) to school. This situation found expression in Zimbabwean literature. Writes Veit-Wild (1993):

> The figure of the mother who sacrifices all her strength in an extreme, almost superhuman effort in order to finance the education of her children is a familiar topic in the writing of this generation [those who went to school in the 1970s]….It is from such a situation that the frequent image of the strong, overpowering, sometimes ferocious mother emerged. (162)

As such, Mungoshi is not the only Zimbabwean writer who portrays strong, independent and self-assured mothers who tend to have intimidating tendencies. Marechera in his novella *The House of Hunger* (1978) and Nyamfukudza in his short story collection *Aftermaths* (1983) both feature hardworking mothers whose love is tough and tyrannical. Zakeo's mother in Mungoshi's "Who Will Stop the Dark" (1980) is one such fiercely determined woman who constantly lashes her son so that he attends school instead of hunting for mice with his grandfather. She even enlists the help of the grandfather to convince Zakeo to go to school.

Although far from being ferocious, Sheila in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981) is more ambitious than her husband and protests his underachievement by feigning illness. Her tirade to her estranged daughter reveals the mother's sacrifice for the sake of her daughter's education:

> *Lucy! Uri kuvhaira nekabasa kako keusecretary ikako asi hauzivi kuti ndisiri ini ndakakurwira baba vako vakanga vasina shungu newe, kana. Kubvira kuchikoro.* Fees*, ndini, pane mbasha, pana mafuta, pane chii. Baba vako vakanga vati urege uri mu*form two*, ini ndikarwisa kuti uite* form four *nokuzonotorawo kosi ye* typing *yauri kuvhaira nayo sezvinonzi wakadonha nayo kubva kudenga (6).*
>
> Lucy! You are now boastful because of this little secretarial job of yours. Had it not been for me, you wouldn't have this nose-in-the-air attitude that you're giving me. Don't you know that your father had no interest in seeing you get a good

> education? Everything you needed from school fees, uniforms and everything else – I single-handedly provided you. Your father was content to see you leave school prematurely at form two but I persevered so you could get to form four and also do your typing course. Now you're acting as if this typing course of yours just fell from the sky. (My own translation from Shona)

Sheila is cast in the mould of the 'mother who provides.' She wants to see her children succeed and for her, just as it is for VaChingweru and Zakeo's mother, that will be done through education. Sheila as already indicated in Chapter Two, wants Joe to go and study overseas and even helps him fill in application forms for possible scholarships because she does not want Joe to end up as poor as his father.

Although Sheila's motives are not selfless, her disgust with mediocrity and poverty is apparent. She cannot face the two to a point that she feigns chronic illness. She refuses to acknowledge the family's poverty and also refuses to apply herself further than the effort of educating her children. Zinyemba (1997:68) is of the opinion that Sheila "is presented for the most part as frustrated, self-pitying and, to some extent, selfish woman. She does not do anything positive for anyone in the family, not even for Joe on whom she seems to dote. If anything, all she has accomplished is an Oedipal complex in Joe." Zinyemba's (1997) dismissal of Sheila is rather premature. As already shown, she is very keen to see her children move up the social ladder through education. Second, she stands as a constant reminder of the vacuity of her husband's promises of a better life when they got married. Having left school due to pregnancy in Form Three, she attempts to recover her dreams through her children and gets frustrated that Tafi, her husband, is not complementing her efforts.

4.6 Disaffected Wives

Mungoshi's work shows how women are oppressed structurally, especially as wives. Most of the wives that Mungoshi portrays demand trust, monogamy, emotional openness as well as a mature and deeper communication within marriage. The wives also demand that their husbands show more ambition and thrift to achieve material success. Wives

make these demands because they tend to be taken for granted by their husbands, the extended family and the community at large. In this regard Gaidzanwa (1985) makes a valuable point in writing that,

> As wives, women are expected to behave in comforting, non-aggressive and nurturant ways. They are there to make life manageable for husbands and children…. In the literature, [Zimbabwean] the bulk of the problem women are those who fall down on their wifely duties and responsibilities. These duties include bearing children, subordinating themselves to husbands, remaining faithful to the husbands and deferring to the husband's mother, father and other relations. Childless, domineering or assertive, unfaithful and insubordinate women are despised and socially disapproved. (11)

Gaidzanwa also notes that "Mungoshi's characterization of women in general and wives in particular, tends to be striking in one sense. Most of the women characters in his writing are very strong, large in life [sic] and domineering" (35). She quickly adds that the strength attributed to these women is "negative." This scholar suggests, at the least, a collective disparagement of women by Mungoshi. On the contrary, an argument is made here, that Mungoshi draws our attention to the spousal conflicts that he depicts with a view to problematize heterosexuality and marriage. He identifies heterosexual marriage as the very site of gender power inequality. He goes further to show that heterosexual marriage does not merely reproduce structural imbalances or an ideal egalitarianism. Mungoshi, mainly through some characters cast as wives, reveals ways in which although not involved in consciously informed and executed ways of resistance, women characters resist some societal practices they find oppressive or demeaning. In fact, what Mungoshi does is to expose deep-seated cultural misogyny (not that he is a misogynist himself as Gaidzanwa charges) with the aim of holding up to scrutiny such misogynist tendencies.

Spousal cohabitation in Mungoshi's work is so fraught with conflict that one is bound to agree with Malaba (2007) that "marriage is not seen as a partnership, but a battlefield, a struggle for mastery, control" (2). There is neither the rosy view of domestic harmony nor a flagrant subordination of mothers or wives. Motherhood in Mungoshi's work is not yoked with victimhood. Rather, wives through their scathing verbal remarks and other

means suggest that marriage for women does not necessarily equal confinement, captivity and subjugation. The contestations within marriage problematize biologistic analyses of women's subordination to men. Thus, women contest the essentialist idea of gender that men's power emanates from men's bodies and women's oppression from women's bodies or biology. Through the trope of male disability, Mungoshi holds up to scrutiny the phallocentric view in which society values physical strength and stamina, and by implication, a strong penis, equating these to ideal manhood. Thus, the role and definition of a wife/mother in Mungoshi's work is more nuanced than he has been given credit for as he rejects the idea of wives/mothers as characters who have internalized self-erasure and subordination.

Whereas in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) and "The Mount of Moriah" (1980), both discussed in Chapter 2, the children Mungoshi focalises live in a world punctuated by absence of the mother or the feminine principle, shadows and silence because of fathers who refuse or are completely oblivious to the subjectivity and needs of mother and child, in "Who Will Stop the Dark?" (1980) the boy's mother has a potent presence that can be equated to symbolic masculinity. Interestingly, Zakeo's mother is not referred to in the story by her maiden or marital name. She is only called Zakeo's mother to emphasize the salience put on her identity as a mother. One may be tempted to assume that the story will deal with the burden and subordination attendant to motherhood. On the contrary, it speaks of a woman's strong resolve to do what is best for her son. Zakeo's mother is a very strong-willed, decisive, ambitious, domineering and outspoken woman. Her sense of agency, her bristling energy and violence are contrasted with her hapless and sedentary husband. The man has a broken back and moves by dragging "his useless lower limbs" (25) and the only thing he does is basket weaving, which is also seen in this masculinist society as a feminine undertaking. Zakeo's father is "castrated" (Zhuwarara, 2001:72), given that "the back itself…in Shona, is seen as the mark of manhood" (Mupfudza, 2006:251). Because of her powerful position in a masculinist and phallocentric society, Zakeo's mother is regarded as having upset a supposed natural order of things as well as invading and trivializing the stronghold of manhood. This theme is further discussed in Chapter Five.

Zakeo's mother faces a similar problem as Rindai in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975). Zakeo in the short story, just like Rangarirai in the Shona novel, hates school and his mother because of the teasing he gets from other children at school. Zakeo confides to his grandfather, "They are always at me saying your father is your mother's horse. Your mother rides hyenas at night. Your mother is a witch. Your mother digs up graves at night and you all eat human flesh which she hunts for you" (41). It is quite clear in the story that these utterances originate from the parents of the children that taunt Zakeo. These parents suspect that Zakeo's mother is responsible for her husband's paralysis and by extension, social and sexual impotence. The man's loss of vitality and sexual virility is threatening to a community that reads this as the usurpation of men's power and potency. It is a society whose cultural premise associates men with power and virility. Zakeo's mother is branded a witch because as Bourdillon (1976) observes, amongst the Shona, "witchcraft is the paradigm of all evil and anti-social behaviour," (211) and "any kind of power may be associated with witchcraft (since power includes power to harm)" (214). As a result, Zakeo begins to believe what other boys at school say about his mother. He starts watching her intently and his judgement of his mother is as arbitrary as believing what he hears about her. Mungoshi (1980) writes: "The boy knew that his mother had something to do with this condition of his father. The tight lines round her mouth and her long silences that would erupt into unexpected bursts of red violence said so" (25).

Zakeo eventually concludes that it is not safe to stay with his mother and spends most of his time with his grandfather who becomes a better father figure compared to his crippled father. Zakeo plays truant at school to go mouse trapping with his grandfather who belongs to a generation of men who "were born hunters, stayed hunters… and most died hunters" (28). Zakeo's mother uses everything within her means to make sure her son goes to school, including beating him until he decides not to cry when his mother beats him. He equates this quiet taking of pain to an achievement of manhood and not surprisingly, tells his mother that she knows nothing. Sekuru, Zakeo's grandfather, humours Zakeo knowing very well that the mother is attempting to give her son a better

future through education. He tells Zakeo, "You will cry one day and you will think your mother was right" (46).

Zakeo's mother gets stigmatized and denied emotional warmth for knowing what is best for her child and doing all she can to make sure the boy goes to school, including confronting Zakeo's grandfather, an unheard of thing for a daughter-in-law to do. Gaidzanwa (1985: 36) comes close to the truth when she observes of Zakeo's mother: "For the wife, the price of strength and determination is the denial of tenderness and approval by those around her" and even as she breaks down and cries, "Nobody feels guilty about denying her any tenderness because she appears so strong." The truth is that she is denied affection and sympathy because she is perceived as a threat to manhood in a society where gender dualism is sharply marked and perceived through gendered bodies with their normative functions. As such she is some form of evil since through the "emasculation" of her husband she has inverted sex/gender roles, appropriating the husband's power, authority and privilege. She causes consternation in the family and community. That explains why the grandfather moves away from the homestead to set up his own little hut elsewhere. The grandfather's move away from the homestead to set up his own little hut elsewhere is also considered by the community as a sign that there is indeed something evil about Zakeo's mother. It could very well be that the old man does not know how to deal with an opinionated daughter-in-law nor does he expect such from Zakeo's mother. Zakeo unconsciously drifts away from his parents in a bid to assert his identity which he equates with a vague toughness and independence, a nascent hypermasculinity reminiscent of children, adolescents and young men discussed in Chapter Two and Three. His fixation with behaving in a "manly" way and search for a strong father figure all blind him to the fact that all the "manly" pursuits he can learn from his grandfather are dated and will not help him at all. No wonder when Zakeo brings home some mice to give to his mother because he knows that she likes them, the mother throws the mice to the dog. Indeed mouse trapping is scoffed at in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) by one of the men who admires Lucifer's scholarship that has enabled him to travel overseas to study, compared to the neighbour's children who spend their time "chasing mice all day long" (121).

In all of this however, Sekuru, Zakeo's grandfather, knows that Zakeo's mother is correct that the boy must go to school. Zakeo's mother's "unexpected bursts of red violence" (25) are those of a frustrated woman whose son has been conditioned by the community to think the worst of and be oppositional to her. The point is not that Zakeo's mother discomfits her son, her husband and father-in-law through dominating her husband. The point in this story is not that Mungoshi portrays Zakeo's mother "negatively" as Gaidzanwa (1985:15) puts it, but that the blame lies squarely on the society that fears her determination, energy and single-mindedness and as a result constructs her as a danger and a pariah.

In the story "The Victim" (Mungoshi, 1980), Mangazva's mother is feared by her community as "the worst witch" (113) in their midst. Mangazva is over thirty, has a wife and four children, a family he started because his mother "pushed [him] into it" (119). Mangazva acknowledges that his mother is "very tough" (121) and his wife warns the narrator, Mr Moyo, that if he steps in to help Mangazva escape his mother's clutches, the mother would prove to be "too strong" for Moyo and "crush" him (132). Mangazva's father is reduced to a "kind of sleep-walking living and a terrible illness of the mind" after a series of "bitter quarrels" with the mother (121). The only comment Mangazva's mother has for her husband and son is "Barking dogs and castrated bulls" (128) and proceeds to spit into the fire to underline her contempt for both men. According to Zhuwarara (2001:183-4):

> Mangazva's mother relies on the absolute psychological control over everyone in the family. Through her shrewish and devastating sarcastic tongue as well as her unpredictable moods and no-nonsense approach, she leaves others without a voice in all matters to do with the family.

Zhuwarara views Mangazva's mother as a villain and tormentor and concludes, "Such blind power or control, unmediated by reason or ideas from others, often degenerates into spiritual abuse of those closest…in the family circle" (84).

Zhuwarara's reading however, does not pay attention to detail in the story because as with almost all of Mungoshi's stories, this one too is a cause-effect story. Mangazva's mother had high hopes for her son who at one point worked for the Estate Manager, Mr Jones, as a gardener. She tried to endear herself to Mr Jones by bringing him "baskets and baskets of vegetables" (Mungoshi, 1980:121) with the sole hope that one day Mr Jones would adopt Mangazva and send him to school and "to university even" (121). Mangazva however, proves to be mentally unstable and unable to concentrate on academic work. Perhaps Mungoshi is suggesting that Mangazva's mental illness is genetic and that he inherited it from his father. In which case the father's "terrible illness of the mind" (121) has little to do with his relationship with his wife. Thus, Mangazva is mentally unstable and not a "congenital liar and leech" as Benson (1990:396) puts it. That is why the mother is overprotective when it comes to Mangazva who happens to be an only child.

The mother is the only one with an ambition to succeed and a sense of responsibility in the family. Although she fails to gain Mr Jones' benefaction, her attempt is not an outlandish plan given the significant number of successful black Zimbabweans who owe their success to white patronage during colonial Rhodesia. An example is Babamukuru in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1989). Mangazva's mother wants her son to be educated like his "two uncles [who] are both heads of some big schools somewhere in Salisbury" so that he can build a big modern house for himself and his parents (122). In this sense Mangazva's mother is cast in the tough mother mould, a woman who wants her son and family to go up the social ladder in much the same way as other "tough" mothers discussed so far, do.

Since Mangazva can not build a modern house, the mother does so in preparation for the son's wedding. The wedding does not take place because the condition from the in-laws is payment of three quarters of the bride price. Mangazva and his father are expected by custom to raise this, especially the father, but between them, they can not. The unfinished house Mangazva's mother builds from her own resources and efforts stands as a symbol of the mother's uncomplemented and thwarted ambitions and dreams. The narrator says, "The big house was clearly unfinished and it was already fading into the past with that

painful apology that haunts people who never seem able to handle simple affairs of everyday living" (123). It is the mother who makes an effort to improve the family's fortunes. She handles "the affairs of everyday living" by working very hard in the fields but is not complemented by the men in the family. Even the furniture is so rickety that "only the ancestral spirits of chairs" hold the one the narrator is sitting on (124). The spirits seem to give up, the chair breaks and the narrator falls. The mother's remark is significant here, "And I don't know how many times I keep telling the men of this house to buy some new chairs" (126). The two men cannot even repair the chairs. The mother knows that Mangazva can afford to buy new chairs but has turned into an alcoholic and spends literally all his money on a lethal and illegal brew called *nipa*, which further incapacitates his mind, turning him into a childish man who needs his mother's approval in just about everything he does. As for Mangazva's father, apart from an odd remark now and again, he is almost non-existent. The narrator at some point "thought him dead" (130).

"The Day the Bread Van Didn't Come" (1980) explores a strained marital relationship between Mr Pfende who runs a grocery shop (and does a bad job of it) and his beautiful wife who is frustrated because her husband lacks drive and innovation to rise from petty trading and what is worse, is bowed by his inability to impregnate her. Through this story, Mungoshi signals his interest in asking the question: what motivates the infidelity of wives? This concern is explored further through Lorna in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (*Is Silence Not Speech?*) (1983) and Sheila in *Inongova Njakenjake* (*Each One Does His Own Thing/Free for All)* (1980).

Pfende lacks imagination and drive, both of which are signified by his poorly performing business and his inability to impregnate his wife. Matiure, a petty trader like him, "has been only three months in the business yet he has got a phone and radio in his shop" (145) compared to Pfende who has been a petty trader in the same place for much longer. His lack of success is captured through "the single bun in the wire cage" (141), that he is "reading a weekold paper" and his shop is seen by his wife as "the stifling little shop that reeked with the stink of dry salted fish, dust and cheap soap" (141). Mr and Mrs Pfende

cannot communicate verbally. They engage in "loud monologues" (Mungoshi, 1980:145), a writing technique Mungoshi uses to full effect in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura*? (1983).

Of great significance in the story is that Mrs Pfende has two children from her first marriage but the circumstances around this first marriage and the fate of her children explain some of her frustration. Mungoshi writes:

> Her first husband who had died had given her two boys but, being a woman, the children had been taken by her husband's people who had branded her a witch and said it had been she who had killed [the husband]. Also, her beauty had been reason enough for them to believe it. You are not made that beautiful without having a crack in you. (Mungoshi, 1980:148)

What emerges from the above quote is that Mrs Pfende is not barren. Her husband is and he knows it too. Ironically, the community believes it is her fault that they cannot have children. Mrs Pfende thus suffers from a culturally induced insecurity. We also notice that her extraordinary beauty becomes a liability. She is not the only woman who suffers because of her beauty in Mungoshi's writing. Kerina in "The Little Wooden Hut in the Forest" in the collection *Walking Still* (1997) suffers the same fate. At thirty-two, Kerina is "slowly becoming a village aunt" (152) no one wants to marry. She is "so beautiful that some elders considered that this was the reason why no man had ever taken her seriously" (152).

Mrs Pfende becomes bitter with her husband who wants to use the fact that he paid *lobola* for her to keep her in a loveless marriage. This is emphasized through the image of the female dog that is tied to a pole in the yard and Mrs Pfende's insistence that her husband should unchain the dog. His refusal to free the dog and his answer, "Too much mischief. She'll be useless to me once she gets herself full of puppies" (141) is clearly an ironic reference to him and his wife. Mr Pfende thinks that just as he owns his dog and decides to chain her, similarly, even though he cannot impregnate his wife and even though there is no love between them, "still, a man had his rights over a woman he had paid lobola for, hadn't he?" (147). Mrs Pfende also suggests that her husband is sexually impotent,

echoing VaChingweru's concerns about her sickly husband in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970). When Mr Pfende complains about the late delivery of bread, his wife advises him to turn baker, laughs derisively and acidly remarks, "I just wonder what kind of bread you would make – all doughy and watery, I suppose?" Of interest here is that wives seem to have no other register with which to discuss sexual impotence and any disability in the male body except the very masculinist one that is supposed to serve men and denigrate women. Instead of serving men, this register undercuts them. This theme is analysed in detail in the next chapter.

Mrs Pfende's childlessness in a community that puts a premium on motherhood bothers her so much that she stops going to the Women's Club in fear of being mocked for a situation that she is not responsible for. She attempts to have sex with Moses, the bread van delivery man who dies in an accident before she can sleep with him. She tries to lure Moses' replacement but he flatly refuses. Mrs Pfende's actions cannot be understood in moralistic terms only. It is a desperate attempt to have children and lessen the pressure of condemnation from the community and ultimately fit in. In fact, it will be her way of proving that the problem of childlessness does not lie with her but rather, her husband. In this way, she will be vindicated and validated.

Of all Mungoshi's female characters, Lorna in the novel *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983), is the only one who espouses feminist ideals of women's independence and equality in marriage. She also attempts to live on these ideals. Lorna refuses to be the quiet, self-sacrificing, hospitable and diligent wife and daughter-in-law. Norika, the aunt to Lorna's husband, Paul, visits the couple at five in the morning. Norika uses the cultural knowledge that aunts in Shona societies use, that is, exercising power over a daughter-in-law. At times aunts exhibit patriarchal attitudes towards daughters-in-law such as demanding to be waited on. The aunt's authority stems from the role she used to play in Shona society, that of acting as advocate of her paternal family with regard to her brother's wife in which case it was in the wife's best interest to be in good terms with the aunt so that the wife can consult her concerning her marital disputes. Lorna refuses to make tea for Norika because she is too tired from her night duty as a nurse and in any

case, as she points out to Norika, it is Paul's duty to cook. Mungoshi provokes the issue of domestic responsibilities versus hegemonic gender norms. Considering the historical time period of the story's setting, it is not impossible to imagine readers then, strongly disapproving of Lorna and arguing that as a daughter-in-law she just has to entertain her in-laws at all costs and not have, let alone enforce, a duty roster at home.

Kanyongo and Onyango (1984) give an enlightening example of a wife's duties in most African urban contexts especially during weekends. The example tallies with Lorna's case and is worth reproducing in full here:

> Weekends are equally frustrating, as the wife ends up managing her house-hold duties single-handed and hardly rests at all. Sometimes her situation is made worse by relatives who may flock to the house and choose to be waited on. The woman's situation is made more difficult because in Africa visitors do not make appointments for visits: she may find herself with many visitors at weekends when she would prefer to be resting…. The wife who resents all of this is considered selfish or a bad wife…. Although in her office job she may have to perform all the duties performed by men, her home duties are really those of a "good African woman" – that is, one who keeps her household together, runs it efficiently, brings up children, and welcomes anybody home with a wide smile on her face…. (69)

Lorna challenges the idea of unquestioning female servitude and in this case, she has a point that she is tired from night duty.

Not so likeable as Lorna is, especially because of her snobbery, it is difficult to blame her for having an affair with Eric, her husband's half-brother. Through Lorna, Mungoshi turns the tables on the "male gaze." Lorna judges Paul's body *for her own* desire and finds it "weak." Equally, Lorna finds Paul's intellect appalling. She despises Paul, especially for his excessive drunkenness that incapacitates him mentally and sexually. She is shown thinking:

> *Iwomagwiriri kana tadhakwa! Haiwa, ndiro basa. Munhu anobva aita sebota-bota kudaro kana kuzvisimbisawo munhu womurume! Dai pasina inika iye zvino*

akatobhuroka… zvikafa, chokwadi andimbochemi. Kuchema chaiko kuti Paul afa? Chii chaanga achindiitira? (105-106)

As for this roof-shaking snoring – that's what he does best, it is his job. He gets senselessly drunk and becomes so helpless. Everything about him becomes floppy. At least he could try to get a hold on himself as a man and have a little strength left. Had it not been for me, all the businesses would have gone bust by now. When he dies, I won't grieve him. I don't see myself doing that. Fancy, crying that Paul is dead? What positive thing did he ever do for me? (My own translation from Shona)

Lorna chooses words that speak of the floppiness of the male body or some parts of it, a reference to both social and sexual impotence. A man's snoring in bed next to a discontented woman is in itself a euphemism in both Shona and Ndebele languages for a woman's lack of sexual fulfilment through a man's lack of sexual stamina or poor sexual skill and is hardly thought of as erectile dysfunction. Lorna's understanding of male sexuality is underpinned by the prominence of a sustained penile erection, a feature of hegemonic Shona manhood which speaks of the sexual subjugation or satisfaction of women. Paul clearly falls short of this ideal.

Whether one agrees with her or not, Lorna represents an expressive and candid female voice about some of the weaknesses of men on top of which can be added Paul's sycophancy and love for blatant and embarrassing name-dropping. Generally, Lorna finds Paul to be a dimwit and unlovable. That is why Lorna says of him, *"Anomboita seakangononzi imwe pfungwa tumvura o, mbijana…dzimwe nguva ndinombonzwa sokunonzi ndiri kutaura nechana che*seven years. *Kare kare ndaimboti mafani* but it's just being plain dull*"* (At times he behaves as if part of his brain was dipped in water…and it's as if I'm talking to a seven year old. I used to think he is constantly joking but I've realised it's just being plain dull) (My own translation from Shona).

When Lorna compares Eric to Paul, the differences are clearly manifest and propel her to desire Eric over his half-brother. Eric, who has obtained a Masters degree from England, becomes more attractive than her husband, Paul. In short, Eric's overseas sojourn and level of education both become a symbol of desirable masculinity. Added to Eric's ability to sexually satisfy Lorna, this makes him urbane, intelligent and virile, compared to Paul. Thus, Lorna measures Eric's masculinity or manhood through the latter's intellect, overseas sojourn and sexual virility and finds her husband seriously wanting in this regard.

On top of this, Paul has no money of his own. Mungoshi makes it clear that Lorna has the majority of shares in the business that Paul runs and that the house they live in was bought for Lorna by her father. As Lorna says,

> *Hapana murume anonditonga ini pano kana ndazvida hangu*….This is my own house *and kana ndada ndinounza andinoda muno pasina anonditi pwodoro pwodoro zvakazvoitirwei! Ndiri* independent *pachangu ini*…. (107)
>
> No man can rule over me or tell me what to do, if I put my mind to it….This is my own house and I can choose who I want to stay in it. I am an independent woman…. (My own translation from Shona)

Paul then, is bereft of all those features that his society and wife regard as masculine – a muscular body, a hard and sustained erection, intelligence or resourcefulness, and most of all, money. Lorna's infidelity, and the brazen way in which she does it, should be understood in this context. She is, just like Paul, an adherent of the masculinist ideology that equates sharp intellect, resourcefulness, possession of money and sexual virility with healthy manhood. In short, she challenges Paul to perform his masculinity. Paul has none of the attributes required to perform successful masculinity. Mungoshi seems to ask the question: If a man lacks valorized features of masculinity or manhood, does he cease to be a man? Through this question, he suggests that men and women need to relate to each other in ways that go beyond these narrow definitions of manhood. Mungoshi, by making Lorna financially independent is again suggesting that men and women need to relate to each other in ways that go beyond financial security and its skewed power relations. The

point gets across all the more because of the reversal of roles in which the man plays second fiddle to the woman. As such, Lorna should be analysed beyond questions of morality.

Brash and brazen, Lorna can be accused of indiscriminately embracing Western ideas, as evidenced by her code-switching between Shona and English. Sharon is convinced about this and says "*Lorna dzachowo zvechirungu dzinozvida*" (As for this Lorna woman, she is too much into European practices) (23). Sharon seems to suggest that Lorna should temper her desire for "European" ideas and behaviours with local Shona ones. Sharon misses the point because there are some women who refuse to be treated unfairly by men, such as old and illiterate VaNhanga. In any case, it is a fact that Lorna is unfulfilled sexually and intellectually, not necessarily in the institution of family itself and what it stands for but with the husband who does not provide her the mental stimulation that she desires more than the sexual. Lorna becomes a problematic, unaccommodated figure whose intellectual astuteness represents some kind of interregnum in which a woman of her caliber is waiting for a man she can 'think' and live with, given that Eric deserts her as well.

Lorna destabilizes notions of hegemonic masculinity and masculinism, although briefly. Briefly because Mungoshi kills her in the end. Thus, Mungoshi troubles conventional ideas of successful masculinity and socially approved sexual deportment on the part of women only to "restore order" through Lorna's death. Her death, through suicide because she has been ultimately rejected by Eric, whom she has framed for rape, is very unconvincing for so strong and vibrant a character that she is. Again one tends to think that Mungoshi is working within the confines of the Literature Bureau which continued, even after independence, to dictate on writing content. Mungoshi first turns Lorna into an angry and vengeful "woman scorned," one of the stereotypes Dube (2006) identifies in vernacular literature. She is eventually destroyed just as other "immoral" women characters are in Shona and Ndebele literature. Such characters are usually destroyed through disease and bodily violence (Furusa, 2006). Lorna does not escape the staple tragic consequences of vice through the predictable coupling of unsanctioned female

sexual activity with self-destruction and death found in Zimbabwean vernacular literature.

The debacle between Sheila and Tafi in *Inongova Njakenjake (1981*) raises questions about frustrated ambition, a woman's need to preserve her body through controlling her reproduction and the connection between love and the material, especially money. Sheila and Tafi have been married for twenty years. Her disaffection with her husband has its roots in her frustrated dream to become a nurse and what turned out to be a loveless marriage characterised by physical abuse largely at its beginning. She finds herself a dependent housewife, a position she finds very difficult to accept. She says of her bitterness, "*Ishungu dzinondibaya. Shungu dzokushaya chandinoti changuwo*" (What burns me inside is a strong desire, a desire to have something I can call my own) (33).

Sheila's deep-seated discontent with Tafi is evident right at the beginning of the play when she refuses to respond to Tafi's evening greetings and to answer the husband's enquiry after her "migraine." Sheila's life is submerged in regret and bitterness. She is bitter first of all, because she fell pregnant just before she could write her last nursing exam. Max, Tafi's friend, had impregnated Sheila, asked her to temporarily claim that Tafi was responsible for the pregnancy. The plan, according to Max, was that he would go overseas and then send for Sheila so she could finish her nursing course and the two would marry and stay overseas. Duplicitous as this action of Sheila's is, it is pitted against the deceit of two men – Max's jilting of her and Tafi's lies and broken promises. This explains why Mungoshi withholds Sheila's deceit until towards the end of the play. Through dropping minor details to the audience, Sheila problematizes issues such as the meaning of love, procreation and ambition.

Sheila is contemptuous of Tafi's protestations of love because as far as she is concerned, they never loved each other and Tafi has no clue what love is. She asks her husband,

> *Ukati chinonzi rudo uochiziva iwe? Dai waichiziva handifungi kuti ungadai wakaramba mukadzi wako wokutanga nepamusana pokushaya mbereko. Dai*

waindida handifungi kuti waindisvora nekundituka zvawaiita zvose zviye. Wakandiroorera kuti ndikuitire vana chete. (23)

Do you think you have the faintest idea what love is? If you did, I don't think you would have divorced your first wife simply because she was barren. If you ever loved me, I don't think you would have scolded and verbally abused me the way you did. You only married me so that I could bear children for you. That's all. (My own translation from Shona)

Sheila problematises marriage by bringing up the question of love and its idea of emotional closeness, suggesting that intimacy should not be reduced to its barest function of sex and procreation; at the same time, Sheila suggests that affect and exchange are inseparable. Her grievances are genuine especially when one considers that Tafi had struck the pose of a modern, gender-sensitive man before their marriage. As a result Sheila had thought, before their marriage, that she had found someone to share her vision of social mobility with. She still has Tafi's letters in which he had professed love and gender equality, some of whose contents Sheila quotes verbatim:

Dzidzo inoreva kuti mukadzi ishamwari yako murume, akafanana newe pane zvose, waunobvumirana kugara naye, muchiita zvese pachena pasina kuvanza, kutyisidzirana kana kunyengedzana. (26)

To receive formal education means that you take your wife as a friend for she is just the same as you in every respect and your equal. As such it means both man and woman must do everything transparently, free of intimidation and deceit. (My own translation from Shona)

These prove to be vacuous phrases that Tafi was mouthing before their marriage and Sheila feels grossly abused and significantly betrayed especially because soon after their marriage, Tafi starts physically assaulting her for no apparent reason other than to release his frustrations through this act. Mungoshi's point is that Tafi and Sheila's marriage is built on deception and lies on both sides. Sheila lies about her pregnancy whereas Tafi does through promising an egalitarian marriage. Theirs is supposed to be a modern marriage, described by Zeihl (1994:46) as a marriage that "promises a great deal more

than economic security. Love, respect, sharing, companionship and egalitarianism" as part of the "package deal," so to say.

Sheila's unfulfilled ideas about and with Tafi are responsible for her disenchantment with love. Part of her frustrating history with Tafi involves the husband's disregard for the necessity of family planning:

> *Ndakakuti ini zvinu zvachinja, dai tamborega kuchaita vamwe vana mushure ma Lucy, ukanditi ndiri kuda kudzikisa zita rako nechi Rungu chokunzwa mubhazi. Ndakakuti dai wandirega ndadzidza kana kutsvaga basa tibatsirane ukanditi ndava kuda kutsvaga zvikomba. Chii chandakaitawo pano ukanditenda? Iye zvino vana ava uri kuti ndiri kuva dzidzisa zvisizvo. Uri kuti ndiri kuda kukutonga pano. Chako Tafi haudi kukundwa kana kukoneswa. Unoda kuti tose nevana pano tigwagwadze kana tichikuona*. (23)
>
> I did say to you, times have changed, let's not have any more children after Lucy but you said I wanted to lower your family name through some dubious European custom I didn't understand. I also asked you if you could let me further my education or find a job but you said that was my ploy to get lovers. Now you claim I am teaching our children all the wrong things. You say I want to lord it over you in this home. The truth is, you don't want anyone to beat you at anything, and so you want everything done your way. You want everyone in this home, children included, to worship you. (My own translation from Shona)

Sheila is one of two women in Mungoshi's work who express a desire to control their reproductive capacities. The first is a rather extreme case in which Monika in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970) aborts a child born of rape by Mujubheki, a man that Monika's mother wants her daughter to marry. Sheila's desire to have fewer children is founded on the idea that less children would have made it possible for her to launch and maintain a career and secondly, it would have slowed down the aging of her body. Thus Sheila regards childbearing as one of the disabilities of maternal obligations.

It emerges that Tafi has been insensitive to Sheila's plans, wishes and desires to better herself and the fortunes of the family generally. Her disappointment is as strong as Tafi's

denial of it. That she had progressive ideas like minimizing the size of their family and contributing to the family's income is incontestable. That she lied to Tafi about her pregnancy does not signify much regarding Tafi's treatment of her as his wife, given that Tafi only discovers her deceit at the end of the play. That Mungoshi gives her this vice seems, more than anything else, to have been influenced by the writer's general idea that no one is perfect.

Sheila's bitterness is exacerbated by Tafi's lack of ambition. She mocks Tafi in a manner reminiscent of VaChingweru's contempt for her husband in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo*) (1970), discussed in detail in the next chapter. She refutes Tafi's claim that all he wants for his family is a humble life style, in the process posing the question: what constitutes failure or success in marriage and individual attainment? Sheila vehemently denies that theirs is a modest lifestyle. She sees poverty instead and proceeds to emasculate Tafi through her speech, especially when Max returns from overseas:

> *Usade zvako kuzvinyaradza zvenhema apo. Wakatadza chete zvnoitwa navamwe varume vanonzi varume. Iye zvino uchiona vana Max vogara mumasabhabha vachidzichinjanisa Benz handiti unonzwa godo richikudzipa pahuro?* (24)
>
> Don't comfort yourself with lies. You have failed to achieve what other men worthy of that name have achieved. When you see Max living in suburbia and driving different Mercedes Benz models, don't you feel jealousy choking you? (My own translation from Shona)

Sheila's view on her family's poverty which she abhors and attributes to Tafi's lack of ambition, suggests that "affect and exchange are entangled" (Cole and Thomas, 2009). For bearing Tafi children, providing him sex and having her dreams thwarted, Sheila is extracting a huge debt from him and may very well be enjoying the discomfort she causes him. This echoes the observation by Mills (2005:91) that "money can be the single most significant symbol through which one can imagine, practice and understand a sexual and social relationship." Sheila's pointed statements are testimony to the fact that indeed, wives can willfully and psychologically hurt husbands in revenge not only for the

physical and psychological torture husbands inflict on wives, but the material deprivation and lost chances that the husbands may subject the wives to.

In a desperate move, Sheila attempts to rejuvenate herself by wearing lurid make-up and ill-fitting dresses and has an affair with Max. Somewhat pathetic as this attempt at rejuvenating herself is, it is a painful reminder of how bearing children at Tafi's behest has made her older than her years. It is also a reminder of the chances Sheila has lost by becoming a mother. It is very tempting at this point to dismiss Sheila as a confused and highly immoral woman. The point however, is that her antics stand as an obtrusive reminder of the deception and heavy-handed treatment she was subjected to by Max and then Tafi respectively. Mungoshi deliberately creates a frustrated but brazen character who voices her discontent uninhibited by decorum and thereby exposing some of men's foibles that tend to be taken for granted.

Rindai in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) shows more restraint in her disapproval of her marriage to an irresponsible husband, Rex. In fact, the story exposes sexual double-standards in which "sexual potency gives social value and self-esteem to men, sexual modesty gives social value to women" (Silberschmidt, 2004:242). Veit-Wild (1993:280) is of the opinion that Rindai "seems to be a projection of Mungoshi's mind, his ideal of a woman." Perhaps Veit-Wild (1993) in making this statement, suggests that Rindai is one of Mungoshi's most carefully crafted characters. What is significant about her, especially when contrasted with Sheila in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981) is that Rindai shows very little regard for the material on affect or love. She decides, unlike Magi in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) and Sara in the short story "The Hare" (1997), to get married to Rex whereas the other two women find themselves with unwanted pregnancies, forcing Sara into early marriage and Magi into single motherhood. Rex however, stops supporting Rindai both materially and emotionally but Rindai does not seem to stop loving him. The only thing that makes her stop loving her husband, and briefly too, is her discovery that he has been having an affair with her friend for several years.

One of Mungoshi's celebrated novels, *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) sees a shift in Mungoshi's narrative technique, when compared to his first novel, *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (*Brooding Breeds Despair/Heart Break*) (1970). This also accounts for the depth of characters in the second novel. Mungoshi drops omniscient narration and opts for what Vambe (2005:221) calls the "stream of consciousness" technique to present individuated mental processes of the main characters. It is, however, a limited stream of consciousness. Rather, Mungoshi mixes limited third person narration together with flashback and interior monologue. The thoughts of the main characters – Rindai, her husband Rex and her friend Magi, are apportioned space to dramatise conflicted and conflicting perceptions on male-female relationships.

Regarding its theme, *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) is not radically different from other Ndebele and Shona novels of its time in that it focuses on a love triangle occasioned by the separation of husband and wife – the husband engaged in wage labour in town, having an affair with another woman whilst the wife toils in the fields in their rural home. However, "Mungoshi treats this conventional theme very differently and abstains from the usual categorization into 'good' and 'bad'" (Veit-Wild, 1993:279). Thus, according to Veit-Wild (1993) Mungoshi's writing in this book has no clear didactic thrust. An argument is made here that to a large extent, it has. Mungoshi may not have as much propensity to moralise as most writers of vernacular literature in Zimbabwe, but it is a question of extent more than absolutes in his Shona novels.

Rindai's story, like Sheila's, is also one of truncated dreams. Unlike Sheila's hers is also a story of selfless love for her husband and family. In her case, unlike Sheila's, she decides to marry Rex before she gets pregnant, not because she is a victim of pregnancy. There is no deception on Rindai's part. By marrying Rex, she also, like Sheila, sacrifices her training to become a nurse. Rindai marries Rex in spite of her mother's advice that she should first qualify as a nurse. Rindai's mother single-handedly raises her daughter after separating with her husband who marries another woman after marrying Rindai's mother. She decides to opt out of a polygamous relationship. Already, Rindai has a good model of self-reliance and emotional fortitude in her mother who has seen, through

experience, that men can quickly get tired of their wives or want to boost flagging male egos by marrying other women or having affairs. That is why she also alerts Rindai to the fact that she is marrying rather too early.

Rindai's mother wants her daughter to be self-reliant, for she, as an older and experienced woman, has seen the advantages of self-reliance and the disadvantages of female dependency on men. She says to her daughter:

> *Haufungi here kuti zvaive nani wange waita kosi yako, waizoroorwa hako wanyatsogadzikana muhana? Nekuti iye zvino pausi ipapo ndinoziva kuti ihana yako chete iri kukupapamisa. Dai wanga watora kosi yako, nyangwe dai aizoti haachakuda hazvaikunetsa nekuti unenge uchizvisevenzera*. (17)
>
> Don't you think it'll be better to first complete your nursing course so that should you decide to marry, you make that decision with a level head? Because at the moment I know that you are being guided by your skittish heart. If you get your course first, even if he [Rex] changes his mind and says he doesn't love you anymore, it wouldn't be the end of the world for you because you'll be having your job to fall back on. (My own translation from Shona)

Rindai's answer is that Rex earns good money. Her mother quickly points out that the control of money is the root cause of most marital disputes and tells her daughter that Rex can use the very same money to procure a second wife. The impetuosity of youth gets the better of Rindai and she marries Rex against her mother's advice.

The advice that Rindai's mother gives rehearses the unsatisfactory marriages that Mungoshi portrays, in which, as revealed earlier in this chapter, it is mostly women who are disillusioned when their desires are unfulfilled. This stands in contrast to most marriage unions portrayed in Shona and Ndebele literature in which it is largely the man who regrets having married a lazy woman, a witch or an unfaithful wife. When Rex stops visiting the rural home and supporting his family financially, Rindai is worried but does not become hysterical nor deeply disaffected like Sheila in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981). Rindai determines to work harder and become self-reliant. She is, in the first case,

a hard worker for Mungoshi writes, "…*aigona kuzvishandira oga. Basa akanga asingazivi kuti rinonzi iri nderomurume kana kuti nderomukadzi*" (…she could work on her own. She did not categorize work as men's or women's. If she had a job to do, she just did it) (My own translation from Shona). Rindai grows more than enough food and sells the surplus. She also has a thriving poultry project. She becomes a wife with an independent budget from her husband and engages in productive labour to take care of herself and her two children.

Veit-Wild (1993:280) is correct in describing Rindai as a "strong, self-reliant, sensitive woman who lives on her own resources and does not need a man to give her an identity." Her self-reliance and taciturn nature make Rindai a subject of deviancy discourse in the village. She is first of all given labels: *"Anodada," "Anotsvinya," Anoti zvaakaenda kuchikoro," "Ane mwoyo wouroyi"* (She is too proud, she is arrogant, she thinks she is special because she went to school, she has the evil heart of a witch) (My own translation from Shona). She has broken the axiom *"Kugarisana kukumbirana"* (Good neighbourliness is asking from your neighbour that which you don't have) (11) through her economic independence and her strong emotional resources that see her eschew gossip and the company of gossips. One of the gossips says, *"Handimuoni mamiriro ake. Munhu asingatiowo nhasi ndashayawo chakati, regai ndinokumbira kwavaningi"* (She is a very suspicious character. She has never, even on a single day asked for or borrowed something from anyone. That is very strange) (10). When a male teacher in the village befriends Rindai, she is falsely accused of having a sexual relationship with him.

Although one appreciates the fact that she is a "robust and hardworking woman who commands respect and her character hugs the rugged moral authority normally associated with the resourcefulness of black women in rural Zimbabwe" (Vambe, 2005:223), it is through the family and village's gaze that Rindai is controlled. The text presents Rindai as endowed with patience, intelligence, respect, forgiveness and a strong sense of morality and some critics (Vambe, 2005; Veit-Wild, 1993) stress these characteristics. What remains a glaring omission is how the village and family act as panopticon, putting Rindai under surveillance and thereby controlling her behaviour.

Rindai's readiness to forgive Rex is questionable. She might possess qualities of independence, moral probity and emotional strength but her accommodation of Rex's abuse begs many questions. One feels that Rindai sacrifices her happiness in an effort to become an ideal mother and daughter-in-law. This is so especially when one considers that the final reconciliation between Rex and Rindai happens after the death of their daughter, Rangarirai, in a somewhat spurious car accident just at that moment when Rindai is walking away from Rex. The child is sacrificed for the reunion of the parents, one of which, the husband, does not deserve any form of reconciliation, indeed, does not deserve the good wife that he has so ill-treated.

It would appear that the two literary traditions Mungoshi works in – the English and Shona, the latter shaped by the didacticism of the literature bureau, clash, giving rise to contradictions in Mungoshi's writing. On the one hand he constructs a strong woman with the potential to walk away from an abusive husband (just as her mother did) and on the other, contrives to find ways, including an implausible accident, to make sure she does not leave. The ending sounds so contrived that it is likely Mungoshi had written a different ending that the Literature Bureau did not approve of. In fact, Chiwome (1996), cited in Vambe (2005:231) "has argued that the end of *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* was imposed by the Rhodesia Literature Bureau editors so as to control the story that was threatening to 'collapse' the differentiated roles between African men and women in the rural and new urban settings." Just like in any other didactic Shona or Ndebele text, Magi, Rindai's friend who decides to have and affair with Rex, her friend's husband, ends up pregnant with Rex's child and Rex denies responsibility. While Rex reconciles with his wife, Magi is left to suffer the consequences of the second woman who was a threat to a marriage. She suffers the disgraceful end of a female villain just as happens in most Shona and Ndebele novels.

4.7 Single Women in the City

There is an abundance of literature on gender and urbanisation in Zimbabwe in particular and Africa generally (Gaidzanwa, 1985; Veit-Wild, 1993; Stratton, 1994; Davies & Graves, 1986; Nelson, 1996; Vidrovitch, 1997; Nnaemeka, 1997, 1998; Mguni and

Furusa, 2006; Cole and Thomas, 2009). Concerning creative writing in Zimbabwe, texts that deal with this issue in the three main languages – Shona, Ndebele and English are too numerous to mention given that most of the literature was inspired by rapid urbanisation and the unraveling of some gender myths. Consequently, as some critics indicate (Vidrovitch, 1997; Nnaemeka, 1997; Dube, 2006) some of Africa's and Zimbabwe's creative writing registers moral panics embedded in the upsetting of conventional gender norms as a result of urbanisation. City women occupy a central position in the discussion of urbanisation and gender, especially single city women.

In Zimbabwean literature, Gaidzanwa (1985: 67) observes, the city women stand in sharp contrast with rural women when she writes that, "There is a marked association between women's virtue and a rural, peasant life style. Most of the ideal wives and mothers in the literature are rural women." Conversely, the city women emerge as wicked, immoral, aggressive and in some cases, untrustworthy. The foundations of the family in the city become threatened by female infidelity. Tsodzo's play, *Babamunini Francis* (1977) (A Secret Lover Called Uncle Francis) is one such piece of work that features a woman who cheats on her husband and most of the blame seems to be attributed to the supposed wiles of the city. At times formal education is factored into the "decadence" of city women. The educated woman is portrayed as promiscuous, needlessly rebellious and so on – all of which signifies cultural decay. A good example here is Moyo's (1977) *Ziva Kwawakabva* (Don't Forget your Origins). In most of these works, the immoral woman is discovered and punished or commits suicide. In some works, such as Mlilo's *Lifile* (1982) (The Country/Nation has Died), the errant single woman, corrupted by town ways, returns to the rural areas, penitent and disillusioned. The rural woman on the other hand, is portrayed as a metaphor for moral uprightness, an ideal of purity, diligence and patience as opposed to the immorality, self-indulgence and laziness of urban women.

The single woman in the city in most Zimbabwean literature carries the stigma of prostitution. As Gaidzanwa (1985:12) comments, "There is no distinction made between lovers, mistresses, concubines and prostitutes." Mungoshi however is one of the few Zimbabwean writers who offer a nuanced representation of single women in the city. In

his portrayal of single women in the city, Mungoshi acknowledges the difficult position of single women whose singlehood sometimes makes them vulnerable. Through the use of intelligent and determined single women in the city, Mungoshi suggests that women have the capacity to emancipate themselves from oppressive situations. There is the emergence of the vocal, openly critical, economically and sexually autonomous woman who offers an explicit challenge to masculinist domination.

The woman who fights for professional visibility in Mungoshi's work challenges gender relations and the distribution of power in postcolonial Zimbabwe and this is seen especially in the novel *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983). Single women's increased literacy in the city gives rise to women whose actions question social structures and mental habits of their epochs. Education, fought for by the mothers for the benefit of their daughters, becomes a tool not only for the enhancement of individual visibility but an exercise in the acquisition of a strong voice driven by self-determination. The city as a locus of economic and political power at a macro level becomes a site for the shifting of both these forms of power at the micro level of gender relations. Thus, the city emerges as a site for new ideas and values that strive for positive social change. For this reason, Moyana's (2006) assertion that overall, there is a strong misogynist current running through Mungoshi's work reveals both the limited scope of her studies on Mungoshi as well as a preconceived conclusion that Mungoshi has an "obsession with denigrating women" (155).

In some of his writing, Mungoshi portrays the city as a place where women are easy prey for men. In the story "The Brother" (1980), Sheila loses her virginity to Magufu, a married man with a wife in the countryside. This story epitomises the moral dichotomy referred to above about the rural and town women. Magufu (chaff) is an alcoholic. He laces Sheila's drink with brandy and then proceeds to slap and force her to have sex with him. It is Sheila's first sexual experience but the way in which Magufu does not believe it reveals his thought, quite typical of a number of men Mungoshi portrays, that by virtue of being an urban girl Sheila has had a lot of sexual experience and therefore as a man, he is entitled to have sex with her because she already carries the moral/sexual taint of the city.

Thus, when Sheila asks Magufu if he has a wife, the latter's response is, "I don't see what my wife has got to do with this" (57). In other words, Magufu's wife and the rural represent moral decency whilst Sheila and the city represent decadence. When Sheila insists on bringing the two categories together through constant questions about Magufu's wife, love and the trick he uses to lure her to bed, Magufu hits her. He gets angry because Sheila is prodding him to perceive her as a person, and not just another immoral city woman only good enough for sex. It is Sheila who destabilises Magufu's long-held misogynist belief which has seen him turn his town home into a brothel and centre of violence on women. Sam, one of his friends, unleashes uncalled for violence on one of the women in the house, Martha. In a purely sadistic manner, Sam beats up Martha until "she was lying back on the sofa, her mouth looking as if she was eating raw liver" (73).

The women in this story are sexually exploited and physically abused but Mungoshi does not condone this, as Moyana (2006) seems to think. One tends to agree with Zhuwarara that "The city has become the kind of environment in which vulnerable and innocent souls such as the one represented by Sheila … are trampled upon by selfish and brutal characters like Magufu and by the blind and unexplained violence such as is displayed by Sam…" (74). Limited as this view is in that it ascribes the ills mentioned here solely to the city, it is useful in its pointing out that the abuse of vulnerable women does happen and writers need to expose it. The absence of an explicitly liberationist and "progressive" message does not equal the condoning of such abuse. Mungoshi's disapproval is evident in his attention to meticulous detail in the story, "in which everything is sordid and unfailingly disgusting" (Zhuwarara, 2001:75). Moreover, if one is alert to Mungoshi's style, it becomes apparent that he is pointing out the ridiculousness of men like Magufu who do not realise the irony in being the chief architects in acts of sexual decadence and then claiming that every city woman is "loose." Mungoshi uses the loss of Sheila's virginity to a man of Magufu's caliber to bring out this irony.

Magi in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) is one of Mungoshi's most complex women characters regardless of the fact that she is cast in a love triangle as "the other

woman." Although the story line is quite simple, a crisis in marriage caused by the husbands' infidelity and debauched city life, or the betrayal of a female friend by another who ends up having a sexual relationship with the friend's husband, Mungoshi treats this situation in a more complex manner compared to other Shona and Ndebele writers. The characters in this story are painstakingly drawn and are "shown in permanent conflict with society and with themselves" (Veit-Wild, 1993:281). In many respects, Magi anticipates the relatively emancipated Martha and Sharon in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983) in that she has a lucid understanding of the behaviour of the sexes, proposes to take a liberatory action but ends up as the clichéd "other woman" fighting over her friend's abusive husband.

Magi first comes across as a beautiful, open, lively and trustworthy person, as if Mungoshi wants to disabuse his readers of the notion that city women cannot have these character traits. These positive traits draw Rindai, Rex's wife, to her. Rex is drawn by Magi's physical beauty and liveliness. Lurking in Magi's past is the fact that she was jilted by her lover who had impregnated her when she was in Form Three, a year before she could finish secondary school. As a result, she could not continue with her schooling whereas her lover, a boy in high school, finished his education and proceeded to study in America. Thus, Mungoshi brings to the fore the unfairness of this situation and the reader becomes sympathetic towards Magi, especially given the fact that the boy, in league with his parents, had lied to Magi that he would marry her – a situation that is echoed in the duping of Sheila by Max in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981). As soon as he learned that Magi was pregnant, her father disowned and threw her out his house. The father also treats his daughter as "damaged goods" by not bothering to think of the boy's part in Magi's pregnancy. Magi stays with an aunt before striking out on her own and that is why when we are first introduced to her, she strikes one as a toughened and street-wise urbanite, nonetheless warm-hearted.

As Mungoshi develops Magi's character, we realise that deep inside, she is unhappy and that is why she seeks solace in drink. Rindai thinks Magi's drinking is very unbecoming for a decent woman, and in this way of thinking she shares a prevalent view in the 1970s

and perhaps one that has endured to the present, that a woman who consumes alcohol is a woman of "loose morals" and in need of correction. It is not surprising then that Zakariya, one of Magi's lovers, beats her in an effort to make her stop drinking. Magi leaves Zakariya instead of drink. She tries several times to quit drinking but the trauma of being jilted by her boyfriend, being disowned and driven out of the family home by her father, the death of her mother occasioned by this action of her father, her sister's suicide when she was made pregnant and jilted by a man and a series of disappointments with men she expected would marry her – all these aspects of her life drive her to drink.

Beer is not the only commodity that Magi consumes. Cosmetics like red lipstick, perfume and fashionable clothes are included in this list. In his insightful article, Burke (2005) traces how, when African consumption expanded in colonial Zimbabwe, it led to white anxiety about an emerging black middle-class. Coupled with the anxieties of black men over the increasing mobility of black women, the two became a potent mix in the creation of stereotypes concerning the consuming black woman. Writes Burke:

> The confluence of these attitudes [white anxieties about emerging black middle class] with the concerns of African men about female mobility and economic power and the role of African women in commodification put into circulation a powerful set of cultural stereotypes that envisioned the most active and socially visible black female consumers as corrupt and culturally degenerate, as temptresses and prostitutes. Such stereotypes had power among most whites and some African men. (68)

To appreciate Burke's acuity above, one notices that one of the things that attract and repel Rex concerning Magi is her use of red lipstick. Generally, red lipstick has come to be associated with prostitutes in Zimbabwe and other African countries, and so has the preoccupation with cosmetics. Even female novelists like Barbara Makhalisa portray women who regularly consume cosmetics as either "loose" or prostitutes. In the novel *Impilo Yinkinga* (1983), Makhalisa shows Mamsie, a married woman with a lover called Joza using cosmetics, especially red lipstick (there is sizeable textual space describing how she paints her lips) when she is going out to meet him and not when she is at home or going out for any other occasion.

On the one hand therefore, the aspirations of black women expressed through consumption are viewed as immoral as seen through the association of such with prostitution. On the other, black men are attracted by the beauty that such consumerism achieves but the attraction is mixed with a sense of revulsion. Rex is initially shocked by Magi's drinking, repelled by her red lipstick but ends up not only as Magi's drinking partner but lover of many years as well and impregnates her.

One admirable quality about Magi is that she manages to overcome complete dependence on men by having a secretarial job. However, this job alone does not satisfy her. She has an emptiness that she hopes can be filled by a proper relationship with a man, thus, her deep-seated fear of becoming an old maid. This fear drives her to have one affair after another in the hope that she will find a man to marry her. She eventually finds out why men do not want to marry her:

> *Vakomana vemuno umu hauvazivi. Vanofunga kuti musikana wese anosevenza muHarare ipfambi. Saka kukubata kwacho kwavanoda kuita ndekwemamveve chaiko. Havadaviri kuti muno mungaite musikana chaiye angaroorwe namunhu*. (22)
>
> Bachelors in this city are up to no good. They think that every girl who holds a job here in Harare is a prostitute. That explains why they handle women as if we are rubbish that needs to be discarded. They don't think for once that in this city they can get good and proper girls to marry. (22)

To a large extent, Magi is correct, for we see in the novel how attractive her physique and personality are, yet all the man she dates do not want to marry her. The reasons given by the men do not reflect their judgement of Magi's character, rather, the urban space she occupies and as already discussed, the stereotype she is framed in as a result of her consumerism. One is reminded of Mujubheki's remark in *Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo* (1970) when asked by Monika why he had not married a woman in Johannesburg after living there for many years, preferring to marry her, a village girl. Mujubheki answers,

"Vakadzi veJubheki havasi vokuroora. Vakangwarisa maningi" (Jo'burg women are not marriageable material. They are too clever by half) (17).

Thus merely dwelling in a city, according to some men, condemns women found in this place, especially those who work, as indecent. Vidrovitch (1997) provides a prescient observation on the conflation of women's wage earning, independence and immorality, a phenomenon that also expressed itself as a drive to control women's physical movement:

> [African men] hardly allowed women the freedom of movement needed for work in a factory. Almost everywhere, women workers were despised. Usually young and divorced or unmarried, they often sought regular salaries because they were responsible for one or several children. Among men, the financial autonomy of their wives in the factory was ill-accepted: it meant that a woman was "lost," suspected of using her economic independence to satisfy "immoral" appetites. Confusing cause and effect, public opinion claimed that women worked in factories not to escape life as a prostitute or concubine but to achieve sexual freedom. Work of this kind supposedly led straight to libertinage. (129-130)

What one reads here is an element of fear from men – that city women who work will be more challenging than rural women and it will not be easy to manipulate them because of their financial independence.

Magi becomes bitter with men and despondent over marriage:

> *Varume vanoshinwa. Vane mwoyo youmbwa. Kana ndikashaya anondiroora zvangu ndingasve ndagara ndakadaro, kwete kutsvinyirwa nemumwe munhu anodyawo sadza seni, achiendawo kuchimbuzi sezvandinoitawo.* (23)
>
> Men are lecherous. They take after dogs. If I can't find one to marry me I don't mind staying single. I hate the very idea of having a man acting all high and mighty, treating me like dirt as if he doesn't eat *sadza* like I do and shit like I do. (My own translation from Shona)

In spite of her desire to be treated decently by men, failing which she had rather not have a man in her life, Magi ends up as the "other woman," betraying in the process, her

friendship with Rindai and the solidarity Rindai had shown her by turning down Zakariya's (Magi's lover) proposal that he and Rindai become lovers.

> Although she is attracted to Zakariya, Rindai turns him down first, because Zakariya treats women as objects. Rindai thinks, *"...kutaura kwa Zakariya kwakanga kwamuratidza kuti aiona vakadzi sezvimwe zvinhu zvinoerwa pachikero"*(41) (…Zakariya's manner of talking revealed to her that he viewed women as things you could weigh on a balance scale) (My own translation from Shona).

Second, Rindai refuses to betray her friend and third, to be made a laughing stock, together with Magi, by men. She says to Zakariya, "*Kana ndabvuma todii? Kana ndabira Magi murume wake ndofara kuti ndamukaurisa, imi muchiseka muchiti vakadzi inzenza?"* (41) (What if I agree to be your lover? When I have stolen Magi's man must I be happy that I've won over her? And meanwhile, will you not be crowing and saying women are all loose and stupid?) (My own translation from Shona). Here, not only is Rindai protecting her own dignity but that of her friend and women as a whole.

Magi betrays the female solidarity shown her by Rindai by living together with her friend's husband for many years. This becomes possible largely because of the two spaces – the city and the rural. Mungoshi could be highlighting the negative effect of colonial settlement patterns and how men became complicit in the destruction of their families using the very same colonial idea that the city is a place for working men and wives should stay in the rural areas. Rex beats up Rindai when she arrives in their city house unannounced. That Rindai has come to inform her husband of serious problems in their rural home is insignificant to Rex who thinks that it is an unwritten law that Rindai must first of all get permission from him before she can visit.

The collusion between colonial laws and "tradition" in the restriction of women's access to the city seems to have struck root for even Rex's mother defends her son's beating of his wife citing the unwritten code between husband and wife regarding town visits. Writers of Ndebele novels also capture this. Ndaba in Makhalisa's *Umendo* (Marriage)

(1977) beats up his wife for the same reason and before doing so interrogates and offers her a homily:

> *Ngubani othe uze lapha wena? Hi? Phendula ngingakakudukluzi nje amazinyo lawo akhumuke…. Abakini abakulayanga ukuthi kufanele umele ilizwi elivela kumkakho kuqala kuso sonke isikhathi na?* (39)
>
> You, who said you should come here, hah? Answer me before I bash in all your teeth. Didn't your folks stress it to you that you are required to visit only after your husband's consent has been sought and given? (My own translation from Shona)

Faced with this situation, Rindai is filled with fear and stays away from their city house, making it possible for Magi to have an affair with Rex for several years without Rindai's knowledge.

Mungoshi could also be using Rindai as a foil to Magi, in which case *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) does not divert much from the general treatment of the "other woman" in Ndebele and Shona literature. Magi appears very keen to embrace her status as the "other woman" when she says to Rex, *"Enda zvako kumudzimai wako. Ndiye mudzimai wako wekumusha, ini ndini mukadzi wako wemuno muHarare"* (Go to your wife. She is your rural wife and I am your Harare [city] wife) (78). Once again, Magi is left in the lurch when she is pregnant with Rex's child. Perhaps what saves Mungoshi from the charge of wantonly punishing Magi is that although she errs in living with her friend's husband, she raises the question of Rex's complicity in the whole matter. She says to him, "*handisi simbi kana mhuka. Ndiri munhu. Ndakagara newe kwemakore ese aya ndichiita zvawaida – iwe wayifungei nazvo? Waiti zvaizvoguma sei? Waiti munhu asingakude aiita here izvozvo?"* (I am neither made of metal nor am I an animal. I am human. I lived with you all these years, doing what you wanted – what did you make of that? How did you think it will all end? Did you think that someone who didn't love you could do all the things I did for you?) (142).

It is not surprising that Rex cannot answer these questions for they betray his complicity and selfishness in nearly destroying not only his marriage but Magi's life as well. In the end Magi does not emerge as an immoral woman but rather, a victim. One is bound to agree with Veit-Wild (1993:287) that *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) is "full of admiration and sympathy for the independent woman Rindai and full of understanding and pity for the victimized Magi. Mungoshi dissects and unmasks typical male chauvinist behaviour as a major root of the problems that the book describes." Rex's masculinist approach to his marriage to Rindai and affair with Magi is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura (1983) builds on Magi's mooted idea and desire for independence and self-fulfilment. It is interesting not only to pursue this idea but also how the idea is explored through the use of a full-blown stream of consciousness technique in the later novel. Mungoshi clearly signals his intent of allotting the bulk of the space and voice in his novel to women characters by exploring subjective views of six characters, five of whom are women – Va Nhanga, Ruth, Sharon, Martha and Lorna. The women's social identities range from mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, daughter, wife and fiancée. The only male voice is that of Shaky.

Martha and Sharon are single women in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983). Both challenge traditional gender definitions through the sharpness of their minds and their determination to attain economic and sexual autonomy. Martha, a single mother, is Eric's fiancée. The latter has just returned from studying in England, having made a promise that upon return the two will wed. Eric however, does not appear keen to marry Martha. His hesitancy does not appear to worry Martha that much. What worries her is that she has created a relationship with Eric's family for the seven years she has been dating Eric. In a sense, she has become part of their family. In one of her monologues, Martha says:

> *Usafunge zvako kuti kana waregera kundiroora iwewe ndichatambura, izvo kanda kure imbwa dzimhanyire. Ndakaita dhigirii rangu nekosi yokudzidzisa. Ku Bikita uko vabereki vangu hapana chavari kushaya*. (32)

> Don't even for a second think that if you [Eric] don't marry me, I'll be destitute. That's the last thought you should have on your mind. I obtained a degree and a teaching qualification. Look at how even my parents in Bikita do not want for anything because I can provide for them as well. (My own translation from Shona)

Proud of herself and her achievement, Martha is a career woman for whom marriage is not an absolute necessity. She expresses explicit self-assurance and confidence. Should she want another child or more children, she considers getting pregnant by a man of her choice and not ask for marriage. Living together might suffice. If that fails, she is not terrified of the prospect of raising more than one child on her own. As she says, "*Vamwe vari kugara vese navarume vasina michato, vamwe vari kuti kana voda vana vanotsvaga anovapa vozvichengetera*" (Some women live together with men they haven't married. When some want children they just find a man to make them pregnant and keep the child) (33). Thus, Martha destabilizes the discourse of the female body, marriage and reproduction, suggesting that mother is not a synonym for wife whereas Magi in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) conflates the two and hence her desperate need to be Rex's second wife.

The desirability of informal cohabitation on the woman's terms, as expressed by Martha was radical, especially in the Zimbabwe of the early 1980s when *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) was published. So was and still is, to some extent, the challenge on purported female passionlessness and the idea that female sexuality should be expressed in approved forms of mating. Marriage, following Martha's thinking here, is no longer the portal into adulthood for a woman, financial independence is. Martha has her own flat and car – symbols of her independence. That is why she decides not to marry Eric whom she knows has been having an affair with his step-brother's wife as well as another woman whilst he was in England. No matter how much Eric begs her, her mind is set:

> *Hazviiiti kuti ndingoti 'Zvawauya zvanaka, Eric. Ndakuregerera zvose, chindirooora hako.' Kungava kupusa kwakadii ikoko? (93)*
>
> *....*

Pane zvauri kutaura zvose chandiri kunzwa mukatikati memwoyo wako ndechhokuti uri kumanikidzirwa kuita zvisiri kudiwa nomwoyo wako…kana kundiroora kwacho hausi kuroora uchida. Wava kutya vokumusha kwako. Uri kuda kundiroorera kufadza vanhu, kwete kuti unozvida. Zvino kana pakadaro, with me, it doesn't work. *Hazviiti Eric. Iva* free *kuita zvaunoda. Usandiroorere zve*window dressing *kuti vanhu vagoti Eric akaroora.* (96)

I can't just say because you're now making yourself available for marriage everything is all right. That will be stupidity of the first order. (My own translation from Shona)

….

In all that you're saying, what I can hear very clearly is that you are being forced by external forces to marry me. You feel you are under duress from your folks and so you want to marry me just to please them, not because you love me and that's what you want to do. If that's the case, it doesn't work with me. Just feel free to do whatever you want because I don't want you to marry me for window dressing purposes so that people will regard you as a married man. (My own translation from Shona)

In putting her needs in front and detecting Eric's condescension, Martha insists on love and mutual feeling as the basis of marriage and not the status of marriage which may be based on nothing other than the official marking of cohabitation. Compared to Rindai in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975), Martha reveals how much Mungoshi's thoughts about women's emancipation have shifted. Whereas Rindai could forgive Rex for physically abusing her, neglecting the family materially and socially, as well as having a sexual affair with her friend, Martha cannot stand anything that compromises her self-respect.

Not surprisingly, Martha is a role model for Sharon, Eric's niece. Sharon is such a good judge of character that one is tempted to think she is Mungoshi's mouthpiece. Sharon admires Martha and thinks, *"Futhi pana mainini Martha panga paita munhu. Vangani vakadzi vanoti apihwa mwana agoshingirirazve kuita kosi, kusevenza, kudzokera*

kuchikoro nokupfurira ku University*?"* (Martha is a great person. How many young women get unwanted pregnancies but recover, go back to school, do a course and eventually get a University degree?) (24). Thus, Martha is a heroine in Sharon's eyes and indeed the readers' for refusing to be a casualty of her biology. She stands in sharp contrast to Sheila in *Inongova Njakenjake* (1981) who sees early pregnancy as condemning her to a life of unrealized dreams and consequently, does not apply herself in the direction of self-emancipation.

Martha's fortitude in overcoming the burden and stigma of an early pregnancy and a fatherless child seems to be Mungoshi's answer to Sheila's paralysed will. Martha's achievement is inspirational and hence Sharon's annoyance that Martha has so much patience with Eric because as Sharon says, "*Ndichinge ndiine basa rakaita seraMartha? Ayivhaya kuseni [Eric]. Chete kungotiwo nyaya dze* love *idzi…"* (If I had a good job like Martha's I'd quickly kick Eric out of my life. Well, one understands though that these love matters are complex) (92).

Having Martha as an inspirational figure makes Sharon withstand pressure from her father who wants her to get married before she has finished her studies. Her father also wants her to abide by the rules of his church, some of which Sharon finds oppressive to women. She realises that to avoid her father's direct influence, she has to pass her course and move out of home. She muses, *"Zvino manje zvekosi yandakunyorera ku* Polytechnic *zvikangofamba,* finish*. Ndibaba vangu zvavo asi zvimwe zvavanoita zvinombondifinha"* (If I pass the course that I'm going to write at the Polytechnic, that will be the end of my father's control over me. He is my father but at times his actions and demands really upset me) (27). Sharon's code-switching between Shona and English, her widespread use of slang coupled with her confidence, clear thinking and determination confirm her not only as entrenched in the city but also as equipped to succeed in it. For these reasons, one might safely suggest that through her, Mungoshi has created a better version of Martha.

It is not surprising then that distressed by her father's religiosity, his hermit-like existence and concomitant narrow thinking, Sharon thinks in the following manner, which bears quoting at length for it seems to encapsulate Mungoshi's outlook in the whole novel:

> *Kana urimumba uchigotarisa panze nekaburi kamwe chete uchiona paine bani, unodzoka wofunga kuti nyika yese inongova bani. Hauzozivi kuti kune mamwe mativi kune makomo, masango kana nyanza. Haiiti. Kana iyo rekodhi unombochinjawo uchiisa kuseri wani. Ukaramba wongoridza divi rimwe chete rinopedza rachereka, rakengeka…. Ndingaite sendiri kutuka asi zvababa zvonozomboda kundikorongonya mbijana. Ndipo pamunozonzwa mwana opedzisira oti kuna baba, 'Makapusa!' Ishoko rinorema parurimi asi ungazvidii kana uchida kuti zvinhu zvifambe? Kutarisa munhu achizviuraya nezvinu zvinogadziriswa? Haidhonzi.* (28)
>
> When you are indoors and your only view is through a crack in the door and all you can see is a valley, you end up thinking that the whole world is a valley. You never know that there are other features such as forests and lakes. Take the example of a record as well. There are times when you play the flip side. If you play one side persistently that side ends up scratched and useless. I may sound as if I am being disrespectful to my father but he is that narrow-minded. And in situations like these, that's when you find a child telling the father to his face that he is downright stupid! It is difficult to say that to one's parents but I think sometimes for the sake of progress, it is necessary. (My own translation from Shona)

It is easy to understand why Mazarura, Sharon's father, incenses his daughter no end for he thinks that every problem that he has will be resolved through prayer. At the same time, he lets his relatives spoil his relationship with his wife.

Befittingly, it is left up to Sharon to defend her mother from the abuse of the female patriarch, Norika who is convinced, just as Mazarura's mother is, that Ruth, Sharon's mother, has fed Mazarura a love potion to make him 'stupid' and pliable. Norika, with no evidence at all, accuses Ruth of infidelity, in fact, calls her a "whore" and insinuates that

Sharon is another man's child and not Mazarura's because Sharon's features are different from her father's. When Sharon tries to intervene as respectfully as she can, Norika calls her a whore as well, to which Sharon replies, *"Kana zviri zvokuhura ndakafundiswa nemi vorudzi rwangu, siyanayi namai vangu. Mutorwa pazviri"* (Well, if its whoring you're talking about, I was taught by my own people, my father's side – you of course. So leave my mother out of this as she is not close kin) (60). Sharon turns the tables on the female patriarch who thinks that by virtue of being the husband's sister, she is a female husband and has every right to control, and at times abuse, the brother's wife because the wife is always regarded as a stranger who needs the support of the aunts if her marriage is to last.

Sharon is prepared to even have a physical fight with Norika once the latter threatens to beat her up. When these two options to cow Sharon fail, Norika uses the threat of *ngozi*. Not even this will work with Sharon who is quick to point out that for *ngozi* to be effective, Norika would have to be her mother, which she is not. Sharon further puts her Aunt on the spot when she ends with, "*Vajaira kungorotomoka makuhwa pesepese pavanofamba. Ndiko kutidzidzisa here isu vana ikoko?*" (She [Norika] is so used to peddling rumours wherever she goes. Is this the good example that she is setting for us young ones?) (60). Sharon exposes Norika's abuse of her institutional position of power as *babakadzi* (literally, female father). The *babakadzi* or *tete*, as Mano (2004:322) points out, is widely regarded as a "valuable figure of wisdom and a key source of family stability." Norika is the very antithesis of this role, given that as the aunt she is responsible for the informal education of her nieces, especially in matters pertaining to sexuality and general good deportment. Sharon is aware of the discrepancy between Norika's expected role and the latter's determination to abuse her position and cause discord in the family. Ruth, Sharon's mother, slaps her daughter for exposing Norika's fraudulence. Sharon is stunned by this action because she does not understand that her mother comes from a generation that was taught to fear their husband's sisters and suffer their contumely. However, Sharon's point has been made and Norika becomes wary of verbally attacking either Ruth or Sharon.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter follows the one on adolescents and young men who are in pursuit of the assumed heterosexual telos that they will have sanctioned or non-sanctioned sexual relationships with women, largely aimed at reproduction. As such, this chapter on women starts by providing an overview of the dominant images of women in African and Zimbabwean literature with a view to juxtapose these with the gender scripts that the young men in Mungoshi's fiction learn. Generally, feminist critics in Africa agree that for the most part, images of women in literature are "negative" (Gaidzanwa, 1985; Davies and Graves, 1986). This classification has its uses but is not without its problems and limitations as Stratton (1990) reveals. Taking heed of Stratton's caution that some of the "positive" images of women in African literature are on the contrary, negative, the chapter cautiously teases out cause and effect in Mungoshi's works, paying particular attention to women's open and covert protest. The chapter traces gender in(equality) in Africa generally and Zimbabwe in particular through history, revealing the common sentiment that colonisation lowered the status of women in Africa. Keenly aware of the appropriation of women's reproductive capacities, Mungoshi offers stories such as "The Sacrifice" (1997) that show the blatant and forceful appropriation of this ability by women when Taveya is offered as "sacrifice" to appease *ngozi*.

Mungoshi offers a problematized awareness of women as individual characters, thereby disturbing popular social configurations of gender power. He signals this by giving women a lot of textual space, in some of his works such as *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983), more space and nuanced thoughts than men. In the event that women willingly contract a marriage, it is characterised by discord largely because the women are disappointed by men who are not ambitious or do not achieve "successful" masculinity – effectively playing the role of provider, sensitive lover and partner as well as virile sexuality. Thus, women like Sheila in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) highlight the indissoluble link between the material and affect, and how problematic the masculinity ideal can be should a man fall short in providing materially. Lorna in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983) is as dismissive of her sexually impotent husband as VaChingweru is in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970).

Most of the ambitious and disaffected wives in Mungoshi's writing do not fit the dominant construct of womanhood given that their actions defy the permissible scope and content of normative womanhood. By openly challenging men, pointing out men's weaknesses and at times behaving aggressively towards men, Mungoshi's women characters disrupt the oppressor/victim dichotomy to suggest a more complex configuration of girlhood or womanhood. Mungoshi's main argument seems to be that character traits are not necessarily gender specific and that reading women characters as perpetual victims of andocentric societies has done much to hide the agency of women in Zimbabwean literature. The dissatisfaction that women register about their husbands lays the ground for the next chapter which looks at the burdens of manhood.

In his nuanced enquiry into versions of femininity, Mungoshi explores images of the "new" woman. He endows such women with resilience, intelligence, determination and a strong sense of pride as they seek and demand a more than thimble-sized existence. Women characters such as Martha and Sharon in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983) are depicted beyond the stereotypical roles of self-effacing and long-suffering mothers and wives. The "new" woman is less dependent on men as lovers and husbands and her femininity is premised on attaining economic independence and sexual autonomy. Such women are social agents in themselves and are not cast as liberatory "types."

Chapter 5

The Burden of Manhood: a Matrix of Threatened Masculinities

5.0 Introduction

Mungoshi's writing, as seen in the last three chapters, especially the last, evinces the rhetorical relation between male and female characters in a way that suggests close scrutiny of the boundaries between men and women, how these boundaries are created and enacted. A discussion of how women are oppressed structurally and how they respond to that oppression through different versions of femininity would be senseless without a discussion of men and the diverse discourses of masculinity they use to identify themselves as men and how these identities shape the men's behaviours towards women. In other words, in a study that deals at length with gender relations, it follows that the mention of femininities suggests masculinities and how the two stand in relation to each other. The specific focus on men is also occasioned by the need to produce a more nuanced reading of *men* themselves, for as Ouzgane and Morrel (2005) observe, "Addressing the concerns of the men in Africa has not always been high on the agenda of either gender or international politics. In a way, men in Africa have been treated either as victims of slavery, colonialism, and postcolonialism or as oppressors of their women" (vi). Thus, the aim of this chapter is to retrieve men for the purpose of a gendered understanding of Mungoshi's work and by extension, Zimbabwean literature.

Man and woman in Mungoshi's work are explored as political categories that exist with a certain degree of tension and oppositionality. At the same time, there is a suggestion that both are not self-sustaining in that without one, the other cannot exist. This chapter continues, like the ones before it, to reiterate the fluidity of these categories by further exploring how Mungoshi treats gender as a contested discourse, with particular attention to masculinities, or how different men perceive their maleness and how these perceptions inform resultant relationships between men and women and amongst men themselves. As Connell (1995:44) observes, "knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of knowing gender relations." Questions that will frame this chapter are as follows: (1).

How does Mungoshi represent men and what can be deduced from such representation? (2). How do male characters in Mungoshi's work understand their manhood and that of other men? Do these ideas of manhood shift or are they rigid? (3). How does the understanding of one's manhood shape intimate relations with other men, women and children? (4). What literary devices does Mungoshi use to explore ideas of masculinity(ies)? (5). Does Mungoshi offer images that attempt to reenvision masculinity?

Masculinity is pluralized in the heading of this chapter to signify fragmented domains in which men are constructed through language and lived experience. This is in contrast for example to the unitary and stereotypical view of men captured in the title of Makayi's (2004) novel *Makudo Ndomamwe* (Men are all the Same). Simply because Revai, the main character, is impregnated and jilted twice, she comes to the conclusion that men are all irresponsible, lustful and deceitful, which seems to be the author's thesis.

Mungoshi questions narrow social definitions of masculinity through portraying male characters that are overwhelmed by inadequacy engendered by what they and others perceive as a failure to fulfill a masculine social role. In other words, Mungoshi explores men as a "troubled" category, to borrow form Butler (1990) who expands on this point and writes that "the universal person and the masculine gender [tend to be] conflated, thereby defining women in terms of their sex and extolling men as bearers of body-transparent manhood" (9). Mungoshi uses the body, especially the device of physical limitation or debilitation, ageing, sexual performance and social position to show that maleness is problematic and not unitary; that it is not an essence but a mediated category. Through such delineations, Mungoshi makes men's bodies visible and subject to scrutiny in the process revealing "the contradiction, conflict and anxiety in masculinity's claim to superiority" (Segal, 1990:171). The heading of this chapter also harps on the idea that thwarted duty ethics and socially approved notions of successful manhood can become burdens to men. Thus, gender relations can also be read as men's attempts to deal with their vulnerabilities to socio-political, economic and interpersonal relations. Through a thought-provoking portrayal of male characters, Mungoshi is careful not to portray men

as villainous subjects that volitionally and consistently perform negative actions on women, children and other subordinated men. Instead, Mungoshi suggests, men can be victims and oppressors at the same time.

Mungoshi's writing shatters the myth of male invulnerability and seems to suggest that if men have a burden heavier than any other, it is that of straining towards the masculine ideal or straining for affirmation through pursuing certain masculine ideals. Men as young adults, husbands and fathers, are explored in the previous three chapters, albeit without close attention to male bodies and how these bodies can give or deny access to physical strength and social status. It is clear in the preceding chapters that men's actions and characters are shaped by an interplay between dominant constructions of masculinity and their self-conception of maleness. Both the dominant constructions of masculinity, what Connell (1994) calls hegemonic masculinity and individual perceptions of masculinity (which may but do not necessarily coincide with the hegemonic) are bound by socio-historical forces, in this case colonialism, and what may be called, at the risk of suggesting stasis, Shona culture.

The masculinities explored in Mungoshi's pre-independence work are subordinate versions in the sense that they are constructed by black colonised men whose masculinity is subordinate to white colonial masculinity. Racial subordination, with its connotations of weakness and effeminacy ascribed to the subordinated, is only partial and does not signify much in Mungoshi's work, most of which features relations between black characters. At the same time, subordinate masculinities, as Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) point out, have a way of asserting themselves and are not totally subordinated. This is borne out by the fact that in Mungoshi's work, post-independence black masculinities are shown to be no less assertive or desperate than the pre-independence ones. As such, the aim of this chapter is chiefly to analyse discursive situations and actions of male characters, with particular attention to demasculinization, to reveal the psychodynamics of masculinity/masculinities that inform both the characters and Mungoshi over time.

Muchemwa (2007:xvi) makes a prescient observation that "Specific to constructions of Zimbabwean masculinities are sites such as traditional culture, colonial history, war, the family, and the body." Of relevance to this chapter will be what Muchemwa has called "traditional culture" above, the family and the body. Mungoshi explores hegemonic masculinity which finds expression as "traditional culture." He also explores complex and ambiguous understandings of masculinity with regard to educated male characters that are perceived as both feminine (soft) and masculine (financially successful). The chapter is also informed by an awareness that males are not hapless victims of hegemonic masculinity, given that hegemonic masculinity itself is an ideal only a few men can match which means that in any case, masculinity is largely an idea that is stronger in people's minds than in practice.

This chapter discusses concepts of masculinity, the acquisition and performance of diverse masculinities, the trope of male bodily incapacitation as both a private and public confirmation of male *lack*, together with other forms of 'castration' such as job loss. The trope of male incapacitation opens up space to consider men's vulnerability to women and forces us to theorize further, power inequalities in heterosexual relationships. Through deft use of irony, Mungoshi explores the double-blind in which men who feel that their masculinity or manhood is threatened also face women who read back to them a phallocentric and masculinist script. The subheadings in this chapter are thus informed by the idea that masculine identities are produced through cultural and ideological struggles, as well as through social practices and relations.

5.1 Masculinity and Related Concepts

The point that Mungoshi has a keen and enduring interest in exploring gender schemas, that is, organized sets of beliefs and expectations about males and females has been made in the preceding chapters. What is needed at this point is to have a broad view of masculinity and related concepts. The binary division of gender is a useful starting point. Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropoulous and Kirkby (2003:2) write that "The binary division of gender can take several forms. The two halves can be seen to be equal but opposite, in a complimentary relationship…. However, often the halves will be typified

as opposite and with the female in the inferior position." Language and embodiment become crucial in this regard.

Shire (1994) in an informative essay, "Men don't go to the moon: Language, space and masculinities in Zimbabwe," gives us an interesting linguistic departure point by remarking that in the Shona language

> The noun *murume* (man) apart from being a designation of anatomy, has connotations of not only gendered difference but specific functions. To women in spaces designated as female, *murume* is a site of bother. The term used to describe what men do in courtship, *kuruma* – to seduce or literally sting, bite, stimulate – defines masculinities in terms of activities and actions addressed to women. *Mukadzi anoruma* [sic] (the woman is seduced) shows, by use of the passive, the woman as being acted on. *Kuruma* can also be that which has potency. These idealized representations portray men as active and in control, yet they also carry with them a sense of dependency of men on women and of the ways in which masculinities are defined and shaped through interactions with women. (147)

Chimhundu (1995) also discusses how Shona masculinity is positioned in contraposition to femininity through attributing an active and aggressive role to men and a passive accommodating one to women by also analysing the Shona language. Chimhundu (1995) points out that the Shona language has built-in sex differentials. He cites transitive verbs that refer to courtship and the sexual act and how they reveal males as performers and females as recipients. Such language, Chimhundu adds, sees sexual relations expressed in ways that position the man as the conqueror and the woman as the vanquished and characterised by sheer surrender.

Shire (1994) and Chimhundu (1995) bring out the crucial point that interpretations of maleness are not neutral but "have political entailments…they may align men against women, some men against other men, some women against other women, or some men and women against others" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994:10). One notices from the example Shire (1994) gives, several assumptions, most hinging on sex roles, suggesting a "general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex" (Connell, 1994:22). The

result is an oversimplified conception of two sex roles, a male and female one and masculinity and femininity "interpreted as internalized sex roles" (Connell, 1994:22). In Shire's (1994) observation above, there is an assumption that all men are in a position of power or agency vis-à-vis women and are heterosexual (want to *ruma* (bite) women); that all women will find men's attentions bothersome (but necessary, perhaps?); that females are passive; that all men will derive their self-worth from wooing and conquering females and that all men need women, and that women cannot escape men.

Foucault's (1972) idea of discourse informing action is instructive with respect to the construction of sex roles. The concept of maleness as captured in language has far reaching consequences beyond sexual differentiation. Whitehead and Barret (2001) write that:

> …discourses provide the very means by which subjects come to understand themselves as woman and man…. So we might say that discourses such as 'man as hunter,' 'woman as passive' and 'the male sex drive' contain social and cultural assumptions which, once taken up by a person, are presented as 'truths' and as ways of being and relating in the world with others.
>
> ….
>
> Discourses are, then, more than ways of speaking, for they send highly powerful messages in terms of knowledges…what is seen as 'truth,' and in respect of how individuals should behave in given locales. (21)

Thus, gender discourse influences mind-sets and actions. As Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) comment, "there is no 'natural' nor necessary connection between men and masculinity [but] this does not mean that this relationship is completely arbitrary. In any particular context, cultural idioms and history define the categories through which gender is embodied" (37).

Some direct definitions of masculinity attempt to give a comprehensive view of this problematic concept. Lindsay and Meischer (2003) use the term masculinity

> to refer to a cluster of norms, values and behavioural patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to

> others. Ideologies of masculinity – like those of femininity – are culturally and historically constructed, their meanings continually contested and always in the process of being renegotiated in the context of existing power relations. (4)

These two scholars quickly point out that masculinity and manhood are not the same thing by commenting that "*Manhood* refers to indigenous notions explicitly related to men's physiology, often recognized in terms of male adulthood….*Masculinity* is broader, more abstract, and often implicit" (5; original emphasis). Connell (1995) points out that at times the two terms are used interchangeably without much ambiguity. This project will attempt to stick to the distinction made by Lindsay and Meischer (2003) for purposes of clarity.

Yet the concept of masculinity is far more complex than highlighted above. The definition above, valuable as it is, is by no means exhaustive. To get a more nuanced understanding of the concept, the following definition is given and explored. Whitehead and Barret (2001:15-16) write that "The nearest that we can get to an 'answer' is to state that masculinities are those behaviours, languages, and practices in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine." This definition raises a critical point, that of gender relations, which these two scholars elaborate on by adding that "masculinity is inherently relational and does not exist except in contrast to femininity" (27). Connell (2001) concurs with this view, pointing out that masculinity is "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (33-34). Thus, much as a lot of scholarship stipulates that gender is not a quality inherent in the body, the thought persists in wider society in which gender is tied to the body. According to Butler (1990), gender is not a core aspect of one's identity, but rather, a performance. Masculinity therefore becomes an achievement rather than a biological factor. Nevertheless, the body gets tied to ideas of masculinity and femininity in relational and enduring ways. The idea that masculinity is described in relation to femininity is illustrated in Chapter 3 through fathers who are keen to pass on certain ideals of masculinity to their sons, mostly framing the ideal as a flight from "feminine" habits and body shape.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity or masculinities needs explication. Connell (1995, 2001), one of the key masculinity scholars, holds that hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to subordinated and marginalized masculinities and femininities. He expatiates on this concept:

> The concept of 'hegemony,' derived from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of class relations, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.
>
> ….
>
> It is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony. (Connell, 2001: 38-39)

Thus, the idea of hegemonic masculinity alerts us to the fact that there is more than one form of masculinity within social groups, at any given time, and that one form of masculinity is valorized, dominant and more influential than others within certain social and historical contexts. In other words, hegemonic masculinity is an ideal and the problem is that as Weinke (1998:255) points out, "the ideals most men support do not reflect what men are." Thus, an attempt to attain the totality of any given hegemonic masculinity is a goal that by its nature must result in failure (Calasanti and King, 2005).

Whereas Connell (1995) warns that hegemonic masculinity is "not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same… [but] occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (76), he nonetheless discusses the concept in the singular. Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) on the other hand argue that hegemony itself contains various hegemonic models that can co-exist and suggest that we speak of hegemonic *masculinities* within the same socio-historical and cultural space. In other words, at any given moment, there is more than one form of privileged masculinity, each masquerading as unitary and hegemonic. Thus, the slipperiness of the term masculinity becomes apparent:

> The many different images and behaviours contained in the notion of masculinity are not always coherent: they may be competing, contradictory and mutually undermining. Moreover, completely variant notions of masculinity can refer simultaneously or sequentially to the same individual. Meaning depends on who is speaking and who is being described in what setting. Masculinity has multiple and ambiguous meanings which alter according to context and over time. Meanings of masculinity also vary across cultures and admit to cultural borrowing; masculinities imported from elsewhere are conflated with local ideas to produce new configurations. (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994: 12)

Thus, masculinity is a fractured, fluid and situational notion. It is a claimed identity tied to linguistic and materialist practices both of which are neither fixed nor secure. Just like any identity, masculinity is subject to claims, negotiation, resistance and refutation.

Notwithstanding the transcience, together with variance of ideas regarding what constitutes masculinity, Whitehead and Barret (2001:7) offer the following useful observation:

> …masculinities have always been subject to fashion. [….]Yet despite…the evident multiplicity of masculine expression, traditional masculinities and associated values still prevail in most cultural settings. Countless numbers of men still act dominant and "hard," deny their emotions, resort to violence as a means of self-expression, and seek to validate their masculinity in the public world of work [and] the private world of family and relationships.

Thus, the most enduring ideal of masculinity is "hardness, not just of the penis, but the body in general. A man should be hard both muscularly, and socio-emotionally. All things soft are considered feminine" (Addleston, 1999:338). Under this broad ideal are some popular notions of manhood such as extreme self-sufficiency, resourcefulness, stoic toughness, the ability to provide for the family and emotional inexpressiveness.

Brittan (2001:53) adds a significant concept – "masculinism" to the study of masculinities. Masculinism is

> …the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination.
>
> ….
>
> Masculinism takes it for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres. Moreover, the masculine ideology is not subject to the vagaries of fashion – it tends to be resistant to change. In general, masculinism gives primacy to the belief that gender is not negotiable…. (53)

It will be seen, following this differentiation, that some of Mungoshi's characters are masculinist whereas some are aware of the ambiguities of maleness and sex roles.

Versions of hegemonic masculinity are challenged by other masculinities that do not conform to the ideal of hardness, showing that men do not constitute a hegemonic cultural or philosophical alliance; that both masculinity and manhood are riven with interior instabilities. In Mungoshi's work, there are males that do not fit the masculine ideal – men labeled "gender inappropriate" such as Joe in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980); those who are bodily incapacitated (some are in a vegetative state) such as Mushayazano in the novel *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970), Zakeo's father in the short story "Who Will Sop the Dark?" (1980) and Paul, a dimwit and braggart who cannot sexually satisfy his wife in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983). Some of these men like Nhongo in the short story "The Hare" (1997) cannot provide for their families and in some cases such men are entirely dependent on women. In short, these are men who have become physically and socially impotent, whose manhood appears to be disavowed by life-changing events that have broken the ethic of physical strength, sexual virility and self-reliance. This dislocation between gender expectations and realty is what Wood and Jewkes (2005:96) call the "thwarting of masculinities… which can be understood as the inability to sustain or properly take up a gendered subject position, resulting in a crisis, real or imagined, of self-representation and social evaluation."

Of interest to this chapter then, is an exploration of how male characters acquire and perform masculinities in a familial and by extension, social context, and how men respond when qualities associated with manhood are under threat or missing entirely. Thus, this chapter engages with how men negotiate their emotions and somatic selves in the performance of what are largely insecure masculinities underlined by a perceived loss of manhood. Hence the chapter explores male characters as they pursue masculinity, which is "an exposure to vulnerability" given that "masculinity is constructed in front of and for other men, and against femininity because, what men fear most is being feminized" (Silberschmidt, 2004:244).

5.2 Acquiring Masculinity

Following Clatterbaugh's (1990) idea, masculinity is learned and socially reinforced through ideals and stereotypes. Boon (2003:269) underlines the centrality of modeling and conditioning in the acquisition of masculinities by writing that rules shaping the performance of masculinity are "passed from generation to generation primarily by the father…. Men identify themselves as men by matching their behaviors with the behaviors of others whom they consider to be men; boys become men by modeling adult men." Boon (2003:272) identifies the father as "the source of masculine legacy…the primary male mentor." Thus, the actions, and more so the language of significant males is seen as both responsible for the acquisition of masculine thoughts and behaviours. Much as Boon's observation erroneously assumes that all male children grow up with fathers or male figures they can emulate, the significance of language in the acquisition and performance of masculinity can never be overemphasized as pointed out at the beginning of this chapter. As Whitehead and Barret (2001:12) observe, "language not only informs concepts of masculinity, it is a tool through which to perform, label and interpret our gender identities…. Language gives meaning to our selves and our lives, without which our ability to locate ourselves in the social would be missing."

One notices for example, that Zakeo in the story "Who Will Stop the Dark?" learns a lot, "all without words," not only mouse trapping but masculine behaviour (Mungoshi, 1980:39). Mungoshi writes that when Zakeo "tried to ask a question…he was given a curt

‘Mouths are for women’ by his grandfather” (39). It is no wonder that at the end of the story Zakeo tells his mother that she is ignorant and he says this “without understanding what he meant by that but using it because he had heard it used of his classmates by the old man” (45). Zakeo internalizes his grandfather’s grammar of gender and proceeds to act from it.

Morrel (2001) sheds more light on cultural prescriptions of masculinity, writing that

> …masculinity is not automatically acquired; it is also true that boys and men are not entirely free to choose those images which please them. Their tastes and bodies are influenced…shaped, by discourses of gender, which they encounter from birth. Human agents can’t stand outside culture and wield power as they wish. Power is always limited and shaped by systems of knowledge, which also shape the subjects and objects of power. (8)

Morrel’s reference to discourses of gender expands the narrow view that boys are only socialized by men. One is reminded of Shire’s (1994) comment that amongst the Shona, “boys learn what it is to be a *murume chaiye* (‘real man’) not only through those who profess to embody these ideals but also through the myths of masculinity which are spun by female relatives” (148). In a way then, the family, in its constricted and widest sense, is primarily responsible for the fostering of gender and masculinities. It is as Morgan (2001:225) puts it that the family “shapes and reproduces gender identities through socialization and social reproduction and through the internal division of labour.” Thus, the family and wider community are responsible for the acquisition of masculinity and as such, “masculinity is a product of large-scale social structures” (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985:577)

The centrality of family and culture in the acquisition of masculinity is well taken. However, the acquisition and performance of masculinities cannot be explained through social learning theories of modeling and conditioning only. Such an explanation occludes conflict within masculinity or masculinities and indeed differences within individuals given that it is unlikely to find an individual who possesses exclusively gender-consonant traits. Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) warn against such an oversimplification when

they write that masculinity should be understood "not as something permanently fixed by childhood experiences, but as a role that changes over the lifespan of the individual; and as a role that is itself not stable, but undergoes significant cultural changes" (570). Whitehead and Barret (2001) add a useful idea in this regard, that of "identity work" through "self-regulation and self-discipline" (17). Thus, there is also a tug between being inculcated with dominant discourses of gender and one's perception of gender which might be at variance with the dominant ideology of gender.

The double bind of this situation is captured through Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975). Lucifer both spurns his father's version of masculinity (bodily toughness and emotional inexpressiveness) and questions his father's appropriateness as a model for maleness. However, in spite of his oppositional stance as far as this situation goes, he discovers that insidiously, he is performing his father's version of masculinity by bullying his sister, Betty. When Lucifer arrives home, he finds Betty absent. When she returns, he asks her, rather gruffly, where she has been. Mungoshi writes that Lucifer "doesn't mean to sound like his father exactly, but that's the impression he gives and it irritates him" (51). Furthermore, Lucifer is more emotionally inexpressive compared to his father. The only difference between Lucifer and his father is that whereas his father is a masculinist oblivious of his bully tactics and takes it for granted that that is how he should treat Betty by virtue of her femaleness, Lucifer reflects on his reaction to his sister in the following vein: "Do I sound natural? My God, two years I haven't seen her and this is the way to greet your sister?" (51). Lucifer's self-doubt, his embarrassment with seeing aspects of his father in his behaviour lends credence to Lindgren's (2002:171) observation that "what is a dominant gender model in society at large may be quite different from everyday life and experience. People are not unified wholes, they act from different subject positions." Lucifer's lived experience clashes with the ready-made idea of male domination, a situation that applies to his father's situation as well.

5.3 The Education Factor in the Construction of Masculinities

The recognition and performance of masculinities in Mungoshi's work, as indicated above, presents contradictions, ambiguities and confusions, more so when the formally educated male is factored in. The male body becomes a potential ground of intellectual and social authority. Dover (2005) offers a prescient observation on the significance of the body by writing,

> The body is where the personal and social meet, we know ourselves through our interactive subjective experience with other actors. Through nonverbal language, our bodies consciously and unconsciously interact with each other in both culturally defined and idiomatic ways. As persons, we are our bodies and whilst the physical may be transcended by the mind in terms of authoritative weight, charisma, or sexual allure, these aspects are still identified with our body. (173)

In Mungoshi's work, characters' decisions and the language of sexual differentiation are used to reveal diverse and contradictory masculinities and manhoods, most of which are tied to the body whilst some are tied to the intellect and wage earning.

The relationship between Lucifer, his father Tongoona and brother Garabha is a good departure point for examining the paradox of masculinity in Mungoshi's work. Tongoona, as indicated in Chapter Three, overlooks his elder son, Garabha, for the title of "Father of the family" in favour of the younger and formally educated Lucifer who in any case, will be leaving for overseas in a few days' time. The title bestowed on Lucifer is significant. It implies, amongst other things, that Lucifer is or will be 'man enough' so to speak, to provide for and take care of the whole extended family. His prospects, according to Tongoona, are brighter than those of Garabha, who is illiterate and "irresponsible." Garabha is less of a man than Lucifer because of his illiteracy and refusal to marry. Although Lucifer is still single, this factor does not stop Tongoona from perceiving a financially secure future for the family in Lucifer's hands and hence passing the mantle on to him. This action can be likened to Tongoona's acknowledgement and approval of Lucifer's attainment of manhood. In other words, Lucifer's potential to make

more money than anyone in his family becomes, as Addlestone (1999:341) citing Gould (1974) says, Lucifer's "passport to masculinity," in his father's eyes.

Yet Garabha regards Lucifer as effeminate, and by implication, less of a man and not worthy of leading the extended family. One of the things that Garabha says to Lucifer when he finds the latter in bed during late morning is to insinuate that that habit is unmanly. For Garabha, it is Lucifer's wearing of pyjamas that confirms the femininity of the latter, already hinted at by sleeping beyond 'manly' hours:

> Garabha suffers once more at the sight of Lucifer in pyjamas. Always different pyjamas. These ones with bright and red flower designs on a grey-bluish background. For some strange reason, he finds himself thinking of those things women wear under their dresses. The sight of Lucifer in pyjamas disgusts and saddens him at the same time. (Mungoshi, 1975:108)

Garabha's observation captures the feminization of intellectual or non-physical work. This view is expressed more powerfully by Va Nhanga in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983) who says of her degreed been-to son, Eric:

> *Zvino naicho chirungu chakecho, naiyo minwe yareba nokuora kudaro nokubata siponepenzura, ndokuzowanikwawo ondundurudzana negejo achitiwo heki Charuveki?* (Mungoshi, 1983: 5)
>
> Now, what with his obsession with English? Put that together with his long fingers that have become so weak because of constantly holding either a tablet of soap or a pen. Is that the sort of person who can have the power to handle an ox-drawn plough? (My own translation from Shona)

Both Garabha and VaNhanga view physically demanding work as an expression of masculinity and what dignifies a man.

Although Garabha does not explicitly refer to Lucifer's body, it is clear that he, like VaNhanga, subscribes to the idea of the muscular body as a symbol of masculinity. This is in line with Weinke's (1998) observation that,

> Despite the historical variability in cultural emphasis, the muscular body prevails as a cultural ideal because as a visual presence it symbolizes the predominantly stereotypical view of masculinity…such stereotypical masculine attributes as strength, tenacity, competence, sexual potency, independence, dominance, self-confidence, and aggressiveness. (256)

It is a strict adherence to this very same ethic that sees Tongoona, Lucifer's father, suffering from bodily ailments. Tongoona destroys his body through relentless physical exertion in the name of work.

Tongoona, in his bid to be more successful than anyone in the village, works in his fields everyday, even when his back and feet are hurting. His conflation of the physical virility of the body with manhood and success has potentially disastrous consequences for him given that as Brandth and Haugen (2005:152) put it, "The physicality of work demands bodily exertion and endurance and creates bodily fatigue and sometimes poor health." Tongoona's poor health is understood in terms of witchcraft by both him and most of his family. His mother-in-law for example, asks him, "Couldn't you leave the fields alone for just one day, son? Your wife tells me you don't sleep with that back of yours and here you are – talking of fields. You think your neighbours are happy?" (Mungoshi, 1975:12). What Old Mandisa means is that the pain in Tongoona's back and feet is induced by jealous neighbours through witchcraft. Tongoona's response to Old Mandisa's concern, "Let them finish me off" (12) is typical of the masculinist stoicism that sees him push his body to unhealthy limits, denying that his physical discomfort is a fleshly one.

In spite of Tongoona's sacrifice to provide for his family through back-breaking labour, he falls short of Lucifer's idea of masculine authority. Perhaps Tongoona's work in the fields puts him, in Lucifer's eyes, in the same bracket as women who are known, as Magosvongwe (2006) points out, to be the main cultivators of land in Africa generally. Be that as it may, Lucifer's awareness of his father as "a big timid man" (73) in front of him, makes Tongoona aware, in turn, of the fact that Lucifer regards him as an impotent father figure trying very hard not to show that. Tongoona's role is further undermined by the fact that he does not have the resources to send Lucifer overseas. In fact, Tongoona

feels very insecure that his role as a father has been usurped by a Jesuit priest, significantly called Father, who is sponsoring Lucifer's travel and study overseas. Tongoona finds it difficult to deal with this situation as he sees it as undermining his role as a father and by extension, his masculinity. Father asks son if the latter had revealed to the priest that he, Tongoona, is a "very poor man" (73). Tongoona is relieved that Lucifer did not divulge this information since it saves him further embarrassment. In an ineffectual attempt to restore his masculinity, Tongoona pretends that he could have sent Lucifer overseas if only Lucifer had told him that going overseas was his wish. In reality, as Mungoshi writes, Tongoona is "afraid that he has nothing to give his son, afraid that the boy stays away because he, the father, has nothing to give him" (44).

5.4 The Phallic Imperative and Desperate Masculinities

As already intimated, Mungoshi unravels some of the strategies deployed in power relations built around sex. Lorna's story in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983), discussed in the last chapter, warns against an unquestioning insistence and expectation that males should successfully control their bodies where it supposedly matters most – the performance of the sexual act. Mungoshi reveals that sexual performance is an area infused with gendered power relations but the scales are not always tipped in men's favour. The performance of the sexual act becomes a site for the performance of manhood or failure to perform it. As Silberschmidt (2004:242) observes, "notions of masculinity are closely associated with male virility, sexuality and sexual performance." Thus "phallic" in the subtitle above "refers not merely to the penis but incorporates notions of potency, virility, manliness and power" (Clare, 2001:9). The term is used to refer to both the phallus as a cultural symbol of power in direct association with its biological referent, the penis. Some male characters in Mungoshi's work seem to be victims of phallocentric imperatives, using sexual performance as a resource to achieve masculinity.

The "phallicization of the penis, its standing in for the power of the man" (Potts, 2000:97) is evident in Mungoshi's work. Whereas young men such as Magufu in the story "The Brother" (1980), Kute in "Some Kinds of Wounds" (1980) and Rex in *Ndiko*

Kupindana Kwamazuva (1975) are overdriven by "the imperative to fuck" (Jensen, 1998:99) which expresses itself as number fucking, that is to say, a contest with oneself to see how many women one can have sex with, older men like Makiwa in "The Flood" (1980) are concerned with renewing their manhood through polygamy (marrying a younger wife than the first). In all of these stories, "The penis stands in for and up for the man" (Potts, 2000:85).

The description of Magufu's living room, through the eyes of his younger brother, Tendai, betrays the elder brother's obsession with sex as a requirement for validating a typical macho script:

> There were some magazine pictures of naked women hung on the walls. For some reason, Tendai had expected to see some pictures of his brother's recent wedding. There were just those naked women pictures, a big portrait of his brother in dark glasses, like a black pop star, and some out of date calendars displaying more naked women. (Mungoshi, 1980:49)

Magufu's house is akin to a brothel given that his numerous "friends" use it for sex. No sooner is this information revealed than Tendai is shown thinking, "It didn't feel like his brother's house at all. Not the brother who would drive the whole family to church every Sunday he was on leave" (49-50).

Tendai cannot understand that the stark difference between Magufu as a family man in the countryside and the profligate in town is a case of his brother performing his own version of masculinity through homosocial enactment. Magufu, as already discussed in the last chapter, associates the city with decadence and wants to belong to his bohemian friends through embracing their lifestyle and hence, their approval. Kimmel (2004), by assuming the collective "we" to refer to men, explicates by observing that "We are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval" (187). Magufu overdoes the need for acknowledgement by his friends and ends up outdrinking everyone and turns into an alcoholic. Needless to say he is broke most of the time. His dilemma is that he cannot back down from the illusory image of a hard-drinking and

sexually insatiable pop star lest he be mocked by his friends for being not man enough, for as Kimmel (2004) points out, 'The fears of being seen as a sissy dominate the cultural definitions of manhood" (191). In short, Magufu has driven himself into a trap in which he has to constantly prove his manhood to other men and lose it inversely with regard to his family for he is a breadwinner in decline. As a last resort, he finds solace in sex and drink and so uses both to shore his crumbling sense of manhood and masculinity and attempts to use sexual prowess as a substitute for economic success. Thus Magufu's case is more than just a plain case of moral degeneration that can easily be attributed to the effect of the urban space only.

Equally desperate, Kute in the short story "Some Kinds of Wounds" (1980) regards himself as a failure because he has repeatedly failed his Ordinary Level examinations and cannot get a job. He takes out his frustration in sex, in the process contracting a myriad of sexually transmitted diseases – an act he considers manly. Thus, for Kute, unprotected sex becomes a marker of virile masculinity which he views as predatory and powerful. For him, sexual performance is linked to feelings of masculine self-worth and scoring. Gatsi, the narrator, is a foil to Kute. His role is to suggest that men cannot be reduced to one bodily organ – the penis, and that they are not complete victims of both familial and societal definitions of masculinity. He tells Kute, who "lived on the actor's habit, the clap of the hand and the cry for more" (97) that his bravado and irresponsibility will not solve his problems. Kute wants another man, and his age mate, Gatsi, to acknowledge his idea of manhood and accord him the status of manhood just as Magufu desperately wants such acknowledgement from his friends. Interestingly, Gatsi's sexual conquests will not impress his father who wants his son to pass his examinations and that is why Gatsi has to sleep with women that he brings home on the sly. Above all, Mungoshi is suggesting that men must explore and squarely face their "wounds" or conflicted emotions instead of evading them. Kute has some emotional work to do as captured through Gatsi's comment: "But you can't just give up like this. You aren't helping anyone, least of all yourself, by being bitter and attacking your father and dropping your studies and chasing tail. You have to face yourself" (100). By juxtaposing these two characters, Mungoshi

may be offering a counter-image to self-destructive masculinity based on an obsession with sexual conquest as validation of manhood.

Rex in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) lives a life of dissolution in the city of Harare and neglects to support his family in the countryside. Veit-Wild (1993) and Vambe (2005) concur that Rex's experience is shaped by the colonial city in the sense that menial wage labour separates Rex from his family and in Vambe's words, Rex "has not been spared by the vulgarities of colonialism, namely beer and prostitution" (229-230). True as this may be, to put exclusive blame on the colonial city and its vices is to limit Mungoshi's intentions. Mungoshi's aim is to expose sexual double morality by exposing Rex's thinly veiled lust which he blames on beer, the city and women. That Rex has sex and lives with his wife's friend Magi for several years, and has sex with other women as well, is in itself a very revealing action. When he reflects on his actions, he either blames the vices of the city or professes bafflement. Here is one of his reflections:

> *Ndichitaura kudai mungazofunga kuti ndakambotanga ndazvironga. Hapana chayinyatsoonekera mupfungwa dzangu. Zvese zvaingova zvokutsvanzvandzira murima. Dai munhu aigona kundibvunza kuti uri kuitirei izvi, handifungi kuti ndaigona kumupindura. Ndinotoshama navamwevanhu vanofunga kuti chese chese chinoitwa nomunhu chine chikonzero chiri pachena.*
>
> ....
>
> *Ndizvo zvimwe chete nokuneta kwangu naRindai. Chikonzero chacho chiripo asi hachipo nokuti chinoramba kuzviratidza.* (Mungoshi, 1975:104)

> As I speak, you may think that I planned all this [neglecting family, womanising, and excessive drinking]. Nothing was clear in my mind. I was stumbling in the dark. If someone had asked me just what I was doing, I don't think I'd have had an answer. It surprises me that some people think that there's a clear reason for every action.
>
> ….

> The same logic applies to how I got tired of my wife Rindai. The reason is both there and not there because it refuses to present itself clearly. (Mungoshi, 1975:104)

Rex's prevarication betrays his masculinist belief, consciously or not, of the idea Potts (2000:85) calls the "penis-self." According to this concept the penis is seen as a

> miniature male person…a homunculus, parasitically attached to the man's body, possessing a mind of its own peculiar 'carnal' intelligence….This penis-brain is generally portrayed as operating in contrast to the rational conscious control of the man's cerebral brain/mind; it follows its own primal agenda, resulting in a frequent 'battle of wills' between the man and his sexual penis-self. (Potts, 2000:85)

Underlining this is veiled lust. For example, Rex blames the way Magi looks at him as well as the quality of her eyes as the reason he eventually has sex with her, knowing full well that he should not do so since Magi is his wife's friend. Rex thinks, "*Iye Magi ndiye akanga anyanya kunditarisa. Hapana chandaizviita. Hana yangu yakakwakuka sakamhuru kamazuva mana"* (83). (Magi is the one who looked at me suggestively. There was nothing else I could do. My heart leapt like a four-day old gazelle). About the effect of her eyes, Rex says, "*Kwakanga kusiri kutarisa bodo. Kwaive kudya nemaziso" (*83). (It wasn't just a look that she gave me. She was literally consuming me with her eyes). Rex suggests that Magi was giving him more than come-on signs. He casts her in the mould of the irresistible temptress that has him in absolute thrall.

At the same time, Rex expresses his male sexuality as devoid of relational intimacy. In "giving in" to Magi's flirtation, he gives the impression that his sexuality is "uncontrollable" and that he has inherently aggressive and unfettered sexual passions, what is also known as "the male sex drive discourse" which purports that "men are at the mercy of their biological nature… rendering men innocent and women culpable in these [sexual] interactions" (Macleod, 2006:131). This discourse presents sex as a powerful force that is not attached to affect, in other words, lust. One notices that indeed it is lust that drives Rex, for before the encounter where he thinks Magi seduces him with her

eyes, he had a negative image of her because of her drinking problem. After a while, he gets tired of Magi's body, physically abuses her and starts having sex with other women.

Like Magufu and Kute discussed early on, Rex believes that the ability to seduce women is a form of manhood and he performs this through the erect penis, a physical entity that symbolizes maleness. He is always hungry for new sexual experiences without being honest about it. Here is another instance describing how he got bored of his wife: "*Tingati kwakatanga kakusagutsikana. Kwaive kudya mangai mazuva ese. Ko, ndizvo zvataimhanyira here izvi?"* (100). (We can say that an inexplicable dissatisfaction on my part set in. It was like eating boiled maize grains everyday. Was that what we had rushed into marriage for?) Rex's choice of imagery, that of eating, relates to sex here as it does in his description of Magi's eyes. He constantly hungers for new sexual conquests in a manner that shows he has suspended his sense of judgement, or rather, uses it in a way that portrays him as driven by his "penis-brain." This is reminiscent of Friedman's (2001) *A Mind of its Own: A Cultural History of the Penis* in which the author explores a pervasive idea that the penis has a mind of its own and is capable of controlling its owners.

For the same reason, Rex blames the city, Harare:

> *Dai Harare yaive mukadzi waiti akandipfuwira….. Harare inokupa mawara.*
>
> ….
>
> *Ungaidii Harare yakukomba? Ungaidii Harare yakupinda mutsinga? Ungaiita sei Harare isina mugoni, isina akaipa kana akanaka?*
>
> ….
>
> *Ndiyo Harare iyi. Harare mwoyo womunhu: Harare, Harari, haarari; hakurarwi.* (137-138)
>
> If Harare was a woman, you could say she has fed me a love potion to make me love her most insanely. Harare gives you some kind of bravado.
>
> ….
>
> What can you do when Harare has you in its clutches? What can you do when

> Harare has entered your veins. What can you do to Harare, a city no one can master, with no righteous or bad people?
>
> ….
>
> That is Harare for you. Harare is a person's heart. Harare, a place of no sleep. (My own translation from Shona)

Rex uses a myriad of ambiguities that portray Harare as a temptress, a physical and spiritual realm one cannot fathom, a person's heart (the seat of emotions), an amoral place and so on in pretty much the same way that he justifies his decision to change sexual partners and behave irresponsibly. The fault, he persistently implies, is not with him but everything else. Yet just about all of Rex's problems revolve around sex – the impending breakup of his marriage, the impregnation of Magi as well as his quarrel with Magi. These problems point to the centrality of that part of Rex's anatomy, the penis, as the totem of masculinity.

It is not surprising then that when Rex returns to his wife, Rindai, he says as his reason for doing so, "*Ndaneta neHarare. Hauchisiri upenyu uhwu"* (145) (I am now tired of Harare. This is no longer a life worth living). Essentially, he stops thinking with his penis or letting his penis think for him. In other words, his lust has been quenched, giving credence to Kibby and Costello's (2004:224) remark that "The male body functions as a phallic symbol, its difference is marked by the penis. Although the penis is not a phallus, in a patriarchal society those with power generally have a penis, and the penis has become the object in which notions of power are grounded." Thus, Rex loses some of his power and authority with age. Perhaps his wife Rindai accepts him back because as a man in possession of a penis, he still has symbolic power and authority over her. Not surprisingly as well, his decision to settle down with the wife he has neglected for so long coincides with the sprouting of grey hairs on his head. Rex's last-minute reform speaks of a tamed and domesticated masculinity shorn of sexual excess, as if to suggest that is what is good for his wife Rindai, who as her name suggests, has been waiting for him patiently. Here, Mungoshi falls into the trap of portraying women as having a lower libido than men and as morally responsible for safeguarding their bodies against other

men for the benefit of husbands who have to first exhaust their rampant sexuality on other "less worthy" women like "wicked" city women or prostitutes.

5.5 Old Age and the Impaired Male Body – Challenging the Phallic Imperative

The story of Rex puts into perspective other stories of Mungoshi in which male bodies embody social phenomena. Mungoshi makes the point that a masculinity that is tied to bodily performance cannot be sustained in the event of physical disability or old age. Rex settles down when his body has relatively aged and is somewhat tired, marking a shift in the way he wants to assert a sense of his own value and significance. Thus, the strong body and by implication, strong penis of his early manhood gives way for reflection (as opposed to thinking with his penis) and quietude. We never get to know if that lasts as the novel ends at that point. However, Rex's story reverberates with those in which Mungoshi employs ageing and physical impairments as tropes to explore how men attempt to fight against physical and social impotence, an exercise directly linked to wanting to control women. In both tropes, there is both the explicit and implied lack of certain bodily functions, especially sexual or erectile function.

Resorting to sexual assertiveness, through either polygamy or multiple sexual partners to shore a crumbling self esteem or challenged manhood is common in Mungoshi's male characters, confirming that for most of these characters, manhood is tied to the penis; that erectile function is synonymous with masculinity. Tongoona in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) had wanted a second wife but Raina "had succeeded in accusing and crying him out of the idea" (8). Hama's father in "The Mount of Moriah" (1980) had multiple sex partners. In "The Flood" (1980:157), Old Makiwa is upset about the impact of the Christian church on his family: "It has taught my wife and children bad manners and now they tell me I am not head of the family any more because I have taken a second wife."

"The Flood" (1980) typifies Mungoshi's ironic view towards the idea that old age equals a loss of vibrant masculinity which can be renewed through a "visible" display of masculinity such as marrying a young second wife. Mungoshi mocks Old Makiwa's folly

of equating the ability to have penetrative sex with defying age. Makiwa has been asked by Chitauro who cuckolded Mhondiwa and fathered children with Mhondiwa's wife, to broker peace between the two men. Chitauro calls Makiwa "Grandfather" to show not only respect towards the older man but also how advanced in age Old Makiwa is (156). Old Makiwa is "impotent" in the brokering mission for he sleeps through Mhondiwa's violent killing of Chitauro, as if Mungoshi is saying that if Old Makiwa sleeps so easily and soundly through the noisy scuffle between the two men, if he can be this "useless" in his attempted arbitration, how can he hope to satisfy his new wife? His sleep becomes, as it were, a metaphor for a flaccid penis as pointed out in Lorna's reference to Paul's disposition to immediately sleep and snore at bed time in the novel *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983). Thus, Old Makiwa's need to have a second wife is nothing but an ego trip in which polygamy is regarded by him as a display of phallic physical prowess and recovery of manhood lost through aging.

The rampant penis on the other hand, symbolized by Chitauro's impregnation of Mhondiwa's wife, is emasculated through the killing of the lascivious Chitauro by Mhondiwa. Much as Mungoshi shows Mhondiwa as haunted by some supernatural powers or simply paranoid, what makes him kill Chitauro is his recollection of village gossip about his wife, the sexual innuendos that he is a cuckold and hence less of a man. This is aptly captured by Wood and Jewkes (2005:99) who write that "particular acts of a man's girlfriend or wife (such as engaging in sexual relations with other men) might threaten his self-representations as well as jeopardize the social evaluations held of him by others…particularly those concerning his masculinity." Thus Mhondiwa's being cuckolded by Chitauro assails not only Mhondiwa's personhood but his manhood as well for no sooner does he kill Chitauro than he feels at peace with himself. Symbolically, he has killed the source of his unmanning. Through this story, Mungoshi reveals another level of male vulnerability, that of the male ego when it is conflated with the phallus. A derogatory label not only threatens Mhondiwa's sense of manhood but also unhinges his mind and turns him into a murderer. His inner peace will only last briefly before he gets thrown into prison.

Mungoshi goes further in exploring the male body as a site for the scripting of social messages, especially masculinity. By using the trope of male bodily incapacitation through illness or disability, he holds up to scrutiny the phallocentric view in which society values physical strength and stamina, equating these to manhood and by implication, to a strong penis.

In *Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo* (1970) Mushayazano, VaChingweru's husband, has a chronic and debilitating illness meaning "the head of the family has been rendered impotent due to illness and has lost the will, hope and ambition to live," resulting in an "abnormal family set up" (Kahari, 1990:268). Mushayazano cannot do any physical work, spends his time lying down, and has been in this condition for several years. His complete dependence on his wife is an interesting situation Mungoshi deliberately creates to undermine the basis of male privilege and authority – a physically strong body and by implication, a strong penis. This complete dependence and powerlessness of the man teases readers into re-evaluating narrow social definitions of masculinity.

VaChingweru, Mushayazano's wife, does not accept that the body, especially a man's, can be diseased to the extent of complete incapacitation. Of her husband's long illness she says, "*Kurwarepi? Vakabvira rini vachiti ndinorwara ndinorwara? Usimbe chete*" (What illness? It's been ages since he started saying he is ill. It's just plain laziness. That's what it is) (8). Musiyiwa (206) explicates this situation:

> In traditional Shona society, a family's agricultural production was measured against its ability to produce grain, so critical to its food security. A lazy woman, as is the case with a lazy man, was and still is highly scorned in Shona culture. Family stability and gender harmony were only achieved by spouses who worked hard and complemented each other's roles. (160)

According to VaChingweru, Mushayazano, her husband, has always been weak. She tells her daughter, "*Monika, baba vako vakagara vaita maoko avo bota. Vakagara vaaita mbodza*" (Monika, your father has always had arms as weak as porridge. He has never been a real man) (9).

In her dismissal of her husband, VaChingweru is also indirectly expressing her sexual dissatisfaction and frustration with Mushayazano. She has been indoctrinated into masculinist and phallocentric discourse as seen through her somewhat callous remark that she will not grieve the death of her husband:

> *Kuchema ani, simbe zvayo? Anoenda kumunda here andinoti anozondirimira ndiani? Kumunda Ndiko kwaanorava asi pakudya ndipo paanobva anaya. Akafa ndokuwanikwa ini ndochema kuti ndafirwa nomurume? Ndashaya zvangu basa*! (8)
>
> How can I grieve over Mr Lazy Bones. Does he go to the fields that I will miss his contribution in tilling the land? He is very scarce in the fields but first when it comes to eating. So you think if he dies I'll be found grieving over him, saying I've lost a husband. You bet! That will only be when I have run short of anything to do. (8)

To her thinking, her husband has become a parasite instead of a strong breadwinner as expected of his societal role. She defines masculinity, like Tongoona does, through physical labour and a physically strong body required to carry out such labour successfully. Her husband's change from virile manhood to a human vegetable is something that she cannot handle. Ironically, in a poor attempt to claim his normative physical superiority and authority over his wife, Mushayazano slaps her when he musters enough strength to. VaChingweru's retaliation indirectly leads to the husband's death.

Mungoshi also inverts the then popular situation in the 1970s whereby a husband had virtually a unilateral right to divorce his wife, especially if she did not work as hard as the husband expected. In such a case, the husband had the power to get rid of her by taking her back to his in-laws and proving her laziness. VaChingweru seems to be performing this powerful role as she says to her husband, who attempts to kick her out of their marital home, "*Iwe wakafa karekare, saka buda zvako*" (You died a long time ago, so if anyone is to leave this home, it is you" (76). The metaphoric death of her husband invokes the metonymy by which the penis stands for masculinity. Mushayazano's is a permanently flaccid penis and that is why she wishes she had a different husband,

"*Daiwoka ndakawanikwa nomurume kwaye – murume akaita sa Mujubheki*" (If only I had been married by a real man, a man like Mujubheki) (27). Mujubheki is the local celebrity, rich by village standards and one notices the assumption VaChingweru makes, that Mujubheki would have met all the societal requirements of both manhood and masculinity.

The stories through which Mungoshi explores threatened masculinities above, do not explore the affected males' psyche. Perhaps, aware of this omission, Mungoshi sought to fill this gap through his short story, "The Hare" (1997) by focusing on a woman who, in the inversion of expected gender roles, becomes the breadwinner. Thus, instead of male bodily incapacitation, Mungoshi uses unemployment or redundancy as another form of male incapacitation and in this particular story, goes to great lengths in exploring the psychology of demasculinization and resistance of gender identities to social change. Nhongo desperately attempts to cling to "tradition" in an attempt to restore his virtually lost "patriarchal dividend" (Hearn and Kimmel (2006:58). By patriarchal dividend these two scholars mean "a dividend from being a man in a patriarchal society in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command together with a more material set of benefits" (59). Consequently, Nhongo suffers from gender panic.

Sara becomes the breadwinner by default when Nhongo (he-goat), her husband of sixteen years and father of four, is retrenched at work. In the temporal narrative, that is as the story unfolds, Sara is absent, gone on one of her numerous cross-border business trips. As soon as she leaves, Nhongo hastily embarks on a puerile counter trip. He bundles the children and their housemaid of four years, Ella, into the family car, going to see his parents. When the impulse to rush to his rural home to see his parents seizes Nhongo, it is a "wish to return to the spatio-temporal point of origin in order to recover a 'pure', non-deviant identity" (Primorac, 2006:128). The identity that Nhongo wants, one may add, is a masculinist one.

Sara is conspicuous by her absence but ironically, it is this absence that controls the story as it brings to the surface all of Nhongo's fears and insecurities about his manhood and

role as husband. Assailed by an overall sense of impotence, Nhongo rushes to his rural home to seek authority and direction from his parents who strongly disapprove of his wife's cross-border trading and perceive it as plain prostitution. Thus, Sara's absenting herself from her marital home seems to be the main problem and Nhongo wishes he could control her movement. This need to contain his wife comes from Nhongo's belief that he is a "traditionalist" and "tribesman" (8) in spite of his tertiary education and former position of Manager in an industrial firm. His claim to traditionalism, it should be noted, is not just an adherence to an abstraction but rather, a tool that had and which he still desperately hopes, can accord him privileges based on the domination of Sara.

When Sara engages in cross-border trading to rescue the family from abject poverty and starvation, Nhongo, "the patriarch who belonged to a proud tradition that said the hunting is done by the man of the house" (Mungoshi, 1997: 13) can no longer master or fathom his wife. The mere thought that Sara has friends, especially male friends, frightens Nhongo because "He had never really thought of her alone, independent, without children. Someone with her individual needs" (11). Similarly, when Sara gets her passport without having told him, he is upset but keeps it to himself. He realises that through her mobility, he will be unable to control her as much as he used to. At the same time, Nhongo cannot stop Sara from travelling and trading for that is the family's source of livelihood.

Nhongo suspects, like his parents do, that Sara is having sex with virtually all the men she travels with on her business trip. Although Sara asks Nhongo to travel with her, he refuses. His wife's gesture of openness or transparency in her travels and by extension their relationship, does not stop the husband from equating his wife's mobility to libertinage or promiscuity. The process through which Nhongo gets to this conclusion speaks of his insecurity and not his wife's infidelity. This situation is termed a "manufactured crisis" expressed through "imagining that [a man's] sexual partner has actually had sex with another man (when it is not the case) or claiming to foresee the occurrence of such an event" (Wood and Jewks, 2005:99).

Sara's success in business is suspicious to Nhongo who never noticed his wife's potential. The change in her sartorial code and use of make-up are largely responsible for Nhongo's conclusion that she is prostituting herself. The association of make-up and prostitution in Zimbabwean literature is discussed in the previous chapter and need not detain us anymore here. The discussion will turn instead, to clothing. In the story under examination here, the husband notices that, "As Sarah began to buy her own dresses, they had become shorter, knee-length, sometimes – shockingly – the hem-line was even slightly above her knees" (21). Nhongo finds himself comparing his wife's dress code to Ella's, the housemaid's, "As Sara's dresses had become shorter and more liberated (she'd even begun to wear trousers), Ella's had become longer and housewifely, and more motherly" (21). Thus, Nhongo sees Sara as progressively in a state of undress whereas Ella progressively covers more of her body. Nhongo draws a causal relationship between dress and sexuality. He eroticises Sara's dress code to a point where according to him, Sara exudes unbridled sexuality, akin to prostitution. That is why, we are told, "whenever Sara was home, Nhongo couldn't help – but silently, and through his body language – hold her up for the children to look at: *Look at her. Look at your mother. Please just look at the bitch!*" (12). Nhongo's anxiety about his wife's mobility and erotic agency gets translated into a discourse of decency and indecency in dress. The mention of Sara wearing trousers is instructive in that "trousers are traditionally a symbol of masculinity" (Dube, 2006). Nhongo feels challenged, as if he and his wife have swapped roles. He sees the wearing of trousers as signifying, indeed, causing moral degeneracy and hence the crisis it occasions in him. Yet Sara wears trousers because they are comfortable to travel in since she does a lot of cross-border travelling.

Nhongo's relations, especially his parents, do not help matters either. His cousins tell him that "It was unheard of that a married woman, somebody's wife, had male friends and left her husband at home to go on business trips to foreign countries with them" (14). Some "dared to ask who made the rules in his home. What they meant, he knew, was: *did he still have his balls on him*?" (14; stress in original). Nhongo's father perceives Johannesburg, where Sara mostly goes for her shopping, as the preserve of man, "and not just any man with nothing between the legs" (17). He implies that Sara can only

prostitute herself there and that Nhongo is failing to sexually "discipline" his wife. In fact, Nhongo's relations are implying that he is sexually weak, hinting that if Sara was sexually satisfied (disciplined), she would not venture out of the home and cross national borders. Thus, Sara's mobility is conflated with an unfulfilled sexual appetite and Nhongo's relations, especially the men, are expressing their thinly veiled contempt for his "letting down" of men or the masculinist idea of sexually subjugating or dominating women.

Inadvertently, Sara challenges post-colonial masculinity. Nhongo's assurance of "good money" (6) as a section manager of a textile firm, the fact that he is a ruling political party cardholder; that he is a "careful security conscious family man" (6) is eroded and brought into question when he loses his job. One notices that ironically, it is through the disastrous economic policies of the political party that Nhongo supports and is a Ward Chairman of, that he finds himself out of a job. Mungoshi is clearly referring to the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1990s that started Zimbabwe's economic woes.

Nhongo's deep-seated insecurities find expression in morbid and incessant thoughts of emasculation for he increasingly thinks like his relations, that Sara's mobility has made her body wild, sexually insatiable, deviant and tainted. Mungoshi writes, "Nhongo seemed to keep coming across the word "castration" each time he picked up something to read" (13). His traditional power base and privilege have been appropriated by his wife. He feels stripped of every semblance of manliness, hence he is overwhelmed by an imagined nakedness until he becomes "obsessed with his feeling of nakedness" (13). Similarly, the new snazzy shoes that Sara has bought him typify the choreography around accepting a gift. The shoes are tight, and rather too bright for his liking, reflecting his discomfort with the reversal of roles. He is so self-conscious that he imagines everyone looking at him knows that Sara, and not he, bought the shoes. Primorac (2006:126) makes an apt remark that "The wife has, perversely, taken on a key component of masculine identity, leaving Nhongo with a feeling of being emasculated. Although there

is no evidence that Sara is unfaithful, her deviant movement acquires a sexual connotation."

Nhongo's parents hint that he should marry Ella, the housemaid. He realizes though, that polygamy cannot be a viable arrangement in his precarious position. Amoateng and Heaton (2007:16) capture Nhongo's dilemma succinctly when they observe that,

> Masculinities are founded on certain assumptions about the role and responsibilities of a male member of a household or community. However, the validity of the assumptions is repeatedly questioned by changes in context and circumstance which, in the most dramatic cases, result in the reversal of roles between men and women within the household and the larger society.

Thus, the historical, political and economic changes have rendered the assumptions and expectations of the male sex-role obsolete in Nhongo's case. What has persisted is the myth and stereotype of this role. It must occur to Nhongo that polygamy or Sara's knowing that he is sexually interested in Ella might be tantamount to suicide not only for him but his parents as well since all of them are financially dependent on Sara. The story "expresses as illusory all attempts of maintaining contemporary African gendered identities based on the absolute contrast between 'the traditional' and the modern" (Primorac, 2006: 129).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined Mungoshi's ironic representation of male characters especially through the trope of male bodily incapacitation to explore issues of masculinity, manhood and masculinism. Mungoshi suggests that both men and women actively participate in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and hierarchies especially through the internalization and performance of masculinist ideas. He further suggests that men are not as emotionally impoverished as they are thought to be; instead, it is their attempt to live up to a certain masculine ideal that makes them appear so. At the same time, Mungoshi's writing shows that men do possess the intellect to and can question hegemonic masculinities or masculinist behaviour. This reverberates with Brittan's

observation that "Our experiences do not simply mirror social meanings; though they are filtered through them" (2001:103).

This chapter illustrates how Mungoshi questions stereotypical "Shona" images of the sexes by exploring diverse understandings of masculinity and manhood. The myth of women's dependence and men's independence is discussed at length. Men's independence, usually construed as beyond or exclusive of dependence is subverted by reversing this situation in Mungoshi's work. Whereas men in these situations see their masculinity or manhood as threatened, and see themselves as reduced to normative husbands and female appendages, their wives, who have internalized cultural messages of a masculinity associated with physical and sexual assertiveness, show no pity to their husbands whom they regard as a source of public shame and an economic burden.

The idea that sexual potency is central to masculinity or in extreme cases, the conflation of the two, is analysed. Another enduring idea, that masculinity equals a muscular body that a man is in charge of to perform work and sex; that a man should also be in charge of situations and his emotions; that a successful man is an independent achiever is problematized in Mungoshi's writing. The use of male bodily incapacitation as both a private and public confirmation of male weakness reveals that this situation leads to a conflicted self and seems to traumatize, in the case of married couples, the husband more than the wife.

The difficult situations in which Mungoshi's couples are caught are reminiscent of Silberschmidt's (2004) observation that

> …there is … an urgent need to analyse in more detail the commonly accepted notions of male domination and women's subordination. While the patriarchal ideology may be embodied and expressed in the lives of men and women, this does not mean that all men are successful patriarchs or that all women are submissive victims. In actual fact… matters work out very differently in practice. (245)

Thus, through the exploration of both covert and open displays of men's vulnerability, inconsistencies in marital roles and women who seem to be invading strongholds of

masculinity, Mungoshi makes the point that while men might be in power structurally and in theory, in practice they tend to feel threatened and in some cases are completely disempowered.

Chapter 6

Lone-parenting and Transgressive Sexualities

6.0 Introduction

So far, this thesis has focused on salient issues around the structure and function of heteronormative families as both "nuclear" and "extended" families. This chapter focuses on other family forms apart from the conventional heteronormative two-parent and child(ren) family. An argument is made that Mungoshi singles these different family forms such as lone parents, alongside transgressive sexualities such as bi/homosexuality as sites where new debates about family, morality, ethics and citizenship are played out. This chapter examines Mungoshi's exploration of patterns of human separateness and connectedness through the trope of the family by focusing on women who opt out of marriage, lone-parent families and bi/homosexuality. By focusing on bi/homosexuality, largely regarded as trangressive sexuality in Zimbabwe, Mungoshi shines a spotlight on a key issue that seems to have fallen through the cracks of inquiry in the writing and discussion of Zimbabwean literature. Through this theme, Mungoshi interrogates three locations of sexuality – gender, kinship and national politics.

Questions that drive this chapter are: (1). How does Mungoshi handle the absence of a co-parent and what does it suggest about changes in family forms, function and diversity? (2).What is the tenor and quality of relationships between a lone parent and child/ children and what conclusions can be drawn from this? (3). What critical input does the introduction of same-sex sexuality bring to the understanding of gender and sexuality in Mungoshi's work and Zimbabwean literature in general? (4.) Why does a homosexual male choose to enter a potentially conflictful arrangement in heterosexual marriage and why does his female partner accept him? It is hoped that the exploration of these questions will enlarge knowledge about familial and other human connections through the focalization of single parenthood, women's choices to opt out of matrimony, and homosexuality – all of which appear to differ with widely accepted communal

orientations of two-parent homes, family "stability" and heteronormativity. Thus, the subheadings in this chapter problematise what Butler, cited in Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropoulous & Kirkby (2003) calls the "heterosexual matrix" by which she refers to "a grid or frame through which cultures make sense of the ways that our bodies, genders and desires seem to appear naturally heterosexual" (20).

6.1 Minus the Mother: Can Fathers Mother?

Family disintegration is a common topic in the discussion of Zimbabwean literature (Kahari, 1980; Zimunya, 1982; Zhuwarara; 2001). In these analyses, the family is seen as under siege from pernicious socio-political factors. This is an invaluable view given that the family cannot be and should not be insulated from significant socio-political influences and changes. However, to view family changes, especially the diminishing of co-parenting, as a symptom of moral collapse and a deficit in family well-being is to ignore that changes usually thought of as signs of dysfunction might in fact be adaptive measures and potentially positive. New family forms such as mother-headed households might be constructive attempts to build families that work in a more complex world.

The two stories, "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) and "The Mount of Moriah" (1980) explored earlier on, have another interesting dimension to them – the possibility of fathers or men playing the nurturant role usually assigned women or mothers. In both stories, the discontented mothers are absent and a chance is given to the fathers to "mother" their sons, in other words, to raise them single-handedly. In "Shadows on the Wall" (1972), the mother leaves home following incessant quarrels with the husband. The boy's illness suggests that the father has to go beyond his custodial role and nurse his son or restore the boy's health. The task speaks of more than just basic care. It points at a need to nurture. The father finds that his son is unresponsive to him and realises that the recuperation of the boy will require more than the primary activities of feeding, cleaning and clothing the sick child. As such, the husband follows his discontented wife, begging her to return home so she can take care of the boy. When the boy's condition improves, the mother leaves again following further quarrels between the parents. As soon as the mother leaves, the boy's condition deteriorates. The husband's response is to quickly get

another woman in a move that seems to be calculated at relieving him as a primary parent and nurturer as symbolized by the fact that he wants the boy to call the new woman "mother." One senses that the man gets a substitute woman for more than the purpose of performing stereotypically "feminine" tasks such as cooking and cleaning, for the father does not seem to be capable of fulfilling instrumental, let alone expressive functions such as providing care.

Similarly, Hama's father in "The Mount of Moriah" (1980) is separated from the boy's mother. Hama has been staying with his aunt, who is a mother figure, most of his childhood. His father takes Hama away from his aunt, ostensibly to send Hama to school. The father is as inept at providing care for his son as the man in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972). In fact, Hama's father is thinking of killing his son in order to extract some of his body parts to make a charm for luck. In both stories, the fathers do not seem able to adopt expressive skills to provide intimacy, behaviours strongly associated with mothering. One tends to think that the fathers cannot fulfill a role for which they have not been socialized.

On the other hand, the "deficit" theory or lack of a father or male figure comes through quite strongly in Mungoshi's writing. This is not to say that it is Mungoshi's opinion, but rather, that Mungoshi captures communities that assume that the absence of a male figure is the absence of a key figure of authority and hence an effective disciplinarian. The assumption is that fathers or male figures command more authority than mothers or women and that being the case, a familial environment devoid of a male figure is not favourable to children's well-being. Mungoshi complicates this idea and shows that in some instances the presence of a father might be detrimental to the family, both materially and psychologically. Conversely, the absence of a father, Mungoshi suggests, may be to the benefit of a lone-parent and her child.

6.2 Women Opting out of Marriage

That Mungoshi treats marital conflict, breakdown and at times dissolution, has been highlighted in Chapter Two and Four. One of these instances involves women who make a conscious decision to leave their marriages. The narratives of these women embody

quests for personal fulfillment and success beyond marriage and motherhood. In the short stories by Mungoshi, and indeed his writing in English, we are not afforded a chance to go into the minds of the wives who opt out of marriage. In "Shadows on the Wall" (1972), what informs the wife's decision to leave is the husband's gruffness and insensitivity. There is no mention of physical violence or infidelity, suggesting that the woman demands a certain level of respect and positive reciprocity in the relationship. Hama's mother too, in "The Mount of Moriah" (1980) leaves her husband because of his verbal abuse, lack of respect for her, as well as the husband's alcoholism, gambling addiction and selfishness. As Matura the medicine man says, Hama's father is devoid of love and adds, "I bet you don't even love yourself" (9). In both stories, wives are driven away by incompatible character traits and husbands' behaviours they find demeaning to their selfhood.

The situation of wives opting out of marriage is given more space in Mungoshi's Shona novel, *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983). When VaNhanga, a woman in her late middle-age, with grown up children who are themselves parents, forsakes her polygamous marriage and sexual relations with men, Mungoshi signals his intent to explore in more detail than in his short stories, women's movement towards the relocation of the self as controllers of their lives. VaNhanga like the other wives who opt out of marriage, searches for alternative ways of being outside wifehood. Mungoshi's choice of an older woman to fill this role is interesting in several ways that problematise female selfhood in the context of marriage and family. In a sense, the issues that VaNhanga's story raises foreground other instances in Mungoshi's stories where women make self-motivated choices about singlehood, mothering and selfhood, issues explicated in the story "Did You Have to Go That Far?" (1997).

Tired of an acrimonious relationship with her co-wife and a husband who seems to abet her abuse by VaKwanhurai, the junior wife, and fearing for her life, VaNhanga decides to leave her polygamous husband and in the process leaves behind, her rural home. In other words, her position as senior wife does not give her the prestige that senior wifehood is associated with in polygamy. VaNhanga also leaves behind her crops which she has not

harvested and sells her livestock so she can stay with her married son, Mazarura, in town. A rural life is what VaNhanga has known all her life and would prefer to live if her marital position accorded her a life of respect and a certain degree of equanimity. With parenting out of the way, VaNhanga starts focusing on "a woman's quest for fulfillment in the domestic sphere" (Magosvongwe, 2006:147) and finds none whilst she is still married to her husband and is under his influence and control.

Steeped in traditional codes of thought and practice, VaNhanga's "rebellion," as Magosvongwe (2006:14) puts it, "challenges the readers to view women in a different light." That a character of VaNhanga's persuasions and age should affirm her search of personal worth and dignity by turning her back on the land, wifehood and home, key aspects that have defined two-thirds of her life, is a re-description of herself as a person and a woman. However, VaNhanga's self-narration is crippled by the fact that in escaping her unsatisfactory marital arrangement, she becomes her daughter-in-law's rival in vying for attention from her son, Mazarura. Although she is not openly meddling with her son's marriage, her belief that Mazarura is henpecked by Ruth and ought to show more independent thought and action than he is doing speaks of her insecurity and desire to influence her son more than, if not as equally as, Ruth is doing. With no money and a home of her own, VaNhanga "appears to be rendered a perpetual minor," but not before the point has been made that "Although VaNhanga's history as wife and mother has been crippling, it is the woman who has broken ties with convention who can adequately project and compensate herself and this she successfully does by deciding to find sanctuary somewhere" (Magosvongwe, 2006:149). Physical relocation becomes an expression of rebellion and a quest for a better emotional state although this has its limits.

Rindai's mother in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) signals Mungoshi's intention to construct young mothers who choose singlehood and proceed to successfully raise children in a one-parent household. In a sense, Rindai's mother is a less developed version of Mrs Gwaze in "Did You Have to Go that Far?" (1997) with the only difference being that Rindai's mother opts out of possible polygamy when her husband marries a second wife, and with Mrs Gwaze we are not sure whether her husband died or he is the

man who appears at the end of the story to help mother and son move. Assuming he is the man who appears at the end of the story, then the couple is either divorced or on separation.

Rindai's mother, having clearly chosen to be a lone parent, single-handedly raises her daughter in a manner that signifies that her single-motherhood is not a misfortune but a viable choice that gives her agency. The mother is a good model of self-reliance and emotional fortitude. From her experience with Rindai's father, she has drawn the lesson that marriage and a man's money can be a trap for women. That is why she warns her daughter Rindai who is rushing into marriage instead of securing her financial independence through studying. Such advice may sound commonplace at the beginning of the twenty-first century but takes greater significance if one considers that the book was written in 1975, and the setting is largely rural. Thus, Rindai's mother could be seen to be ahead of her time in choosing single motherhood and empowering her daughter.

The women who opt out of marriage are portrayed as making a statement that they cannot be cooped in denigrating and loveless marriages. Those who take their children with them are convinced that the action will benefit the child or children as well. It is difficult to decipher in such women a selfish individualism driven by an overriding desire for self-fulfilment regardless of the cost to others and to relationships and responsibilities to others. Those who leave their children behind like the mother in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) do so because of their knowledge of customary law that the child belongs to the man. Those who challenge this law and do not face custody contestation from their husbands, such as Rindai's mother in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975), get custody of their children and raise them successfully.

6.3 Lone Mothers

Keenly aware of the stigma attached to single motherhood in Shona society, Mungoshi problematises this issue through his representations of mothers and surrogate mothers with no male figures in their lives. Much as Old Mandisa in "The Homecoming" (1997) is not Musa's mother but his grandmother, she functions in the role of a mother especially

given that Musa's mother died in infancy and Old Mandisa is the only relation he has. That explains why Musa calls his grandmother "mama." This story serves to introduce the deficit discourse that the communities in Mungoshi's writing use to stigmatise family forms without a male figure. Musa's rowdiness, thieving and all forms of ill behaviour are attributed to Old Mandisa's femaleness and her feebleness in old age.

The notion that for a family to be seen as "whole" and functional there must be a male presence is up-ended in the story, "Did You Have to Go that Far?"(1997). The story relies on the ironic twist of the social discourse that fatherlessness is a negative; that a good or complete family must be a family of a man and a woman with children, with the male as a dominant breadwinner, and that two parents are better than one. In this story, Mungoshi questions pervasive attitudes towards gender, especially in relation to child-rearing.

Before discussing the story, it is important to highlight the assumptions about and stereotypes of single motherhood that Mungoshi mocks in his story. In an enlightening study, "*Mvana* and Their Children: The Language of the Shona People as it Relates to Women and Women's Space," Chitauro-Mawema (2003) discusses terms that refer to single mothers and children born out of marriage and extrapolates attitudes towards these two groups. A single mother is called "*mvana*" whereas there is no marked term for a single father. *Mvana,* according to the Standard Shona Dictionary, as cited by Chitauro-Mawema (2003:139) is defined as "1.Unmarried woman who has borne a child and is still able to bear more. 2. Married woman of loose morals." Similarly, children born by a single mother are marked as "*vana vasina baba*" (fatherless children) or "*vana vemusango"* (children from the forest) (Chitauro-Mawema, 2003: 137). Thus, parenthood is a marked category for single women whereas for single men it is not. Other terms for *mvana* include "*nzenza* (one easily carried away – prostitute), *hure* (whore), *pfambi/fambi* (prostitute)" (136). This leads Chitauro-Mawema to conclude that "Although… single motherhood can be the result of many factors such as having children outside marriage, divorce…being widowed (at an early age) or choice, the general stereotype is that she is willfully loose and a moral failure" (140). Mungoshi in "Did You Have to Go that Far" (1997) dramatizes this semantic derogation of single mothers and their children.

That the story "Did You Have to Go that Far" (1997) focuses sharply on family forms and the ideologies surrounding these disparate forms is seen through the fact that in the first four pages of the story, Mungoshi highlights three family formations before we get to meet the single-parent family of Mrs Gwaze and her son, Dura. Best friends Pamba and Damba, whose almost identical names underscore their closeness, both come from conventional nuclear families typified by the description of the two boys' backgrounds: "He [Pamba] lived with his parents at number 63 Bise Crescent. I [Damba] lived with mine at Number 65" (45). We are then told that "at Number 67, lived an old childless couple" (46). Then we are introduced to Rose: "Rose was a girl on our street. For just a toffee or a biscuit she would let us touch her budding breasts. She lived with her stepmother who didn't care where she went or what she did. Her father only came home once a week; he drove out of town trucks" (50). Thus, we have the ideal nuclear family structure, a childless couple and a largely absent father cohabiting with a stepmother.

When the lone-parent family of Mrs Gwaze and her son Dura is introduced, it is clear that Mungoshi, through the incremental detail on family forms and relationships, invites the reader to make comparison of these families. The spot light shines brightest on Dura's family, for it is his arrival that destabilizes the close friendship of Damba and Pamba. Similarly, Mrs Gwaze's arrival, not out of her intentions, destabilizes the friendship between the mothers of these two boys. The cumulative detail deployed for contrast is made possible through the child narrator's point of view, through Damba's supposed relative innocence and curiosity, enhanced by the confessional tone of the piece. The narrator's simple details of family relationships, the characters' preoccupations and their conversations provide meticulous detail that undergirds the irony in the story.

Damba, the narrator, points out that his father, Mr Mudzonga, and Pamba's father, Mr Dengu, are high ranking officials in their political party: "Pamba's father was the Chairman of our ward, Chaminuka, and my father was the Political Commissar" (46). We are also told that by virtue of the authority invested in them as office holders of the Party, they "sometimes held kangaroo courts to discipline errant members and disputing families or couples in our ward" (49). In his trademark ironic style, Mungoshi raises these

men all the more to subvert them. Pamba's father seems to think that the Party is a useful structure from which people can gain both moral and general edification. That is why when a neighbour, Rose's father, comes to complain about the sexual molestation of his daughter by Pamba and Damba, Pamba's father says of Rose's father, "That man doesn't attend Party meetings, that's why he is so stupid" (51). However, there is a glaring irony in the fact that Mr Mudzonga and Mr Dengu cannot be said to be exemplary family men, nor wise, especially Mr Dengu, "a domestic tyrant eager to use his fists in order to make a point to his wife and child" (Zhuwarara, 2001:104). Both hardly spend time with their families:

> They used to call for meetings every Sunday morning, and spent half the day grilling in the hot sun…. At midday after lunch…they would go to the local beerhall until around ten thirty, when it closed. On Saturdays, they would frequent any of the shebeens in Zengeza One or Katanga and continue their drinking until two or three in the morning. During working days, our fathers would leave for work well before we were up, and come back long after we were in bed. It was very strange. We hardly saw our fathers during the week. We only heard their voices when they went out in the morning or came back at night. They were like radio DJs: only heard, not seen. (46-47)

Damba's seemingly simple observation here, underlines the physical and emotional absence of fathers in this story through the lack of meaningful relationships with their sons and wives. As Zhuwarara (2001: 105) puts it, "The cumulative effect of the kind of lifestyle lived by both Mudzonga and Dengu is that home becomes a place to come back to, sleep and go away from." However, Mr Mudzonga is better than Mr Dengu in this regard for Mr Mudzonga does get to reflect before punishing his son Damba and is not abusive towards his wife.

Mr Dengu, the chairman of the Party, is physically and emotionally abusive to his wife and son. He imagines himself as an effective disciplinarian through invariable and constant use of corporal punishment on his son. He also does not buy enough food for his family and Pamba goes hungry most of the time. The father's presence engenders trauma for both son and mother. The narrator recounts:

> At least twice a week, we could hear Mrs Dengu crying and shouting: "Kill me!"
> ….
> This would be late at night after Pamba's father had come from the beerhall. Sometimes Pamba wouldn't go to school the day after one of these episodes. Instead he would hang around our house, looking bruised and woe-begone, and I would share my afternoon and evening meals with him (62).

The result of the father's brutality is captured in one of the poignant moments in the story, when Pamba observes Dura's mother next door, kissing her son when he is off to school and when Dura gets back. Pamba thinks this is "a very expensive habit. People who do it have money" (Mungoshi, 1997:137). One way of looking at this might be to say that the custom of mothers kissing their sons in the township was uncommon during the time the story is set. Taken another way, which appears to have been Mungoshi's intention, it expresses lack of love from Pamba's parents, to a point where affection appears unattainable to the young boy, like something expensive – something reserved for privileged people and not him.

When Mrs Gwaze and her son occupy the house formerly occupied by the old childless couple, this destabilizes a lot of assumptions about good families and in the process suggests pluralistic perspectives on familial forms and relationships. The story focuses on the "outsider status of the new family" (Gagiano, 2006:138). Mother and child find it difficult to fit in primarily because of the mother's singleness and her capacity for autonomous action as symbolized by Mrs Gwaze's financial independence, amongst other things.

The narrator tells us, "There were only the two of them: Mrs Gwaze and her son, Dura. No Mr Gwaze. The women of our street – and anywhere else for that matter – didn't like women with children without visible husbands" (Mungoshi, 1997:52). The public dialogue on single mothers is indicative of a community in which a woman's identity, as revealed in the discussion of Chitauro-Mawema's (2003) study, is thought to derive directly from her attachment, or lack of it, to a man. The two young boys, Pamba and Damba have internalized the derogatory public dialogue on single mothers through

constantly asking Dura if he has a father at all and composing a disparaging song they hope will embarrass or at least irritate Mrs Gwaze and sing it within earshot of her:

> Dura's mother, Dura's mother.
> Bring back Dura's father.
> Dura is crying, Dura is crying –
> Where did you put Dura's father? (55)

The reigning orthodoxy is that fatherlessness is a deficit to the family and a threat to the wholesomeness of the community, hence Mrs Gwaze and her son are pathologised. There is also implied here, in spite of the boys' naivety, the idea that Mrs Gwaze either did something heinous to get rid of her husband or left him so she could be free to engage in anti-family activities such as having affairs with married men. Mannis (1999:122) makes an insightful comment regarding this situation when she writes that,

> Most social institutions operate as if the traditional heterosexual, married, two-parent family is the only family form. This places burdens and stigma on nontraditional families. The dominant view supports the traditional family as ideal and the norm against which other families are compared. Other family structures are viewed as deficit models.

Yet the story clearly shows that both Mrs Gwaze and her son emerge as more organised, polished and civil than the rest of the characters featured in the story.

Whereas the rest of the families in the township take in lodgers to supplement their income, Mrs Gwaze, because she is relatively well off financially, does not. Her son is always "very smart" (48) in his school uniform as opposed to the other school-going children his age who look dirty and unkempt. That is not all – Dura is also bright at school and is a grade ahead of his age mates, a fact hated intensely by both Pamba and Damba. Dura also emerges as a conscientious child with a highly developed sense of personal responsibility and interpersonal skills, all of which he learns from his mother. On the other hand, Damba and Pamba are "the terror of Bise Crescent," (45) excelling in all kinds of anti-social behaviour. To the taunting of Damba and Pamba about Dura's father, Mrs Gwaze responds with the same equanimity as she does to the malicious rumours that she is an AIDS sufferer and a witch. She does not give the two urchins and

the community at large the satisfaction of seeing her angry or irritated by their prejudices. As the narrator says, "We wanted her to scream and shout and stamp her foot – to do *anything* to show us that we'd got to her. But she only smiled: 'Good evening, Damba. Evening Pamba. How are the books?' and she continued to talk and laugh with my mother…" (55; stress in original). Dura, Damba tells us, "was even worse than his mother. We were *certain he hadn't told his mother* about what we had done to him outside the gate at Shingai Primary School" (55; emphasis added).

The incident referred to by Damba above is the extortion of Dura's pocket money, cutting his rubber ball into strips, taking away his coloured pencils, ripping the pockets of his school shirt and dousing some of his books with cooking oil. In spite of all this, the narrator recounts, "all [Dura] ever said was, 'Good morning Brother Pamba!' with his terrible smile while his eyes seemed to be laughing at us behind his thick glasses" (55). Mungoshi, like Dura, is mocking the two boys and their families. It is no coincidence in the story that Pamba eventually "smashed a fist into Dura's face, smashing his glasses into his eyes" (59). Pamba's perception of the shallowness of his actions and intellect eventually drive him to such brutality. Dura exposes him as a loveless dimwit with no interpersonal skills to speak of. Whereas Damba and Pamba coerce children in the neighbourhood to follow them, Dura does not. In the narrator's words, "what irked us most was that the kids followed Dura willingly. He didn't bully them or anything. And we realized that we were losing to him" (58). This is in contrast to Damba and Pamba's uncontrollable delinquency in spite of the presence of their live-in fathers.

The fact that Mrs Gwaze is "very beautiful" (52), courteous and friendly should make her liked by her neighbours but the opposite is true. Wives in the neighborhood have unfounded fears that Mrs Gwaze will lure their husbands away from them, by virtue of her not being coupled to a man. The implication is that a man will control what the community believes to be Mrs Gwaze's unbridled sexuality, stemming from her singleness. The single mother's "blight" is extended to her son with the result that Pamba's mother is keen to see Dura ostracized by other children or at least to see to it that Pamba and Damba do not play with Dura or else they will catch AIDS. As if the

AIDS rumour is not enough, Mrs Gwaze is accused of witchcraft by Pamba's mother who becomes jealous that Damba's mother has befriended Mrs Gwaze:

> You see how thin that son of hers is? He shares his food with a huge python she keeps in a trunk in one of the rooms. Why do you think she doesn't take in lodgers like the rest of us? There are only two of them and what do they need a house as big as that one for? She moves about alone. She doesn't go to meetings. She doesn't complain about anything. (57)

To Mrs Dengu, Mrs Gwaze's independence is a sure sign of witchcraft, a spurious allegation made against another financially independent woman as well, Rindai, in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975). Zhuwarara (2001:104) aptly observes that the wild allegations leveled at Mrs Gwaze as a witch who killed her husband and the suspicion of AIDS "are no more than an indication that her relatively well-off position might destabilize the relationship of neighbours who, in a perverse sort of way, are both united as well as alienated from each other by their poverty." Thus, Mrs Gwaze is rejected by her neighbours not only because of her marital status, but also because of her class. The neighbours take unkindly to her middle class aspirations and codes of respectability. In a sense, Mrs Gwaze indirectly exposes the wretchedness of the neighbors' lives.

Pamba's death, inadvertently engineered by Dura, has as its root cause, Damba's abuse by his father. The non-discriminating manner in which Pamba's father punishes his son regardless of whether Pamba is in the wrong or not, together with food deprivation in the house, set Pamba on his way to drowning. Mr Dengu's thoughtless beating of his son is contrasted with how Damba's father disciplines his son, as a result of which Damba can push the boundaries of his father's tolerance and get involved in more naughtiness "because my father would always be on my side" (51) whilst on the other hand, "Pamba went on to do other things because it was all the same to him: whether he had or hadn't his father would always belt him" (51). Although Damba is exaggerating that his father would always be on his side, the point is made that his father uses corporal punishment discreetly and sparingly. When Pamba, out of hunger, steals Mrs Gwaze's chicken, Dura lies that it was poisoned and the only way whoever has eaten the chicken can survive is to bring the rest of it back as a condition for getting an antidote for the poison from his

mother, Pamba panics and attempts to find the rest of the chicken which he had thrown into a dam. He drowns in the attempted recovery of the chicken. As Zhuwarara (2001:106) writes, "The father has failed to provide enough to eat and has also failed to create a home for [Pamba] to feel loved and welcome."

So the "fatherless, privileged and courteous household" (Gagiano, 2006:137) stands in sharp contrast to Pamba's and Damba's. In fact,

> Although the story seems to focus primarily on the divisive effects of class differences among three boys…beyond this obvious factor there is a deeper investigation of the ethos of patriarchy, with especial emphasis on the crucial role of the father in the son's socialization and well being. (137)

What Gagiano omits is that the story is really about the parenting style of a lone female parent. It explores parenting styles that contribute towards or damage the child's emotional and mental development. The comparison suggests that Dura is not negatively affected by the lack of exposure to a father or a male figure.

In "Did You Have to Go that Far?" (1997) Mungoshi's main focus is to explore whether the form of a family plays a significant role in shaping a child's well-being. His conclusion seems to be that it is not the family structure per se that influences positive or negative outcomes on the development of children but rather, other factors such as parenting style and poverty. Thus Mungoshi questions some assumptions around the nuclear family. This is captured succinctly by Bozalek (2006:132) who writes that

> The assumption that the male breadwinner is a source of strength and support is flawed in that it is premised on the notions that the resources which the breadwinner acquires are equitably available and distributed to all members of the household and that men are neither abusive nor violent in their relationships with their partners and children.

As such, Mungoshi suggests that the concern should be less on family arrangements or forms in which children live and more on the quality of relationships within all family arrangements.

6.4 "Of Lovers and Wives"

In the story, "Of Lovers and Wives" (1997) Mungoshi further disturbs the foundations of heteronormativity by collapsing what had, before the discovery by the wife of her husband's bi/homosexual inclinations, been a stable and "successful" marriage. The title of the story is instructive in the sense that it encapsulates the complexity of sexual identities through a problematic hetero and bi/homosexual love triangle in what Gagiano (2006:140) calls "intertwined loyalties and betrayals." Mungoshi offers an example of two sets of intimacy – heterosexual and same-sex domestic partnerships through the love triangle. Through its focus on the mutability of sexual desire, the story offers Mungoshi a chance to explore the fluidity and ambiguity of sexuality with its concomitant socio-political implications. Chasi's choice to contract a heterosexual marriage with Shamiso and concurrently have a homosexual relationship with Peter troubles the heterosexual/homosexual binary because Chasi crosses the normative boundaries of sexuality.

The atmosphere of hostility against homosexuals in Zimbabwe during the mid 1990s and early 2000s explains why in Shaw's (2005) opinion, homosexuality in the few texts of Zimbabwean fiction that treat the subject, is marked as "perverse" and there is a prevalent line of thought that "gayness represents a blight and a perversion of sorts" (94). Not surprisingly then, a couple of criticisms have been leveled against Mungoshi in his story, "Of Lovers and Wives" (1997). Gagiano (2006:140) thinks Shamiso's fortuitous discovery of her husband's sexual identity after eighteen years especially coupled with the fact that the three have been living in the same house is a "somewhat unlikely scenario." Shaw (2005) is more scathing and is of the opinion that, "The story is ostensibly a serious and sensitive treatment of a taboo topic, but, problematically, it slips at crucial moments – the beginning and the ending – into a powerfully judgemental homophobic discourse" (99).

Much as one agrees that the ending is rather disingenuous, these two scholars are too ready to dismiss Mungoshi's efforts in this story, especially Shaw (2005). An argument is made here that the story must not be quickly dismissed given that in the first place,

Mungoshi shines a spotlight on homosexuality, a life experience highly denied, devalued, marginalized and criminalised in Zimbabwe. The story refutes the idea that black Zimbabwean men are exclusively heterosexual by nature. Secondly, Chasi transgresses against the containment of sexual identity and desire more than a "straight" homosexual or heterosexual male would, something that criticisms of this story (Zhuwarara, 2001; Shaw, 2005; Gagiano, 2006) either downplay or are oblivious to yet the story hinges on the way Chasi disturbs the binaristic definitions of sexuality and gender. His bisexuality "disrupts the social categorization of male and female, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual as binary opposites" (Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropoulous & Kirkby, 2003:79) and suggests a more fluid sexuality and gender.

That the story focuses on a bi/homosexual who has legally contracted a heterosexual marriage and fathered a child invites us to (re)examine knowledges of sexuality, role conflict and the family in the Zimbabwean familial, legal and nationalist context, especially given that sexuality is a key marker of citizenship. Thus, taken in the larger socio-political context of Zimbabwe, the story focalizes sexuality as subject of conceptual attention, inviting argument about sexuality, family and natioanalist discourses of belonging. To dwell too much on the demerits of the story is to close the door to the intellectual consideration of interrogating silences around homosexuality and the extirpation of homosexuals from the polity in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa.

Boehmer, Chrisman and Parker (2005:114) aptly note that, "In the African sphere, despite the frequently urgent discussion of how to go about constructing independent identities in relation to the contexts of modernity, fiction has to date kept noticeably – strategically? – silent on questions of gay selfhood and sexuality." Generally, that may be the case. However, Zimbabwe has seen the emergence of fiction on gay selfhood and sexuality since 1995. Commenting on the significance of 1995 Shaw (2005) writes,

> 1995 was a watershed year for Zimbabwe regarding homosexuality, which suddenly hit national and international headlines. Whereas few Zimbabweans had publicly discussed the subject previously, now it became unavoidable, thanks to a

> high-profile anti-gay campaign led by Robert Mugabe who came to shape and symbolize a virulent new homophobic movement within pan-Africanism. (91)

It is no coincidence then that "Since 1995 Zimbabwean literature has witnessed two major texts that tackle the issue of homosexuality head-on. These are Nevanji Madanhire's novel *If the Wind Blew* (1996) and Charles Mungoshi's short story 'Of Lovers and Wives'" (Shaw, 2005:97). Thus, the spectacularly increased public awareness of homosexuality, Shaw (2005) continues in the same paper, created the space for Mungoshi, a veteran writer who had been quiet on the subject, to address homosexuality directly. What is interesting is that Mungoshi treats the theme of homosexuality in a more nuanced manner than Madanhire (1996) as will be shown later.

It should not be lost sight of therefore, that Mungoshi's story was written in the context of official homophobia in which President Mugabe and the state media expressed clear revulsion against same sex sexualities and also made patent threats of physical harm and incarceration. The banning of the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) organisation from taking part in the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) was followed by the trashing of the GALZ stand at the same fair the following year and threats of physical harm to members of this organisation. The theme of the 1995 ZIBF was, ironically, "Human Rights and Justice." That year, Mugabe made vitriolic statements against same-sex intimacy as representing depravity and pathology. He made reference to the prevalence of homosexuality in "jails where there are mad people and criminals" and added, "But outside, we shall not tolerate it" (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:19). The conflation of same-sex sexuality with prison and madness is challenged by Mungoshi in his story for the two homosexual men do not show any signs of criminality or mental instability.

Amongst the many disparaging remarks he made about homosexuality, the following captures Mugabe's intolerance and what came to be some of the core anti-gay ideas in Zimbabwe:

> It [homosexuality] degrades human dignity. It's unnatural and there is no question ever of allowing these people [homosexuals] to behave worse than dogs.

….

> What we are being persuaded to accept is sub-animal behaviour and we will never allow it here [in Zimbabwe]. If you see people parading themselves as lesbians and gays, arrest them and hand them over to the police. (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:18)

The exclusion of gays from the 1995 ZIBF and Mugabe's attacks on homosexuality propelled vigorous debate on homosexuality, human rights, the power of government to control private and public choices, and what were called "African" versus "foreign" values. Mugabe's narrow conception of the nation put sexuality in the service of moralistic, racial and nationalist agendas – all of which were calculated at perpetuating his rule. One is reminded of Nagel's (2000) prescient remark that "Racial, ethnic, and national boundaries are also sexual boundaries." The active patrolling of sexual boundaries by the Mugabe regime was essentially an expression of suspicions about the patriotism of homosexuals, their Africanness and by extension, their Zimbabweanness and indeed, their humanity. Homosexuality itself was put under a moralistic lense and seen as moral peril and a threat to the heterosexual family. Most of these ideas are challenged in Mungoshi's (1997) story.

The thrust of Mugabe's argument was that same sex sexuality was anathema to Africa and was a form of foreign vice that needed to be rooted out. Interestingly, the same sentiment pervades African novels that address homosexuality, prompting Dunton (1989:422) to conclude that in such novels, "homosexual practice is almost invariably attributed to the detrimental impact made on Africans by the West." However, Mungoshi's story is not of this mould as will be explicated later. Dunton (1989) also points out the conflation of sexuality, politics and economics when he writes, "Further, if the engagement of the West with the African continent is generally identified as being exploitative, then homosexual activity is seen as being a particularly repugnant aspect of this" (424). It is not surprising then that Mugabe, known for his diatribes against the West is on record as saying, "I don't believe they [homosexuals] should have any rights at all" (Phillips, 2004). Elsewhere, Mugabe had expanded on his position and said,

> I find it extremely outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizations, like those of homosexuals who offend both against the law of nature and the morals of religious beliefs espoused by our society, should have any advocates in our midst and even elsewhere in the world. (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:14)

The state media echoed these sentiments and "depicted homosexuals as corrupt, immoral, un-African, deviant and perverse. *Moto* magazine (affiliated to the Catholic Church) went further alleging that gays were involved in satanic cults, barbaric rituals, child molestation, ritual rape and murder" (Shaw, 2005: 91-92). Ironically, the trial and conviction of ex-President Reverend Canaan Banana in 1997 on eleven counts of sodomy and indecent assault meant that homosexuality was "suddenly exposed at the very apex of 'respectable' Zimbabwean society – within the political establishment and the Church" (Shaw, 2005:93). Upon Banana's death in November 2003, no mention was made of the ex-President's homosexuality in Mugabe's official eulogy, confirming a culture of "unsaying" homosexuality (Epprecht, 1998) and hence the complexity of the issue of homosexuality in Zimbabwe.

To a large extent, Mugabe's verbal gay-bashing, elevated to a national campaign and touted by the media as the official line regarding homosexuality in the country, fueled homophobia in a society that Epprecht (1998) argues, was highly tolerant of homosexuals or turned a blind eye to such intimacies. "Of Wives and Lovers" (1997) bears this out. Shamiso, the woman through whose eyes we see the story, has been married to Chasi for eighteen years and fortuitously discovers that her husband has all along been having a homosexual relationship with Peter, whom Shamiso has always regarded as a close live-in family friend. Chasi's decision not to disclose his homosexuality to Shamiso is as discursively important as Shamiso's blindness to her husband's bi/homosexuality when everybody else around her, including her eighteen year old daughter, has always known about it. The silence of those in the know regarding the homosexual relationship between the two men speaks volumes as well.

One of the questions, as highlighted at the beginning of this chapter is why Shamiso accepts Chasi in the first place. Concerning the background of this marriage, Mungoshi writes:

> Shami had got pregnant in Form Four and her parents, strict Salvation Army members, had written her off as a bad investment. Chasi on the other hand, had had to abandon his studies at University to get a job. His parents – a lawyer and an educationist respectively – had given him up for lost. Maybe that was the reason why it had been so easy for Peter to remain part of Chasi's life, and become such a close member of the young family? Or maybe both Chasi and Shami's families knew what kind of man Chasi had been before he married Shami? They had known and kept quiet, waiting for Shami to find out for herself! And she had – eighteen years later. (107)

The situation is more complex than what Shamiso thinks in the above quote. The ambiguity of Chasi's sexual identity is captured through the many unanswered questions that Shamiso asks herself. Mungoshi does not make it clear that Chasi is a "straight" gay man.

What is clear however is that Chasi does not verbally disclose his bi/homosexuality to Shamiso. The question is why? There is a range of answers. Bozzet (1980:174), commenting on why gays marry in heterosexual relationships says, "to conceal one's true sexual orientation, to test one's heterosexual responsiveness, and to deny one's homosexuality to oneself, or more actively, to vanquish homosexual impulses." Another reason could be that at the moment Chasi married Shamiso, he was not consciously aware of his homosexual inclinations. The myriad possible reasons here echo Mungoshi's ambiguity as mirrored too in the narrative technique in which we see the story through the limited view of Shamiso's eyes – she who has been "blind" to her husband's bisexuality. She is to a large extent correct to say that she feels like "the outsider, the intruder, the uninvited gate crasher" in Chasi and Peter's relationship (Mungoshi, 1997:109). This however, happens *after* her discovery of the homosexual affair between the two men. Mungoshi's point is to dispel the myth that homosexuals are monsters and perverts that have clearly idiosyncratic behaviours. Shamiso for example, could not

identify Chasi's homosexual tendencies or his bisexuality for eighteen years because Chasi does not exhibit any stereotypical homosexual behavior. On the contrary, not only does Chasi own up to the responsibility of Shami's pregnancy, he also marries her – two admirable actions that to Shamiso speak of Chasi's heterosexuality for he fulfills the heteronormative role of a husband: fathering in the biological and social sense. Shamiso is shown musing: "Peter on the other hand she could understand. She felt that his personality was so dark and ambiguous that nothing was impossible. Besides… Shami had come to accept that Peter never seemed completely at ease with women" (106). The irony here is that Shamiso is still looking for essential "signs" of homosexuality when she has failed to see them in her husband. Shamiso's limited point of view, that of the suddenly baffled heterosexual wife confirms that Chasi had not been lacking as a husband with regard to providing sex, affection and material comforts. In fact, how Shamiso eventually marries Chasi is not fundamentally different from the foundation stories of several heterosexual marriages as discussed below.

Chasi abandons his University studies and assumes responsibility for having impregnated Shamiso before she could finish her secondary school education. This could be why Chasi's parents "had given him up for lost" (107) not because they knew he was bi/homosexual but because they think he is hampering his future by marrying too early. At the same time however, there is a hint that his parents suspect and know that he has bi/homosexual inclinations and are dismissing him on the basis that he is sexually confused and *quietly* disown him. Shamiso too is "written off as a bad investment" (107) not because, one would like to think, she is getting married to a well-known homosexual. She is disowned by her parents on the basis of her early pregnancy as what happened to Magi and her father in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975). The tacit silence on Chasi and Peter's homosexual relationship speaks of a society that will, to borrow from Epprecht (1998), "unsay" homosexuality at all costs and is tolerant of the practice. Mungoshi's story, an argument is made, reveals that although homosexuality is formally outlawed in Zimbabwe, practically, there could be a great degree of tolerance for the practice.

Thus the hard line taken by Mugabe against homosexuality altered, to a considerable degree, the tolerance for homosexuality, giving rise to a situation in which "many black Zimbabweans maintain that homosexual behaviour is un-African, a foreign disease that was introduced by white settlers and that is now principally spread by foreign tourists and ambassadors" (Epprecht, 1998:632). Implied here is that homosexuality is not a biological predisposition but invariably a choice and one exclusively attributed to Western influence. In his story, Mungoshi mocks this idea and chooses as the venue for the reconciliation talk that Chasi, Peter and Shamiso have, a restaurant called "The African" (Mungoshi, 1997:108) and makes the two men hold hands on top of the table at some point of the conversation to scoff at the essentialist idea that homosexuality is un-African. It is as if Mungoshi is responding to Madanhire's (1996) novel in which Isis, the main character, witnesses "an intense love act" between her husband and Christiaan, a white Swede described in the novel as "a foreigner" (97). Madanhire's (1996) treatment of the theme of homosexuality is predictable and monothematic in the sense that although the homosexual act he writes about is between two consenting adults, there is the stock European homosexual who is portrayed as the more depraved party, who may have controlled events. On the other hand, the subject of homosexuality in Mungoshi's story is of larger and problematic import as will be discussed below.

To appreciate Mungoshi's acuity in crafting his story "Of Lovers and Wives" (1997), a historical perspective on homosexuality in Zimbabwe will be instructive at this point. Mark Epprecht (1998; 1999; 2005) has probably done more extensive and thorough studies of homosexuality in Zimbabwe than any other scholar on the subject. According to Epprecht (1998) homosexuality, in the sense of same sex erotics, was practiced in Zimbabwe in different contexts and guises before and during colonialism amongst black Zimbabweans although this did not lead to the emergence of homosexual identities due largely to the secrecy around homosexual acts and strict codes of social behaviour as also illustrated in Mungoshi's (1997) story above. For the most part, homosexuality was regarded as transient behaviour and not an orientation as witnessed by the tolerance of the practice amongst young men, men in the mines and jail, where there was a scarcity of, or no women at all (Epprecht, 1998). Amory (1997:6) aptly warns that "same sex erotics

practiced by many people in many different historical contexts do not always necessarily lead to the emergence of homosexual identities."

Epprecht's (1998) study of court records and oral sources revealed that by and large, "The African cultures of Zimbabwe unquestionably disapproved of open homosexual behaviour. They were, however, prepared to tolerate or turn a blind eye to discreet, eccentric or 'accidental' homosexual acts provided proper compensations and social functions were maintained" (1998:645). The culture of discretion, Epprecht writes in the same article, was "almost certainly condoned and probably enhanced by over a century of Christian missionary propaganda" (637) since most missionaries couched homosexuality in the language of immorality. If one follows this line of argument, homosexual identities were more clouded before the formation of organisations such as GALZ which have seen some homosexuals publicly declare their same-sex sexuality. Much as that is the case, many people who are certain of their homosexuality, especially in black communities, do not disclose their preference for same-sex relationships for fear of ostracization and physical harm.

The tolerance that Epprecht writes about above stands in sharp contrast to the official homophobic sentiments spouted by Robert Mugabe in the years 1994 and 1995. According to Epprecht, the motive behind such homophobia was to gain political mileage just before the 1995 elections, given that the early 1990s were characterised by economic disempowerment under the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme whose failure undercut the main masculine identity in Zimbabwe – the ability to provide for a wife and children. The males' inability to play the role of a provider was occasioned by widespread job losses and a land redistribution exercise that had stalled or been bungled. To this end, Epprecht (1998:644) writes, "The coincidence of President Mugabe's anti-gay and presidential re-election campaigns of 1995 is thus quite striking. Both Mugabe and his supporters characterised homosexuality as a threat to an idealized patriarchal culture and national values, frequently and explicitly linked to Western imperialism and 'reactionary forces.'" Shaw (2005:93) concurs with Epprecht's theory that Mugabe's

gay-bashing speech was calculated at "seeking re-election on an anti-white, anti-British and anti-homosexual ticket (and conflating all three in a highly problematic manner)."

The main reason that Mugabe and other anti-gay commentators use to outlaw same-sex sexuality is that same-sex carnal attractions and relations run counter to human biology and as such, these relations are associated with carnal and affective inappropriateness; in short, as "unnatural" – a word that Shamiso also uses in the story "Of Wives and Lovers" (1997). Mugabe once said of homosexuals, "We are saying they do not know biology because even dogs and pigs know biology" (Shaw, 2005:93), and elsewhere he is quoted as having said, "I hope the time will never come when we all want to reverse nature and men bear children" (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:15).

Linked to this biological determinism is the preference for reproductive heteronormativity with its emphasis on procreation over sexual recreation. This functionalist approach to sex condemns the deviation from the fecund heterosexual ideal and labels it as "unnatural" as well. Epprecht (1998:634) quotes the late Border Gezi, the then Minister for Gender, Youth and Employment saying in a parliamentary debate:

> We have asked these [gay] men whether they have been able to get pregnant. They have not been able to answer such questions. Even the women who are engaging in lesbian activities, we have asked them what they have got from such practices and no one has been able to answer.

These ideas were aimed at underscoring the presumed pointlessness, and by implication, pathology of homosexuality. Mention of these strands of thought is made here because it is these ideas that are at play in Mungoshi's short story.

"Of Lovers and Wives" (1997) challenges "compulsory heterosexuality" or "sexual essentialism" (Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropoulous and Kirkby, 2003:79). These four scholars explicate on these two useful ideas:

> So heterosexuality is a powerful conceptual tool or category which has been mobilized in the twentieth century to define and regulate not just sexual behaviours, but ways in which we define gender…. It [heterosexuality] is not a

> biological category, as often assumed; indeed biology developed for many years as a scientific study without the use of this term. Instead, it is a social construct which has the power to regulate and re(inforce) not only particular kinds of sexual practice, but also categories based on them. Heterosexuality is the concept which determines whether a man is recognized as a viable male subject and a woman as a viable female subject. (20)

Thus Shamiso's identity as a heterosexual woman is destabilised because the discovery of her husband's bisexuality threatens her sexuality, gendering and status. She feels defrauded and resentful towards the fact that Peter and Chasi have an affective tie that she thinks is stronger than her marriage to Chasi. In other words, she starts viewing her marriage to Chasi, indeed their family, as a sham. Competing for her husband with a man is something she cannot fathom and hence sees as unnatural.

Mungoshi's exploration of Shamiso's predicament emerges as more nuanced than Madanhire's portrayal of Isis when she discovers her husband's homosexuality. What Shamiso finds more disconcerting than her feelings of frustration and devaluation is the calling into question of her heterosexual femininity. As Zhuwarara (2001:111) observes, the discovery of her husband's homosexuality "mocks her sense of womanhood and displaces her from her role as wife while at the same time destabilizing her sense of identity." In other words, for the past eighteen years she had regarded her relationship with Chasi as normal and fulfilling. Her poise is rudely shaken askew and she is being forced to re-evaluate not only her sexuality, but that of Chasi as well. That explains why Shamiso wants to know whether Chasi's lovemaking to Peter is more enjoyable than his lovemaking to her. On the other hand, when Isis discovers her husband's homosexual inclinations, Madanhire (1996) resorts to the spectacular as a pregnant Isis instantly miscarries. The miscarriage itself seems to be a rejection of a homosexual man's sperm and by implication, homosexuality itself. To put finality to this sentiment, Isis quickly divorces her husband.

Whereas we do not get to know much about what Isis feels and thinks about her husband's homosexuality, Shamiso is assailed by a sense of shame that has more to do with the way she imagines people regard and have always regarded her, than the actuality

that Chasi is bi/homosexual. When Shami seeks sympathy from her daughter Kathy, who is due to be married soon, "Kathy's response was to laugh" and Shamiso "couldn't bear to imagine what her own daughter must think of her" (108). With hindsight, she also realizes that those who had called her "Poor Shami" (107) behind her back had been mocking her. In other words, what Shamiso cannot deal with is the thought that some people had assumed that she was either averting her eyes from the homosexual relationship or condoning it, in which case they regarded her as "queer" too, alongside the two men. Thus, she is more worried about the stigma that goes with homosexuality and the shame that she imagines has rubbed off her than homosexuality itself, which she does not understand anyway. In other words, Shamiso is not disgusted by the homosexuality of the two men but assailed by a mixture of confusion and shame because heterosexuality, the guarantor of acceptable gendering in her society, is shaken at the roots.

It is difficult then to say that Shamiso and Chasi's marriage collapses because of sexual incompatibility. Rather, it collapses because of sexual, and in Shamiso's eyes, gender infidelity. As for Chasi, it could be that he sees in a heterosexual marriage a variety of social advantages such as a woman's company and the prestige of being a father. It could also mean that he is involved in sexual peccadilloes in which he views his individual taste as having a legitimate role. Even at the end of the story, the act of holding hands between Chasi and Peter does not unequivocally point to Chasi's rejection of Shami or his prioritizing of homosexuality. Regarding Chasi's sexuality, Mungoshi is also careful not to portray Chasi as possessing an excess of sexual appetite. He seems to satisfy his emotional and sexual role in as far as pleasing both Peter and Shamiso goes. This ambiguity could be a rejection of a monosexist perspective which asserts that sexual desire is "naturally" directed toward one of the two sexes.

Thus, Mungoshi's story challenges some conventional ideas about hetero and homosexuality. On the contrary, Shaw (2005) does not agree. He finds fault with the very first sentence of the story: "In the middle of the night, in the midst of a very pleasant dream involving some children and some men, Shami shook him violently and asked him

if he was dreaming of Peter" (105). Shaw (2005) is of the opinion that "The first sentence of the story troublingly implies that homosexual men, generally and typically, dream and fantasize about pederasty" (105). Gagiano (2006:140) shares this feeling not only about the first sentence, but the story as a whole which she regards as "somewhat coarse-grained in its texture" tending to state the point instead of dramatizing it. There are elements of truth in these statements, but there is more to the story. Inasmuch as one tends to agree that both scholars have a point in suspecting Mungoshi of pandering to "popular stereotypes of homosexuals as Westernised perverts who spread disease and corrupt children" (Epprecht, 1999:26), the whole story itself subverts these very same stereotypes by demonstrating an affectionate relationship between the two black Zimbabwean men.

In spite of this slip, the innuendo involving children, the story portrays the homosexual relationship sympathetically although the ending is unsatisfactory. The fact that both Chasi and Peter are surprised about Shamiso's new knowledge of their homosexual relationship speaks of the two men's unconditional acceptance of their homoerotic inclination. As Mungoshi writes, "Chasi was the more bewildered of the two men when Shami confronted him with the truth. He couldn't see what bothered her. Peter, of course, took umbrage and retreated into silence and work" (107). To Shami's charge that homosexuality "isn't natural," (108) Chasi's unwavering answer is "There is nothing natural or unnatural about it" (108).

Gagiano's (2006) comment about the coarseness of the story can be discussed in conjunction with the denouement of the story. Perhaps as pointed out above, this is the strongest weakness of the story in that a somewhat improbable "accident" happens in which Peter appears to have committed suicide by driving off a bridge to plunge to his death. The news comes via a telephone call. One tends to get the sense that the ending is forced and may be read as an authorial intervention in the restoration of heteronormativity. Shami and Chasi decide to live apart after Peter's death. Mungoshi (1997:111) writes, "There could be no question about the rightness of certain situations, under certain circumstances. And when Chasi decided to leave town after Peter's funeral, preferring only to visit his wife occasionally during the weekend, Shamiso felt that that

too had its own fitting rightness." Shaw (2005) comments that first, "Non judgemental readers may dispute the necessity for Peter's death and find its coldly unsympathetic treatment quite distressing" (100). Second, Shaw (2005:100) concludes that "the narrative as a whole could be criticized for burying unsettling issues that it raises rather than pursuing their full implications."

Shaw (2005) is correct in pointing out that Mungoshi had an opportunity to use sexuality as a site of gender anxieties and that the result is somewhat unsatisfactory. It would have been interesting to see how Chasi and Shami behave with each other on the weekends that Chasi visits, for example. To accuse Mungoshi of homophobia is however, stretching the point. In any case, the labeling of others as homophobes can hardly be said to be any more enlightened than homophobia itself given that both attitudes are "underpinned by medicalised pathology" (Shefer and Potgieter, 2006: 106). What one senses is that Mungoshi expresses disquiet with sexual transgression but nonetheless acknowledges sexual plurality and variability through Shami's and Chasi's discontent with each other *after* Shami's discovery of Chasi's attraction to Peter. One does not sense a moral panic or outrage over the two men's transgressive behaviour. The ending of the story suggests a textually endorsed restoration of order, but not panic or phobia. The boundaries of sexuality are subverted only to be reinstated, but after refutations and arguments have been invited. Thus, although Mungoshi's text gives the impression of policing sexual boundaries, it does not demonize homosexuality. What the narrative manages to do is to destabilize notions about socially sanctioned repression of bi/homosexuality, socially approved heterosexuality, conventional masculinity and femininity. Mungoshi's story typifies those that "whether or not [homosexuality] is treated sympathetically, it is granted a greater capacity to disturb, to call questions" (Dunton, 1989:423).

Shamiso's comment about the form and substance of any kind of intimate relationship is apt for ending the discussion of this story:

> …I think marriage and things like love and so on have to be worked for, they don't just happen like rain. I mean sometimes I think it's time we thought about things like love and marriage…Can they still exist or are they just arrangements

> put together, built out of fear and loneliness because otherwise we wouldn't survive…(110).

When Shamiso speaks of marriage, she is referring to heterosexual marriages which are legal and condoned in Zimbabwe as opposed to homosexual couples who are targets of derision, scorn and hate. What Shamiso's comment brings to the fore, in spite of herself, is the assumption that love is to be found in heterosexual relationships only, a lie that the story has demonstrated. Her comment also hints at the masquerade that homosexual or bisexual people have to perform in order to be accommodated in society. A question is indirectly asked by Shami's comment: If homosexuality represents depravity and pathology, does heterosexuality represent purity and health? An exploration of heterosexual relationships in the preceding chapters suggests that heterosexual relationships are heavily conflicted to the point of dysfunction as marked by uncommunicativeness or silence, for example.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with Mungoshi's exploration of one of the enduring determinants of familial relationships – the dissolution or breakdown of these ties. Mungoshi's focus on relationship breakdown and negotiation through different or changing family forms is not an index of social decay as some critics claim. Inasmuch as Mungoshi recognises the fact that collectivism and familism are strong values amongst the Shona, his writing, especially the deployment of irony, prompts the critic to revise and refine these values.

The increased trend away from the extended and conventional two-parent nuclear family towards other family forms as a result of marital disintegration or alternative sexualities as delineated by Mungoshi in his work, is explored. With regard to fathers who are left in the sole custody of their child(ren) it emerges that the fathers are inept at mothering, hinting at the possibility that the fathers are not socialized for this role. The fathers' attempts to replace the biological mothers with other women to provide primary care for the child(ren) proves ineffectual. Lone female parents become such either as a choice or because of circumstance. Those who choose to leave their marriages do so in pursuit of a dignified, less stifling and demeaning existence after conflict negotiation has failed or

when they perceive that there is no space for such negotiation. In other words, their discontent with marriage would have been such that opting out is a better choice either for the mother or both the mother and the child(ren).The discontented mothers remind the readers of the shakiness of human affiliations, especially in the context of verbal and psychological abuse.

Through his portrayal of responsible and successful lone female parents, Mungoshi challenges the adequacy and accuracy of the claim that a "whole" family is a co-parent one and that a lone parent family, especially a female-headed one, is a deficit model. In his portrayal of such mothers, Mungoshi questions the moral weight accorded the nuclear family over the lone-parent family. By dint of focusing on and exploring different family forms as well as different sexual orientations such as bi/homosexuality, Mungoshi seems to suggest that the family is intellectual, in the sense that it shapes the way people imagine affinity and at the same time impedes the consideration of alternative interpretations of the family.

By broaching the subject of bi/homosexuality, Mungoshi is responding to a historical juncture characterised by politically manufactured homophobia in Zimbabwe. The story "Of lovers and Wives" (1997) suggests tolerance for or the unsaying of same-sex intimacies compared to for example, Mugabe's conflation of homosexuality with madness and other pathologies. Mungoshi's handling of bi/homosexuality troubles heterosexuality and its socially approved forms of sexuality, femininities and masculinities.

As elsewhere in his writing, this chapter has explored Mungoshi's proclivity towards inconsistencies in human relationships as a method of understanding what is happening inside relationships. He shows that cultural and intellectual shifts foster new forms of relationships and new perspectives on time-honored "normal" ones.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This thesis has discussed Mungoshi's acute sensitivity to human intimacies located in the family, and how his writing necessitates a rethinking of certain cultural and social arrangements. By consistently mining the family trope, Mungoshi signals his keen interest in human relationships, especially their quality. Theoretically discontented with the inadequate conceptualizations of interpersonal relationships in Zimbabwean literature in general, and spurred by the opportunity Mungoshi's work avails through a sustained exploration of the family trope irrespective of the change in polities, this thesis identifies family as a useful concept to analyse key issues such as childhood, gender, sex and sexuality, femininities and masculinities. It questions some of the categorizations that have been inherited in the criticism of Mungoshi's work in this regard.

The thesis moves away from what Vambe (2005:97) calls the "dominant thesis approach":

> In this paradigm, authoritarian institutions such as colonial structures are assigned unlimited power and are depicted as having total control over every facet of the lives of the dominated. In the political economy of the imagery of the 'dominant thesis' paradigm, the lives of the ruled are distorted, manipulated and absorbed into the systems of power to the extent that they lose autonomy and individuality.

The dominant thesis referred to by Vambe is intellectual cultural nationalism in its various forms, the most overworked being Marxist-Leninist criticism which got stuck in "flogging the colonial horse" (Chinodya, 2003:99).

Marxist-Leninist criticism left family inadequately theorized because it treated family as allegory of the nation and in a way inadvertently took part in the perpetuation of age and gender assymetrical relations. Mungoshi's meticulous delineation of familial conflict suggests a closer reading of this institution and not a glib one that sees family as political allegory in the fight against colonialism or just the unraveling of family ties under rapid

social change. What Mungoshi does is force us to question assumptions about interpersonal intimacies in a way that suggests that once we do it may lead to a better practice for both literary criticism and perhaps, practical life itself.

In this regard, Mungoshi's writing is not just another example of "Third World Literature" which Kaarsholm (2005:3) writes of below:

> It has been argued that Third World Literature is distinguished from other types of writing by its special 'moral' and 'national allegorical' quality and that Third World societies do not possess the private spheres that in European history provided the hothouses for the development of literary genres and aesthetics.

Although this statement is tinged with condescension by the critics that Kaarsholm refers to, it nonetheless captures a time in which literary criticism muted the contradictions and contestation in the family because focus on fissures in the family was viewed as divisive and secondary to the fight for liberation from colonialism and intellectual imperialism.

By choosing to focus on family and social change, Mungoshi chose a durable topic in literature. He offers a cumulative critique of day-to-day issues punctuated by ideologies of gender. In his patient examination of these issues, Mungoshi shows a deep understanding of human psychology. His writing requires a great deal of rigorous literary scrutiny than it has received. To that end, the first and introductory chapter accounts for some of the reasons behind the undeservedly little attention Mungoshi has received and how this thesis aims to fill particular gaps in the extant criticism on Mungoshi.

The introductory chapter demonstrates not only Mungoshi's artistry and the impact his works have had on other Zimbabwean writers but also examines the effect of the Rhodesia and then post-independent Zimbabwe Literature Bureau on his Shona works. Much as Mungoshi's Shona works show just as much introspection as the English ones, they tend to follow the didactic thrust of the Bureau. Although far less didactic than other vernacular texts, Mungoshi's Shona works are didactic nonetheless in their final resolution of conflict largely because of the moral/ethical frame of the Bureau as well as

the implicit knowledge that if one publishes through the literature bureau, the work is also potentially earmarked for vernacular literature's biggest market – schools.

The fact that Mungoshi's writing is neither fervently nationalistic nor flamboyant is largely the reason why in spite of his fairly large corpus and successful writing in both English and Shona, he has not had the amount and depth of critical attention that he deserves. Most of the available critical work on Mungoshi lacks rigour and systematic evaluation. Critical work tends to be pigeonholed according to language (Shona or English), focuses on one or a few texts or genre and in the largely scattered nature of the articles in different publications, produces a fragmented view of the writer's oeuvre. The *Charles Mungoshi* Reader (2006) by Vambe and Chirere offers a similarly compartmentalized view. This thesis emerges as the one attempt that discusses Mungoshi's work in one volume, across the two languages he writes in and across three genres to generate a more subtle, more layered reading.

The thesis focuses on the theme of family and demonstrates that it is an intellectually fertile domain in the criticism of Zimbabwean and by extension, African literature. The introductory chapter reveals that Mungoshi's body of works in both Shona and English is informed by family and directs us to the necessity of unpacking the definition and practice of this institution not only through examining how he represents it but by also comparing his portrayal to that of other African and Zimbabwean writers. Much as it is one of the most significant and sustained themes in Zimbabwean literature, especially in the work of Charles Mungoshi, literary criticism on family tends to avoid commenting directly and incisively on it. It is suggested that instead of viewing the family as allegorical and unitary, it is profitable to perceive it as fractured and fluid. To that end, Mungoshi portrays dystopic families, a deliberate ploy to expose the myth of the model family – family characterised by intra-kin harmony and as source of love and comfort. Family in Mungoshi is associated with fracture, alienation and estrangement.

Age and gender are crucial determinants in how individuals in the family interact as well as perceive themselves. The finer focus on sources of familial discord and contestation is

meant to mine disparate voices within this institution so as to question foundational assumptions about the family and its related concepts in the criticism of Zimbabwean literature. In any case as McKinlay & McVittie (2008:47) observe, "Families…comprise sites where local understandings and broader social understandings meet, and where individuals make sense of themselves and actions in relation to a network of social relations." Thus, Mungoshi focuses on the internal processes of the family all the more to raise other fundamental questions of citizenship in general.

Mungoshi's work is marked by tension and contest in the family, revealing contradictions and paradoxes of intimacy. The conflicted and conflictful experiences that he captures both expand and critique our vision of human intimacies and life in general. Through familial contestation and conflict, Mungoshi offers for critique, various matrices of power located within this institution. That is why this thesis listens to voices of discontent, starting with children in Chapter Two. The discontent is verbalized by the characters or dramatised by Mungoshi in a way that suggests discontent by one or some family members. Burnham (1987) comments on the efficacy of conflictual family relations:

> In viewing household formation and marriage in [a] more conflictual manner and taking seriously the notion that despite the normative altruism of kin relations, individuals are likely to be pursuing personal interests in domestic contexts, we are confronted with the necessity of considering the ideological content of kinship norms in everyday life. (45)

More than anything, Mungoshi's work calls our attention to the relevance of gender in everyday lives.

Thus, Mungoshi is mostly interested in strife-ridden dystopic families. Persistent conflict reminds us how conflicted and contentious family is. Saying this is not to say that other writers do not portray conflictual relationships, for indeed, conflict is the very essence of literary creativity, the very "stuff" of literature. What Mungoshi suggests through strife-torn relations is the need to critically analyse such relations and how they are socially constructed in the hope that the sources of such conflict become clear and interrogated further. As such, he eschews the idealised model of family which ignores conflict.

Similarly, he avoids the use of family as a political metaphor in the fight against colonization. What he shows is how bodies and the characters who own those bodies have a purport at both a micro and macro social scale of citizenship. As Burman observes, "The definition and boundaries of families connect with wider institutions and practices" (1994:70).

Chapter Two as pointed out above focuses on children and childhood. The child's point of view or focalization of children is a tool of perspective given that "Notions of childhood evoke concepts and practices such as nature, biology, stages, bodies, growth, (im)maturity, rights, vulnerability, and innocence. These combine moral-political evaluation with apparently 'natural' terminology (of growth and maturity)…" (Burman, 2008:94). The chapter is a departure from the victimhood thesis of childhood as expounded by Kahari (1980), Zimunya (1982) and Zhuwarara (2001). In Mungoshi's work, children are not as immature, helpless, vulnerable and silent as they are said to be by the critics just mentioned. Much as children are under their fathers' normative authority and care, they do not show complete submission to paternal authority.

Mindful of childhood as a construct, the chapter discusses the centrality of children and childhood in Shona society as well as how some Zimbabwean writers such as Katiyo (1976) deploy childhood as a political tool. The chapter makes the point that Mungoshi offers a gendered view of childhood by focusing on boys, whose childhood is usually thought of as a simple process of acquiring a male gender role. Mungoshi's keen sense of observation shows how troubled childhood is for boys, suggesting that it may not be any less troubled than the childhood of girls, largely regarded as inculcation into subservience to patriarchy. In the first place, hypermasculine fathers attempt to "claim" their sons by teaching them, in typical Okonkwo fashion, to eschew all that is "feminine." In learning to be men, the boys have to relinquish boyhood through various rites of passage all aimed at the erasure of fear, indecision, "softness" and so on and acquire macho attitudes of daring, stoicism and non-display of affection. The killing of a crow in "The Crow" (1972), hooliganism and bullying of other children in "Did You Have to Go that Far?" (1997) fit the observation by Mosher and Tomkins (1988:71) that "The world of boys

becomes a stage to try out and rehearse macho roles. The world of boys becomes, in time, a world of youths. This transition from 'real boy' to 'real man' requires trials by fire – *rites de passage.*" Thus, following Groth's (2007) idea, most of the boys in Mungoshi's works find themselves involved in the renouncement of boyhood to accomplish manhood. Adolescence then, becomes a deepening of these issues as gender role expectations become acute.

One of the myths about childhood that Mungoshi explodes is patriarchy's claim that the child belongs to the father. Beyond the legal claim that fathers have over their sons, the relationship between the two suggests fathers' lack of authority and influence over their sons. Mungoshi offers some boy characters who are "wrested" from their fathers and become "mama's boys" much to the consternation of their fathers. Such stories point to the idea that there is no one clear sex role for boys and another for girls but rather, multiple versions of masculinity and femininity even in childhood. Through such stories, Mungoshi signals his intention to explore alternative ways of being a man other than through the embrace of a hypermasculine identity. This theme is explored in Chapter Three, "Adolescents and Young Men." Some of the children in Chapter Two reject their fathers' ideas of macho masculinity through disaffection, which in some cases leads to boys despising their fathers as seen for example, through a retreat into adversarial silence and focus on the father's least attractive characteristics when describing the latter. Thus, children in Mungoshi's work gauge attitudes and values of parents, conceptualise people and social relations. Child narrators or focalized children bring to light the prevalent attitudes and sentiments about their parents and home, which sentiments and attitudes underlie most of Mungoshi's work and are explored in detail in Chapter Three. The most common sentiment is disillusionment and disappointment with both home and parents. Overall, Mungoshi offers no moralizing rhetoric on childhood. The child is not an innocent foil to the depravity of adults and the world although the child is used to bring out imperfections in relations and the wider structures and ideologies that underpin such stunted relationships.

Chapter Three builds on the analysis provided in the previous one. Nsamenang (2002:71) is apt in observing that "The adolescent experiences foreshadow the state of families, adolescents' roles and adolescent-parent relationships and roles." In fact, the significance of adolescence and young adulthood goes beyond that. This stage also touches on concepts of home and belonging, ideas that are central not only to family but to existence in general. Chapter Three, "Adolescents and Young Men," concerns itself with this pivotal stage in the human life cycle as depicted by Mungoshi in his work. Home and belonging bring to the fore self and group identity, both of which are largely determined by conventional and competing gender imaginaries. The characters in this group are more conflicted than the children as they battle not only with assuming socially approved gender norms but also inheriting patrimonial narratives thrust on them by their macho fathers.

The poverty of home is also an important factor in adolescence in Mungoshi's work. It engenders deep shame as seen in "The Homecoming" (1997) and Lucifer's case in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975). Poverty is intertwined with effects of formal education especially biculturation. Scathing as Lucifer's comments about the poverty at home and some dated customs is, it nonetheless critiques some of the cherished ideas of familism as he questions the notion of holistic community and culture and the idea of unitary collective experience. Family histories and legacies are put under scrutiny especially when Lucifer refuses to accept the mantle his father wants to pass on to him, that of "Father of the Family" (Mungoshi, 1975:15).

Thus, adolescence and adulthood is the terrain where the theme of tradition versus modernity finds its most powerful expression given that standing on the threshold of manhood and womanhood, adolescents and young adults are the ones most affected by social change. Adolescence emerges as characterised by change and contradiction. Overwhelmed by the poverty of home and traditions they consider obsolete, adolescents and young adults decide to leave home. There is no better example of this than Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) who "rebels militantly against the African family" (Zimunya,

1982:64). Lucifer however, is not a rebel without cause as most analyses (Stratton, 1986; Veit-Wild, 1993; Zhuwarara, 2001) make him out to be.

Lucifer, alongside Rondo in "Sins of the Fathers" (1997) has the same macho fathers as those in Chapter Two. Mr Rwafa, in the last mentioned story, is the most autocratic, tribalistic and sexist male character in Mungoshi's work. Owing to the father's tyranny, Rondo lacks confidence, independent thought and self-confidence until his father kills the son's young family.

Chapters Four and Five speak intimately to each other given that the former is on Mungoshi's depiction of women and the latter, this writer's depiction of men. Both chapters question assumed stable gendered behaviour and roles for men and women. These two chapters are essential because they fill a gap in the scholarship about the construction and performances of femininities and masculinities in the context of Zimbabwean literature. There is abundant literature that obliquely discusses how the constructions of masculinities and femininities have been challenged and transformed by key historical processes but not much is said about how gender is constructed and contested in the domestic setup. Mungoshi's work directs us to such a close enquiry, reminding us that men are only half of humanity just as women are. To understand both, one needs to understand the relationships between them because it is the relationships between the two groups that form the base for social organization.

Through first, highlighting the significance of reproducing children which puts women in a position where their sexuality might be controlled to achieve agnatic goals, and secondly, through marital discord, Mungoshi problematises heterosexuality on which reproduction and the normative family are founded. The policing and exploitation of women's sexuality by patriarchy appears to be the main cause of conflict between the sexes for from it emerge other discourses of containment. As Burman (2008:119) observes, "Girls' and women's sexuality has been a longstanding site of particular regulation owing to women's accorded positions as representatives of cultural purity and reproduction." It is the women's challenging of some of these discourses of restraint in

words and deeds that Mungoshi is interested in, proving that women are not just willing wards and powerless wives under patriarchy. But Mungoshi is also aware of how crucial the ability to bear children is to women themselves, *for themselves*. Whereas some characters like Betty in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) would do anything to have a child, including fighting the world of spirits and curses, others such as Martha in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983) and Mrs Gwaze in "Did You Have to Go that Far?" (1997) value motherhood but uncouple it from marriage.

Both Chapter Four and Five show that in fact, the masculinist script of manhood is a problem not only to women but to men as well when the latter cannot satisfy the points on the checklist such as sexual virility, providing for the family and so on. The two chapters upset the idea of fixed gender stratification as Mungoshi opens up space to consider men's vulnerability to women and thereby complicates the staple of men as in positions of authority and power in relation to women. Thus, most of the male-female relationships that Mungoshi explores are not simple subordinate-superodinate relationships. This finds expression not only in subversive women but also in the way men are burdened by or fail to live up to the script of "successful" masculinity.

Befittingly, Chapter Four starts with a discussion of gender (in)equality through history. That women in precolonial Africa had certain rights and privileges that were eroded by colonialism is an idea shared by most of the scholars consulted on this topic (Schmidt, 1992; Zhuwarara, 2001; Moss, 2002; Matshakayile-Ndlovu, 2006). There is a consensus that the reshaping of gender by colonialism entrenched female subordination. Be that as it may, Mungoshi portrays women who problematise this subordination, showing that it exists more in the structural sense than in individual experiences. Equally, Mungoshi's work warns against a simplistic analysis that overemphasizes the role of history and economics in discussing gender relations. He suggests instead, that gender in(equality) is embedded in personal relationships although there are overarching macro institutional forces. The most crucial undertaking is to study gender at the level of personal relationships. One is reminded here, of Staples's (2004:122) comment that "female equality is more than a function of political and economic relationships." Following this

idea, Mungoshi's point is that not all women are victims of patriarchy and patriarchy is not complete in its assumed dominance of women.

Dominant images of women in African literature are said to be stereotypical and "negative" (Gaidzanwa, 1985; Davies & Graves, 1986). Stratton (1990) opines that the division of images of women into positive and negative is not very helpful for some of the so-called "positive" images, mostly those that treat woman as mythology of the nation, are marshaled by men for the benefit of patriarchy at the expense of women. As if responding to this situation, Mungoshi, through an ironic representation of women and men, fractures gender assumptions and thereby disrupting the oppressor/victim dichotomy. He does this by first apportioning women characters significantly larger space than males in his writing as seen through for example, the prevalent use of women characters' names as chapter headings and the telling of the story from these women's perspectives. This allows Mungoshi to explore even ruthless sentiments women characters have about men in general and their husbands in particular. These women bring to the fore, issues often considered too intimate or taboo to discuss in public, such as their sexual dissatisfaction and lack of love for their husbands. Mungoshi shocks male readers into the realisation of their flaws and in some cases, follies concerning their shallow ideas about women.

Mungoshi's unwavering interest in marital contestation suggests that women and men may be related hierarchically but that hierarchy is not always constant or in favour of men. Through ambitious wives, Mungoshi depicts husbands who lack the drive to succeed such as seen in the relationship between Mangazva's parents in the story, "The Victim" (1980). Sheila in the play *Inongova Njakenjake* (1980) finds Tafi lacking as a husband for failing to gain promotion beyond a messenger at work when his friend becomes a manager at the very same firm. In fact, by denying Tafi affection, Sheila is not only extracting debt for the abusive treatment she gets from him but also shows the indissoluble link between affect and the material – especially how problematic the situation can be for men should they fall short of their normative role of providers. Similarly, Lorna in the novel *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975), who owns most of

the shares in the business she runs with her husband and the house they live in, has no patience with a husband who has no money of his own and fails to satisfy her sexually. Lorna spurns patriarchal notions of female duty such as deference to her husband and doing all the household chores such as cooking and in the process problematises culturally sanctioned forms of gender practices.

Paul, Lorna's husband, has none of the features listed by his society in the script of valorised manhood. In the same vein, husbands with broken backs, such as Zakeo's father in "Who Will Stop the Dark?" (1980) and Mushayazano in the novel *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970) face women who read back to them the normative script of successful masculinity, a masculinity attached to the male's ability to have penetrative sex with his wife. Through these conflictual relationships Mungoshi draws attention to the fact that apart from the material, intimacies are also bound up with physical bodies and the politics of both male and female bodies. Lorna ends up having sex with Eric, Paul's half-brother because of the latter's sexual virility and high educational attainment. Thus, bodies can fail to perform as expected, proving that male sexuality in heterosexual relationships is more problematic than it is often thought to be and this point is made all the more emphatically by wives who are not sympathetic towards their husbands over the husbands' recalcitrant bodies. Thus, the use of male bodily incapacitation is both a private and public confirmation of male weakness. Through Lorna, Mungoshi lays bare some of the reasons for spousal infidelity from a woman's point of view. In other Zimbabwean fiction, the adulterous wife is portrayed as the one in the wrong or not having a reason at all for being in an extramarital relationship. In Makhalisa's *Impilo Yinkinga* (1983) for example, adultery is motivated by "*ukuganga*" (an inclination to want to do bad) (24) and Mamsie, the errant wife, is said to have "*isibungu"* (24) (a worm) that drives her into adultery. These terms are not only nebulous but suggest that there is something intrinsically wrong with Mamsie and women in general. We never get to know what it is about her husband that makes her unfaithful to him except that he does not like alcohol and parties.

Mungoshi's treatment of single women in the city is ambiguous. On the one hand, the works suggest a division of women into two crude categories – the pure and therefore marriageable and the impure or tainted like "prostitutes." Prostitute is in quotes here because in some of Mungoshi's works, singlehood is enough for a woman to be branded loose or a prostitute by other characters. One instance is provided by VaChingweru in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970) when she refers to her daughter who has been divorced from her husband. Magi in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) has no man who wants to marry her because she is a town woman, implying that a rural woman is the one to marry. Not surprisingly, Rex, whom Magi has a long affair with goes back to his rural wife at the end of the book. On the other hand, Mungoshi offers a wide range of single city women determined to attain economic and sexual autonomy through education and financial independence. Martha and Sharon in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) are such characters.

Chapter 5 explores in detail, the different versions of the performance of masculinity and the psychology of demasculinization begun in Chapter Four, registered by the discontent of wives and lovers in intimate relationships with men. The main aim of this chapter is to retrieve men for the purpose of a gendered understanding of Mungoshi's work given that a study that deals at length with gender relations cannot show the construction of femininities only without doing a similar exercise with masculinities, to reveal how the two stand in relation to each other and how their different performances result in diverse relationships.

Chapter Five harps back to Chapter Two (fathers "claiming" sons by emphasizing flight from the feminine and aggression), by pointing out that masculinity is learned and socially reinforced through ideals and stereotypes (Clatterbaugh, 1990), with hyper models of masculinity privileged over less aggressive and expressive ones. The chapter explores the dangers of overstressing men's physical and sexual virility, as well as men's denial of frailty and fragility. Tropes explored to this end include bodily incapacitation, for example, husbands with broken backs, implying a lack of virility through an inability to perform penetrative sex, one of the key requirements of the hypermasculinity or macho

script. Thus, the chapter examines men as they battle to cultivate and uphold self-images they imagine crucial to their sense of manhood. As such, the chapter anticipates Chapter Six which upsets normative gender scripts through lone parenting and bi/homosexuality.

Mungoshi questions narrow social definitions of masculinity through portraying male characters that are overwhelmed by inadequacy engendered by what they and others perceive as a failure to fulfill a masculine social role. This demasculinisation is explored through bodily incapacitation and socio-economic processes such as job loss to suggest that if men have a burden heavier than any other, it is that of straining towards the masculine ideal or straining for affirmation through pursuing certain valorised masculine ideals which are not attainable for most of the male characters Mungoshi depicts. Thwarted duty ethics as well as socially approved notions of successful manhood become burdens to men. Thus, gender relations can be viewed as men's attempts to deal with their vulnerabilities to socio-political, economic and interpersonal relations. Mungoshi also focuses, as he does in Chapter Six, on the pitfalls of a body-based model of gender. He uses the male body, especially the device of physical limitation or debilitation, ageing and inability to perform penetrative sex to make men's bodies visible and in the process shatters the myth of male invulnerability. Thus, the "phallicization of the penis, its standing in for the power of the man" (Potts, 2000:97) emerges as a myth that cannot be attained and sustained.

In Chapter Six, Mungoshi troubles dominant gender and sexuality paradigms by acknowledging the diversity of family forms and transgressive sexual identities. He explores some gender myths, showing in the process, that gender identities are fraught with ambivalence and confusion. He does this through exploring lone parenthood for both men and women, as well as a love triangle featuring a gay man, a heterosexual woman and a bi/homosexual man. Mungoshi singles out these two categories as sites where new debates about family, morality, ethics and citizenship are played out. Thus, through lone parenting and bi/homosexuality, Mungoshi disturbs the foundations of heteronormativity.

Through women who opt out of marriage such as the unnamed mother in "Shadows on the Wall" (1972), Rindai's mother in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) and VaNhanga in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura* (1983), the point is made that human intimacy or connectedness, especially of a conjugal nature, is bound up with and suggests separateness and that such separateness is not necessarily a deplorable or pathological state. The lone parent families that result from the dissolution of marriage do not appear to be marked with regard to single fatherhood, even though the fathers fail to nurture or "mother" their children as seen in the stories "Shadows on the Wall" (1972) and "The Mount of Moriah" (1980). On the other hand, single motherhood is stigmatized even though the mother raises her child(ren) successfully.

The notion and discourse of lack and pathology with regard to single motherhood, that for a family to be seen as complete, wholesome and functional there must be a male presence is up-ended in the story, "Did You Have to Go that Far?"(1997). The conventional belief that fatherlessness and single motherhood speak of a deficit and pose a threat to the wholesomeness of the community is subverted through Mrs Gwaze and her son Dura in this story. Mother and son emerge as above the petty jealousies, poverty and endemic domestic abuse in the neighbourhood. Mungoshi makes it clear that he is comparing the single mother family to the two nuclear families that the boys Damba and Pamba belong to. One notices that the strident claim on sons that the fathers are seen making in Chapters Two and Three, that the child belongs to the father, is challenged here. Mrs Gwaze has no Mr Gwaze nor does she seem to want a man to complete her family or life. Through such an ironic dramatization, Mungoshi suggests that the concern should be less on family arrangements or forms in which children live and more on the quality of relationships within all family arrangements. This is so because the nuclear family ideal can result in excessive emotional and physical abuse to both wife and child as happens in Pamba's case who is driven to his death by his father's abusive behaviour. Thus, Mungoshi questions the moral weight accorded the nuclear family over the lone-parent family of a single mother.

Through his story, "Of Lovers and Wives" (1997), Mungoshi troubles dominant gender and sexuality paradigms. He questions the essentialism of biological or anatomical explanations to gender by exploring bi/homosexuality. Given the outlawing of gay relationships in Zimbabwe, the story becomes of more import than just a love triangle including a "straight" heterosexual woman, her bi/homosexual lover and his homosexual lover. The story is thus read in the background of hostility against homosexuals in Zimbabwe during the mid 1990s and early 2000s. The intolerance towards and perversity of homosexuality are both questioned by the fact that just about everyone in the community knows about the same sex erotics of the two men yet do not challenge or threaten them. Similarly**,** Shamiso's shame has more to do with how she feels she has been undermined as a woman and not disgust.

Overall, the study of Mungoshi's works forces us to revisit some of the salient arguments about African literature. One of these arguments is the identity and language of African literature. There are two extreme positions that Mungoshi straddles in this regard. He overlaps these views because he writes competently in two languages – Shona, his mother tongue, and English, a second language. He represents a composite view regarding the debate around the identity of African literature. This situation suggests a third, profitable way of defining, writing and analysing African literature.

The first extreme position regarding the identity of African literature is represented by Ngugi wa Thiongo's view on this subject, and the second, Dambudzo Marechera's. Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986) is of the opinion that writing that deserves the appellation "African literature" is that written in African languages only. Not only does he espouse this view but has also practiced it by abandoning writing in English for writing in his mother tongue Gikuyu, since 1978. According to this writer, writing in a European language in Africa, the erstwhile language of colonisation, is to perpetuate cultural imperialism and thereby impoverish not only African languages but also the very personhood of Africans and their cultures. Regarding imperialism and language, he writes, "The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation" (1986:9). Ngugi wa Thiongo's commitment is to the

intellectual, political and economic emancipation of Africans through the use of their languages. He exhorts African writers:

> We African writers are bound by our calling to do for our languages what Spencer, Milton and Shakespeare did for English: what Pushkin and Tolstoy did for Russian: indeed what all writers have done for their languages by meeting the challenge of creating a literature in them, which process later opens the languages for philosophy, science, technology and all other areas of human creative endeavours.

To achieve this, African writers must abandon writing in English.

On the other extreme, Dambudzo Marechera believed in the cosmopolitanism of the writer, which in his definition meant a preference for English over African languages. He once remarked in his typical ironic style, "In Zimbabwe… we have these two great indigenous languages, ChiShona and SiNdebele. Who wants to keep writing these ShitShona and ShitNdebele languages, this missionary chickenshit? Who else but the imperialists?" (Pattison, 1994:226). Marechera was referring to the idea that in any case, Shona and Ndebele languages were in a sense "created" by missionaries through first, the lumping together of disparate ethnic and linguistic groups and second, through the codification of a variety of languages that eventually came to be known as Shona and Ndebele, an idea that Chimhundu (1992) discusses at length. Marechera was also alluding to the previous Rhodesian government's stance of preventing Africans from writing in English lest the latter, through this exercise, view themselves as equal to whites. In a way, Marechera was indicting the Zimbabwean government for holding views similar to those of the colonial one. Apart from the "bastardisation" of Shona and Ndebele, Marechera was also alluding to the parochialism of using the two, hence his angry comment, "I…question anyone calling me an African writer. If you are a writer for a specific nation or a specific race, then fuck you" (Veit-Wild, 1988:3).

Charles Mungoshi's writing in Shona and English makes us realise that instead of advocating the sole use of vernacular languages in the writing of African literature as advocated by Ngugi wa Thiongo, or embracing European languages only as Marechera

argued, perhaps the point is to encourage writers to use both. Mungoshi's reading and writing in both Shona and English has enriched Zimbabwean, as well as African literature. Much was said in the first chapter about how Mungoshi's reading of European texts expanded the boundaries of creativity in the writing of Shona literature and how his firm command of both languages led to the creation of "Shonalised" English, a technique that was later fruitfully embraced by Chenjerai Hove in *Bones* (1998) and *Shadows* (1994). Similarly, Mungoshi's multivoiced narrative structure has been successfully appropriate by Hove in the novels mentioned above. In fact, Mungoshi's work emerges as a warehouse of common themes, tropes and narrative techniques in Zimbabwean literature. Some of these themes and tropes such as familial contestation and the trope of larger than life women find full expression in Mungoshi's work and have since been appropriated by other writers such as Nyamfukudza (1983, 1991), Marechera (1978) and Chirere (2006).

Mungoshi's psychological insight into character, through the pursuit of various forms of psychological discomfiture, has tremendously influenced writing in Zimbabwe as seen through writers with similar preoccupations such as Mabasa (1990) and Chirere (2006). These two writers are singled out because apart from tackling concerns similar to Mungoshi's and employing some of the latter's narrative techniques, Mungoshi's legacy of writing in both Shona and English is seen through them. Both Mabasa and Chirere are successful short story writers in English and acclaimed writers in Shona. The brilliance in their works lies in how writing in two languages elevates their art in a mutually beneficial way. In a way, the creative endeavours of these writers hold the answer to the erstwhile crippling influence of the now defunct Literature Bureau. These two writers have begun pushing the boundaries of creativity and expression in both Shona and English. Sadly, the same cannot be said of Ndebele literature. Apart from Barbara Makhalisa, an iconic Ndebele novelist who also wrote short stories in English under two titles, *The Underdog and Other Stories* (1984) and *Eva's Song* (1996), there appears to be no other Ndebele writer who writes in both English and Ndebele at the moment. Perhaps this partly explains the stagnation in Ndebele literature.

From reading Mungoshi's work, it is also clear that his bilingualism implies a multiple consciousness drawn from Shona and English traditions. This enables him to think flexibly not only about the creative process but life events as well. He displays a deeper understanding of diverse ways of thinking and behaving as typified for example, by the code switching of his characters such as Lorna in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983). Lorna's use of English and Shona brings to the novel not only linguistic but loaded cultural concepts as well, both of which point beyond Lorna's education, class and subject position. This example is central for it epitomises Mungoshi's own use of both Shona and English. The two languages and the "cultures" they carry engage each other to create problematic discursive territories that beg close analysis, in this case, the analysis of family and its related ideologies.

Finally, Mungoshi's works are not a polemical manifesto of one kind or another although his Shona works lean towards the didactic. There is little preoccupation with the oppressive white "other" and more concern with tension and contestation in the family to unravel inherent antagonisms in this institution. His intention is to examine "intricacies of motive or social process" (Ndebele, 1991:39). Mungoshi's preference for irony signals his mistrust of essentialism. Ndebele (1991:67) aptly describes irony as

> the literary manifestation of the principle of contradiction. Its fundamental law, for the literary arts in particular, is that everything involving human society is in a constant state of flux; that the dialectic between appearance and reality in the conduct of human affairs is always operative and constantly problematic, and that consequently, in the representation of human reality, nothing can be taken for granted.

Thus, Mungoshi deliberately complicates simple binaries, which leads to great reflexivity in his work.

With particular reference to his work in English and through deft use of irony, "Mungoshi is not a man with a message. Instead, he offers an apprehension of life in images that thrust against one another without ever coming to a point of balance or rest. To Mungoshi, life and history are not tidy structures" (Brown, 1982:70). By focusing on

beleaguered and embattled families, especially the delicate mechanism of communication or the absence of it, Mungoshi insists on examining unresolved tensions from which better relations can be built. One is reminded of Lionnet's (1997:204) remark that,

> Literature, as a discursive practice that encodes and transmits as well as creates ideology, is a mediating force in society: it structures our sense of the world since narrative or stylistic conventions and plot resolutions serve to either sanction and perpetuate cultural myths, or to create new mythologies that allow the writer and reader to engage in a constructive re-writing of their social contexts.

Through painstaking detail to the materiality of everyday life in the family, Mungoshi invites his readers to a dialogue on interpersonal intimacy. He depicts family as in a continuous state of turmoil and reconfiguration, and thereby jolts the reader into realizing the need for readjustment and change of mindsets regarding this institution. Thus, he more than represents human experience. His representations critique our understanding of human intimacies and politics structured around the concept of family. He reminds us, especially, that "Everyday life is an arena of gender politics, not an escape from it" (Connell, 1995:3) and in the process indirectly suggests gender egalitarianism.

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