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## CHARLES MUNGOSHI'S *WAITING FOR THE RAIN*\*

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THE ZIMBABWEAN WRITER Charles Mungoshi is both a prolific and a versatile writer who has to date attracted little critical attention. In English he has published four works: a novel, *Waiting for the Rain* (1975); two collections of short stories, *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) and *Some Kinds of Wounds* (1980); and a collection of poems, *The Milkman Does not only Deliver Milk* (1981).<sup>1</sup> He has also written two novels and a play in Shona. T.O. McLoughlin in his survey of Black writing in English from Zimbabwe says of Mungoshi that he 'is Zimbabwe's most substantial writer not least because he offers such a penetrating and complex image of the fragmentation of Shona society' brought about by years of colonial domination.<sup>2</sup> The aim of the first part of this paper is to attempt to elucidate that image and Mungoshi's means of evoking it. At the same time, in the light of existing critical commentary it seems important to open up the question of Mungoshi's attitude to, or vision of, his nation's future. This issue is debated in the second section. Ideally, a discussion of these topics should include the works in Shona, possibly placing them at its centre, but this is beyond my linguistic capacity. Instead, while reference is made to some of the short stories, the focus is on Mungoshi's most comprehensive and best-known work in English, his novel *Waiting for the Rain*.<sup>3</sup>

As Mungoshi indicates in *Waiting for the Rain* and in a number of his short stories, cultural cohesion was maintained in the past by the bond between the people and the land on which they have dwelt for generations. This is the essence of what the old father in 'The Setting Sun and the Rolling World' is telling his son Nhamo when he says: 'Nothing is more certain to hold you together than the land and a home, a family.'<sup>4</sup> The land is not merely a source of physical sustenance, for the earth of which it is a manifestation has a central place in Shona cosmology. It is the abode of the ancestral spirits who exercise considerable control over the

\*I wish to express my indebtedness to Rebecca Taisekwa Wadi with whom I initially worked on Mungoshi.

<sup>1</sup> C. Mungoshi, *Waiting for the Rain* (London, Heinemann, 1975; and Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981); *Coming of the Dry Season* (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1972; and Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981); *Some Kinds of Wounds* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1980); *The Milkman Does not only Deliver Milk* (Harare, The Poetry Society of Zimbabwe, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> T.O. McLoughlin, 'Black writing in English from Zimbabwe', in G.D. Killam (ed), *The Writing of East and Central Africa* (London, Heinemann, 1984), 109.

<sup>3</sup> All references to *Waiting for the Rain* are to the Heinemann edition and they appear in the text.

<sup>4</sup> In *Coming of the Dry Season*, 28. All references to this work are to the Zimbabwe Publishing House edition.

destiny of the living, as Mungoshi shows in *Waiting for the Rain* through the divining of the seer Matandangoma concerning the 'wronged ancestor' (pp.138-42). It is also a powerful deity in its own right, the creator of life and the owner of everything that resides on its surface. A vengeful deity, to survive the people, must live in harmony with its laws, for when offended 'the Earth takes back its own' (p. 18). The earth/land thus serves as the force behind cultural continuity.

However, the land on which the people live is becoming less and less productive. The most fertile areas have been allocated to the White settlers and that designated as Tribal Trust Land (now Communal Land) has deteriorated further owing to population pressure and a prolonged drought. The Manyene Tribal Trust Land where *Waiting for the Rain* is set is a barren wasteland where soon only 'charurwi and acacia, the curse of the dry lands' will flourish (p. 162). The drought is as much a cultural and spiritual reality as it is a physical fact. The young, lured by the bright city lights, abandon the land and their families. Cut off from their roots, they waste away in the city like the tormented Moab in 'Coming of the Dry Season'<sup>5</sup> or like Magufu in 'The Brother' whose only solace is sex and drink.<sup>6</sup> Those who have been sent to school have been alienated from the ways of their people. Nhamo's unuttered response to his father is that home is a 'rubbish heap' where people 'scrape for a living',<sup>7</sup> a sentiment echoed by Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain* for whom home is just 'a heap of dust and rubble' (p. 52), 'the failure's junk heap' (p. 162). On the land itself the very roots of the society are withering. The traditional economy based on cattle has been ruined by the imposition of a cash economy. While more and more cows are sold to pay school fees, unemployed school-leavers steal 'their parents' hard-earned money to spend it on whoring and boozing' in the townships (p. 62). Even the chiefs, now in the pay of the White man, have abandoned their role as custodians of traditional values. In *Waiting for the Rain* we are told that 'now, there is hardly any rainmaker left, and what's more, the in-time-of-need one or two left have tainted their hands with the foreign disease' (p. 168). The absence of rain-makers is not an instance of heavy-handed symbolism. Rather it is an omen and one of a number of cumulative indications of cultural attrition.

In his fiction, Mungoshi's most characteristic method of portraying the fragmentation of Shona society is to dramatize the tensions among members of a family, probing the psychological wounds that have been inflicted by the cultural breakdown. In *Waiting for the Rain*, he focuses on the Mandengu family, three generations of which live on the Manyene Tribal Trust Land. Using this family to serve as an image of the Shona nation, a microcosm of the macrocosm, he depicts through it the rending of a once cohesive social system.

<sup>5</sup> In *Coming of the Dry Season*.

<sup>6</sup> In *Some Kinds of Wounds*.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Setting Sun and the Rolling World', in *Coming of the Dry Season*, 29.

The older generation is represented by the Old Man, his wife Japi, and Old Mandisa, the grandparents of the younger generation. Through the thoughts and practices of two of these characters, the Old Man and Old Mandisa, Mungoshi effects a partial reconstruction of Shona culture as it existed prior to the European incursion, thus establishing a standard against which the behaviour of the other characters can be viewed. Through Japi he demonstrates the pervasive influence of Western culture. She who should be an embodiment of her cultural heritage has developed a mania for an imported product. Hooked on sugar, she lives for nothing else, even going to the extent of jealously guarding her stock in this once communally-centred society against her grandchildren.

The most significant of these three characters is the Old Man as it is his philosophy which pervades the novel. A maker of drums by trade, his occupation is a physical extension of his philosophy: play your own drum. What he means by this is most fully articulated in the passage in which he describes the Chimurenga War fought in 1896, the first war of liberation against the White man, in which he took part. Speaking to one of his grandsons, Garabha, he explains why he is cynical about the outcome of the present struggle against imperialism in which another of his grandsons, John, is involved:

'Now we — we were defeated but ours was a clean fight. We still had our own gods of whom we were proud. And because these gods meant the same thing to all of us, we rose like one man to fight the white man. And we didn't fight them just for the sake of fighting — no. They misunderstood our hospitality for stupidity. We received them with food and they thanked us with guns...

'Today we ask: Where are we? Who are we? What wrong did we do? How many stories do we hear of the white man humiliating our people? Again and again and again. We hear it, but do we see it? We might be blind. We hear it, but do we listen? We might be deaf. And why? Playing the enemy's drum, that's why. Making so much noise with the enemy's drum that we can't even hear the beating of our own gullible little miserable hearts. Each time you drink that tea, to whose god do you give praise? Each time you listen to that talking box, on whose altar are you making the sacrifices?...

'These are the questions John and his friends should ask themselves before they come to me. This is what they don't know, and because they don't know it they are going to lose the battle before it's even started. They fight for what they don't know. We fought for what we knew. We cut off their genitals and threw them into Munyati River because they shouldn't have been called men with that woman's greed of theirs. We said: build there, the land is the Earth's, there is enough for everyone. But their greed reduced them to something less than men. We couldn't understand this desire of theirs to call everything mine mine mine...

'That is why I won't listen to anyone who speaks the way John does, fighting the white men and yet praying to the white men's gods' (pp. 115-16).

In the Old Man's view, liberation is not to be equated with the mere recovery of the land. As he and his generation believed, the battle is less a political and more an ideological one over the values invested in the land by the opposing forces: the competitive acquisitiveness of Western capitalism and Shona communalism. While the present war may be won by John's generation, the battle will be lost if it is fought to the beat of the 'enemy's drum'. To retain, in the face of the colonial onslaught, their humanity and their individual and collective integrity, John and his friends must listen to the 'beating of [their] own gullible little miserable hearts'. Otherwise, like Kwari, who in the Old Man's story chose to be 'the white men's dog', they will be destroyed (pp. 116-17).

The middle generation is represented by the Old Man and Japi's two sons, Tongoona and Kuruku, and their wives, Raina and Rhoda. All of the members of this group are afflicted with a deep-seated neurosis that manifests itself in psychological aberrations and physical ailments. Allured by the new ways, they are nonetheless bound to the old and their attempts to reconcile the two are merely destructive. Tongoona is the most fully drawn of these characters. He has nearly exhausted the family resources to educate his second son, Lucifer, who is preparing for further studies abroad under the patronage of a White man. And although Lucifer rarely visits home and has difficulty communicating with the members of his family, because he has an education, Tongoona pins all his hopes for the salvation of the family on him, even going to the extent of breaking with tradition and choosing Lucifer over his first son, Garabha, to head the family when he, Tongoona, dies. At the same time, he relies on traditional means to deal with immediate problems, calling in the diviner, Matandangoma, to advise the family on such matters as Lucifer's safety during his sojourn, the failure of his eldest daughter, Betty, to marry, and the illnesses plaguing both him and his wife. Psychically split, Tongoona provides an image of the shattered Shona sensibility. In his disorientation, he is even unable to see, despite the Old Man's remonstrations, that by entrusting the welfare of the family to Lucifer, who is already alienated from the familial scene, he is sealing its doom.

In several of his works, through his depiction of the relationship between husband and wife, Mungoshi considers another type of psychological damage this middle generation has sustained. The morning of the first of the three days that *Waiting for the Rain* spans begins with a quarrel between Tongoona and Raina:

It is a thirty-year-old game that ushers in each morning of every single day of their married life and it is as familiar to them as the other's face and as old as their first-born, Garabha. And it's a game he

has always been losing to her since the birth of their fourth child just because she had succeeded in accusing and crying him out of his idea of a second wife after the death of their third child. AND it is all because of her way of talking. Her voice. Even when she doesn't talk, her calculated silence preaches volumes. Sometimes he feels like wringing her neck for her and when she offers the neck for him to wring he feels like today: weak, helpless, at her mercy — and that makes him disgustingly brutal. But these days the brutality is only a sham, something that only hurts him, if it hurts anyone. And she knows it and that's why she says what she says now — just to crush him:

'Maybe a second wife would have been a better idea' (pp. 8–9).

The picture that emerges is that of a domineering woman emasculating her man. This becomes something of a pattern in Mungoshi's fiction, reappearing in four of the stories in *Some Kinds of Wounds*, 'Who will Stop the Dark', 'The Victim', 'The Flood', and 'The Day the Bread Van Didn't Come', in the first acquiring archetypal status. In that story, the husband is paralysed from the waist down and although the official reason given for his condition is that he broke his back when he fell from a roof he was mending, there are hints that his wife is in some way responsible. Although in *Waiting for the Rain* Mungoshi makes clear that in his view traditional Shona male chauvinism is in itself a societal weakness, he also indicates that the emergence of this particularly destructive kind of male–female relationship is not the result of a feminist challenge, but instead finds its source in the disruptive effect of colonial domination on established gender roles. This is brought to the surface in a rather pathetic exchange between Tongoona and Lucifer:

'Your European friend,' Tongoona says, scratching his head: 'did you tell him that your father is a very poor man?'

Lucifer looks up: 'Why would I want to tell him that?'

'Well, I thought you might have been as indiscrete [*sic*] as to tell him that.' Pause, as if looking for words, then: 'Anyway, I am not saying that he shouldn't have done what he did — but — I could have sent you overseas myself if you had told me you wanted to go overseas. I mean, although I may not be able to clothe the whole family, I can, at least, send you to school' (p. 73).

Significantly, Lucifer's benefactor is the priest and thus addressed by Lucifer as 'Father'. That the women are shrill termagants is merely symptomatic of the situation, a sign of their anxiety over their men's diffident vacillation. The men have been rendered impotent by the usurpation of their masculine role in society by the colonial 'masters'.

The younger generation is represented by Tongoona's children, Garabha, Lucifer and Betty, and by Kuruku's son, John. As members of the emergent generation, it is on this age-group that the nation must pin its hope, but, as Mungoshi shows, the lacerations inflicted by colonialism are deeper and the ruptures wider. John, who like Lucifer has received a Western education, presents himself as being in the vanguard of the current liberation movement. As a revolutionary figure, he is living evidence of the validity of his grandfather's prognosis. He has so completely assimilated the capitalist ethic of individualistic acquisitiveness — the desire to 'call everything mine mine mine' — that he has betrayed his elder brother to the police so that he can possess his house and wife.

Through his portrayal of Betty, Mungoshi focuses his concern on the plight of the women of this generation, a theme which he also explores in several of his short stories. In the city they are victimized by men who unleash their pent-up frustrations on them. This is the case with Chipo in 'Coming of the Dry Season', Sheila in 'The Brother', and the nameless young woman in 'Some Kinds of Wounds'.<sup>8</sup> All three are degraded and brutalized by men who use them to satisfy their lust and then discard them. In the countryside they are the victims of traditional beliefs. In *Waiting for the Rain* the brunt of a curse on the Mandengu family falls on Betty. In order to atone for the death of a member of another family murdered by one of the Mandengu ancestors generations ago, either Betty must leave her home, never to return, and wander the countryside in an unaided search for the surviving members of this family to one of whom she is to offer herself as wife, or a young female virgin of another family must be abducted by the Mandengus and sacrificially murdered. Until one of these two courses of action is undertaken, Betty is, according to tradition, doomed to spinsterhood and barrenness. As no man will, in the circumstances, marry her, she is unable to achieve through the roles of wife and mother the only acceptable forms of self-definition that her society affords to women. As it is, she remains at home, the drudge of the family and the butt of jokes.

Betty does, however, in defiance of all traditions, take matters into her own hands. She has a secret affair with a married man in the neighbourhood and she does become pregnant. This is the only event in her life that has any meaning for her:

She is quite aware that her chances of coming out of it alive are — as Matandangoma said — bleak, but a rope round her neck wouldn't have been wiser either. It's all the same. At least, when she dies there will be that satisfaction (touching her belly). She *is* a woman. And isn't that the only difference between dead and alive? She *is* a mother. And isn't that what she was made for? The village is there with its

<sup>8</sup> In *Some Kinds of Wounds*.

black laugh, blacker than death. Her parents are there with their heavy name, heavier than death. Let the two fight for right and wrong. She is beyond that. Something is going to live, or already lives in here — again feeling her belly — and there is no question of *that* being right or wrong. It just lives (p. 38).

Near the end of the novel, Matandangoma declares the child dead in her womb, a pronouncement that Betty accepts. Whatever the case, her life is severely circumscribed. If she runs away to town, a possibility she considers, there is nothing to suggest that her experience will be any different from that of other young women like Chipso and Sheila. If she remains at home she will continue to be the family's handmaiden and tradition's scapegoat. Thus Mungoshi, in consonance with a number of his male colleagues, including Nuruddin Farah, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Sembène Ousmane, joins African women writers in raising his voice in protest against the oppression of women. As Mungoshi shows, although the fate of the men of this generation may be uncertain, the young women clearly have no future at all.

In his presentation of the two brothers Lucifer and Garabha, Mungoshi employs the device of psychological doubles as a means of revealing the extreme polarities of contemporary Shona cultural division and of providing an image of the psychic split, the schizophrenia produced by the conflicting demands of two incompatible and antagonistic cultural formations.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, Lucifer's and Garabha's chosen modes of being are diametrically opposed, the vastness of the distance between them being marked by their complete inability to communicate with one another. On the other, each represents what his opposite's feelings of inadequacy require him to become in order to quell his inner anxieties, to dispel his dis-ease over what he has repudiated. Each is a distorted mirror image of the other, and although their paths diverge, there are points of intersection.

Lucifer's education has so estranged him from his cultural heritage that he is contemptuous of its values and indifferent toward those whom he sees as its relics. In an expression of the Western-style individualism he has imbibed, he declares, most appropriately in soliloquy form, his disaffiliation from home and family:

I am Lucifer Mandengu. I was born here against my will. I should have been born elsewhere — of some other parents. I have never liked it here, and I never shall and if ever I leave this place, I am not going to come back. It is the failure's junk heap. Those who go to the towns only come back here to die. Home is where you come back to

<sup>9</sup> In *The Mourned One* (London, Heinemann, 1975), Stanlake Samkange exploits this same device of psychological doubles in his presentation of the twin brothers, Ndatshana and Zana. This is not an instance of literary influence as *Waiting for the Rain* and *The Mourned One* were both published in the same year. Pursuing the similarity could be a fruitful area for further research.



die, having lived all your life elsewhere. Home is a cluster of termite-eaten huts clinging on the stony slope of a sun-baked hill. What is here that's worth loving? What is here — in this scrub, in this arid flatness, in this sun-bleached dust to love? You go for mile after mile in this swelter and not here, not there, not anywhere is there a tree big enough to sit under. And when you look everywhere all you see is the naked white earth criss-crossed by the eternal shadow of the restless vulture. I have been born here but is that a crime? That is only a biological and geographical error (p. 162).

Garabha, on the other hand, is in many ways an embodiment of the values of the older generation. A renegade from school, he finds Western ways antithetical to his very nature, a response epitomized by his allergic reaction to tea. His concern for the disintegrating home and family is so deep and vital that despite rebuffs he makes fumbling attempts to express his affection for his scornful brother.

While Lucifer and Garabha are both artists, each represents a different position in the debate over the appropriate relationship for an artist to maintain with society. Lucifer is a creator of poems and drawings and it is to continue his study of drawing that he is soon to go abroad. He approaches his craft from the point of view of the European aesthetic of the alienated artist who erects a rigid barrier between himself and his society for which he expresses unqualified contempt. Thus, during his brief sojourn at home prior to his departure, Lucifer shuts himself in his room where he gives vent to his personal feelings by producing a poem and a sketch in which he depicts his home as a place of death. Garabha is a musician, a composer and singer of Shona music and a master of the drum. He is thus a literal realization of the Old Man's philosophy: play your own drum. The aesthetic underlying his art is the traditional African one of the artist as an integral part of his society, reflecting in his art the total life of the community and creating communal experiences. Like Lucifer, Garabha is able through his art to produce for himself a satisfying private world of meaning:

In the middle of playing the drum he suddenly notices the frayed ends of some old man's trousers flapping away helplessly on their own as the old man, who is really oblivious to the fact that he is wearing any trousers at all, dances. Then, looking at the old man, he sees a rapturous face, the rolling ecstatic eyes, the thick foam round the mouth, the thin thready veins holding down a ready-to-snap head to a violent storm of his body.... The tattered trousers tell a sad story that's the everyday life of the old man, but the heavenward-looking eyes say 'No!' (p. 85).

But his art is also a function of his community, in isolation from which it would cease to exist. Called to play at Lucifer's farewell party, Garabha, together with the other members of the community, recreates the story of the Great Ancestor

Samambwa, the Founder of the Tribe, at the conclusion of which, with the exception of Lucifer who finds the music monotonous, all shake 'their heads in disbelief at this wonderful thing they have all shared in' (p. 130).

Nonetheless, even Garabha finds it necessary to seek his destiny away from home. When, after an extended absence, these two young men approach the place of their birth, Garabha on foot from the hinterlands and Lucifer by bus from Salisbury, both are uneasy and reluctant to arrive. Each is aware of the impossible demands that will be made on him by their confused and captious parents. Ironically, the communally-minded Garabha is put under pressure to find a job in the city, while the acculturated Lucifer is required to fill the traditional role of head of the family. As a result, both suffer from a type of reactionary neurosis. Garabha feels that he is waiting for something and, not really knowing what it is, he dissipates much of his energy on 'drink and women' which leave him 'tired and strangely lonely and sad' (p. 85). Seeing himself as worthless and weak, he believes that his father had no option but to choose Lucifer as his successor. Lucifer guiltily remembers his childhood vow to help his parents who have made such sacrifices for the sake of his education once he is able; and he is troubled by nightmares in which the ancestors take him to task for his failure to accept his family responsibilities. Still when Lucifer effects his escape from the 'failure's junk heap', he sees the break as final. Just prior to his departure for Salisbury with the priest, in a symbolic gesture he smashes the bottles containing the protective medicine the family has had prepared to safeguard him on his journey. And he callously refuses to take the peanut butter the ailing Old Mandisa has so lovingly made for him. Garabha, on the other hand, having bid farewell only to the Old Man, returns to the isolated bushland settlements.

What, then, for Mungoshi is the way forward? This is an important question, for although *Waiting for the Rain* was written well before Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Mungoshi's vision is less strictly political than it is social and thus it remains highly relevant today. In their discussions of *Waiting for the Rain*, the critics M.B. Zimunya, Norman C. Jones and T.O. McLoughlin conclude that Mungoshi offers no resolution to the conflict he presents, and they all imply an inherent pessimism.<sup>10</sup> As I hope to show, this estimation ignores the finer elements of text. Particular attention is paid to Zimunya's views as his study of the novel is the most extensive and detailed to date.

A consideration of Mungoshi's mode of narration provides some insight into his purpose in this novel. Despite the symbolic implications in terms of the fate of the communal ethos of Tongoona's misplaced faith in Lucifer, *Waiting for the*

<sup>10</sup> M.B. Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1982), 81, 92-3; N.C. Jones, 'Acculturation and character portrayal in Southern African novels', *African Literature Today* (1983), XIII, 193; McLoughlin, 'Black writing in English from Zimbabwe', 109.

*Rain* is not necessarily a pessimistic work. As the excerpts quoted from the text indicate, the narrative is carried forward by the simple present form of the verb rather than the simple past which is the norm in fiction. Both Zimunya and Jones make reference to this, but they view it as only a stylistic device which provides 'zest and emotional vitality'<sup>11</sup> or 'immediacy and urgency'<sup>12</sup> to the prose. Mungoshi's chosen narrative approach is, in addition, an integral part of the novel's meaning. Through it he creates the impression that the action is moving continuously into the future rather than being hermetically sealed in the past. Thus Mungoshi indicates that what he is articulating is not a statement of certainty but a warning. The scenario of the future in which Lucifer features prominently is not the only possible one.

Zimunya casts Garabha in the following light:

Garabha is a sadder and more tragic figure than Lucifer. His ignorant self-enclosure drastically undermines his role. For, if the total disintegration of the society is to be avoided, the virile technological world must be conquered first. Because they have succumbed to reactionary spiritual fatalism, the Old Man and Garabha have surrendered their destiny to more powerful elements. Their unreserved rejection of the alien culture is as dignified and correct as it is primitive and uncontributing. This brave new world has taken many a sacrifice of lost savages.

Garabha is the most unfortunate victim of this 'drum-ignorance'. Like his grandfather, he is an anachronism. But, unlike him, he does not share the consolation of having lived in the pre-colonial Zimbabwe Eden....trapped in his ignorance and superstition, he is one who waits outside human intimacy, a primitive version of *l'étranger*, sad, lonely and anxious.<sup>13</sup>

The biased terminology in this passage is inappropriate, for it makes no contact with the text. For instance, as Mungoshi makes quite evident through his juxtaposition of the performance of Christian and Shona rites for travellers (pp. 175-6), in his view 'superstition' is as much a part of Christianity's attempt to pierce beyond physical nature as it is of Shona thought and practice. Similarly, there is nothing in *Waiting for the Rain* to suggest that Mungoshi adheres to either the capitalist or Marxist view of a 'virile' technology. The Mandengus are not presented as labour-worn peasants in need of a tractor. Rather, what they require in economic terms is access to more fertile land, such as the White-occupied Hampshire Estates which border the Manyene Tribal Trust Land. And their psychological distress is in part due to the introduction of Western technology, or, more precisely, to the system of values invested in it. Nor is this 'drum-ignorance' as ignorant as Zimunya supposes. The Old Man may not understand how a radio works, but he immediately grasps the implications it presents for human patterns

<sup>11</sup> Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger*, 92.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, 'Acculturation and character portrayal...', 187.

<sup>13</sup> Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger*, 70-1.

of communication. Through the questions he asks he points to the depersonalizing and alienating effects of modern modes of communication and to the radio's potential as an instrument of propaganda. Whether or not one accepts technological innovations, these are the kinds of questions that should be raised. Ignorance could be said to be rather widespread in the world of this novel, whether it be the so-called 'drum-ignorance' of the Old Man and Garabha, or, to use the Old Man's phrase for Western gadgetry, the 'cracked little tin toys' ignorance of Lucifer and John (p. 1).

At the same time, in his reconstruction of a traditional African past, Mungoshi does not, as Zimunya seems to claim, depict a 'pre-colonial Zimbabwe Eden'. He is not concerned with sentimental idealization, but rather, like Achebe, points to weaknesses as well as strengths. On the one hand, the Old Man and Old Mandisa have a wisdom and dignity which is denied the other characters, and they possess a resilience, a tremendous inner strength, which springs from their awareness of who they are and where they come from. The communal nature of traditional life is also contrasted favourably with Western individualism. The acquisitiveness that Western capitalism inspires is demonstrated through the portrayal of John, and Lucifer's desire for privacy comes across as selfish egotism. In addition, Mungoshi evokes the social customs of the Shona people in such extraordinarily graphic detail that the warmth of the communal life they share is impressed on the reader.

On the other hand, change is not only inevitable, as even the Old Man admits; it is also in Mungoshi's view in some ways desirable. As has already been indicated, Mungoshi presents the treatment of Betty as an instance of community-sanctioned victimization of women. And the fears and suspicions that he portrays as being part of traditional life clearly hold no attraction for him. It is this aspect of traditional life that Mungoshi seems to be pointing to when in his poem 'Poet' he refers to the past as 'a roaring lion in the underbrush'.<sup>14</sup> In *Waiting for the Rain* the distrust the two older generations of Mandengus have of everyone outside the immediate family amounts to paranoia and it creates a stifling and claustrophobic atmosphere. Fearing that their neighbours are jealous and therefore wish them ill, they avoid contact with them. They are afraid to hold a farewell party for Lucifer in case a guest tries to poison him. They won't even allow Lucifer to eat the food his Aunt Rhoda has prepared for him in case she has put poison in it. Significantly even Garabha is appalled by the meanness of spirit.

Garabha is thus not as 'reactionary' as Zimunya contends. And while it is true that he is often 'sad, lonely and anxious', he is surely much less *l'étranger* than Lucifer. A strong bond of affection connects Garabha with his sister Betty and

<sup>14</sup> In *The Milkman Does not only Deliver Milk*, 12.

with the Old Man and Old Mandisa, and through his music he relates to the entire community. Lucifer is alienated from everybody and everything. His cynicism extends not only to his Shona roots but also to his adopted culture. He rejects the Christian viewpoint of his benefactor and he has no faith in his work nor any commitment to his proposed vocation. While he 'wants so much to be able to get inside some things, to be able to whole-heartedly believe in his own people, in life, in his drawing --- in everything', he is also 'proud of being an outsider, standing outside everything, looking on, passing judgement' (p. 72). It is Lucifer and not Garabha who is the 'sadder and more tragic figure' in this novel. Mungoshi's choice of the name 'Lucifer' for his character was not an arbitrary one. Lucifer is a lost soul — in terms of his grandfather's metaphor, a man with no drum to play.<sup>15</sup> As he moves off in the car with the priest, he 'leans back and tries to look at his country through the eye of an impartial tourist' (p. 180, emphasis added). This is the novel's last sentence and as such it has been given special prominence. What Mungoshi is saying is that the outer landscape is an integral, even though an unwanted, part of Lucifer's inner being. And until he stops trying 'to completely dig up and cut the roots that plant him in the earth of this dark arid country' (p. 52), he will remain in psychological limbo. Garabha, on the other hand, goes off into his future singing a song that is not 'any of the old war chants' but one he 'has made up himself...with the unerring ear of the old musicians' (p. 165).

However, the strongest evidence that for Mungoshi the way forward lies in Garabha's adaptive creativity is to be found in what Zimunya calls the 'mythic structure' of the novel.<sup>16</sup> Zimunya is the only one of the three critics to draw attention to the central place of myth in this work. As he says: 'The myth of the Fugitive, or the Traveller, or the Wanderer, or the Hunter manifests itself over and over again variously in the Old Man, Garabha, Makiwa and Lucifer.'<sup>17</sup> But he fails to recognize that Mungoshi has presented two different archetypes of the Traveller and thus he concludes: 'By this generous metaphysical gesture, at a stroke, Mungoshi permits Lucifer into the elite of legend-makers, thus acquitting him.'<sup>18</sup> One of the archetypes is presented during Matandangoma's late-night visitation to Lucifer. She relates to him the folktale of the hunter, Magaba, who was so 'bewitched' by 'the voice of a strange bird' that he left his home and followed it over mountains, across rivers, and through forests until he reached the Great Plain. There, too exhausted to travel farther, he died, having realized just before vultures picked out his eyes that 'the plain was covered with human skulls

<sup>15</sup> It is also highly unlikely that Mungoshi's choice of the Shona name 'Garabha' was arbitrary. However, I have not been able to discover its meaning.

<sup>16</sup> Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger*, 85.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-9.

and bones' (pp. 155–6). The other is the legend of Samambwa, the Founder of the Tribe, which Garabha relates through his music. He, too, was a hunter and a traveller who died far away from the place of his birth. But he left his home because he had 'lost' all his people 'in a battle with some other tribes in the north'. After having wandered in solitude for many years, he was induced to settle with a group of people who, in recognition of his prowess, gave him a number of wives. Through them he founded the Mandengu clan. Then, having lived to a ripe old age and feeling himself growing feeble, he took his own life (pp. 126–9).

Zimunya outlines the similarities between these two stories,<sup>19</sup> but it is the differences that are crucial to an understanding of the thrust of the novel. Magaba's story clearly follows the classic tragic pattern of the alienation of the individual from society and a lonely and premature death occasioned by personal folly. His journey is a journey into death. It is this pattern that is played out in the life of Makiwa, the 'wronged ancestor', another wanderer and traveller, as Zimunya says. The eldest son of the Old Man and Japi, Makiwa 'ran away from home to the white men's town when he was still young' where he was run over and killed by the White man he worked for (pp. 138–40). On the other hand, Samambwa's story traces the comic pattern of a journey from undeserved isolation into community. Through marriage, the traditional comic symbol of regeneration and concord, Samambwa not only acquires immortality for himself, but he also revitalizes his own almost extinct family line and establishes another.

Mungoshi links Lucifer with Magaba and Garabha with Samambwa in a number of ways. There are, most obviously, the circumstances in which each story is told. On the level of metaphor the correlations are quite evident too. Lucifer has, indeed, been 'bewitched' by 'the voice of a strange bird' which leads him away from his home into exile. Garabha, on the other hand, becomes a wanderer because he has 'lost' his parents 'in a battle with some other tribes'. It is, however, through Shona ancestor myths that Mungoshi overtly identifies Lucifer and Garabha with their prototypes. Matandangoma declares that the 'wronged ancestor', Makiwa, will only be satisfied when his remains have been brought home and Lucifer has been given his name (pp. 138–40). Garabha, too, she proclaims, must be given another name. He is Samambwa reborn and a ceremony should be held to 'give the boy his ancestor's name' (p. 130).

Lucifer and Garabha have just begun their journeys when *Waiting for the Rain* comes to an end. However, the travellers' paradigms have been laid down. What the substance of the text supports is the fulfilment of Matandangoma's prophesy that 'it is only to more darkness that [Lucifer] goes' (p. 140) and of the Old Man's that Garabha 'will find what he is looking for' (p. 165). Lucifer's way is

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 87–8.

the way of cultural suicide. His path leads to the plain of 'skulls and bones'. Like Samambwa, Garabha may have to wander in lonely solitude for a long time, but his way leads to wholeness and regeneration, to the revitalization 'of the Tribe'. What Mungoshi asks of his people is that they shut their ears, at least for the moment, to 'the voice of the strange bird' — the 'cracked little tin toys' of the West — and listen instead to the rhythms of their own land, to the new songs Garabha is creating 'with the unerring ear of the old musicians'.