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sections are 'Go Down, Moses, Way Down in Egypt's Land, 1619-1808' edited by Sondra O'Neale; 'Tell Ole Pharoah, Let my people go, 1808-1865' edited by Patricia Liggins Hill; 'No More Shall They in Bondage Toil 1865-1915' edited by Trudier Harris; 'Bound No 'th Blues, 1915-1945' edited by Baxter Miller and Liggins Hill; 'Win the War Blues, 1945-1960' edited by Hill, Bernard Bell and Horace Porter; and 'Cross Road Blues, 1960 to the Present' edited by William J. Harris.

Presenting over 500 selections from the works of over 150 writers with broad introductions, author headnotes and selected bibliographies, containing over thirty short stories and nine full-length works ranging from Douglass's slave narrative to Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and Earnest Gaine's 'Three Men', the anthology negotiates the history, sociology and gender discourse of African American literary tradition. In its revisionist course, the anthology situates itself, more than the *NA*, as a gender-conscious text by representing the works of over seventy women 'many of whom have been critically misunderstood or summarily dismissed from existing anthologies' (xxxv). Anna Deavere Smith and Kamaria Muntu are introduced here as two notable and emergent black female authors. Also, there is a prominent addition of gay consciousness to black writing, after such earlier efforts of Samuel Delany, George Wolfe, Billi Gordon and others, in the essay of Charles Nero - 'Toward a Black Gay Aesthetic' and in the works (poetry and fiction) of Essex Hemphill (earlier noted in the *NA*).

As part of its strategy of presentation, the *RA* imbeds in each of its six sections a series of critical debates, as generated by leading intellectual figures of African American literature, which represent the consciousness of each of the literary periods. For instance, the editors of parts Four and Five of the Anthology draw on the literary crossroad of the theory of black art, during the Harlem Renaissance and later in the 60s, as generated between Alain Locke and W.E.B. DuBois and between Hugh M. Gloster and Nick Aaron Ford. Part Six contains the more recent debate on the nature of black art between Joyce Ann Joyce, the black aesthetician, and Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Houston Baker Jr., the proponents of black post-structuralism.

Apart from the practical attempt of the editors of *RA* to initiate a concrete re-tracing of memory through art, a reaching or journeying back to *primordial* creativity of the African person of imagination in America, both

anthologies have as supplements respective audio compact discs which afford the 'reader' the lisible possibility of *de lire et de comprendre*, the dual advantage of reading and listening to the text. Thus, that opportunity given the reader/critic to encounter the text both as written and as oral basically establishes the verbal tonations and the rhetorical backgrounds of the African American literary work; the essence, the phonocentric actuality of the written work becomes performed rather than imagined.

The audio CD to *NA*, edited by Robert G. O'Meally (containing twenty-one tracks) and the CD to *RA*, produced by Robert H. Cataliotti (containing twenty-six tracks) are a pragmatic journeying into history through sounds whereby the cadences of black experience are recorded by testamental voices of African American legends, musicians, singers, orators, poets and preachers. Notable in both CDs are texts like 'Go Down, Moses', 'John Henry', 'Blackwater Blues' and the original 'I Have a Dream' by Martin Luther King Jr. Other platinum acts of performance include 'Steal Away to Jesus', 'Take My Hand Precious Lord', 'You May Go But This Will Bring You Back' and Malcolm X's 'The Ballot or the Bullet' (all from the *NA* CD); 'Sunyetta', 'Bars Fight', 'The Meaning of July 4 for the Negro', 'If We Must Die', 'For My People', 'Nikki-Rosa' and 'Dope' (all from the *RA* CD).

Finally, I should add that these anthologies have done more persuasively for African American literature what *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature I & II* and the *Concise Anthology of American Literature* have established for the general and specific reception of their respective literary traditions in this century.

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## Walking Still

M.Z. Malaba

Charles Mungoshi, *WALKING STILL*, Baobab Books, Harare, 1997, 167pp.

CHARLES Mungoshi is Zimbabwe's leading writer and his latest book *Walking Still* is a powerful collection of short stories. Mungoshi's earlier works, *Coming of the Dry Season* and *Some Kind of Wounds*, demonstrated his masterly command of the short story and his deep insight into the psychological profiles of his characters. These qualities have, once again, been amply demonstrated in *Walking Still*.

Mungoshi is a keen observer and this latest work foregrounds the socio-economic devel-

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opments that have occurred in Zimbabwe since independence. One of the finest stories is the first, entitled *'The Hare'* which deals very movingly with the disintegration of Nhongo's world, after he has been retrenched and his wife assumes the role of the breadwinner. A traditionalist at heart, Nhongo was relieved when his wife stopped looking for a job, after her secretarial studies, because she couldn't stand the managers who 'look at my breasts all the time they are interviewing me.' Sara had been a very promising pupil at secondary school, before she fell pregnant and had to leave. A dutiful housewife, she comes into her own when she starts selling second-hand clothes at the market, her business thrives and her network of friends grows. Nhongo feels that she is slipping away from him, he cannot come to terms with the fact that she is not only no longer dependent on him, but he depends on her, albeit that she still seeks his permission, before buying her mother clothes. Notwithstanding the fact that he feels her behaviour is 'innocent', Nhongo suspects that Sara is having affairs during her shopping trips to South Africa, because his friends (and, by extension, many Zimbabwean men) refuse to believe that women can have Platonic relationships with other men. Mungoshi skilfully dramatises Nhongo's paranoia and the manner in which his immaturity leads to the disintegration of his family, as he ends up having an affair with the maid, in a pathetic attempt to assert his ego. The tragic impact of this on the children is brought out in the older girl's moving defence of her absent mother. The story arose from the negative media coverage of the behaviour of some women who went to Botswana and South Africa on shopping trips.

The role of women in Zimbabwean society is a major theme in Mungoshi's writing. He shows great sensitivity towards women who strive to create space for themselves despite the constraints of traditional beliefs and expectations. In the excellent story, *'Sacrifice'*, the traditional Shona custom of handing over a virgin to atone for the murder of an innocent victim is explored. Mungoshi also raised this subject in his highly acclaimed novel, *Waiting for the Rain*, which was published in 1975. The female characters in his works are often far more admirable than the males, who are either weak, unprincipled or pathetic, as seen in the stories *'Of Lovers and Wives'*, *'The Little Wooden Hut in the Forest'* and *'The Singer at the Wedding.'*

In *'The Empty House'*, Mungoshi satirises the ambivalent attitude towards art and artists in Zimbabwe. Gwizo Maneto's bohemian lifestyle drives his father to despair. The latter revises his opinion of the son after Gwizo's

American wife, Agatha, successfully promotes her husband's work locally and internationally. Snobbish people then rush to buy Gwizo's paintings because of his new social status, rather than out of a genuine appreciation of his work. This story raises the issue of race relations in Zimbabwe, as does *'The Slave Trade.'* In *'The Empty House'*, mixed marriages are regarded sceptically by many blacks, either because of racial prejudice, or on the grounds of cultural differences. *'The Slave Trade'* satirises the hypocrisy of some 'third world groupies' who profess liberal values, but still patronise blacks. But, like Achebe, Mungoshi does not naively portray all blacks as innocent - the protagonist, Marara, is a simpleton who is so caught up in himself that he fails to read the mood of both his wife and his hosts at the dinner party, as he downs glass after glass of Scotch. Mungoshi stresses the fact that, for any relationship to succeed, a spirit of give and take must be fostered by both parties. It is significant that in the two stories dealing with race relations, the interaction is between black Zimbabweans and foreigners, rather than between black and white Zimbabweans. This begs the question of how successful the post-independence policy of reconciliation has been.

*Walking Still* demonstrates that Mungoshi has not lost his skill, after a lengthy break from writing fiction - he has devoted much time, in recent years, to writing and acting in plays. One of his greatest strengths is psychological realism: his ability to enter into the minds of his characters, irrespective of age or gender. The story *'Did You have to Go that Far?'* illustrates his sure grasp of child psychology and his command of the child's eye narrative viewpoint. Nevertheless, I believe that this story is too long - it could have been trimmed from 38 pages without jeopardising either the development of the plot or the characterisation.

*Walking Still* confirms Charles Mungoshi's position as Zimbabwe's most accomplished writer. His craftsmanship, his deft use of understatement, his profound understanding of people, the broad range of his sympathy, his tremendous sense of humour and his detailed knowledge of his society have established him as one of the most distinguished writers in the world, today.

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