

## REALISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY SHONA NOVEL\*

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THE CENTENARY OF 'realism'<sup>1</sup> as opposed to idealism and naturalism, and as an English literary and critical term, was not celebrated in 1956. However, unknown to the Western reading public and six thousand miles away from England, there was published in Cape Town, *Feso*, written by Solomon Mangwiro Mutswairo. The author was the son of a Salvation Army officer at Chikankata in Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia). This publication served two purposes, first as an experiment in the reduction to writing of the hitherto unwritten dialects, and second, as an experiment in the transformation of the traditional folktales, myths and legends, which have an element of fantasy in them, into the Western-type novel form which aims at realism. The oral art was transformed into the written form—a process which recognizes written art as somehow being an improvement upon the old spoken narratives. The traditional story-teller, the *sarungano*, told his tales well but Mutswairo, in taking advantage of the latter's techniques and incorporating them into English nineteenth-century narrative styles, did better. Since then Bernard Chidzero, Patrick Chakaipa and Paul Chidyausiku have improved upon Mutswairo, and Charles Mungoshi and Thompson Tsodzo have excelled all their predecessors.

In this lecture, 'realism' excludes forms of narrative found in history, biography and autobiography, as these are specifically related to events that did happen and a description of such events would qualify as being empirical. In realism we concern ourselves with that mode of narrative which gives the illusion of being specifically related to the real world. But through art such facts or experiences of the real world are made to be of a more generalized application. This generalization of reality assumes a universality which is immediately governed by two polarized impulses, the aesthetic and the intellectual; that is, the desire for formal organization and the desire for verisimilitude. A form of aesthetically controlled fiction which is not 'realistic' is Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumiremiseve*,<sup>2</sup> a romance in which the author is after popular simplicity and traditional clarity and whose hero is idealized. In opposition to this is a form of writing which is

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<sup>1</sup>Realism was specifically used as a literary term by the foundation in 1856 of *Réalisme*, a journal edited by L.E.E. Duranty. See B. Weinberg, *French Realism: The Critical Reaction, 1830-1870* (London, Modern Language Association of America, 1937), 114. See also I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1957), and R. Williams, 'Realism and the contemporary novel', in D. Lodge (ed.), *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader* (London, Longman, 1972), 581-91.

<sup>2</sup>P. Chakaipa, *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (Salisbury, Longman, 1958).

constrained by political and social facts, and which is more or less specifically related to the world of reality. Such is the didactic form, which is primarily expository and can be satirical. This form of 'social realism' is represented by Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*,<sup>3</sup> Chakaipa's *Garandichauya*<sup>4</sup> and Aaron Moyo's satire, *Ziva Kwawakabva*.<sup>5</sup> Two types of realism can be distinguished in these novels; they are the 'peasant realism' in which the author's vision of life is directed towards the pre-colonial era, but because he is influenced by traditional folklore his characters are representational; and the 'bourgeois realism' or 'social realism' where the author's vision is urban and the characters are illustrative. The representational is mimetic; the illustrative symbolic. 'Psycho-historical realism' emanates from 'bourgeois' or 'social realism', as a direct result of English literature and East and West African literature in English by African writers such as N'gugi and Achebe. The Zimbabwean pioneer in this realism is Mungoshi in his *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva*.<sup>6</sup>

'Realism' (or 'realistic') is a problematic literary term; and not without cause. It is used both descriptively and in an evaluative sense and is not exclusively aesthetic in its application. The man who says: 'The Government has made a *realistic* appraisal of its foreign or economic policy' would be approving of the actions of that particular Government, while the man who used *unrealistic* would obviously be implying disapproval. In literature the most ordinary definition is in terms of an ordinary, contemporary, everyday reality as opposed to traditionally heroic, romantic, mythic or legendary subjects.

The traditional folktale whose structure has greatly influenced the contemporary novelist has both realistic and fantastic elements, a fact which explains the presence of the fantastic in modern writing despite the modern author's efforts to move quickly towards Western-type realism. In Mutsvairo's *Feso* we have a character, Chauruka (the jumper), who takes a gigantic leap over a wall ten feet high; in Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* we have a hero who jumps and holds on to the lion's mane until it hits against the tree and dies, and in a more recent novel, Nicholas Hamandishe's *Sara Ugarike*,<sup>7</sup> we have a main character who steals sheep from a White farmer and dresses them up like human beings. Realism is thus a struggle against idealization and supernaturalism in writing. 'Everyday, ordinary reality' is now differently conceived in new techniques, such as the *in medias res*; flashbacks and the introduction of first-person narrative are developed to cope with the new kind of social reality. Out of this new situation is born the kind of novel which creates and judges the quality of an entire way of life in terms of the value judgements of the persons in the community. Realism is achieved

<sup>3</sup>B.T.G. Chidzero, *Nzvengamutsvairo* (Salisbury, Longman, 1957).

<sup>4</sup>P. Chakaipa, *Garandichauya* (Salisbury, Longman, 1963).

<sup>5</sup>A.C. Moyo, *Ziva Kwawakabva* (Salisbury, Longman, 1977).

<sup>6</sup>C.L. Mungoshi, *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1975).

<sup>7</sup>N.P. Hamandishe, *Sara Ugarike* (Salisbury, Longman, 1975).

by the manner in which the author observes his surroundings, selects his material surroundings, and orders his materials to make his surroundings more comprehensible because more patterned.

## TRADITION AND COLONIZATION

The British South Africa Company's occupation of the Zimbabwean plateau had a colossal impact on all spheres of social and spiritual life in the country. Art and (oral) literature entered a new stage of development.

Traditionalism, with its enthusiasm for the strict 'civic' virtues of village people and its agricultural routines, was on the way out, its place being taken by the newly arrived missionary teacher, the village store and its Western wares, and the system of administration.

The missionaries' approach to the concept of individualism was systematic as they thought that the only way of changing the values of a group of people was through the individual. The missionary was the first to separate the person from his social group, thus initiating the process of making unique experiences common, a process which also resulted in the person's being alienated from his group. First, there was the new issue of the White man's religion, which taught that all men were equal in the eyes of God and before the law. Traditional religion amounted to more or less the same idea except that a Christian penitent could appeal direct to his God whereas the traditionalist could appeal to Mwari only through his intermediary grandfather and his remote great-grandfathers whom he asked to intercede with Mwari on his behalf. He worked, in other words, through the community both living and dead. The one approach is direct, the other indirect. Christianity was more appealing to the more adventurous individuals, and for the first time in history parents and their children did not believe in the same God.

Secondly, on the intellectual side the minds of the young traditionalists awoke to wider fields of activities. The three R's were taught to individuate the converts. They were taught arithmetical equations in groups, but the task of finding out the answer was an individual one. They were taught how to write letters, but the application of this exercise to real life situations was personal and individualistic. They did everything together for the purposes of doing things as separate individuals.

The small village or farm store represented the economic ideology of free enterprise introduced with the settlers. For the first time—there is always a first time, even today—both the young and the old were in a position to buy articles which would be their personal possessions and which would not normally fall under the jurisdiction of the family. The individual sought employment, first on the mine, then on the farm, and then in the urban area. The remuneration he earned was his personal wage which he could dispose of without reference to the traditional group to which he belonged. The one article of purchase which changed his self-perception is the mirror. The trader sold these by the thousand and the effect was

devastating. Whereas before the arrival of the trader with his mirror the traditionalist had only a vague idea about his looks (for he had seen his reflection in the water darkly), his self-perception was clearly delineated with the introduction of the trader's mirror, leading the individual into loving himself more than others or his community. In Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* the heroine's love for herself goes to her heart to the utter disregard of her traditional mores. Chakaipa's assertion in this novel is that the mirror is the symbol of vanity and immorality.

The new system of administration was at one with the other agencies of social change, the church and the store. The young girls, whose minds had been opened to new modes and attitudes, were now in a position to defy their parents in matters of traditional discipline. They openly refused to marry men who were of their parents' choice and sought protection at mission stations. The boys went to the urban areas where they appeared before the Native Commissioner with a friend and married the girl of their choice and not of their parents' choice. This heralded the death of the traditional custom which required a young man to get married to a girl whose family background was known to his family—the so-called 'mukadzi wematongo'. This custom was bound to collapse as horizontal and vertical social mobility increased.

The manner in which the individual saw things was literally the way he was beginning to live; his process of communication was no longer the process of his community. His sharing of common meanings, activities, purposes, offerings, his reception of new meanings, inevitably led to tensions as well as to achievements of growth and change. This growth and change has in its wake led the new novel writers to a careful observation and selection of the reality around them. The result is a new hero and heroine who go against the patterns of social behaviour established in their traditional society, frequently involving them in the assimilation and re-interpretation of Western values.

## THE MATRIX OF THE TRADITIONAL GENRES

The traditional folktale, which had both realistic and fantastic elements, was a product of its environment just as is the modern novel. It became the art it was, not because it was executed at the behest of and in the service of ritual, as some anthropologists would like to suggest, but simply because it was a way of looking at reality. There is considerable evidence in support of this postulation in other fields of art. There is a proliferation of secular art such as we have in the decorative designs on pottery and stools and wooden pillows, including the *nyora* (cuttings) on human faces from which we derive the word to write, 'nyora'. Neither of these is ritualistic or utilitarian. They seem to indicate that in Shona there appears to be such a thing as 'art for art's sake' as well as confirming that beauty is not always and necessarily a handmaid of religion or function. To look for religion as being behind all traditional art is to miss the basic and fundamental interplay of art, audience and the universe. Art can excite even though religious or social purpose is absent.

The traditional society's world-view fell into two broad divisions—the physical and the metaphysical. The physical world consisted of pastoral and arable land, forests and rivers and mountains with caves and gorges; the metaphysical consisted of the familiar milieu and its links with the spiritual involving the interplay between the living, the dead and the animal world. The stories which the verbal artist told in the evenings of the story-telling seasons when there was no pressure of work were in response to the immediate pressures of his living conditions. Such stories emerged as folktales, myths and legends. One I remember from my childhood goes as follows:

Once upon a time, in a faraway country, rain had not fallen for many years and the king of the animals decided to call a meeting to resolve the great problem of lack of drinking water. All the animals, big and small, the Elephant, Lions, Giraffes and their wives came. The Hyenas, Baboons, Hares and their wives were there, too. One would think the Tortoise, the Frog and their wives were not there—strangely enough they were present. All the animals one can imagine were present.

At the end of the deliberations, which took all day, the meeting resolved that all animals would take part in digging a community well. The Hare would not join the rest, saying he had other pressing needs. It was no easy matter to dig a well on very hard ground, seeing that rain had not fallen for years. All the animals took turns, making use of bare hands, sharp-pointed sticks, and stones. Finally, water was found and there was happiness in the community.

You will note that the Hare, who did not take part in the project giving the pretext that he had other pressing work to do, was now drawing water from the well. A meeting was again called to find ways and means of stopping Mr Hare from drawing water since he had refused to dig the well. The meeting quickly resolved to place a guard on the well and his task would be to stop Mr Hare from drawing the water. The Hare was still without drinking water. He had a sweet tongue which he used to his advantage and to the dishonour of the guard on duty. Those who refused to be persuaded by his gift of the gab were made to taste the honey he carried in his *maguchu* (calabashes). The guard would be persuaded to be tied and gagged (*mbiradzakondo*) first, if he were really to enjoy the *dapurahunanzva* (taste of honey). Next day the guard, who was any one of the big animals, was found lying, and tied with a rope, to the displeasure of the rest of the well-diggers.

Another meeting was called, this time to deal with a matter of national importance—to apprehend the Hare and put an end, once and for all, to this anti-social behaviour. The king said, 'We have come to the end of all our plans to apprehend the Hare—what shall we do now?' Various plans were put forward but were found to be impractical. 'Excuse me, sir,' said the Drongo, 'I would like to try to bring the Hare to book and to justice.' The rest of the *dare* (council) looked down and wondered whether the little black bird could perform miracles. The *dare* just did not believe him. Others volunteered but were dismissed as stupid. The big and impressive animals were tried. And although Mr Tortoise and Mr Frog were dismissed as all the animals thought they were just playing the fool, the *dare* agreed that they try their luck despite their size.

The Tortoise was guarding the well when the Hare (*akati tsati kusvika*) suddenly and dramatically arrived. 'Go-go-goi' (knock-knock-knock), he said. There was no reply from the well. He dipped his hand to draw water and the Tortoise strongly gripped the Hare's hand. 'I am sorry,' said the Hare, 'you have caught a root, don't waste your time.' The Tortoise let go his grip and the Hare, in panic, left without water, for the first time. The animals knew the Hare would come back soon, and on the following day Mr Frog was on duty guarding the well. The Hare arrived with his honey, as he had done the previous day. The Frog gripped the Hare's hand hard. The Hare said: 'You have caught a tree root.' The Frog asked, with a lisp, 'Does the root of the tree have hairs like the legs of the clever Hare?' The Frog croaked in broad daylight, as a sign of happiness and also to summon the help of the rest of the animals. The cleverest had been apprehended by an animal usually despised.

A meeting to decide on the fate of the Hare was called and the Hare was given the chance to defend himself. After deliberations lasting all day the Hare suggested, 'If you really are to enjoy eating my meat, construct a tall tower at the bottom of which you should dig a trench which you should fill with grass and ashes. Then take me up the tower and drop me into the pit below. This will make my body swell and this will provide enough meat for the community.' The credulous *dare* did just as the Hare had said. The result was contrary to expectations as the Hare landed gently and disappeared in the cloud of ashes below.

This is where the story-teller died (i.e. the story ends here).

The world of the traditional folktale, myth and legend is one belonging essentially to the marvellous and the fantastic. But the novel belongs essentially to the mimetic with elements of both the marvellous and the fantastic, thus maintaining its perennial balance and link between oracy and literacy. If we take the opening of the above fable—'Once upon a time, in a faraway country . . .'—we find it is a formulaic device intended to place the 'text' in its conventional perspective: what will follow will not deal with the commonplace world; the name and identity of the narrator are not given, if only to help us appreciate and understand that his 'text', and his entire discourse, is both mythical and mystical. This atmosphere is further carried by his emotional involvement in the remote past and by his constant use of the *aka*- form of the verb. The formulaic ending—'This is where the story-teller died'—neatly shows that the narrator's identity is insignificant. The text is everything.

In this fable the narrative performance involves the distortion of reality by making it concrete and finite. Characters in one of the first realistic Shona novels, Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*, cannot be animals because he is concerned with human beings in a familiar milieu. The folk narrator temporarily and ritually suspends everyday law and order. Differences have been resolved, permitting social intercourse between the narrator and his audience on one side, and the animal and the metaphysical worlds of the other. Taboos have been broken and all things that were separate and divided species have found an intermediary in the narrator and have thus been united with the rest of God's creation. This suspension

of the ordinary world has its parallel in Shona society, particularly during the *chihwerure* or *jakwara* (threshing party), when practical jokes accompanied by obscenity run riot. Village, family and personal secrets are divulged and the persons who do this are exempt from prosecution, whence the expression, 'chihwerure hachiende kumusha'.

Speaking (or singing) in metaphor, riddles and indirect allusions is at the core of Shona society. This is very much the same case when we come to narrative performance as a verbal art. In certain purposeful gatherings 'sadza-Ndinotsvangawo sadza' refers to a bride while in others it refers to life as we have in 'unofa ukasiya sadza' which is often associated with the wife's function as cook. In like manner, the fable has a deeper and more symbolical meaning than the one which appears on the surface. In the first place the characters of the story are personified animals. The 'round' and 'flat' characters who feel and speak like human beings are given human qualities; the lion is strong and muscular; the zebra, firm and elegant; the tortoise, diminutive but courageous and determined; the baboon, sluggish, greedy and boorish; the frog, weak but resolute; and the hare, small, agile and cunning. This kind of characterization is carried over into Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*, where the three male characters, Samere, Tikana and Matigimu, are placed as against the female characters, Sekerai, Nyemwerai and Mhangwa. In this respect the fable embodies the marvellous but anticipates the mimetic.

But of course the author's intention and point of view succeed in lifting the story from the level of the realm of unreality to one that does inform the familiar milieu. Fantasy in the fable at once disengages itself from the roots and tradition of the *chihwerure* (carnavalesque) art: it no longer is only communal but is a universal art form inducting the future adult into the ambiguities, the nature and purpose of life. The narrator is decidedly didactic and moralistic as he believes in the dynamic nature of human society and he also holds the view that human beings, irrespective of their station (hence the various species of animals), must work together in life to produce beneficial results. Above all, the one human quality which is admired is a commendable presence of mind which enables one to survive in this harsh and cruel world. The application of the theme in a modern situation is in Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*.

This particular traditional genre has been chosen because it demonstrates, convincingly, the link that exists between itself and the various genres dealing with a new industrial society. The concept of genre or species is borrowed from the natural sciences of botany or zoology and there appears to be a qualitative difference in meaning between genre and specimen, especially when applied to human beings or to works of the mind. However, in talking about the genre as a product of imagination, the appearance of a new example, the novel, does not necessarily destroy the main characteristics. The original is, of course, modified but the properties of the new example are for the most part deducible from the archetype. The Shona proverb illustrates this point amply—'Mhembwe rudzi

inozvarwa ine kazhumu' (the duiker is a species, it is born with a tuft of hair [on its head]). If we are familiar—as we are with the traditional genre of the fantastic and the marvellous—with the species of the duiker or that of the tiger, we can deduce from it the properties of the individual. The birth of a new duiker or tiger does not confuse us in our definition of what the species is.

In like manner, in dealing with any text belonging to 'oral' literature, we should take into account the properties that it shares with all 'oral' literature. It would appear, therefore, that it is difficult to defend the thesis that a piece of literary work is entirely original. We must understand that a text is a product of a pre-existing literature and that it is also a transformation of that system. It is for this reason that I have come to conclude that the Shona novel, with all the traditional genres possible—the formulaic expressions, the proverb, the riddle, the song—is not as amorphous as, possibly, the English novel, but possesses a tight construction. 'Genres are precisely those relaying points by which the work assumes a relation with the universe of literature.'<sup>8</sup>

We arrive at the traditional story-teller's personality, perception of world-view and acumen by a simple process of deduction. We judge him more by what he says in words than by what he does—and Plato thought that poets were only 'the interpreters of the Gods by whom they were severely possessed'.<sup>9</sup> One thing we are sure of is that the stories that he told were definitely not of his composition. He died a symbolical death at the end of each narration, as evidenced by the formulaic ending—'ndopakafira sarungano' (that is where the story-teller died)—in order to rise again and retell the same story the following night, in different words. We do not know precisely who he is although we have a pretty good idea of his age. Everything about him is mysterious; among other things, his stories' settings, and his characters. This contributes towards the unrealistic aspect of the folktale. Be that as it may, he has a warm heart towards his audience, which mainly consists of children whose ages range between seven and thirteen. He speaks their language and belongs to the same religion. On the other hand we are in possession of his modern counterparts' personal details. We know of Chakaipa, the Catholic priest, and his novels; Chidzero, the political scientist, and his *Nzvengamutsvairo*; Tsodzo, the University of Zimbabwe graduate, his *Pafunge* and his play *Babamunini Francis*.<sup>10</sup> At least the battle towards credibility is won even if the war for realism is being fought. The stories that they write are of their composition, the settings are clearly stated, and their characters are beginning to bear resemblance to human characters. Their plots and language are shaped by their new industrial situation, a further point to the development of a new 'social' or 'bourgeois' realism.

<sup>8</sup>T. Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* transl. R. Howard (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell Univ. Press, 1980), 8.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in D. Daiches, *Critical Approaches to Literature* (London, Longman Green, 1964), 8.

<sup>10</sup>T.K. Tsodzo, *Pafunge* (Salisbury, Longman, 1972); *Babamunini Francis* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1970).



The distinction which I drew in 1972 between the novels whose authors' world-view is directed towards the coming of the Whites (Old World Novels) and those whose world-view is after the coming of the Whites (New World Novels) is a useful one.<sup>11</sup> The two types of settings, which incidentally fall into rural and urban categories, are distinctly and characteristically Zimbabwean. They affect the unfolding of character and action by providing a Zimbabwean background to both. However, the settings are not clearly elaborated or well delineated, except by a few authors like Mutswairo in *Feso* and Chidyausiku in *Nyadzi Dzinokunda Rufu*,<sup>12</sup> and of course in the novels in English by Shona writers like Stanlake Samkange in *The Mourned One*,<sup>13</sup> by Mutswairo in *Feso* and *Mapondera, Soldier of Zimbabwe*,<sup>14</sup> and by Mungoshi in *Waiting for the Rain*.<sup>15</sup> In this case the Zimbabwean novel in Shona lags behind its counterpart in English and hardly measures up to its other counterpart, the West African novel. The Shona novel is more and more a dramatic statement rather than a demonstration of its settings as representing certain ideals and human values. There is no extended effort to describe 'scenery' for at least three reasons. First, nature does not appear to be apprehended as an independent reality in its colourful and decorative aspect but as an inseparable, indivisible, and integral part of the entire traditional world. Secondly, traditional narration, which has so influenced the modern novelist, gave no scenery unless it had a significant role to play in the plot; and thirdly, the authors take it for granted that the readers are aware of the significance of the settings. Chakaipa in *Garandichauya* does not elaborate on the contents or wares in the store because this is not necessary. What is necessary, however, is the act of selling the articles at greatly reduced prices as this leads to Muchaneta's suitor's dismissal from his post as shopkeeper. However, in the same book, the author finds it necessary to give a clear picture of the type of soup and how well it was cooked, because this would show Handisumbe's immoral side, and this is a very important issue in the didactic aspect of the story. However, John Marangwanda in *Kumazivandadzoka*,<sup>16</sup> Chidyausiku in *Pfungwa dzaSekuru Mafusire*,<sup>17</sup> and in the 'new writing' as represented by Tsodzo in his *Pafunge*, the description of recognizable place-names builds up atmosphere, tone and feeling by concentrating on the physical, moral and intellectual aspects of environment. Except in the Old World novels where the stories unfold and are set in the rural areas, the country, in most Shona novels the rural and urban settings are often juxtaposed to allow the meaning to emerge. Novels written against the background of these conflicting

<sup>11</sup>G.P. Kahari, *The Novels of Patrick Chakaipa* (Salisbury, Longman, 1972).

<sup>12</sup>P. Chidyausiku, *Nyadzi Dzinokunda Rufu* (Salisbury, Oxford Univ. Press, 1962).

<sup>13</sup>S.J.T. Samkange, *The Mourned One* (London, Heinemann, 1975).

<sup>14</sup>S.M. Mutswairo, *Mapondera, Soldier of Zimbabwe* (Washington D.C., Three Continents Press, 1974).

<sup>15</sup>C.L. Mungoshi, *Waiting for the Rain* (London, Heinemann, 1975).

<sup>16</sup>J.W. Marangwanda, *Kumazivandadzoka* (Salisbury, Longman, 1959).

<sup>17</sup>P. Chidyausiku, *Pfungwa dzaSekuru Mafusire* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1960).

settings with their respective ideologies manifest numerous different attitudes towards the rise of bourgeois individualism. Because the essential situation involves the paradigmatic confrontation between an isolated individual and a hostile society, the novel reflects a world-view defined in terms of the author's social position. The writing thus reflects a gradual but steady movement towards a deeper commitment to realism and to the social issues of the day.

'Rural' and 'urban', 'country' and 'city' are powerful words in the experience of the African people of Zimbabwe. The rural area is where they originally came from—the traditional village. 'The urban area' includes the small mining town and areas occupied by the White farmers, while 'the city' refers to Salisbury (now Harare) and at times Bulawayo. The arrival of the White man immediately and dramatically transformed the land they occupied into urban areas and the remainder into rural areas.

Around the word 'rural' is gathered the idea of a natural and primitive way of life; of simple virtue, or peace, tranquillity, innocence and contentment. On the other hand the urban areas are linked with the idea of knowledge, sophistication, the administrative base of the capital city, new religious centres, markets, military barracks, industrialism, politics, ambition and discontent. The rural is distinctly different from the urban, providing a fundamental opposite. The period between 1956 and 1980, however, witnessed a systematic transformation of rural life into urban. This period brought with it an impressive range of novels written in the country.

The migration of African males, first to the mining centres, secondly to farming areas and then to the new urban centres in search of employment, disrupted their pattern of life. Hitherto, work in the village community had been seasonal but now it was throughout the year and migrants were no longer able to live with their wives. Above all, they were forced to work in order to provide the labour for which they were paid a pittance out of which they paid various taxes.

New modes of transport were introduced. The ox-wagon was the most popular, to the extent that a tune, 'Chomtengure', is played by the Zimbabwe Police Band and other pop groups today:

SOLO        *Chomtengure*  
              *Chomtengure*

CHORUS    *Chomtengure*  
              *Chomtengure*

SOLO        *Mkadzi womutyairi kwira pangoro*  
              The wife of the ox-wagon driver gets onto the wagon

CHORUS    *Aiya, aiya*  
              *Aiya, Aiya*

SOLO        *Ugoti woburuka ngoro yachona*  
              And gets down when the wagon is stuck [in the mud]

- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*  
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Wanditi mutyari wandionei*  
You call me 'the ox-wagon driver'—what have you seen  
in me?
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*  
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Wandiona bhurukwa randakapfeka*  
You see the trousers I am in
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*  
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Mkadzi womutyairi usakumbire dovi*  
Do not ask for peanut-butter from the ox-wagon driver's wife
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*  
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Dovi rake igirisi rengoro*  
Her peanut-butter is the ox-wagon grease
- CHORUS *Aiya, aiya*  
Aiya, aiya
- SOLO *Chomtengure*  
Chomtengure
- CHORUS *Chomtengure*  
Chomtengure

The plaintive song introduces three images on a long journey—the tired oxen, the driver's wife and the driver himself walking beside the inspanned oxen. The song is played by modern groups for the memories it brings of the long political journey. It reminds people of their enslavement.

Missionaries deployed themselves at various strategic points in the country: The Dutch Reformed at Morgenster (1891), the Jesuits at Chishawasha (1892), The American Board Mission at Chikore (1893), the British Methodist Mission at Waddilove (1896), the Anglicans at St Augustine's (1897), and the United Methodist at Old Umtali (1898). The Protestant churches soon translated the Bible (1911) and hymns, both of which were used in the fashion of traditional genres. Above all, a few discontented Africans set up separatist movements, which marked the beginning of Black Consciousness, in an attempt to find their true identity before God. They found many biblical passages relevant to the political situation in Zimbabwe. For instance, Sithole recalls Peter Mutandwa's address at Nyanyadzi in 1958, in which he quoted Ezekiel 37 : 1-7:

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones . . .

and, behold, there *were* very many in the open valley; and, lo, they *were* very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord . . . So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

Sithole noted how

This passage had a lot of meaning [to those who listened. To them] the dry bones were the Africans who were scattered all over Rhodesia and who had lost any political coherence since 1896. [They were] impressed by the fact that for the first time Africans were moving up and down the country organizing the people to fight for their rights . . . Indeed, the dry bones of Zimbabwe were coming together and God was breathing the breath of life into them.<sup>18</sup>

The converts took to harmonic singing with grace and ease. They liked antiphonal community singing since it followed in the wake of traditional singing which had the alternation of improvised lines and fixed refrains. This, coupled with the lengthening of words and phrases to suit the African slow tempo, became a unique contribution to the modern protest song. The participation of the soloist in the verses and of the chorus in singing the refrains reinforced the traditional tune elements in the song. The performance was repeated again and again until the singers drove themselves into a trance or violent mood. The interplay of religion and politics is further illustrated in the song sung at Annatoria's funeral in Tsodzo's *Pafunge*:

*Zadzisa chirevo chako*

Fulfil your promise

*Mwari she wechokwadi*

Truthful Lord God

*Ose marudzi enyika*

Let all the nations of this world

*Ngaone ruponiso*

See salvation

*Tarira nyika yokwedu*

Look after our country

*Urege kuipa kwayo*

Deliver it from evil

*Urege kutsamwa kwayo*

Deliver it from trials and tribulation

<sup>18</sup>N. Sithole, *Obed Mutezo* (Nairobi, Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), 119. For a brief review of missionary writing in Shona, see G. Fortune, '75 years of writing in Shona', *Zambezia* (1969-70), 1, i, 55-67.

*Isingafi mhuri yayo*  
 Deliver it from destruction.<sup>19</sup>

Schools in the 1940s often organized concerts to raise funds in order to buy items for school equipment. At times shows were also organized to compete for shields at centres like Chikaka School in the heart of the Zvimba Reserve. The songs which the various 'dumb-bell' choirs sang before the (Native) District Commissioners often criticized the Government to the ironic amusement of the 'invited' guest. One such song that I recall from my childhood was a serious indictment:

- CHORUS    *Kwakatange chibharo*  
               First there was forced labour  
               *Kukauya mambure*  
               Then we were forbidden the use of nets [for hunting]  
               *Kukauya vemigwagwa*  
               Then came the roads [more forced labour on]  
               *Mombe dzedu dzapera.*  
               Our animals are finished [destocked].
- SOLO        *Rave gurugugu mbuya*  
               We are suffering grandmother
- CHORUS    *Rave gurugugu*  
               We are suffering.

And down in the Chivi Reserve, choirs protested about the same injustice they suffered:

*Mombe dzapera naVarungu*  
 [Our] beasts have been destocked by the Europeans  
*Takangoti chena*  
 While we helplessly watch  
*Hatichaziva chekuita*  
 We do not know what to do  
*Tongotamburawo.*  
 We are suffering too.

In Harava, now the Seke Communal Land, choirs sang of political oppression and humiliation from the 'Boers', the Europeans:

*Mabhunu anotitambudza Mabhunu*  
 The Boers torture us, the Boers  
*Anotitambudza*  
 They torture us

<sup>19</sup>Tsodzo, *Pafunge*, 26.

*Sadza ravo nderekoroniwo Mabhunhu*

Their staple food is corn, the Boers

*Nderekeroni.*

It is corn.<sup>20</sup>

The Shona novel cannot be considered independently of such satirical songs but it is in the settings of the novels, especially when they are urban and with strong didactic or propagandist overtones, that we enjoy satire at the highest level. They reveal an author sensitively aware of the failures and the contradictions exhibited by the plush habitations of the privileged educated, the 'been-to's' and the *nouveaux riches* in the urban slums of Gatooma in Chakaipa's *Garandichauya*; in Vhengere (at Rusape) in Julius Chingono's *Chipo Changu*;<sup>21</sup> in the rural townships (Mhondoro) in Amos Munjanja's *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi*<sup>22</sup> and James Kawara's *Ruchiva*,<sup>23</sup> and in the new residential areas of Westwood and Marimba Park as portrayed in the latest classic satire, Moyo's *Ziva Kwawakabva*. This seems to be the temporary direction of Shona novel-writing and underscores that progressive development towards realism.

The domestication of the novel as an art medium in Zimbabwe is highlighted by its background in the context of which character and incident interplay, and man's identity operates in the framework of Zimbabwean history and society. Implicit in this statement is the proposition that a character has a past, a present and a future, the consequences of which are that society, history and the individual, and their inter-relationships and inter-dependences, all constitute a system which accounts for human reality. It is, therefore, in the novel that we see man being defined historically and socially, making it possible for us to see society entering into history and history into society. The delineation of character and incident is affected by the author's point of view which is often in the third-person narrative in all of the Old World and some of the New World novels and in the first-person narrative with the flashback technique in the 'new writing' series of the New World novels. Samkange in *The Mourned One*, Tsodzo in *Pafunge* and Mungoshi in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* successfully employ the *in medias res* technique. This technique, which is also a traditional method of rendering and dramatizing personal anecdotes, allows the writer to highlight a single event by ignoring or only briefly alluding to other causative events. For instance, the narrator, by using the 'shocking' technique says, 'Kufa(kunesu) is dead!' 'What happened?' says

<sup>20</sup> Chidzero, *Nzvengamutsvairo*, 11. It is interesting to note that at least two prophecies told respectively in two Shona novels have been realized. Mutswairo's *Feso* foretold the coming of the War of Liberation, which was first fought exactly where *Feso* is set, in the Centenary area of the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land. Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* foretold the destruction of the Seke Tribal Trust Land because of the growth and impact of industrialization: 'Chemai misodzi nyika yaparara' (Cry tears for the country, i.e., the traditional way of life is destroyed).

<sup>21</sup> J. Chingono, *Chipo Changu* (Salisbury, Longman, 1979).

<sup>22</sup> A.M. Munjanja, *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1971).

<sup>23</sup> J. Kawara, *Ruchiva* (Salisbury, Longman Zimbabwe, 1980).

another. 'He woke up in the morning, took his bicycle, and as he tried to beat the traffic light he was hit on the side and died instantly.' The entire account which leads up to instant death is in fact a flashback which places the narrative in its historical perspective. We continually adjust our behaviour in the light of former steps, which is a way of looking into the past to find our present bearings in our attempts to find ways and means of dealing with the future. Joe Rug in *Pafunge* remains a mystery until the author takes us back to the time when he was teaching at Mharapara Mission, where he met Annatolia, the mother of his daughter whom he now takes to wife. The various situations into which Rug enters really make him the 'rounded' figure he is. Thus the narrative within which the technique of flashback—new in this literature—is extensively used becomes even more realistic. Flashback adds a third dimension to an already clear picture.

Characters in the New World novels are more realistically and convincingly drawn than those in the Old World. The reasons are clear. The author, whose vision is directed towards a new industrial situation, is at home in a situation which invigorates the individual; and again, in itself the novel form seems to encourage the individualization of an individual by society. Nyika(dzino) in Chidyausiku's *Nyadzi Dzinokunda Rufu* became himself after he had been dehumanized and depersonalized in his native environment because of his inability to have children by his wife, Ndaizivei. Muchaneta in Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* is a fine example of what a woman can become in an urban area. Having been drawn to Gatooma by the lure of adventure, freedom, prosperity, and the shield of anonymity which also covered Nyika when he was in Bulawayo, she is 'round' in every sense because she is convincingly portrayed. A recent example is found in Kawara's *Ruchiva*, where the school teacher, Zimbangura, finds himself in a community which demands at least an outward show of respect for traditional concepts of honour and religious faith. For him, masking serves a psychological function as he contravenes values which he is supposed to espouse. He thus develops some means of coping with the dichotomy between what he is and what the community thinks he is or ought to be. On the other hand, characterization, in the Old World novels is significantly 'flat', and this is so because they are dealing with a situation where tensions do not arise from confrontation with the unfamiliar. The characters are thus representative caricatures or archetypes interacting in a homogeneous society with a very high degree of conformity, which would not be found in an industrial society. Characterization in a Western-type novel depends on individual mobility, mental and physical interaction. 'Characters in primitive stories are invariably "flat", "static" and quite "opaque"'. The very recurring epithets of formulaic narrative are signs of flatness in characterization.<sup>24</sup> Be that as it may, just as a good many of Bunyan's characters have a vitality, so have the characters in Chakaipa's

<sup>24</sup>R. Scholes and R. Kelliog, *The Nature of Narrative* (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), 164.

*Karikoga Gumiremiseve*, Eric Mavengere's *Akanyangira Yaona*,<sup>25</sup> Ignatius Zvarevashe's *Gonawapotera*<sup>26</sup> and Mutswairo's *Feso*.

There is a parabolic approach to characterization in both the Old World and the New World novels, but in the latter is overwhelmed and preoccupied with social morality, with the lack of tribal (and national) identity. The old and familiar techniques are identified in New World novels. The technique enhances and elaborates the plot. Kurimahufamba (Mr Travelling-is-[as-good-as]-ploughing), the meat vendor in Hamandishe's *Sara Ugarike*, enhances and elaborates the plot. Samere, in Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*, is the biblical Samuel whose mind and personality grow towards the recognition of God, while of his counterparts, Matigimu (Mr Destroyer) is rude, crude and boorish, and Tikana (his name appears to be without significance) stands between the two. Karikoga in Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumuremiseve* is the little, lonely, trickster, based on the folktale character of that name, convincingly and realistically drawn just the same as some of Dickens' 'flat' characters have succeeded in living. Chikweya (Mr Crippled) in Chidyausiku's *Karumekangu*<sup>27</sup> is indeed lame and heavy (*chirema*). Society looks at him with misgivings. Muchaneta (You-will-tire-of-me) in Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* is a typical character in a typical situation. She enjoys the *wotapu* (auto-harp) dance to the satisfaction of herself and of the onlookers in Bherina in Gatooma. Her tastes have changed with the introduction of exotic foods and, above all, she really loves herself more than anyone else, as measured by her reaction to her reflection in the mirror; she will never tire of herself. On the other hand, her counterpart, Tsisti (Mercy), like Munhamo (In-plaint) in Chakaipa's *Pfumo reRopa*,<sup>28</sup> treasures moral beauty more than physical excellence. Muchaneta is to Rudo (Love) what Tsitsi is to Nyeesai (Gossip intensely) in Kawara's *Ruchiva*. The two girl-friends in Chidyausiku's *Karumekangu* have come up against violence in a world which is decidedly a man's world, and Saraoga's mother in Murangwanda's *Kumazivandadzoka* encounters a situation in which she is rejected by her own son. Thus characterization, even in the latest published novels, is still conceived and patterned on well known and popular traditional folktales, legends and myths as well as on metaphysical assumptions. Francis Hodzongi's *Mhosva Inoripwa*,<sup>29</sup> a work of lyrical beauty, is a notable example of this.

In *The Imaginative Writings of Paul Chidyausiku* I have postulated a theory on the nature of the Shona plot based on the etymology of the root word *-ano* from which we derive *zano* (plan, singular for *mano*) as a concept of a human character in a story (*rungano*). *Ngano* (singular and plural) is a folktale on which

<sup>25</sup>E.P. Mavengere, *Akanyangira Yaona* (Salisbury, Longman, 1979).

<sup>26</sup>I. Zvarevashe, *Gonawapotera* (Salisbury, The College Press, 1978).

<sup>27</sup>P. Chidyausiku, *Karumekangu* (Salisbury, Longman, 1970).

<sup>28</sup>P. Chakaipa, *Pfumo reRopa* (Salisbury, Longman, 1961).

<sup>29</sup>F.D. Hodzongi, *Mhosva Inoripwa* (Salisbury, Longman Zimbabwe, 1981).



we superimpose the prefix *ru-* (*rungano*).<sup>30</sup> The prefix *ru-* is one of its secondary functions carrying the idea of length, e.g. *ru + oko* for hand, and habit, and custom; *ruchiva* (covetousness), *rubo* (a persistent habit of stealing, amounting to being a habitual criminal). *Rungano* (plot or story) is, therefore, a series of plans designed to enable a character in a situation to escape. In the parabolic folktale quoted above, each (animal) character is or has a plan to execute, and they all formulate a series of plans which constitute a dynamic and sequential element in the plot. There is, therefore, between character and plot, that mutual dependence without which there would be no story, its elements of mystery coupled with novelty and familiarity and predictability.

In the light of the above exposition I have, for the time being, distinguished eight types of plot, as follows:

(i) *Romance*, which is based on traditional folktale and myths. The example here is Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumiremiseve*.

(ii) *Epic*, a fine example of which is Mutswairo's *Feso*, a narrative placed between the world of ritual legend and the world of history.

(iii) *Picaresque*, which in Shona novels would be defined as the adventures of a hero, incorporating pseudo-autobiographical and disparate fragmentary materials into the life of a reasonably clever and adaptable peasant character in a new industrial environment. In Spain, where the genre was first used, the term denoted the adventures of a rogue, knave, or sharper; in France, those of a beggar or thief; in Germany (*Schelm* > Afrikaans *skellem* > Shona *chikerema*), the adventures of a rogue or adventurer; in Italy, those of a *rombe* (vagrant or rogue). In the picaresque class we have Mutswairo's *Murambiwa Goredema*<sup>31</sup> and Marangwanda's *Kumazivandadzoka*. Both Murambiwa and Saraoga have been portrayed in a way that will render the work with comic effect without necessarily relinquishing claims to seriousness of moral values and general verisimilitude.

(iv) *Satire*, which is incompatibility of subject matter with the mode of writing accompanied by such minor genres as farce, travesty and burlesque as are found in Moyo's *Ziva Kwawakabva*. Indeed most of the social novels have this satiric element; typical examples are Chakaipa's *Garandichauya*, Chingono's *Chipo Changu*, Simbarashe Dzoro's *Wandigura Kunorira*<sup>32</sup> and Kawara's *Ruchiva*.

(v) *Historical*, essentially set in the rural and sometimes in the urban areas, the stories often being of a legendary nature. Often described in archaic and formulaic expressions, characters in these historical novels are invariably 'static' and 'opaque'. Examples are Zvarevashe's *Gonawapotera*, Mavengere's *Akanyangira Yaona* and Hodzongi's *Mhosva Inoripwa*.

<sup>30</sup>G.P. Kahari, *The Imaginative Writings of Paul Chidyausiku* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1975),

<sup>31</sup>S.M. Mutswairo, *Murambiwa Goredema* (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1959).

<sup>32</sup>S.T. Dzoro, *Wandigura Kunorira* (Salisbury, Longman Zimbabwe, 1980).

(vi) *Social*, which must be distinguished from its counterpart set in the rural area before the coming of the White men. The social novel is set in both rural and urban areas and is almost always concerned with the disintegration of the family as a nucleus of society, the characters often caught up in various snares and ending by being figuratively bound hand-and-foot just as the Hare literally was in the allegorical story quoted above. There seems to be a ceaseless emphasis on fate, such as we have in Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* and Pfumo reRopa, and Kawara's *Ruchiva*, although a number end on a happy note, as in Joyce Simango's *Zviuya Zviri Mberi*,<sup>33</sup> in Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*, Chingono's *Chipo Changu*, Hodzongi's *Mhosva Inoripwa* and Francis Bvindi's *Kumuzinda Hakuna Woko*.<sup>34</sup>

(vii) *Thriller*, in which the hero has his own morality which has nothing to do with the ethics that regulate men's behaviour in his society. The story's fields of perception unfold in a cinematographic fashion, with a duration of days rather than years. A good example is Kenneth Mutize's *Mary Ponderai*.<sup>35</sup>

(viii) *Detective*, which has come about with the rise of gangsterism in the urban area. Good examples of this are Chidyaisiku's *Karumekangu*, Edward Kaugare's *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa*<sup>36</sup> and Alexious Lwanda's *Zvichakuwanawo*.<sup>37</sup>

Yet no novel can be defined strictly as belonging to only one of these categories:

Every separable element in a narrative can be said to have its own plot, its own little system of tension and resolution which contributes its bit to the general system. Not only every episode or incident but every paragraph and every sentence has its beginning, middle and end. It is in these small areas . . . that individual achievement may be properly assessed.<sup>38</sup>

## DIDACTICISM IN THE NOVELS

Research into the biographies of the authors of these works has revealed that most of them are or have been engaged as school teachers, which is not particularly surprising since there were no other employment opportunities open to such Blacks. This fact tends to give the products of their imagination a didactic tone. This statement could be too presumptuous if it ignored, also, the fact that the didactic element was a carry-over from Shona culture. The value of a story, so the Shona story-tellers think, is embodied in the lesson it conveys. In this respect the Shona artists are not alone in their efforts to teach, inform or entertain the teeming school-going masses who form the main bulk of their readers. The ancients, notably

<sup>33</sup>J. Simango, *Zviuya Zviri Mberi* (Salisbury, Longman, 1974).

<sup>34</sup>F.L. Bvindi, *Kumuzinda Hakuna Woko* (Salisbury, Longman Zimbabwe, 1981).

<sup>35</sup>K. Mutize, *Mary Ponderai* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1978).

<sup>36</sup>E.W. Kaugare, *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* (Salisbury, Longman, 1978).

<sup>37</sup>A. Lwanda, *Zvichakuwanawo* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1981).

<sup>38</sup>Scholes and Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, 239.

the Greek writers and philosophers—Aristophanes, Plato and Aristotle—concerned themselves with the proper function of the poet and his society. Aristophanes, writing in *The Frogs* has these observations to make:

A poet should teach a lesson, make people into better citizens. Schoolboys have a master to teach them, grown-ups have the poets. From the very earliest times the really great poet has been the one who had a useful lesson to teach.

We chorus folk two privileges prize:  
To amuse you citizens and to advise.<sup>39</sup>

The idea of 'teaching as well as entertaining' has reverberated throughout the ages. English literature, which has so profoundly affected and influenced Shona authors, abounds in works of this nature. One has only to read social novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Smollett or Dickens to get this impression. We are, therefore, not surprised to find that the Shona novelists are aware of this and that they, too, insist very firmly on their conception of the poet's proper and rightful function in his society. They endeavour more earnestly to fulfil this function because the age-old grandmothers' (and grandfathers') social roles have been affected by the advent of Christianity, technology, industrialization and the social mobility attendant on them. This means that the new institutions have taken away the influence of elders in society.

The Shona novelist's social position is unique. He appears before the public as both teacher and adviser. For over two decades his ideas, his vision of life or his original way of looking at life, his fresh and often unorthodox approach to moral and religious issues, his clever manipulation of the spoken word turned into a written form, have captured the attention of the 'intellectuals' of the modern Shona society. His style, which is based on the old traditional genres, has shocked the pupils out of their traditional attitudes and helped them to create a modern outlook which is nevertheless based on sound Shona traditional values. It is by following their advice, so they annoyingly suggest, that the reader will acquire true wisdom—which is not the same thing as cleverness. Wisdom, they rightly state, thus upholding Shona lore, is intricately bound up with such moral qualities as moderation and justice (see Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*), with courage and integrity, such as we encounter in Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* and *Pfumo reRopa*. Viewed then in this light, these novels possess a remarkable unity of themes and purpose and their authors are conscious of their responsibilities as 'poets'. The apparent naivety that goes with these brilliantly 'naive' novels could be a factor in their greatness. Their strength, ironically, lies in their 'weakness'. Thus the authors are in line with the traditional view that true art is moral, that it seeks to fulfil, to improve life, and not to debase it; and that it further seeks to hold at bay and ward off, at least for the time being, the twilight of the avenging spirits around us. With

<sup>39</sup>Aristophanes, *The Frogs, and Other Plays*, transl. D. Barrett (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964), 149–53.

these noble aims and objectives, which are realized through the application of the art of persuasion at their command, the authors use formulaic and other axiomatic proverbial expressions—Dzoro's *Wandigura Kunorira* (you have touched me on the raw spot); Bvindi's *Kumuzinda Hakuna Woko* (there is no favouritism at the King's Palace); Munjanja's *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* (that which has horns cannot be concealed—evil will out); Hodzongi's *Mhosva Inoripwa* (crime and compensation); Kaugare's *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* (one is in a position to talk if one has been missed); Chingono's *Chipo Changu* (my gift—or blessing—an account of a foundling) and Canaan Banana's *Chido Chomwoyo Wangu* (my heart's delight; a translation from the Ndebele *Isonono Sami*, 1980).<sup>40</sup> There are a few examples—Mungoshi's *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva*, for instance—which fall outside the attested framework. The meaning becomes intelligible only when placed against its English translation, *The Sequence of Time*. Such titles are conceived in English and born in Shona, showing the ironies of the new situation. Moyo's *Ziva Kwawakabva* is one of the best of these didactic novels.

The New World novels consider the differences that exist between European, especially English, and Shona cultures. When Europe imposes its manners, customs, religious beliefs and moral values on an indigenous way of life, there is bound to be conflict between or among the characters who adhere to either of the two systems of culture. These works explore important ideas and values (such as hospitality, for instance), thus forming a new and unique genre. They consider the rise of colonial administration, particularly economic organization, industrialization and the effect of Christianity, but throughout, their expositions or analyses exhibit the link between oral and written literature.

There is therefore a clear distinction between good and evil, and an attempt to suggest what the author thinks is good. In several novels the main character is the villain, which shows how far we have moved from the traditional romance. Kawara's *Ruchiva*, and Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* and *Dzasukwa Mwana-asina-hembe*<sup>41</sup> are cases in point. Of course not all heroes are villains in modern novels, as can be seen in Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*.

The acquisition of technological civilization is seen to have caused serious damage to human relationships. Technology is thus seen to have brought about a systematic movement from an 'ordered' to a 'chaotic' world, so providing a supreme test of character, since people now depend on their inner resources and moral strength to meet the challenging and hazardous balance in a new world full of extremes and one in which relatives are not always keen to come to one's assistance at a time of need. Such a situation enables the authors to understand the vast potentialities of portraying the dramatic contrasts and tensions of men and women caught between the two cultures.

<sup>40</sup>C.S. Banana, *Chido Chomwoyo Wangu* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1982).

<sup>41</sup>P. Chakaipa, *Dzasukwa Mwana-asina-hembe* (Salisbury, Longman, 1967).

The novels, poems and urban songs evaluate their own cultures and moral standards against the new environment, setting or situation, while all the time there is an attempt to answer at least the following two questions: What happens to an African when he is confronted with an alien culture? and What happens to the Africans and their culture under colonialism?

The answers to these two questions are many. For instance, the colonial expression, which is what these imaginative writings are, is a process of self-questioning such as we find in Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* and *Dzasukwa Mwana-asina-hembe* and in Chidyausiku's *Nyadzi Dzinokunda Rufu*. The same process could be a process of self-discovery which easily leads a people to self-awareness and national identity, which is what all these works are doing. The characters concerned have a perception of cultural differences which leads to the fusion of the best elements from the two cultures. Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* clearly demonstrates this view:

If we agree, at least tentatively, that art does instruct, and if we agree that not all instruction is equally valid . . . then our quarrel with the moralist position on art comes down to this; we cannot wholeheartedly accept the religious version of the theory [which seems to influence Chakaipa and all those who write from a Christian point of view] because we are uncomfortable with its first premise, God [instead of primitive society's moral standards, except maybe where they are indefensible—as in the destruction of one or both of twins]; and we cannot wholeheartedly accept the secular version of the theory because we're unconvinced that one man's intuition of truth can be proved better than another's.<sup>42</sup>

## LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Literature involves us in the study of language and its usage, first in its use for purposes of imitation, that is for making of fictions, and secondly, when it is used in a way that is aesthetically pleasing, calling our attention to its use as a medium. The two kinds of language are compatible, and in literature inseparable. It is in the application of these two kinds of language usage that the author includes 'every effect which has to be produced by speech, the sub-divisions being—proof and refutation; the excitation of the feelings such as pity, fear, anger and the like, the suggestion of importance or its opposite'.<sup>43</sup> We get the feeling, tone or atmosphere of the situation he is attempting to create. In the final analysis, the impression or picture thus drawn comes from the author's choice of words, which then carries both the character and events to produce a convincing, realistic and faithful picture. To this end, then, there are two types of general orientation which depend on the story's setting—rural or urban; or on a setting which is in neither the rural nor the urban, but the farming community, which enjoys the fruit of both.

<sup>42</sup> J.C. Gardner, *On Moral Fiction* (New York, Basic Books, 1978), 41.

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* transl. S.H. Butcher (New York, Hill and Wang, 1961), 93.

The novels whose characters operate in the rural areas are described in language slow and ponderous, mythical and ritual, because the rhythm of events is in sympathy with the season's determined movements. In like manner, therefore, the feeling and tone of Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* and *Pfumo reRopa*, Giles Kuimba's *Tambaoga Mwanangu*,<sup>44</sup> Francis Mugugu's *Jekanyika*,<sup>45</sup> David Chiguvare's *Kutonhodzwa kwaChauruka*,<sup>46</sup> Zvarevashe's *Gonawapotera*, and Mavengere's *Akanyangira Yaona* and Hodzongi's *Mhosva Inoripwa* are legendary, mythical, totemic and ritualistic, and this in turn determines (among other things) our approach. On the other hand, the pace of events in the urban areas is not immediately affected by the natural rhythm. Most of the factories continue to produce articles irrespective of the year's seasons. Time as well as space is accurately measured to avoid waste. Everything is well demarcated and so are the individual women and men who appear in the New World novels. There are few seasonal images in such novels. There is, therefore, a tremendous feeling of liberty, freedom and equality—a kind of 'new constitution' feeling—never experienced before, and this can be felt in the language. It is this kind of Christian feeling, even a Christian vocabulary (as not many people would like to admit), that brought about—among other forces of course—the War of Liberation in Zimbabwe.

As the novels are on all aspects of social life in the country, the tones and feelings are equally wide-ranging. The one tone which is shared by authors, whether writing from a Christian or Shona cultural point of view is that of moralistic preaching—and language points to the moral purpose. Marangwanda's *Kumazivandadzoka* from beginning to end is pathetic; Moyo's *Ziva Kwawakabva* is hilarious, satiric and comic; Emmanuel Ribeiro's *Muchadura*<sup>47</sup> is tragic; Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* provides a picture of lyrical appeal as we travel along a terrain of rugged beauty in the Seke Tribal Trust Land; and in Tsodzo's *Pafunge* we attain sublime heights as we move from the serene mission station through the tempestuous winds which uproot the five huge trees symbolizing the fall of the five families concerned in the story. There are moments of comic relief; there are moments of all sorts of different feelings provoked by the author's choice of words, bringing in profundity or banality on either side of the novel's spectrum. In *Pafunge* sentences are long in contemplative situations and short and snappy in aggressive scenes.

It would also appear, as with all the authors, that there are scenes and situations which need an English type of grammatical construction, especially the sentence which begins with a gerund. For instance, 'Achifunga kudai . . .' (Thinking in this manner. . .). Other parts of speech, too, are used, such as the ideophone which Kuimba has used in its traditional form in his *Gehena Harina Moto*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup>G. Kuimba, *Tambaoga Mwanangu* (Salisbury, Longman, 1963).

<sup>45</sup>F.C. Mugugu, *Jekanyika* (Salisbury, The College Press, 1968).

<sup>46</sup>D.E. Chiguvare, *Kutonhodzwa kwaChauruka* (Salisbury, The College Press, 1976).

<sup>47</sup>E.F. Ribeiro, *Muchadura* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1967).

<sup>48</sup>G. Kuimba, *Gehena Harina Moto* (Salisbury, Longman, 1965).

Language has thus been used most imaginatively, to the extent that what Doke in 1929 thought was not a feature of Shona—palatalization—has been found to exist, as in *murume* > *murunyana* (a young husband, i.e., the wife's brother-in-law). In this respect literature is in the service of linguistics, for it must be evident that the evolution of usage seen in the novels must reflect an idiom or register accessible to the reader. As Sartre, the French philosopher, explains in *What is Literature?*: 'The operation of writing implies that of reading as its dialectical correlative . . . It is the conjoint effort of author and reader which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind.'<sup>49</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The *sarungano* (story-teller) was responsible for the dissemination of the stories which he told to the children and, occasionally, to the adult members of his community. His age and wisdom qualified him to be the custodian of the community's moral values. It was not unusual for women to act in this capacity since they had the knack and finesse to deal with developing minds (latter-day circumstances deprived them of this traditional role but they are now coming on to the scene again, as evidenced by Mrs Simango and others). It would appear, however, that women story-tellers could tell only certain stories, leaving others to the male folk. This is understandable in view of the fact that there were certain jobs they alone could do and stories reflecting such roles could rightly be told by them. In this case they told stories with 'domestic' settings while the men told *ngano dzomusango* (tales of the woods), as they were hunters. There were stories which could be told only to selected audiences for the moral values embodied in them. This indeed is the beginning of (voluntary) censorship found in modern states. The Shona community's reasons for introducing this censorship were different from those of Plato, set forth in Book II of the *Republic*, in which he insists that stories told to children should be morally edifying and that they should never suggest wrong ideas. For these and other reasons Plato, who realized that poets had a gift which was not necessarily an art, thought that they (poets, by which he meant writers of imaginative stories) should not be allowed to come anywhere near children since what they say 'feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up'.<sup>50</sup> The ideas of the Shona *sarungano* are more advanced and progressive. He thought and acted otherwise.

Realism in the contemporary novel cannot be understood outside its historical and social perspective. And this contextual analysis must necessarily recognize the role of such national institutions and services as the Literature Bureau, certain publishing houses, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, the National Arts Council, the National Archives and the University of Zimbabwe.

<sup>49</sup>Quoted in D. Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London, Edward Arnold, 1979), 9.

<sup>50</sup>Quoted in Daiches, *Critical Approaches to Literature*, 19.

The Literature Bureau, established in 1954,<sup>51</sup> together with the publishing houses (Longman (Zimbabwe), the College Press and Mambo Press, all of which sprang up before the period beginning 1956), has been responsible for the dissemination of Shona literature, particularly the novel. After *Feso*, the novel played a role of increasing importance in the literary sense. The annual production of works of fiction increased by leaps and bounds from 124,000 copies at the time when I wrote *The Novels of Patrick Chakaipa* to over 229,093 copies ten years later—an increase of over 84 per cent, making an annual increase of over 7 per cent. The novels themselves increased in number from 25 in 1972 to 89 in 1982—an increase of 256 per cent, representing an annual increase of 25.6 per cent. The quantitative increase did not necessarily match the increase in quality. With a few exceptions the novels of the second decade, though occasionally of some interest as evidence of life of the time, had very little literary merit. Much of this lack of merit reveals only too plainly the pressures towards literary degradation which were exerted by the booksellers in their efforts to meet the literate public's uncritical demands; few are very good—Chidzero, Chakaipa, Chidyausiku, Tsodzo—but several still rose above the level of mediocrity. Emmanuel Zanza, for example, has merit as a social reporter and humorist, but there are flaws in the central situations and the general structure of his novel.<sup>52</sup> Tsodzo, on the other hand, offers very provocative literary solutions to the major formal problems which had been raised by his predecessors. He found a way of reconciling Mutswairo's realism of presentation with the realism in assessing internal and external approaches to character shown by Chakaipa, Chidyausiku and Chidzero. There is, therefore, a real breakdown of both the traditional narrative method, and of the social background, facing more squarely, for example, the social and moral problems raised by economic individualism and the bourgeois quest for improved status in a new situation. Tsodzo's picture of the proper norms of the social system is similar to that of Mungoshi, especially in the type of life portrayed in Mungoshi's *Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo*,<sup>53</sup> although its application to characters and the exploitation of their situation is, by and large, more selective, complicated, serious and discriminating. The shift in emphasis is away from the novel as a mere romance (Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumiremiseve*, for example), interested in recreation or amusement, towards the novel as a genre capable of handling the human condition in its totality. The Shona novel writers are beginning to be more and more aware of the link between the reality of created things and the imitative reality of art. There is a strong link with the English type of realism which has come to mean, like the word 'modernism', an experimentation in the arts as an expression of reality.

If the above is to be taken as the norm, then, a good many books that have appeared on the market ought not to have been published or to have seen the light of

<sup>51</sup>Kahari, *The Novels of Patrick Chakaipa*, 1-4.

<sup>52</sup>E.H. Zanza, *Hunde Yorufu* (Salisbury, Longman, 1971).

<sup>53</sup>C.L. Mungoshi, *Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo* (Salisbury, The College Press, 1970).



day. Time is fast coming when the publishing houses will cease to profit by the ignorance of an uncritical reading public.

The Literature Bureau has been receptive in the past, and I hope that with the support of the Government, which is equally receptive to the wishes of the people, it will be even more vigilant to see that bad books do not reach the public. One way of doing this is to let the publishing houses do this work; then the Literature Bureau will not be blamed for allowing bad novels to be published. The publishing houses should compete among themselves.

The Shona novel is connected with various institutions—the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe, the National Archives, and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation—because it is a product of the human mind, and art. And the University of Zimbabwe, which takes cognizance of this fact, is also connected with these institutions. As a Department of African Languages and Literature, we are properly in the business of explaining and evaluating these; in other words, we translate the concrete into the abstract and vice versa, and this is an important function to assume in a new state. In realizing the form of the Shona novel—the traditional folktale, myths, legends, songs, proverbs, riddles, and generally its past as well as its present background—the Department is well equipped to handle these genres as separate issues of one greater form, the novel. There is a team the selection of which was the responsibility of the first incumbent of the Chair, and Head of the Department of African Languages, George Fortune, to whom I am indebted. He was a man of great scholarship, a man with tremendous vision, which made it possible for him to organize the study of the Shona language with regard to its two functions. Notably, he saw language as the ultimate reality to which there is no outside appeal. Truth and falsehood lie in words, with special reference to the Shona novel. In his honour and in conformity with the foundations that he laid in the Department, we have changed our name to 'Department of African Languages and Literature' to reflect this.

The contemporary Shona novel, from Mutswairo's *Feso* to the latest, say Bvindi's *Kumuzinda Hakuna Woko* or Hodzongi's *Mhosva Inoripwa*, has in a period of twenty-five years travelled on a progressive journey into innovation. It has been on the road to that realism which is part of the historical process, and through which it is making a desperate bid to dissociate itself from traditional assumptions. This style of writing is influenced a great deal by that of twentieth-century English novel writing. Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsyairo* has already achieved this realism when it was followed and carried to its logical conclusion by Mungoshi's *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuya*, Tsodzo's *Pafunge* and Samkange's novel in English, *The Mourned One*. Realism is difficult to define: it is the writer's attitude of mind which enables him to render the material in his story realistically, convincingly and faithfully. The fathers of Shona literature, Mutswairo, Chakaipa and Chidyausiku, have earned themselves a deserved and secure literary immortality. They have expressed their own sense of life with commendable

expertise, completeness and conviction. This was taken up by their successors, adding to the sum total of the contribution of realism to the contemporary Shona novel. With such sure foundations the Shona novel will become a vital part of the new Zimbabwean nation.