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Charles Mungoshi

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BOOKS:

Makununu maodzamwoyo [Heartbreak] (Salisbury [Harare]: College Press in association with the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, 1970);

Ndiko kupinda kwamazuva [How time passes] (Gweru: Mambo Press in association with the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, 1975) [2000 copies printed];

Waiting for the Rain (London: Heinemann, African Writers Series, no. 170, 1975; reissued, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981); translated by Imre Katalin (Budapest: Magveto Kaido, 1979);

Kunyarara hakusi kutaura? [Is silence not a form of speech?] (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1983).

PLAY: Inongova njakenjake [Each person does his own thing] (Harare: Longman in association with the Literature Bureau, 1980).

POETRY: The Milkman Doesn't Only Deliver Milk (Harare: Poetry Society of Zimbabwe, 1981).

SHORT+STORIES: Coming of the Dry Season (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1972; reissued, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981);

Some Kinds of Wounds and Other Short Stories (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1980) [2000 copies printed];

The Setting Sun and the Rolling World: Selected Short Stories (London: Heinemann, 1987; stories

selected from Coming of the Dry Season and Some Kinds of Wounds); reissued in African Writers Series, 1989;

Stories from a Shona Childhood, illustrated by Luke Toronga (Harare: Baobab Books, 1989) [2000 copies printed];

One Day Long Ago: More Stories from a Shona Childhood, illustrated by Luke Toronga (Harare: Baobab Books, 1991) [3000 copies printed];

FILM SCRIPT: Abide with Me, film written and directed by Mungoshi for UNESCO, 1993;

OTHER: Gwenyambira [Mbira player], edited with an introduction by Mungoshi (Gweru: Mambo Press, in association with the Literature Bureau, 1979);

Chenjerai Hove, Up in Arms, introduction to Hove's poems by Mungoshi (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1982);

Tsanga vembeu (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1987; translation from English to Shona of Ngugi wa Thiongo, A Grain of Wheat (1967));

K.Z. Muchemwa, Zimbabwean Poetry in English: An Anthology, poems by Mungoshi: "If You Don't Stay Bitter For Too Long", "A Letter To A Son", "Home", "In A Home", "On The Road", "Christmas", "Sitting On The Balcony", "Pioneer Street Is Dying", "Dotito Is Our Brother", "Important Matters", "The Maestro Is Dying", "One For The Road" (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1978);

Colin Style, The Zimbabwe Poetry Review, 15 (1980), poems by Mungoshi: "Winter", "In A Home", "Friends and Neighbours" (Harare: Poetry Society of Zimbabwe, 1980);

Flora Wild, Patterns of Poetry in Zimbabwe, poems by Mungoshi: "Poet", "Home", "If You Don't Stay

Bitter and Angry For Too Long"^u "Lazy Day"^u "The Same Lazy Day, Late"^u "Location Miracle"^u "Sitting on the Balcony"^u "Two Photographs"^u "Winter"^u "How Do You Do It?" (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1988).

SELECTED PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS - UNCOLLECTED: Fiction:

"Cain's Medal"^u as Carl Manhize, Parade (March, 1966): 11-13;

"For Better, for Worse"^u as Carl Manhize, Parade (April, 1968): 24-25;

"Who Killed Tina?" Parade (July, 1968): 26-27 and Parade (Aug. 1968): 14-16;

"Lost Love in the Location"^u Parade (March, 1973): 36-37;

"My Poor Feet...a conversation overheard by Charles Mungoshi"^u Prize (Jan.1974): 20;

"The House of Strange Plants"^u Prize (Feb. 1975): 10 and 26.

Charles Mungoshi is a major Zimbabwean writer in both English and his mother tongue Shona who has long been neglected in the wider context of African writing. His accolades point to a sustained output from a writer of unusual diversity - fiction, poetry, drama and more recently writing for film. They include the Rhodesia Literature Bureau award for the best Shona novel in 1969, PEN International Awards for two novels, one in English and one in Shona (1976), the Commonwealth Literature Prize for Africa (1988) and the Noma Award for African Writing (1992). His writing in English, which includes short stories, a novel, poetry and children's stories, is marked by a masterly and confident control of language and situation, a deftness in portraying the inner worlds of children and adults struggling to comprehend themselves and their relationship with those around them. Zimbabwean society, be it rural or urban, is ever changing, and Mungoshi writes about the mundane lives of those who in various ways try to cope with these changes..

Charles Muzuva Mungoshi was born on 2 December, 1947 in a village in the Manyene Tribal Trust Land near Chivhu some 200 kilometers south of the capital city Harare. His father had been working as a cook in Cape Town and after his return in 1947 purchased a small farm. Charles was the first-born child of a family of eight children. His early childhood followed the traditional pattern of herding the cattle by day and listening to stories told by the older women at night. He remembers that in the winter, or dry season, there were story-telling contests in the villages and he particularly enjoyed visits to his grandmother who was a gifted story-teller. She was later to figure as Mandisa in his novel Waiting for the Rain. Once he learned to read he always had a book or a comic to hand, and found in these a stimulus which his increasingly introspective nature took pleasure in. He left home in 1959 to continue his education at Daramombe Upper Primary School and in 1963 he moved to the High School at St. Augustine's, Penhalonga. Here his creative writing as well as his acting ability were encouraged by his English teacher Fr. Daniel Pearce and his first short story, "Cain's Medal" was published in 1966. On leaving school he found work with the Forestry Commission and by 1969 had moved on to a job as an invoice clerk at a bookshop in Salisbury [Harare]. Some short stories he wrote at the time were published in Parade, a magazine aimed at African readers which had a circulation of over 20,000. Between 1967 and 1970 he wrote his first Shona novel, Makumnn'nnu mayodzamwoyo (1970). This has proved his most frequently published work. Although only 3,000 copies were printed in the years before Zimbabwe's

Independence in 1980, the book has been widely used since then in the schools and a further 42,500 copies have been printed. The title, taken from a Shona proverb, "Brooding breeds despair," indicates the mood of what is a violent family drama set in Mungoshi's home district of Manyene. A young girl, Monika, is caught up in the plans of her scheming mother to marry her off. But they bring only death and madness to the family.

Mungoshi's first collection of stories in English, Coming of the Dry Season (1972), approaches the traumas of growing up into a harsh adult world more obliquely and tentatively. The first five stories take place in rural Zimbabwe or at school. The later stories, set in the city or townships, deal with moments of increasing alienation—from older Blacks, from White bosses, and from home. But the break with home is never final and urban life has plenty of miseries of its own. Mungoshi conveys the resulting psychological isolation by various kinds of interiorization. One of these is the power of memory to paralyze the character's ability to achieve the freedom of action he yearns for. The young narrator in the first story, "Shadows on the Walk," or a character like Mari in "S.O.S. from the Past" is constantly wrestling with memories of the past, as if trying to break free from his rural family. That inner struggle is the core of the story.

The stories, published in Nairobi, were banned in Rhodesia [Zimbabwe] in 1974 by the Censorship Board on the grounds that the last story, "The Accident," was subversive of race relations. An appeal by staff at the University was rejected. The ban was lifted in 1978. The incident is but one indication that the early 1970s, a period during which the government declared Rhodesia a republic and nationalist forces were beginning to infiltrate the country, were not conducive to new writing by Blacks.

Apart from an occasional short story Mungoshi was working on the novel which has become his major work in English, Waiting for the Rain (1975). The story concerns a young man, Lucifer Mandengu, who has won a scholarship to study art in Europe. He goes home to Manyene for a few days to bid his family farewell, and as the story progresses Mungoshi turns the reader's attention inwards to the disintegration of the very society being fought for in the Liberation War. The characters, comprising three generations, see themselves, or are compelled to do so, in relation to the

family's past which is the strongest force in the book. Lucifer, the only character to have had any substantial education, has grown to hate his home. Home, he says, "is the failure's junk heap... where you come back to die". His reflections here are particularly ironic because in the previous chapter his father has just asked him, rather than his elder brother Garabha, to be the future head of the family. Lucifer wants only to escape all the material and spiritual conditions which have shaped the family and, as he sees it, trapped it in its present situation. The family's material plight is evoked early on in the novel where a contrast is drawn between the lush estates of European farmers and the barren landscape of Manyene. The Mandengus are a product of colonial history. They are also the product of a history dominated by the ancestors. The life of his sister Betty for example is dominated by a curse inherited by her mother's family. Betty tells her grandmother, Old Mandisa, "You dragged your dirty curse to this place to drag me in the mud with you". The woman spirit-medium, Matandangoma, proposes that instead of Betty and the family having to suffer, a scapegoat should be selected from their neighbors, a young virgin who will be the victim of the wronged ancestors. Lucifer objects and says this is not fair. To which Matandangoma witheringly replies, "Wipe the snot off your nose, puppy". She argues that in this world, "if you want to live, you must pay for it", the payment being to abandon any idea of what is just, or fair or simply friendly. Life is intrigue, not cooperation.

Waiting for
to read
p. 62.

Waiting
p. 34

Waiting
p. 149

Other facets of the past are evoked in the Old Man, who had been a fighter in the first Chinurenga (Liberation War) in the 1890s and Lucifer's brother Garabha who plays the drums with great skill. They espouse a past that will not return and which in fact is unable to cope with the problems of the present. The Mandengu home in Manyene is a place where destructive contraries are effecting the spiritual death of the community. Lucifer's defection is understandable. Commentators have seen him as a figure who snobbishly despises his supportive family along with the values and patterns of traditional life. At the end of the novel he deliberately smashes the bottles of life-protecting medicine that have been provided by Matandangoma. However he is not as free from the power of tradition as this action suggests. On his last night at home he has nightmares about his ancestors which show that despite his resolve to break away he continues to be involved with the family's past.

The last page of the novel depicts Lucifer being driven away from the village. The family wave to him. He looks back watching, "the leprous skin of his country slough off and fall back dead behind

Waiting
p. 150

hint^u. The apparent finality of that ending is for Lucifer, as it is for the snake, no more than the end of a phase in his life. Mungoshi comes back in many of the poems written during the 1970s to see the fine things he always associated with home, especially his father and the old people.

Mungoshi has long been respected in Zimbabwe as a fine poet. Speaking in a BBC interview with Florence Akst (1982) he said he looks on his poetry as a practice ground for his fiction: "I do poetry and drama as a kind of discipline, I think they demand much more precision, much more accuracy, they force you more into looking for the correct word than pros^o. He attributes this respect for precision to his reading of Hemingway as well as of Japanese poets like Basho. But this is not simply a stylistic issue. Asked about his longer poems in English in an interview with Flora Wild published in Patterns of Poetry (1988) he remarked that he was drawing from the oral tradition of Shona poetry. "I do not consciously write like my grandfather talked, but subconsciously my feeling and thinking is influenced by my ancestors and the spirits^u.

BBC AA
4516
(1982)

Patterns of
Poetry
p. 79

A poem that relates to Waiting for the Rain, particularly its vision of home, is "If you don't stay bitter and angry for too long^u. The novel is a bitter and often angry book. The poem presents a different, more comforting view of the same place. Many of Mungoshi's poems, which were collected in The Milkman Doesn't Only Deliver Milk (1981), are about home—parents, relations, places. These are the main source of his inspiration. They are impressions, moments of perception, often generous, focusing on a person or a place at home or in the city. The language is gently unassertive and non-judgemental, yet energiz^zed by underlying ironies. These qualities, evident also in the novel, are present in the poem "Winter" (entitled in a slightly different version "Pioneer Street is Dying^u). Pioneer Street (now Kaguvi Street, Harare) was, as its name suggests, one of the first streets in the town which the White Pioneers set up in the 1890s. Like many of the older parts of the town it had become run down in the 1970s. The poem uses this fact to point with symbolic force at the demise of the aggressive pioneer spirit which had put up the old buildings there. Now the buildings, like the man being watched, seem in a state of collapse. The persona of the poet offers no judgement; if anything there is a touch of sympathy as he unobtrusively watches this man, one of the last of the pioneers.

Winter

Pioneer Street is dying.

Only a few of the old buildings still stand
Like the serrated teeth of the aged impotent.

Slowly, humped with his sad harvest of cares
he gropes his way through the brick-and-timber rubble:
the cruel July wind asking him the totem of his tribe.

He stops to pick up some breath
in the lee of some half-demolished wall
his eyes and nose running from the dust that was his yesterdays.

Then, quickly, he sees me spying on his memories
hurries on, stumbles, and picks himself up
fingering the wilted rose in his buttonhole.

He mutters: they are pulling down most of the buildings
we used to know. His breath whistles like a cold wind
through the ghost town of his mouth.

Wilde, Ballroom
p. 88

The wilted rose appears so unobtrusively in the poem and yet so expressively as a symbol conveying the passing of a whole generation of rather formal English stock, dandified lovers of the sub-culture of that area with its public houses, brothels and billiard halls. As with Waiting for the Rain winter is a time of spiritual death, but in this piece it is the death of European culture. The observer watching the white man from the point of view of Shona culture speaks from a much more confident and stable position.

“Lazy Day” is a poem that invites a different view of home to that witnessed in Waiting for the Rain or in the short stories: it includes these lines.

There is laughter in the house.
Father and I pause to listen:
his face breaking into that complex

Wilde,
Ballroom
p. 84

bnt restful smile
 that knows the whims of the weather
 and the certainty of death.

This moment of happiness contrasts with but does not necessarily contradict what we read in the novel. In chapter 31 of the novel for instance, Mungoshi depicts an occasion of friendly and lively community life which contrasts with the novel's sombre overall impression of family life. Mungoshi's poetry is a reminder of his eye for the many faces and moods of people and places. Life, like the self, is heterogeneous and pluralistic. The variety of Mungoshi's output is another reminder of the same point.

It is typical of Mungoshi's writing career that he produces a Shona novel, Ndiko knpindana kwamazuvau [How Time Passes] in the same year as Waiting for the Rain. But here the setting is predominantly urban and the issues are, on the surface, not unlike those written in Shona at the time. The story concerns a spirited and independent young girl Rindai [Keep alert] who goes to the city to train as a nurse; she marries Rex, but the marriage fails after Rex sends her back to their rural home while he stays in the city; rumours and incidents of jealousy, betrayal, unfaithfulness and drink mark much of the story. The accidental death of Rindai's child, followed by the birth of a new baby finally brings Rindai and Rex back together and they attempt to rebuild their shattered lives. The plot is quite unlike what Mungoshi had been doing in English, and yet, as Wild has shown in Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers (1992), the novel introduces to Shona writing a number of new techniques including a shift of narrative perspective—third person for Rindai, first person for Rex—use of flashbacks, psychological realism and a subtle use of time.

The above two novels, both of which won awards, established Mungoshi as a major new voice in both English and Shona, but as the banning of Coming of the Dry Season demonstrated, his talents were not likely to be welcomed—except by a few—in a political system that was acutely sensitive to criticism, especially by Blacks. Mungoshi showed no signs of confronting government or of taking the route abroad which he had Lucifer do and which many of Mungoshi's contemporaries regarded as a necessary release. But he did make a significant move. He left his job with the bookshop in 1975 to

become an editor for the Rhodesia Literature Bureau under the direction of Walter Krog. The work involved reading, commenting on and editing manuscripts in Shona from a wide variety of local writers. The Bureau had been established in 1956 to cultivate and to monitor writing in the vernacular languages. In spite of the Bureau's reputation in the 1970s for rejecting work that was critical of government, the move brought Mungoshi very much closer to what was happening in the creative life of the country and he edited a collection of poetry for the Bureau, Gwenyambira [Mbira Player]. However, in the late 1970s, as the guerilla war moved into the final stage, unease and insecurity beset everyone. Mungoshi alludes to his own life at this time in a poem "Two Photographs" that equates national and private pain: looking at a photograph of himself now aged thirty he says, "My face is beginning to settle uncomfortably/ into the torn-up landscape of these times".

Wald
Lattans
2.87

This allusion to the physical attrition of time is not without significance. Through the war years which came to end with the Lancaster House talks and an agreement to establish the new and independent nation of Zimbabwe in 1980, Mungoshi had been storing a set of short stories which he now published as Some Kinds of Wounds (1980). They are stories set in the 1970s and deal largely with the "torn-up landscape" of individual lives during those years. As the title suggests, these nine stories contain physical violence and pain. But the wounds are mostly those that do damage to the mind and feelings. Characters show how vulnerable they are to bitter words and accusations, how they are wounded at times by self-inflicted emotional traumas.

The title story takes place in the days of the war, a time of brutalities, suspicions, terror and displacement as people sought refuge from the continuous threat of violence. A young girl from the rural areas has come to Highfield, one of the largest African townships. She is pregnant by a young man who on leaving her in her rural home told her to look him up if she ever came to Highfield. Her mother and father have been shot and their home burned down. She arrives with no address in the huge, densely populated township. She is picked up by a young man Kute who, seeming to offer her shelter for the night, is only interested in having sex with her.

The first-person narrator, Gatsi, a friend of Kute, hears and reports both sides of this encounter. The girl is clearly an innocent whose experience of the war is no preparation for the unfamiliar world of township life where to be innocent is to be a victim. Kute, "Cool Cat Kute" as he is known, leads a

worthless and damaging life. "How many times," asks the narrator, "have you been to the doctor for the past half-year and he hasn't diagnosed VD in some form or another?" But Kute is vulnerable too. His education has been a failure; he takes refuge in sexual bravado; he crumbles in the face of pressure from his father and Gatsi to snap out of his laziness. Gatsi says to him,

Some kinds of
wounds
p. 102

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, find what you want to do and do it.

Wounds
p. 100

Kute senses that Gatsi has betrayed him to his father and their friendship breaks up. Kute is too self-concerned to recognize innocence, much less the pain of the girl he picks up. He dismisses her as probably a girl on the run from her father "for conceiving a bastard...silly bitch".

Wounds p. 96

The reader, however, like Gatsi, realizes that her predicament is much worse and quite different. Her story shows that her search for the father of her child is the last straw in a young life traumatized by violence. Gatsi finds even her silences a kind of accusation, and later when she has gone his own silences to Kute are a rebuke for his insensitivity.

These stories were written during a war in which rural people, caught between the conflicting demands of the Security Forces and the guerillas, learned that survival often depended on deceit and suspicion. Many of them deal with the hurtful and sometimes destructive consequences of these. But as in Waiting for the Rain the stories are not explicitly about the war; rather they suggest a society at war with itself. The conditions of war have seeped into the day to day relationships if not into the very fabric of Shona society. "The Brothers" takes up again the clash between the innocence of rural Zimbabwe and the wild and violent characters of urban townships who have lived there long enough to turn them into a breed of betrayers and wasters. The final story in the collection, "The Flood" ends with the murder of Chitauro, the foreman of a plantation in the Eastern Highlands where Mungoshi had worked in the 1960s. The murderer, Mhondiwa, is the man who had earlier lost his position to Chitauro, and he suspects that Chitauro has had an affair with his wife. The violence of the final moments, echoed in the booming noise of the river, is the outcome of extraordinarily tense encounters between the two men. As so often, Mungoshi builds an inner world in his characters which

for all its energy, is kept secret from other characters and sometimes from the reader. Moments before the murder Mhondiwa and Chitauro are sitting at a fire late into the night drinking beer: "Mhondiwa stared into the fire with his murky eyes that hid inscrutable thoughts". Later the phrase is repeated. Meanwhile Chitauro is at the door looking out at the pouring rain; suddenly he knows "with a frightening certainty that those murky eyes had been on him all that time he was standing in the doorway". Mhondiwa is a threatening presence who keeps silent much of the time, but there can be no mistake that his "murky eyes" tell the reader and then Chitauro that a passionate violence is about to be unleashed.

Words p. 176

Words
p. 177

Moments like the above have the intensity of stage drama in which the tone of voice and the silences carry much of the tension. These skills are a reminder of Mungoshi's ability as an actor at St. Augustine's. They also point to his deft use of silence, often as an indicator of incomprehension or alienation. It always has a telling dramatic force. His comments on the power of silence in his introduction to the poetry of a fellow Zimbabwean writer, Chenjerai Hove, apply to his own use of silence in his fiction.

By using silence to speak for him, the poet is forcing the reader to be still. Once the reader becomes still, he is in a receptive mood in which he becomes very much aware of the poem as energy, the real life-and-death struggle of real flesh-and-blood people.

Hove,
W. in Am S
p. 3

Silence is part of the fabric of a character's struggle to understand or relate to other characters in the story. The dramatic situation hinges invariably on some conflict between individuals—parents and children, old and young, educated and uneducated, strong wives and weak husbands. That conflict becomes the battle-ground where deep psychic wounds are inflicted. Behind these dramatic encounters lie the social and economic pressures of a society under duress. Kute remarks that he has spent four years "tramping round the country, knocking on every goddamn door for any kind of job and being shoed off with a boot in my ass".

Words p. 98

Zimbabwe's Independence in 1980 brought about a marked change in Mungoshi's standing with his reading public. Far from being the author of a banned book, he was now recognized as a major figure in Zimbabwe's national literature. Coming of the Dry Season was reissued in 1981 by a local publisher;

Makununu Maodzamoyo became a standard work on school syllabuses. In 1982 he moved from the Literature Bureau to become an editor for the new ^{G.} publishers Zimbabwe Publishing House set up by David Martin and Phyllis Johnson after Independence. He also took off a year in 1985 to be Writer in Residence at the University of Zimbabwe where he held seminars and workshops for the students.

Independence also changed the focus of Mungoshi's writing. A curious feature of these years is that between 1975 and 1989 his creative energies were directed almost entirely to work in Shona. Part of the reason may be that his job as an editor involved him with the development of Shona writing. The only works in English he published in the early 1980s—Some Kinds of Wounds (1980) and The Milkman Doesn't Only Deliver Milk (1981)—had been drafted several years earlier. Independence changed the context of the many conflicts which had marked his earlier work in English. The shadow of white power had gone and in a very broad sense Mungoshi was no longer an outsider but an insider.

His creative energies during the 1980s went into his Shona writing, which included a play in 1980, Inongova njakenjake [Each Person Does His Own Thing]; a novel in 1983, Kunyarara hakusi kutaura? [Is Silence Not A Form of Speech?]; and a translation of an Ngugi novel in 1987. The play covers much the same ground as the Shona novels. It is a domestic drama in which the young Sheila abandons her nursing course because she is pregnant by Tafi. They marry, but anger, secrecy and drink lead to the breakdown of the relationship. As so often in his work, whether in Shona or English, the focus is on the collapse of the social fabric. The play has been the most widely read of Mungoshi's works and was adapted for television in 1984 by the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. Mungoshi encouraged and then coached his wife to act in the film, and as a result she has played several parts in local film and video productions.

But it is in fiction rather than in plays that Mungoshi is best able to explore the processes of this collapse, and in his next novel, Kunyarara hakusi kutaura? (1983), he applies many of the devices of interiorization from his writing in English to his Shona fiction. The story is not markedly different from that of his other Shona novels: the head of the Mujokoro family, Chimbimu (dust raiser), has two wives and several children. Much of the novel deals with the involved relationships between the

children, particularly Eric and Paul, who are brothers by Chinbimu's different wives. Eric, on his return from Europe, finds himself alienated from his cultural roots and refuses to visit his rural home. Much of the action, involving intrigue, suspicion, alleged rape and death takes place in the city. A review of the novel in Harare's Herald hailed the novel as a breakthrough for Shona fiction. For the first time interior monologue is used to show a single event from several points of view, and characters are caught between their inner spontaneous reactions to events and their expression of responses which conform to social expectations. Separate narrators weave the complicated relationships in the Mujokoro family, and their narratives indicate "the intimate and lonely world of silence".

If this novel opened up new fictional possibilities to Shona readers and writers, so do Mungoshi's two recent collections of children's stories translated from Shona do a complementary service to readers who do not speak Shona. Stories from a Shona Childhood (1989) and One Day Long Ago: More Stories from a Shona Childhood (1991), a collection which won the prestigious Noma award for African writing in 1992, were written at a time when Zimbabwean publishers were attempting to promote books for children. Mungoshi responded by returning to the oral stories of his own childhood, to the inspiration of his grandmother. The two collections read like a reaffirmation of the traditional roots of Mungoshi's imaginative writing. The dramatic energy of his other work, the ear for pertinent movements of speech, and his sharp perceptions of character have their genesis in childhood narratives. Ironically these stories, coming when Mungoshi has established himself as a major writer, tell of that exciting imaginative world of innocence and clarity of understanding which is noticeably absent in so much of his work. He retrieves that world in fiction while acknowledging in the rest of his work that it belongs to a past that is lost.

Mungoshi has in the last few years turned more frequently to writing and acting for film. In 1991 he played, together with his wife, in a Zimbabwean produced video film Your Child Too. The film, written and produced by Annie Holmes in Harare, focuses on women's issues in Zimbabwe. In the following year he attended a UNESCO course on writing for film. He has subsequently written and directed a film, Abide with Me, for UNESCO, ~~and~~ that is in the final stages of production. The story deals with the relationship between a father and his daughter. This new departure for his writing

suggests he is as ever open to new ways of expressing his vision of Zimbabwean society. However his approach to the business of putting words on the page has not changed. He lives in Harare with his wife, whom he married in 1976, and their five children and spends much of his time at writers' workshops around the country. But when writing he likes to work in seclusion, and he frequently goes back to the family farm near Chivhu where he first listened to stories told by his grandmother.

A principal feature in the development of Mungoshi's writing has been its unobtrusiveness. The very manner of his writing, as with his own personality, suggests a shyness, an unwillingness to stand centre stage and speak or write for an oppressed people. Rather his stance has always been, as in the poem "Winter", to observe and listen. An acute ear for conversation, a sensitivity to understatement, to silence, to the ways in which characters struggle to reconcile their private responses to their social contexts, these characteristics of his fiction and his poetry find their strength in localised and domestic situations. Broader socio-economic, cultural or political issues lurk in the background as shadows which Mungoshi is well aware of but which he leaves his readers to notice and substantiate. These features have made Mungoshi an unusual figure in pre-Independence African writing and partly explain his neglect by the critics. Unlike his better known countryman Dambudzo Marechera whose extraordinarily energetic and protesting fictions have been reviewed, studied and published in several languages, Mungoshi remains relatively unknown. One reason is that much of his best work in English was published when Rhodesia was a political outcast. Its few Black writers were cut off from the rest of Africa and their work went unnoticed. After Independence in 1980 critics started to place Mungoshi, along with other pre-Independence writers like Nyamfukudza, as lost voices whose pessimism is summed up in images of drought and spiritual death. Even so there are still signs that critics outside Zimbabwe have but a hazy grasp of the literature of which Mungoshi is a part. As recently as 1989 a Mungoshi story from Coming of the Dry Season was referred to as, "perhaps one of the earliest stories ever written in English by a Zimbabwean writer". Research within Zimbabwe by McLoughlin and Wild has shown that Blacks have been writing short stories in English since at least the 1940s. Consideration of Mungoshi has been slow. Critics both within and outside the country have tended to comment on Mungoshi's writing in English in a paragraph or a few pages along with that of others who wrote before Independence.

Resmanchwanda
p. 404.

But the corpus of his work demonstrates that he has taken a relatively unusual path in African literature. He moves freely between his vernacular Shona and English, and he has built a substantial body of writing in both, permeating each with the strengths of the other. Unlike many another African writer he has appropriated English to the Shona experience and informed his Shona readers with some of the perceptive modes of English. This is perhaps because he is conscious of the expectations of two different audiences within Zimbabwe, the one a vernacular readership with its traditions of oral and written literature, the other an English reading public many of whom are Shona speakers. All his work in English has its imaginative roots in the Shona psyche and for that reason he presents an as yet unexplored example of an African writer who finds English a formidable medium for the exploration of the Shona experience in colonial and post-colonial Africa.

Jaki Seroke, "We Were Brought Up in a Literary Desert," Staffrider, 3/4 (1980-81): 18-19;

Jaki Seroke, "The damage done to human minds," ZAWA, Journal of Zimbabwean Artists and

Writers Association (1981): 6;

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