

**THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHONA  
DETECTIVE STORY AS A FICTIONAL GENRE IN  
ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE**

**by**

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for the degree of**

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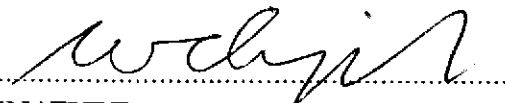
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I declare that THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHONA DETECTIVE STORY AS A FICTIONAL GENRE IN ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

  
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## SUMMARY

This study traces the development of the Shona detective story as a genre different from the mainstream Shona novel. The Shona detective story emerges from the non-detective traditional folktale and develops into three types, namely, the rudimentary form, the pure 'whodunit', and the detective-thriller.

An attempt is made to show that when the Shona detective story first appeared it was quite elementary and showed signs of the influence of Shona traditional folklore. But later on authors developed the detective narrative into pure 'whodunits' and detective-thrillers which showed influence of Western films and English detective stories.

The study ends with the argument that although at its highest level of development the Shona detective story manifests characteristics that make it a unique genre different from other Shona novels its treatment of female characters is not very different from their treatment in the mainstream Shona novel.

### **Title of dissertation:**

THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHONA DETECTIVE STORY AS A  
FICTIONAL GENRE IN ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE

### **Key terms:**

Emergence of Shona detective story; development of Shona detective fiction; characteristics of Shona detective narrative; detective-thriller; pure Shona 'whodunit'; detective-hero; portrayal of female characters; crime and detection; Shona detective genre; murder; crime story; Zimbabwean literature

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Brief history of the detective story in Shona

The modern written and published literature in the Shona language is a very recent phenomenon. To be precise, the first written Shona narrative was *Feso* [Name of main character] written by Solomon Mutswairo and published in 1956. From that moment onwards there was both quantitative and qualitative growth in Shona literature with the appearance of a number of Old World romances that focused on the Shona past and New World novels that focused on the modern world.

An aspect of this phenomenal growth was the appearance of a new type of New World novel in Shona called a 'detective story'. The detective story may be defined as a work of fiction about a puzzling crime. In order to solve such a puzzle a detective is involved. His job is to investigate the circumstances of the crime by way of studying clues which are largely physical until he unveils the criminal. In the words of Routley (1972:19):

... a detective story, properly so-called, is a story involving a crime, a police force, a detective (who may or may not be, a member of that force) and a solution. It must involve a major interest in the finding of that solution.

If, as it has already been pointed out, the history of the Shona written narrative which began with the publication of *Feso* [Name of main character] in 1956 is very recent, then the history of the Shona detective story is even more recent. Paul Chidyausiku's *Karumekangu* [My little husband], the first Shona narrative to contain elements of crime and detection, appeared in 1970, but it was not yet a full-fledged detective story. The first full-fledged detective story, Morgan Mahanya's *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death] appeared in 1976, exactly twenty years after *Feso* [Name of main character, 1982] and exactly one hundred and thirty-five years after Edgar Allan Poe published *The Murder in the Rue Morgue* in 1841. The history of the detective story actually began with the publication of *The Murder in the Rue Morgue* by Poe, and when later he published *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *The*



*Purloined Letter* (Poe, 1987:122-223) he 'single-handedly created the literary tradition of detective fiction' (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1991:168). Zimbabwean literature has now developed its own detective story in the Shona language.

## 1.2 Aim of the research

The aim of this study is to trace the emergence of the Shona detective story as a new fictional genre in Zimbabwean literature. It hopes to establish the point at which one can say the detective story in Shona actually began. From that point it is intended to trace its development quantitatively and qualitatively. By highlighting those unique features that characterise it we will be establishing and confirming its identity as a new genre different from other forms of Shona fiction. The development of the Shona detective story is judged by the extent to which it tries to adhere to the literary tradition of detective fiction created by Poe and adopted by many other detective story writers in many other languages all over the world.

Using the detective tradition created by Poe immediately raises the problem of applying criteria used to judge Western literature as criteria to judge an African literature. But the position taken in this study is that since writers of full-fledged, pure detective stories in Shona have been influenced by watching Western films and reading detective stories in English such as those of Agatha Christie and others, it is reasonable to judge Shona detective stories using the same criteria used to judge the detective story in the West. There is no doubt that in developing his own detective story the Shona author has borrowed certain aspects from Europe. Ngara (1982:7) has recognised this influence from Europe in his assertion that:

... many of our writers have responded vigorously to Europe's effect on Africa. And no doubt some African writers have been influenced directly by European literature..... Even some of the writers using indigenous languages have been influenced by European literature.

Because the intention of this study is to bring out the true quality of the Shona detective story, it is necessary to define it using the criteria that has been used to define other detective stories everywhere. After all, the 'whodunit' in Shona appears to resemble the form of the detective story in English. As Palmer (1979:2) rightly argues:

If the purpose of criticism is to display as accurately as possible the genuine quality of a work, then our aim should be to use or evolve criteria which will be the most helpful in bringing out that genuine quality, whether those criteria have been used by the West or not.

In this study the expression 'detective story' is used to imply any tale or narrative whose central interest lies in the creating of a problem, its analysis and its solution using logic. This tale or narrative, whether it be a short story, a novelette or a novel, it is considered as long as its interest lies in providing a solution to a mystery. The size of the tale is of no consequence. What is important is that there is some detective interest in it. After all, as *The World Book Encyclopedia* (1991:168) explains:

The pattern of most detective stories is the same, whether the tale is a novel, novelette or a short story.

So in this study a short story, a novelette and novel are used as examples of detective stories.

It is also intended to show the emergence and development of the Shona detective story by identifying the different kinds of Shona detective stories in Shona. The kinds of Shona detective stories that were looked at are: the stories that begin as ordinary narratives but end up as detective fiction, the full-fledged detective story called the 'whodunit', and the detective thriller. Each of these is dealt with in a separate chapter and its characteristics discussed.

Chapter 2 tries to show that the Shona detective story as a fictional genre began with the appearance of stories which begin as ordinary narratives but which the authors turn into detective stories before they end. As Kahari (1990:213) puts it, these are the sort of narratives that 'begin as kinds of ordinary bourgeois epics and which gradually become detective stories'. It is shown in this chapter that these narratives do not obey rules that govern the genre as the 'Whodunit' does. Although Kahari (1990:213) calls them detective stories, they are not detective stories in the sense that Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of Baskervilles* (1989) and Arthur Upfield's *Bony and The Black Virgin* (1959) are. In Doyle's and Upfield's narratives a crime is committed early in the first few pages or chapters and the rest of the pages are left to deal with investigations and the final revelation of the criminal.

This chapter intends to show that when the Shona detective novel first made its appearance it was different. The crime in it is committed late and deep into the novel and sometimes no significant sort of detective work is put into progress. For this and other reasons narratives of this kind discussed in this chapter are called rudimentary forms of detective stories.

During the early stages in its development the Shona detective story failed to wean itself completely from Shona folkloric influences. It remained linked to the romances and other non-detective narratives by its tendency to be didactic and moralistic. Most of these early detective narratives use proverbs for their titles.

The novels that are used to illustrate ideas raised in this chapter include Paul Chidyausiku's *Karumekangu* [My Little husband, 1970], Amos Munjanja's *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971], and Janiel Mabhugu's *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979].

Chapter 3 examines the Shona detective story at its best stage of development. The detective story that was looked at in this chapter has developed the characteristics of what is called a 'Whodunit' (Who has done it?). This is a full-fledged detective story which tries to obey most, if not all, the rules that govern the genre.

The novels that were used to illustrate ideas raised in this chapter include: Morgan Mahanya's two novels, *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] and *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980], and his collection of short stories under the title *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989]; James Kawara's two novels, *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] and *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995]; and Edmund Masundire's *Mutikitiyha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991].

In each of these narratives, a crime of some sort is committed in the first few pages or it was committed before the first page, outside the story. The rest of the chapters deal with the investigation of the crime and the eventual revelation of the criminal. By assessing the extent to which the narratives adhere to the detective tradition created by Poe and passed on over the years, we will be addressing the question of its

development.

Zimbabwean literature has also seen the development of another genre within Shona detective fiction. Chapter 4 examines the features that characterise the development of this genre called the thriller. The thriller being referred to is a full-fledged detective story in which a crime is committed quite early in the first few pages or before the story begins and the rest of the book deals with the detective's investigation and the eventual revelation of the criminal. The difference between the thriller and the 'whodunit' is that the former combines elements of a thriller and those of a detective story, and is therefore referred to as a detective-thriller in this study. It is for this reason that the thriller deserves to be given separate treatment because it is, as Todorov (1988:161) says, 'another genre within detective fiction'. The development of the thriller is an indication of the ability of the Shona detective story to diversify.

The inclusion of the thriller in this study is intended to show that the term detective story should not be confined to the 'whodunit' alone but should also be used for those other forms such as the thriller in which the elements of crime and detection are strong and the central issue is about the rational solution to a crime. Consequently, the novels which were used to illustrate aspects of the growth of the detective-thriller include Mordekai Hamutyinei's *Kusasana Kunoparira* [The search for pleasure leads into trouble, 1975], Edward Kaugare's *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* [To discuss an accident means you have escaped, 1978], and Edmund Masundire's two novels, *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992].

Because detective fiction is about crime and its investigation, the detective occupies a special place that no other character occupies in Shona literature. Chapter 5 therefore looks at the portrayal of the detective in the Shona detective story. Detective fiction emphasises the detective's investigation of crime committed against an individual or against society, hence every detective story in Shona has a character called 'mutikitivha' (detective) or a character who does detective work even though he may not be called by that title.

The detective in Shona fiction has developed from the unsophisticated police detail such as 'murume wendebyu' (the man with a beard) in Pearson Mashiri's *Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga* [Family secrets, 1977] to the more sophisticated, colourful and flamboyant type such as detective Gwenembe in Kawara's *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995]. By showing the way authors have depicted the detective, starting with the ordinary, informer-like detective to the sophisticated sleuth, we are showing the growth and development of the detective genre.

This chapter also shows that Shona detective fiction has seen the emergence of a character who is not only the detective hero but is also an exponent of very strong political, social and economic views of the government that he works for. Chief Inspector Chiminya, who is the detective hero in Masundire's two novels, *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] is an ex-guerrilla who fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe from colonial rule.

It will also be shown that Mahanya and Masundire have each introduced into Shona literature a detective who is the hero of a continuing series. Whereas in many Shona novels authors use different characters as heroes, Shona detective fiction has seen the appearance of narratives in which the same detective hero is used in more than one text.

Chapter 6 tries to look at the way in which women are depicted in Shona detective stories. In many Shona novels women are depicted with negative images. They are usually presented as victims of oppression in a male dominated society. They spend most of their lives operating in the domestic sphere and are not usually presented as playing leading and colourful roles. The contention in this chapter is that the images of women as portrayed in the Shona detective stories are not very different from those in other non-detective narratives. Women are portrayed in Shona detective stories as house-wives, nurses, secretaries and as victims. Women are in the majority of the victims of crimes committed in Shona detective fiction. The majority of those kidnapped or murdered, for example, are women.

In discussing the images of women as 'wives' it is not possible to identify any of the detectives' wives by their personal names because they have none. The wives of detectives Dumbuzenene, Chimedza, Chiminya and Gwenembe who are featured in this chapter have not been given personal names by their creators, the authors. Each one of these wives is referred to throughout the narrative in which she appears either simply as someone possessed by her husband or as someone who has mothered a child. This is shown by the detectives' frequent use of the possessive pronoun 'wangu' (my) in the repetitions of the phrase 'mudzimai wangu' (my wife) to refer to their wives. When the detective does not want to call her 'mudzimai wangu' (my wife) he refers to her as 'amai va-' or 'mai-' (mother of-). Therefore, throughout the narratives in which women appear as wives, Chinovava calls his wife 'mai' vaSara (Sara's mother), Sergeant Chimedza calls his 'amai' vaChipeneti (Chipeneti's mother), Detective Dumbuzenene also calls his 'mai' Desmond (Desmond's mother), Inspector Chiminya calls his wife 'mai' Tambudzai (Tambudzai's mother), while Gwenembe's wife is referred to as 'amai' vaChimokoto (Chimokoto's mother).

These women are defined in terms of their relationships to their men or to their first-born children. They have no names of their own. Because they have no mature sexual identities of their own, wives of detectives are referred to in this chapter 6 as mai vaSara, amai vaChipeneti, mai Desmond, mai Tambudzai, and amai vaChimokoto. The reader of this study should regard these phrases as the names by which these wives are identified.

This chapter also shows that when women are given big roles to play in Shona detective fiction they are usually made to play the unfavourable roles of villains, and the colourful and rewarding roles of detectives are especially reserved for their male counterparts. By conceding that the Shona detective story has not made much difference from the other non-detective narratives in its portrayal of women we are actually addressing the question of development of the genre.

### 1.3 Research methodology

In doing this research a number of primary texts that deal with crime and detection were examined. These texts provided examples used to illustrate ideas raised by the researcher. Lists of the main primary texts used have already been given in chapter summaries given earlier in this chapter. In addition to that, a number of other primary texts not mentioned in summaries for chapters 2,3 and 4 were also used, though not as extensively.

Alongside the primary texts were secondary sources used to throw light on the subject of crime and its investigation in general. These sources were also used to support views raised in the research. In addition, narratives in the English language which deal with the same theme of crime and its investigation were also used when necessary. These provided a useful point of reference and comparison since the Shona detective story, at its best stage of development, shows a lot of affinity with the detective story in the English language, and Aldridge has defined affinity as:

resemblances in style, structure, mood or idea between works which have no other connections (cited by Praver, 1973:52).

Interviews were carried out in order to obtain information and views about detective work in real life and about detective work in fiction, particularly Shona fiction. These interviews were held face to face with some of the actual writers of the Shona detective stories as well as with other people involved in the work and literature about crime and detection. In the first interview the researcher relied on taking down notes as the interviewee answered questions but all the other subsequent interviews were recorded on cassettes using a tape-recorder.

Besides face to face interviews those authors of detective stories who could not be reached easily were sent questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed and returned in good time. In the case of author Edmund Masundire, he was sent a questionnaire first and then followed by a recorded interview. The recorded interview was a useful follow-up as it provided the researcher with an opportunity to seek clarification on issues raised by the author in his responses to the questionnaire.

Interviews and questionnaires were very useful methods of collecting data because as Tuckman (1972:174) points out:

Certain information cannot be obtained any way other than by asking the person, and even when an alternative is available, the 'asking' route may be the most efficient.

And Good & Scates (1954:637) concur when they say that 'certain types of information can be secured only by direct contact with people.'

There is certain vital information which we cannot obtain by merely reading primary or secondary texts and so we need to ask the author himself.

#### **1.4 Scope of research**

The question of the emergence and development of a genre requires that as large a selection of primary sources as possible is used. This research topic requires that the researcher looks at origins and development of the Shona detective story from its beginning to where it is to-date. It implies a discussion of the features that characterise its beginning and growth. Therefore, in order to have a global picture of this beginning and growth, one needs to look at as many primary sources as possible because a limited number of selected texts may not give a complete picture of things that have taken place in the area of detective fiction in Shona. The main texts that were used have been given earlier in the summaries for Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Many others not listed earlier in this chapter were also picked at random and used where they were needed, but not as extensively as the main texts.

It must, however, be pointed out that the Shona detective novels were grouped according to those which were discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively, but this grouping does not represent any chronological order in the publication of the novels. Rather, they were grouped according to types. Although, as a general rule, those novels that begin as ordinary stories but are turned into detective stories before they end appeared first in the 1970s and the full-fledged detective stories were more common in the 1990s, observations show that there is a lot of overlapping, with all three types sometimes appearing at the same time.



## 1.5 Literature review

When undertaking a research of this nature it is important to review literature made available by others who have done research on aspects which are related to one's topic. This will help to shed some light on what the researcher is working and also help him in the formulation of hypotheses. Tuckman (1972:291) recognised the importance of a literature review when he explained that:

... the purpose of the literature review is to provide a basis for the formulation of hypotheses. In other words, articles are not reviewed for their own sake, but as basis for generalization from them to your own study.

Literature review helps the researcher to have an idea of what has been done and what has not been done with a view to identifying gaps that need to be plugged. It also helps the researcher to know the areas that other researchers have merely touched but have not delved deep into and hence need a more comprehensive study.

The best known Shona critic to date is George Kahari who has published a number of critical works on Shona novels. Among his critical works is *The Imaginative Works of Paul Chidyausiku* (1975). In this book, Kahari discusses briefly the rise of the Shona novel in general. Much of the book is devoted to the life and works of Chidyausiku himself which include *Nhoroondo Dzokuwanana* [Marriage discourse, 1959], *Nyadzi Dzinokunda Rufu* [Shame is worse than death, 1962], *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970], and *Ndakambokuyambira* [I warned you, 1968].

But of particular relevance to this study is Kahari's analysis of the novel *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] which he correctly identifies as a kind of detective story. This observation is important because in this study *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] is featured as one of the Shona detective stories at an elementary stage in the development of the Shona detective story. Although Kahari does not delve deep into the theme of crime and detection he makes a pertinent observation when he says that *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] 'is a story of life, adventure, love, crime and punishment' (Kahari, 1975:132). He notes that the second part of the story has some detective interest in it.

What Kahari observes about *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] in *The Imaginative Works of Paul Chidyausiku* (1975) is very true of a number of Shona novels which begin as kinds of ordinary stories and which gradually become detective stories.

In *The Rise of the Shona Novel* (1990) Kahari discusses the rise and growth of the Shona novel. He discusses a number of issues but of particular relevance to the present study are Chapters 5 and 7 in which he discusses new literary forms and characterization in Shona novels, respectively. One new literary form which he recognises is what he calls the 'detective-cum-thriller' form (1990:213). Kahari (1990:213) makes a correct assertion when he says that:

The detective narrative is a new genre, a product of the new historical philosophical reality of an industrial and technological situation.

Kahari's assertion is correct because the appearance of a detective story appears to be a response to historical processes taking place in the society which produces it. It appears to be the artists' response to the rise of crime resulting from industrialisation and urbanisation and the corresponding development in the use of detectives to investigate such crimes. The widespread erections in many urban centres and growth points in Zimbabwe of security fences and decorative concrete dural walls where previously there had been flower beds or hedges, is a clear indication of the prevalence of crime in the society. The prevalence of crime in society provides artists with material to write about.

In *The Rise of the Shona Novel* (1990) Kahari does not see any trace of the detective narrative in the oral traditions of the Shona people. If Kahari sees any link between the Shona detective story and traditional folktale, it is because the Shona detective story is also very didactic and its aim, like that of the folktale, is to entertain.

In *The Rise of the Shona Novel* (1990) Kahari also stresses the point that central to the detective genre is the idea that there ought to be a rational solution to the puzzle. This is a pertinent point because one of the golden rules of the detective genre is that there ought to be no miracles or other powers that assist the detective in his investigations.

Kahari also recognises the existence of another form of detective genre called the thriller which combines elements of detection with elements of a thriller. Such narratives include Mordekai Hamutyinei's *Kusasana Kunoparira* [The search for pleasure leads into trouble, 1977] and Edward Kaugare's *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* [To discuss an accident means you have escaped, 1978].

The limitation of Kahari's *The Rise of the Shona Novel* (1990) is that it does not discuss the subject of crime and detection in detail. Kahari merely mentions the genre more or less in passing just to show that within the body of Shona literature has risen a new kind of genre called the detective story. Although he published this work in 1990 Kahari makes no mention whatsoever of the first two full-fledged detective stories in Shona, *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death] and *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard] published as early as 1976 and 1980, respectively.

Since the publication of Kahari's *The Rise of the Shona Novel* (1990) several other Shona detective novels have been published, justifying a claim by the genre for its rightful place as a fictional genre in Zimbabwean literature. The 1990s have seen the addition of Edmund Masundire's three novels, namely, *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991], *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1992], and *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994], and James Kawara's *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995]. There is a good enough collection of Shona detective stories to justify a detailed study of the genre.

Rudo Gaidzanwa in her book *The Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature* (1985) examines the main images of women as they are portrayed by Zimbabwean authors in their works. In this sociological study, Gaidzanwa observes that in Zimbabwean literature women are depicted as mothers, wives, divorcees, widows, single, jilted and as prostitutes. She notes that the view adopted in many of the works is a very conservative one which expects women to play the traditional roles of looking after the family. Gaidzanwa observes that in Zimbabwean literature the ideal wife is the one who sacrifices her own interests in the service of her husband's lineage. This is the kind of wife that Tsitsi is in Patrick Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* [Wait I shall return, 1963].

Gaidzanwa also recognises that Zimbabwean literature is full of images of problem wives: wives who are tough, rough, domineering and difficult. Difficult women characters given names such as Mandirunga or Marujata are common in Shona literature.

Because of the portrayal of women as difficult people, Gaidzanwa has come to the conclusion that it is not proper to regard women in Zimbabwean literature as victims of society and men. 'This kind of view would overestimate society and men's power over women' (Gaidzanwa, 1985:98). This implies that some writers recognise reality in which they see women as asserting their positions in society, and, where necessary, challenge the dominance of their male counterparts.

Flora Veit-Wild in her sociological study, *Teachers, Preachers, and Non-believers* (1993) discusses the images of women as they are portrayed in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988). Veit-Wild concludes that there are women who have accepted their subordinate roles in society such as Tambudzai's mother and those who are determined to assert their independence and rights as individuals, like Tambudzai herself. She agrees with Gaidzanwa that women are not always victims of society. Sometimes they are fighters for their rights, and at times they are oppressors of men as well.

Pedzisai Mashiri in his dissertation, *Interpretations of the Authors' Vision of Women in the Shona Novel* (1994), makes some useful observations about the portrayal of women in Shona novels. Mashiri argues that most Shona novels tend to confine women's role to the 'domestic sphere' and to motherhood. He observes that ideal mother-wife characters are always depicted positively while those who do not keep the place assigned to them by society are portrayed negatively. He, however, notes that certain socio-historical developments taking place in Zimbabwe have provided some women with opportunities to play more assertive roles in society and as a result there is a noticeable change in the authors' vision of women characters in the Shona novels published in more recent times especially those published in the post-Independence era.

Gaidzanwa, Veit-Wild and Mashiri's views on the images of women in Zimbabwean literature are pertinent because chapter 6 of this study seeks to see to what extent the Shona detective story in its development has stuck to the traditional conservative view of the role of women in Shona society and to what extent new developments have emerged with the advent of this new genre.

## 1.6 Authors' biographies

In order for the reader to have a good insight into the work of an author it is essential that he or she knows something about the life and experiences of that author. Knowledge of the background of the author will enable us to understand his works better. We need to know the experiences the author has gone through in order to appreciate the kind of issues he writes about. Wellek & Warren (1963:75) have argued in favour of this view when they say that:

The most obvious cause of a work of art is its creator, the author; and hence an explanation in terms of the personality and the life of the writer has been one of the oldest and best established methods of literary study.

This argument is, however, contrary to the Formalist theory. Formalists argue that when confronted with a literary text what is important is the text itself. Anything else outside the text is irrelevant to them. To them the life, background, interests and personality of the writer are not important. They argue that to consider these in literature is to reduce the study of literature to sociology or history. Anglo-american New Criticism also agreed with Formalism in that it 'treated the literary text as an object essentially independent of its author and its historical content' (Robey 1982:73). And Roland Barthes (1988:172) went as far as to over-emphasise the irrelevance of the author in a text when he declared that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author'.

But the position taken in this study is that the life and experiences of an author are important if his or her work is to be understood better. While in the Formalist scheme of things there is no place for biographies or personalities of the author, we find it unimaginable to think, as Formalists want us to, that we could have had, for example, *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] without Edmund Masundire or *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] without James Kawara, just as much as we find it unimaginable that we could have had *Cry The Beloved Country* (1949) without Alan Paton. Works of art have that tendency of reflecting their authors so it is necessary to know something about some of these authors. In the words of Hudson (1960:22):

Our interest in the writings of any great author being once aroused, the desire will eventually be stimulated to learn something of the man himself, as a man, beyond that which his work reveals to us.

The authors whose works are featured in this study are many and therefore it is not possible to give detailed biographical information about all of them. Brief biographical accounts of only three authors who have made the most meaningful contribution to the development of the Shona detective story by way of writing full-fledged detective stories are given. These authors who have made the detective story what it is today are Morgan Mahanya, James Kawara and Edmund Masundire.

Morgan Mahanya was born in Zimuto in 1948. After leaving school he tried his hand at different jobs. He worked as an untrained teacher, a clerk, a typist, a barman and as a carpenter. He also worked as a freelance journalist, contributing articles to various newspapers and magazines, notably among them, *Umbowo*, *Moto*, *The Mirror*, *The Rise*, *The Sunday Mail* and *The Herald*. At the moment Mahanya writes for *Kwaedza* newspaper. Contributing articles such as short stories to magazines and newspapers has helped him a great deal in his writing career.

Mahanya once joined the police force as a member of the Special Constabulary and, as he says, this helped him 'to know how policemen operate' (response to questionnaire, 1996). His experiences in the police force helped him in his writing career as it enabled him to get involved in police procedures.

Mahanya is a prolific writer who has several published works. These are *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976], *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980], *Chidamwoyo* [Love is natural, 1983], *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989], *Chinotanga Mberi Mashura* [Bad omen is a forerunner of misfortune, 1985], *Muroyi Royera Kure* [Bad behaviour should be practiced far from home, 1978], *Mazvokuda Mavanga Enyora* [Death is wilful if it is by tattoo marks, 1978], *Matsvamwoyo* [Burning heart, 1992], the English short stories, *The Wounds* (1991) and the children's book *Takunda and Chipu in Storyland Forest* (1993).

Although born in Masvingo Mahanya later moved to settle in Zhombe and has remained there to this day. This explains why the geographical setting for most of his works takes place in areas around Kadoma, Kwekwe, Gweru and Zhombe - Gokwe. He himself said in response to a questionnaire (1996) that he frequents beer-halls and hotels in these towns 'to study and observe what people do so as to create characters for my works'.

Mahanya is a man of many hobbies. He likes to listen to music, watch soccer, boxing and racing. He reads widely, which is what makes him a good writer himself. He also likes to read about court reports in newspapers 'so that I can get ideas for my stories' (response to questionnaire, 1996).

At the moment Mahanya says he is writing another detective story about the 'kombi' mini-bus.

James Kawara is another author who has made a big impact with his two detective stories. Kawara was born in Chegutu in 1954. He did all his secondary education from Junior Certificate to Advanced Level by private studies. He also attempted a degree in law with the University of South Africa but gave it up in 1987 after covering nine courses. He is convinced that these university studies in law, though incomplete, have had an impact on his job as a detective.

Kawara is a well-known author who has several novels to his credit. These include *Uchanditsvaga* [You shall look for me, 1978], *Ruchiva* [Lust, 1980], *Mhiko Yorudo* [Oath of love, 1982], *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] and *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995].

Like Mahanya, he too tried his hand at various jobs. He has worked as an assistant brick-layer, salesman in a chain of supermarkets, and as a sales assistant at a brewery. He later joined the police force in 1975 and later moved to the Criminal Investigation Department where he has risen through the ranks to Chief Superintendent. His many years with the CID explains his interest and flair for writing detective stories.

Kawara disclosed (interview 1996) that *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] is based on a true story of murder that happened in Mufakose, Harare, in the 1970s, and *Bhindauko* (Versatility, 1995) is based on gold panning. As La Cour & Mogensen (1971:81) point out, 'real life crimes have of course been a frequent source of inspiration to crime writers'.

He also once lived on a farm where the illegal potent *kachasu* brew was manufactured and sold to farm residents. No wonder in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] the illegal brew and sale of a type of alcohol called Cheetah Brandy on a farm outside Harare is given a prominent place.

Kawara is a keen reader who enjoys reading works of writers like Agatha Christie, Hammond Innes and James Hadley Chase. Besides reading he enjoys travelling and seeing new places. Reading and travelling stimulates his mind to write.

Edmund Masundire has also made a significant contribution to Shona detective fiction. He was born in 1966 in Gutu, in Chief Makore's area. He attended Chitenderano Primary School where he did grade one to six before moving to Fungisai Primary School in Chitungwiza where he completed grade seven in 1980. He completed O-level in 1984 at Nyatsime College in Seke Township, Chitungwiza, after which he went back to Masvingo where he attended Gokomere High School for his A-levels from 1985 to 1986. After completing Form Six Masundire joined the Zimbabwe Republic Police in 1987 and has remained with the force to this day.

In his life with the police, Masundire was involved in the investigation of dissidents' activities in Matebeleland in the late eighties and out of these experiences came his second novel, *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991]. He disclosed in an interview (1996) that some of the events in this novel were taken from actual events that took place during the war against dissidents.



Masundire also spent some time in Guruve where he was involved in investigating activities of people who were poaching elephant tusks and rhino horns. His involvement in these investigations gave birth to his other novel, *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant tusk, 1992] and his one and only detective play, *Nyanga Yechipembere* [Rhino horn, 1996].

It is clear from this that quite a considerable amount of Masundire's writings were conceived during the process of carrying out his duties as a police officer. His writings include some record of things he saw and experienced, which tend to agree with Hudson's assertion that:

Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. (Hudson, 1960:10).

Besides his works mentioned above, Masundire has also written *Mutikivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] and *Dzapiringana* [It is also tangled up, 1994].

Masundire enjoys reading novels especially those that move at a furiously fast pace. This probably explains his natural flair for writing detective-thrillers. Besides reading novels he also reads newspapers and magazines, and watches television films.

It is important to note that all the three most outstanding writers of Shona detective fiction whose brief biographies have been given have all been policemen. With the exception of Morgan Mahanya who has since left the police force, James Kawara and Edmund Masundire are still in it. With this kind of background it is therefore not surprising that these men are at the forefront of writing Shona detective stories. Detecting and combating crime is what their jobs entail. As it has often been said:

Successful authors write about subjects they know and understand. They gather information from experience, observation, reading, and interviews. (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1991:513).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SHONA DETECTIVE STORY IN ITS FORMATIVE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

#### 2.1 Emergence of the detective story in Shona

The Shona detective story is a completely new literary genre in Zimbabwean literature in the Shona language. It is distinguished from other Shona narratives by certain features that are unique to it. What is outstandingly unique about a detective story is that a crime must be committed and a detective must investigate the circumstances of the crime until the criminal is revealed. A detective story is therefore defined in the *Students' Encyclopedia* (1974:560) as:

a novel or short story in which a detective solves a crime by observing, assembling and logically interpreting the available evidence or clues. The clues consist of circumstances surrounding the crime and the motives of all the characters involved.

What distinguishes the detective story from other narratives is the presence of a detective who uses logic to solve a crime. Julian Symons (1972:2) also says of a detective story that it,

should present a problem, and that the problem should be solved by an amateur or professional detective through processes of deduction.

Such a story that emphasizes crime and the role of the detective in investigating has no precedence in the folklore culture of the Shona people (Kahari, 1990:213). It seems, as Kahari (1990:213) has observed, to have 'emerged from the non-detective folktale narrative'. Shona traditional folklore culture has no narrative that can fit the definitions of the detective story given above. The detective story in Shona emerged from those folktale narratives which have nothing to do with detectives and their investigations.

A look at the Shona detective story, especially in its emergent stages of development, shows some resemblance with some of the traditional folktales. The type of folktale narratives that come to mind are those in which some form of 'crime' is committed and some non-detective mode of identifying the 'criminal' is used. For example, there is a folktale recorded by Fortune (1982:53-54) entitled "*Mukadzinin'ina Akaba Hamba*" [The junior wife who stole tortoise meat]. In this story, a man gives

his three wives a tortoise to prepare for a meal. The two junior wives refuse to prepare it, and the senior wife, to whom eating tortoise meat is a taboo, prepares it. When the meat is ready the second wife enters the senior wife's hut and steals the tortoise meat. In the Shona world stealing special meat prepared for a husband is a serious crime and the culprit has to be found. In order to find the culprit the husband ties a rope across a wide river and every member of the family, including the husband and all children, has to walk the tight rope in order to cross. The one who stole the tortoise meat would not make it across to the other side of the river as the rope would break and he or she would fall into the river and drown. This is how the second wife is caught.

In another folktale recorded by Fortune (1983:2-3) entitled *Tsuro naNzou* [Hare and Elephant], the two animal characters own a field of pumpkins. When the pumpkins are ripe Nzou steals and swallows them and the disappearance of the pumpkins becomes a mystery to be solved. To solve the mystery Tsuro nicely cuts the only remaining pumpkin into two halves, removes the stuff from the two halves and sits inside and closes himself in. Nzou comes as usual and swallows the pumpkin. Nzou hears a small voice that is asking him what he is doing and he runs away, gets tired when he is in a far away country, falls and bursts his belly and Tsuro comes out. This is how the culprit is caught and punished.

These are two examples of the nearest folklore genre out of which the Shona detective story emerges. Indeed, there is some resemblance between such folktales and the Shona detective story. In each of the tales given above there is what Propp (1968:27) calls 'a personage, who can be termed the villain' who, like the criminal in the modern detective story, commits some form of 'crime' which starts the actual movement of the tale. In the tales given above, these villains are the second wife and Nzou, respectively. In each of these tales there is a 'whodunit' element. In the tale *Mukadzinin'ina Akaba Hamba* [The junior wife who stole tortoise meat] the question asked is:

Ko, wadya hamba iyi ndiani? (p. 53)

(Who stole this tortoise meat?)

This is the puzzle to be solved. In the other tale, *Tsuro naNzou* [Hare and Elephant], the question asked is:

Ndiani ari kuba manhanga mumunda medu? (p. 2)

(Who is stealing pumpkins from our field?)

The two tales revolve around the mystery 'whodunit?'. The detective story also revolves around the same puzzle. The first point of interest in any crime story therefore, whether it be truth or fiction, is invariably 'who did it?'. It is in this respect that the traditional folktale shows some resemblance with the Shona detective story.

In both tales given as examples above, the culprits are found out and given their punishment. So what these tales show, like the detective story, is 'the inevitableness with which wrong-doing is punished' (Symons: 1972:12). Both the second wife and Nzou die as a result of their crimes.

But where the Shona folktale differs from the Shona detective story is in the methods employed to solve the mystery. The detective story according to *The Macmillan Family Encyclopedia* (1980:62), emphasizes:

the detective's investigations and often focuses on the technical details related to the examination of clues, the character of the people involved (and) the psychology of the criminal...

The non-detective folktale, the nearest genre out of which the Shona detective story emerges, does not involve detectives and there is no step-by-step investigation of 'crimes' in order to arrive at a solution to a mystery. Rather, as Kahari (1990:213) says, the mystery is solved:

without a systematic compilation of available evidence leading either to conviction or acquittal as one finds in a detective story.

Instead, as Propp (1968:43) points out, 'the hero acquires the use of a magical agent'. Kahari (1990:213) agrees with Propp when he also says that 'the litigants are brought to trial by a diviner.' In the tale *Mukadzini in Akaba Hamba* [The junior wife who stole tortoise meat], the rope provides the magical solution to the mystery. In the other tale cited above, *Tsuro na Nzou* [Hare and Elephant], Tsuro acquires the use of the magical powers that solve the mystery of the disappearing pumpkins. In such tales the reader observes that there are no detective-like characters, and no step-by-step investigations take place.

In the light of these observations Kahari's (1990:43) assertion that the "Shona detective genre emerged from the non-detective folktale narrative' seems to be correct.

The Shona detective story in its emergent stages is also noticeable by its tendency to be moralistic. Many of these stories deal with very serious issues and end up teaching a moral lesson or a series of moral lessons. In this respect, they show that they emerged from the Shona traditional folktale. Many traditional folktale narratives deal with serious themes that teach important lessons about life. As Finnegan (1970:346) observes:

One common form is a story ending up with a kind of moral, sometimes in the form of a well-known proverb.

Recognising the didactic nature of the folktale narrative, Mkanganwi (1980:ii) further emphasizes the point when he says:

The moralising trend is really a thematic frame and as such a literary convention which is typical of *ngano*.

Such virtues of honesty, respect for human life and elders, hardwork, kindness and love, were much valued in Shona society. On the other hand, such bad human qualities like telling lies, stealing, taking other people's lives, laziness and selfishness, were deplored. Young people were taught about these virtues and vices through the folktale narratives.

In the emergent stages of development the Shona detective stories, like the folktale narratives, also tend to be didactic as evidenced by their tendency to use proverbs for their titles. These proverbs provide moral lessons for the people who read the novels. Besides the moral lessons they teach, the proverbs are aesthetically appealing. In a paper presented at the University of Zimbabwe, Department of African Languages and Literature, on August 3, 1994, entitled "*Palm oil with which Swahili words are eaten*", Elena Zubkova Bertoncini of the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli, gave the reason why proverbs are often used in prose fiction, saying:

Probably the reason is that the proverbs themselves are beautiful. Most of them contain in a nutshell a profound wisdom cast in a refined poetic language.

Bertoncini's words are true to Shona proverbs used as titles of Shona detective stories. They are aesthetically appealing and contain in them the moral philosophy of the Shona people. By using these proverbs as titles the Shona detective story shows that in its early stages of development it continued to be affected by folkloric influences.

The very first narrative in Shona to deal with crime and its detection is Paul Chidyausiku's *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970]. This title is not a proverb, neither is it proverbial in style. It is the name of the main character. A critical reader would have expected the authors of Shona detective stories who followed Chidyausiku to come up with such titles that do not sell away anything, or at least titles that suggest progressive development away from folkloric influences. But what followed are Shona detective stories with proverbs as titles. Among the many examples are Munjanja's *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971], Mashiri's *Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga* [Family secrets, 1977], Mabhugu's *Dambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979], Mahanya's *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976], and Ndomene Haichemedzi [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980].

The appearance of so many Shona narratives about crime and detection which use proverbs for their titles is a clear indication of the continuing influence of Shona traditional folktale narratives on modern Shona narratives. Later detective narratives, especially those published in the nineties, dropped that tendency and were using titles other than those based on proverbs.

While it may be true that the Shona detective story seems to have emerged from the non-detective folktale it seems equally true that its actual appearance at the time that it emerged is a response to the historical processes taking place in the society which produced it. As Mandel (1984:31) has noted, 'the evolution of the crime story reflects the history of crime itself.'

Mandel's assertion is true of the emergence of the Shona detective story. The Shona detective story is a new product arising from the industrialization and urbanization of Zimbabwean society. With the coming of the white settlers urban centres sprang up and industries subsequently grew. Industrialization and urbanization changed the indigenous people's values and way of life. The money economy was introduced and Shona people developed a new taste for Western foods and other items. The indigenous people left

their homes to go and work in the mines and urban factories, industries and shops. Historians Garlake & Proctor (1987:92) have noted that:

As the colony developed, towns grew up in the Southern Rhodesian veld. Shops, factories and municipalities needed African workers. Many Africans left their homes in the rural areas to live permanently with their families in towns.

These urban and mining environments became the sources of all sorts of criminal influences which were then spread to other areas, including, at times, the rural areas. These developments brought about a quantitative growth in the rate of crimes like thefts, murders, kidnapping, and dealings in precious stones. The rate of crime was only kept at a minimum by the settler regimes' legal measures such as the pass laws, which, according to Garlake & Proctor (1987:92):

prevented unemployed Africans from moving to towns where they might be forced to become criminals.

The point being made here should not be misconstrued to mean that before the coming of the white settlers there were no crimes committed. In the traditional Shona society crimes such as thefts and murders were also committed. However, in given communities people knew who among them were habitual thieves and suspected murderers. If a stolen cow or goat or donkey was found in someone else's kraal the case would be tried by a village headman or by the chief. If a murder occurred and no one was found committing the murder no investigations would be organized by anyone. People could consult a diviner who could suggest suspects but no 'arrest' would be made on that basis. Usually people trusted very much that the deceased would one day come back to avenge his death and the murderer would be revealed in that manner. But this usually happened many years after the murder, and sometimes years after the murderer would have departed from this world. This manner of handling a murder crime is reflected in Hamandishe's novel, *Mashiripiti Engozi* [The workings of an avenging spirit, 1970]. In this story, Tofatabaiwa Kamutondoro kills Mafaune while on a hunting expedition. Despite searches by his son Mafaune's remains are never found. There are no investigations carried out by anyone. Things are left as they are and years later Mafaune's avenging spirit kills many people in Kamutondoro's family. At the end, Mafaune uses Dambudzo as his spirit medium to herald his presence among the living and directs people to the scene of his murder. This example shows that even in traditional Shona society crimes were committed and literature that focus on that period reflects it.

But with the quantitative extension of crime a similar quantitative development in literature dealing with crime and detection was inevitable because as George Grella (1980:103) rightly points out, 'writers mirror the problems of their time.' The growth of crime rate meant that central government had to use state apparatus to deal with the problem. It could no longer be left to the village headman or the avenging spirit to deal with the criminals. Trained policemen were more capable of dealing with the magnitude of the crime. As crime became more and more of a social problem to be handled by the police and their Criminal Investigations Department, writers began to reflect that development in their literature, and hence the rise of the Shona detective story. In this way, they confirmed what the then head of the Rhodesian Literature Bureau, W. Krog (1979:69), said of the Shona novels that:

Many deal with the social conditions and problems of the era in which they are written.

## **2.2 Characteristics of the formative stage**

A survey of the Shona novels published to date shows that there are among them a number of what can be regarded as pure detective stories, most of which were published after 1990. But before the appearance of these there were several earlier works which are more rudimentary examples of detective stories in the Shona language. These works are illustrations of the detective story in its formative stages when it was just emerging and beginning to develop. These rudimentary examples of Shona detective stories display the qualities which can be accepted as minimal requirements for classification as kinds of detective stories. Writers of such stories did not quite manage to produce what could be regarded as full-fledged or proper detective stories. Haycraft (1942:54) regards such writers as having 'approached detection without quite attaining it in the strict sense of the term'.

A careful examination of some of these rudimentary cases of Shona detective stories will illustrate what Haycraft (1942:54) means. When many of these narratives start there is nothing in the opening pages or chapters to show the reader that he is going to read a story about crime and its detection. The first few pages or chapters do not suggest to the reader that he is about to read a detective story because in most of these narratives no crime is committed early enough and hence no investigations are set into motion. Yet a crime in a detective story should come early in the story so as to start the action of investigating



early. George Grella (1980:98) supports this view when he says that ‘murder initiates the action of the detective novel.’ Symons (1972:102) subscribes to the same view where he says that the criminal:

must be introduced early in the story and must not turn up three quarters of the way through.

Recognising the structure of the Aristotelean plot with its emphasis on beginning, middle and end, Sayers (1980:27) also says that:

The detective story commonly begins with the murder; the middle is occupied with the detection of the crime and the peripeties or reversals of fortune arising out of this; the end is the discovery and execution of the murderer.

From the views of most such critics it is therefore clear that a detective story should start with a crime, although it does not need to be murder all the time. But the Shona detective story in its formative stages of development does not meet this requirement. When these early Shona detective narratives begin they are not like detective stories at all. They start as something else but later on a crime is committed and the narrative is then turned into a detective story. No wonder Kahari (1990:213) has characterised them as narratives that:

begin as kinds of ordinary bourgeois epics, which gradually become detective stories.

The first novel in Shona to deal with crime and detection is Chidyausiku’s *Karumekangu* [My little husband] published in 1970. But the build-up to the perpetration of the crime in this novel is very slow. As Kahari (1990:213) has noted, this novel is divided into two parts:

the first one being a novel of character in which people’s feelings are more important than the plot.

In this first part the reader is introduced to Mandirasa and Sarudzai who are travelling on a train. The reader comes to know that Sarudzai is in love with Karumekangu but at the same time is having an intimate relationship with Chikweya, who is disabled. In this first chapter, people’s feelings towards each other are more important than the plot itself. There is only a hint that Chikweya often feels jilted and gets

upset when he sees Sarudzai with able-bodied men. But no crime sets any investigation into progress.

The author also gives the reader a detailed account of the activities at the Gweru Agricultural Show attended by Chikweya and Sarudzai. In their conversation the reader comes to know that Chikweya loves Sarudzai and that he is jealous of Karumekangu who is able-bodied. For the first time Chikweya makes a threat which can be construed by the reader as a hint at possible murder:

Kana iwe, Sarudzai, uchindiramba ndinozvisungirira chete. Ko, ndinenge ndicharamirei?  
Kukakona kufa ini kunototi kufe mumwe wedu kunyange ndisingazive kuti ndiani. (p.8)

(If you, Sarudzai, rejects me, I will definitely commit suicide. What will be the purpose of life for me? If it is not me who dies at least one of us will, although I cannot tell who it is.)

But no murder or any other crime for that matter takes place up to this point. In Chapter 4, the reader gets a detailed account of the soccer match played at Ascot Stadium which Sarudzai and Mandirasa attend. On this occasion there is yet another hint at possible murder in Mandirasa's warning to Sarudzai:

... uri kutamba nomoto pakati paChikweya naKarumekangu. Ukanonoka kuzvigadzirisa,  
vakomana vaviri ava vanogona kubayana... (p. 17)

(... you are playing with fire between Chikweya and Karumekangu. If you don't act fast to sort out the mess, these two men can kill each other with knives...)

But no crime is committed. The following two Chapters, 5 and 6, focus on the romance between Sarudzai and Karumekangu, and nothing more.

Crime in *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] is committed in Chapter 7, on page 28, when Chikweya stabs Sarudzai with Karumekangu's knife. For a narrative that claims the right to be considered as a detective story the crime comes rather too late. The novel is divided into two parts. The first part has nothing to do with crime and detection. Crime and detection take place in the second part of the novel which Kahari (1975:120) has rightly described as:

a novel of action and adventure in which the main interest is centred around the whodunit (who did it?)

In a pure detective story the action of the narrative is set in motion by the occurrence of a crime right at the beginning or before the story begins.

*Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] is another example of a Shona detective story at a rudimentary stage of development. In it there is also nothing to show in the first chapters that it has anything to do with crime and detection. It begins as an ordinary story but is gradually turned into a detective story. The first seventeen chapters deal with the usual things that readers of Shona novels are so familiar with. Most of these chapters repeat the familiar role of Shona novels of showing that when an African leaves his rural home to go into a modern urban city 'he loses his balance and goes to the dogs', (Kahari, 1986:108). Chapter after chapter is devoted to proving Kahari's (1986:108) point that:

The urban area is too much for the Shona. Because there is no social control in the city, the African falls prey to prostitution, pick-pocketing, and organised crime, including murder.

Up to Chapter 17 there is no crime committed and there is no police or detective in sight. Police only come into the picture after Didimus' attempt to murder his wife by throwing her off a moving vehicle. But even then there is no step by step investigation of this crime that takes place. The reader only sees Didimus being cross-examined in court and his being sentenced to three years in jail which is confirmed by the High Court.

It is only in Chapter 18 of *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] that the reader is made aware of a crime that has just been committed. The crime can be described as theft because Jimmy Makuruku has stolen Didimus' wife Anna and together looted Didimus' store and disappeared. Criminal investigations begin in Chapter 18 and last up to Chapter 21. Only five out of the twenty-three chapters of this novel have any bearing on the investigations of the crime. For this reason it can be argued that *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] is a detective story but at an elementary stage of development. Munjanja approached detection without quite attaining it.

Mabhugu's *Ndambakundzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] is another rudimentary work of detective fiction in Shona. The novel starts as an ordinary narrative but is eventually turned into a detective story. The first eleven chapters do not present the reader with any crime. They are preoccupied with showing what happens to young people who do not pay heed to parental advice on matters of love, courtship and marriage. In particular Komboni does not pay heed to his parents' advice against marrying Edwina. As a result he gets into all sorts of problems. Edwina does not conceive, and she also turns out to be a devil of a woman who plots to murder her own husband in order to be married by another man. Although the attempted murder is unsuccessful, three people come out of the ordeal seriously injured. These are Bingwa, Komboni and Zvondiwa. This crime is committed in the twelfth chapter. Before this chapter no policeman or detective appears. Only fifty out of the hundred and seventy pages of this novel have any direct bearing on police investigations.

The above examples clearly indicate that authors of these narratives did not write novels exclusively of detection. There are many chapters in their novels which have nothing to do with the solution of crime. Even in English detective fiction, similar developments have been noted. Bruce Cassiday, (1982:5) has observed that Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) had 'Long passages that have nothing to do with the solution of the crime'. And in Dickens' *Bleak House*, Haycraft (1942:49) has noted that only fourteen of the sixty-six chapters have any bearing on the investigations of Inspector Bucket.

What is noticeable about these early Shona detective narratives is that although they begin as ordinary stories, at some point they will begin to display the basic structure of a detective story. This basic structure of a detective story may be contained in the second half or the last quarter of the story. According to Auden, (1980:15) the basic formula is that 'a murder occurs, many are suspected, all but one suspect who is the murderer, are eliminated, the murderer is arrested or dies.' The crime may not necessarily be murder but the basic formula remains the same.

In *Karumekanga* [My little husband, 1970] the crime is the murder of Sarudzai; in *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] the crime is theft from Didimus' store in Highfields; and in *Ndambakundzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] the crime is the attempted murder of Komboni.

In each of these narratives, the commission of crime is followed by some form of investigation. This is a minimum requirement in a detective story. In *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] Chikweya is picked up by police and subjected to gruelling questioning. Even his employer is interviewed. In *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] and *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] the crimes are also investigated by the local police. But the level of investigation is still very elementary. There is as yet no character playing anything like a detective role in the sense that Sherlock Holmes does in Conan Doyle's detective stories. Even the policemen who are used to carry out the investigations go out to perform their duties of arresting criminals but they have not yet mastered the art of true investigation in the manner of real professional or amateur detectives.

In *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] there are a number of policemen investigating the crime but there is not even one of them who can be regarded as a detective hero. Even their leader Vhandu does not distinguish himself in any way. He is just an ordinary policeman without any extraordinary deductive powers.

*Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] also displays the basic structure of a detective story in the last five chapters. The basic requirement of crime detection is definitely met. Investigations are carried out to establish the whereabouts of Jimmy Makuruku. But the methods of investigation are also very elementary in the sense that there is no private detective or amateur detective who uses logic to arrive at a solution to the mystery. The case is in the hands of the police but we do not see them doing any investigations. All what the reader gets are references here and there to the effect that the police are investigating but we do not see them doing the actual job. The police tell the aggrieved Didimus Saunyama that:

Chidzokera zvako kumba kwako, isu tichafeya-feya. Kana iwewo uchinge wanzwa kumusha kwake kana kwaakaenda uye kuzotiudza. (p.161)

(You can go back to your house, we shall investigate. If you come to know of his home or his whereabouts you come and alert us.)

This is all what the police can do. Instead of carrying out the investigations themselves they sit back and merely hope to bump into helpful clues. The aggrieved part, who has a terrible criminal record himself, decides to carry out the investigation himself. When he picks up a mutilated national identity certificate, Didimus resolves that:

Zvakana ndezvokuti ndizive muridzi wacho, ndigoenda kumusha kwake kunofeya ndega. Kana ndazomuona ariye Jimmy, ndobva ndaenda kumapurisa aikoko ndomusungisa. (p. 164)

(The best thing is for me to know its owner, then go to his home and investigate on my own. If I find out that it is Jimmy, I will go to the local police and have him arrested.)

When he is told by registry officials that the identity certificate he has picked up was issued in Gatooma he decides to go there and investigate further:

Ndakafanira kuti ndikwire chitima chete ndiende Gatooma ndinotsvaga kuti munhu ane namba dzechitupa chandakanonga ichi ndiani? (p.167)

(I must board the train and go to Gatooma to find out the owner of the number on the identity certificate I picked up.)

From this moment onwards the reader puts the police at the back of his mind and now focuses on Didimus. In Gatooma, Didimus is told by the registry officials there that the person whose mutilated identity certificate he picked up is Tichareva Jimisi from Nyika in Mungezi. The police contribution here is very minimal. We only hear about them when they are invited to come and collect the dead bodies of Didimus and Jimmy:

Izvozvo majoni akanga apedza kuferefeta zvose zvakanga zvaitika. Kana namapurisa okuHighfield anove ndivo akatanga kufambisa nyaya iyi akanga oziva kuti Jimmy Makuruku akanga awanikwa. (p. 189)

(By that time the white police officers had completed their investigations of what had happened. Even the police in Highfield who had started the case now knew that Jimmy Makuruku had been found.)

How the police carried out their investigations is not known. However, what is important here is that investigations have been carried out and Jimmy Makuruku has been found, regardless of who found him.

This probably reflects what Barzum (1980:144) has in mind when he says:

It is not enough that one of the characters in the story should be called a detective - nor is it necessary. What is required is that the main interest of the story should consist of finding out, from circumstances largely physical, the true order and meaning of events that have been part disclosed and part concealed.

*Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] is therefore a kind of detective story because investigations of a crime are carried out. However, it is not a proper detective story because there is no amateur or professional detective to solve the mystery. It is solved by Didimus who may be regarded as a 'minor' character in the second part of the story if we consider that the main protagonists in a proper detective story are the detective and the criminal. Didimus is not a detective. He is a criminal coming out of prison to solve the mystery of the theft that took place in his own shop. These observations make it possible for one to argue that this narrative is a detective story at a very elementary stage of development.

The conspicuous absence of private detectives in the Shona detective stories published before 1980 is not surprising. There were in real life black detectives in Rhodesia but they were part of the police organisations such as the Criminal Investigations Department. There were no private detectives among the blacks. The settler government could not be expected to allow blacks to establish private security companies and then hire their private detectives to investigate cases for the state. Individual white citizens with their racial prejudices could not be expected to hire black private detectives either. Most Africans would not hire private detectives because they could not afford the expenses. For these reasons, it would not make any economic sense for a black man to set up a private security company even if he was allowed to. However, among the whites there could have been private detectives who could be hired by other whites, for example, those who wanted to track wives they suspected of infidelity. Some private detectives were foreign nationals who came as mercenaries and were employed by the Smith regime as intelligence agents to penetrate and break the guerrilla movements operating from neighbouring countries.

The likelihood is therefore that many blacks, including most of those who became writers of Shona detective stories before 1980, had no inside knowledge of private detection. There were no real-life black detectives they could use as models in their works. They could not get their models from the whites either because Rhodesian society was racially divided with blacks and whites living in separate areas. The races lived apart and had 'little social contact' (Barber, 1967:2). The black writers therefore had very limited, if any, knowledge of private detection. For that reason, private detectives do not feature in their works. Almost all the writers of Shona detective stories before 1980 except Morgan

Mahanya, feature detectives similar to the kind of police detectives from local police stations who they used to see investigating criminal cases in the townships or in the rural areas where they lived.

The other essential requirement which a detective story should have is that there ought to be clues which the detective is going to study in order to find a solution to a puzzle. The importance of clues in a detective story is emphasized by Cawelti (1991:4) when he says that:

an investigator sets out to work through a set of clues in order to discover the 'real' truth of the object of his investigation...

The early writers of Shona detective stories do provide their investigators with clues. For this reason the narratives meet one of the minimum requirements for them to be considered as some kinds of detective stories. In all the rudimentary examples of detective stories given in this chapter the investigators are presented with clues which they examine in order to arrive at solutions to the puzzles. In *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] the parker pen picked up by police at the scene of murder becomes a useful clue in solving the mystery revolving around who murdered Sarudzai in her room. This parker pen was given to Chikweya by his employer on the day the murder was committed. Even Chikweya's earlier statement to Sarudzai that 'kukakona kufa ini kunoti kufe mumwe wedu' (p. 8) (If I don't die, one of us definitely will) is a useful clue that is used against him in court. Moreover, his fingerprints are found on the murder knife.

In *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] the clue which leads to the solution of the mystery revolving around the whereabouts of Jimmy Makuruku is the mutilated national registration certificate picked up at the scene of the crime. Similarly, in *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] clues are provided which assist the police in their investigations. The clues 'which must be interpreted to arrive at a solution' (Cawelti, 1991:9) are many. One clue is Bingwa's eye, badly injured during the commission of the crime and eventually removed at the hospital. This becomes a permanent mark which later assists the police in their investigations. The various clothing items that Bingwa leaves at the scene of the crime also become useful clues in police investigations. His jacket also contains a piece of paper on which is written his own name, Bingwa Gore. Vhandu expresses satisfaction when they discover this piece of paper:



(Now we have got the criminal sergeant. We have found a useful lead to the solution.)

These rudimentary examples of Shona detective stories and many others show that the frequency with which criminals leave evidence at the scenes of crime is very high. As Thompson (1980:95) puts it, 'it is almost as if the wrong doer positively invites detection'. Even in real crimes committed in Rhodesia many criminals especially amateurs, failed to polish up their act so that the police often found it easy to find a lead. Such kind of crimes are not so sophisticated and hence police investigations do not become sophisticated either. This is the kind of criminology that most writers of Shona detective stories before 1980 write about. The crimes in these early Shona detective stories are simple, the criminals are also simple and hence the investigators are simple policemen with no special talents. The criminals literary 'leave their national identity certificates or pieces of papers carrying their names' at the scenes of crime so that it is so easy for the policemen to find them. Once Didimus finds a mutilated national identity certificate it becomes easy for him to find Jimmy Makuruku; once a parker pen is picked up at the scene of the murder of Sarudzai, it is no longer a problem to identify Chikweya as the murderer; and once a piece of paper with Bingwa Gore's name is found at the scene of the attempted murder of Komboni, it also becomes easy to identify the culprit. This shows clearly that the Shona detective story in its elementary stage of development lacks the maturity that characterises the proper Shona detective stories that appeared later. As Suits (1985:202) puts it, a writer of a detective story:

must not make the clues so obviously directed toward the guilt of X that it is virtually impossible not to solve the puzzle, and he must not make the clues so vague, ambiguous, or meagre that it is virtually impossible to solve the puzzle.

The writers of these narratives do not provide the reader with a battle of wits between the investigator and the criminal. When the criminals are caught they appear helpless in their bid to outwit the police. They do not seem to have depth of talent required to match that of the 'detective'. What these rudimentary examples of Shona detective stories lack is what Waugh (1982:34) has described as a:

line of pitting a supergenius against a supergenius criminal who invented the most intricate, elaborate, and complex means of trying to get away with murder.

While the writers of the rudimentary examples of Shona detective stories have made clues so obviously directed towards the actual criminal, they have also tried to use another method meant to divert the attention of the 'detective', at least for a while. This method, also used by writers of bonafide detective stories, is called 'misdirection'. The writer misdirects the attention of the detective away from the **guilt** to the innocent as the criminal. The effect of this has been that at first the guilty appears to be innocent and the innocent appears to be guilty.

In *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] it appears at first that Karumekangu, the main character, is the murderer of Sarudzai. All evidence point to him at first. He is the one who is last seen with Sarudzai on the day that she is murdered. The murder knife picked up by the police at the scene of murder carries his initials, 'K.M.'. Karumekangu has to run away to Johburg to give time for justice to correct itself. In *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] Mabhugu places obstacles in the path of the police so that at first they see the innocent as guilty and the guilty as innocent. At first it appears as if Bingwa and Edwina are innocent and Zvondiwa and his farm workers are responsible for the attempted murder of Komboni. What points to Zvondiwa and his workers are a number of wrong clues placed at the scene of murder. Tarusenga becomes a suspect because he is found at the scene of the attempted murder. Zodias Makozho phones the police so he becomes a police suspect as well. Zvondiwa is injured in an attempt to save Komboni's life and he becomes suspect number one. Moreover, the axe used to 'murder' Komboni is Zvondiwa's .

It should be noted however that in these rudimentary examples of Shona detective stories only the investigator and not the reader, is misdirected by the use of this tactic. In almost all these kinds of 'detective' narratives, the crimes are committed in the 'presence' of the reader. The reader is shown the criminals, the commission of the crime, the motives of the criminals and even the places where they go to hide. So what provides the reader with suspense and aesthetic pleasure is not the state of unknowing the 'whodunit' (who did it), but the state of knowing what the investigator does not know, and the uncertainty of whether he will ultimately discover what the reader himself is privileged to know. The reader watches with a certain measure of pleasure as the police get misdirected and lost but ultimately pick up the spoor again. The reader enjoys every bit of it because he knows the police will not get lost for ever. They will eventually get at the criminal because as Schwartz (1975:356) correctly notes all 'detective literature kept repeating a much less significant refrain, crime does not pay, over and over again'. So the police will

ultimately apprehend the criminal and that is what the reader knows the author wants to happen.

With respect to the use of the tactic of misdirection the rudimentary examples of Shona detective stories differ from the full-fledged Shona detective stories. In the full-fledged Shona detective stories, the writer misdirects both the reader and the detective.

Writers of rudimentary works of Shona detective fiction, unlike those who later wrote proper detective stories, do not allow the 'detective' to provide the solution. According to Cawelti, (1991:10):

In the solution section, the detective explains the crime and puts the events surrounding it in their proper perspective.

In these rudimentary works of Shona detective stories the investigator does not explain anything at the end of the story. For example, in *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] the policeman who investigates the crime does not explain the crime. The events of the crime are provided by Chikweya through confessions in court. In *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] the reader also gets the explanation of events surrounding the crime from the criminals' confessions in court and not from the investigator. In *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] there is no explanation of any events. This explanation of events is also called the denouement, which, according to the *Collins English dictionary* (1956:264), is the unravelling of the complication of a complicated plot.

It is probably reasonable to suggest that authors of these rudimentary works do not make their 'detectives' explain the events of the crime because their 'detectives' are not real great detective heroes in the mould of great detectives like Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, Christie's Hercule Poirot, Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey and Van Dine's Philo Vance. When great detectives explain to readers and other characters the events surrounding fictional crimes, they really show that they are gifted intellectuals and great problem - solving geniuses which the 'detectives' we see in these rudimentary works of Shona detective fictions are not.

One other dimension of the Shona detective story in its elementary stage of development is that the authors tend to want to end their stories with the trial of the criminal in a court of law. This also explains why the authors do not make the 'detectives' explain events of the crime because this will be done by the criminals themselves in court anyway. For example, in *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] Chikweya is tried in court and so are Bingwa and Edwina in *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979]. In *Rima Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] we are saved from the boredom of going through court proceedings by the untimely deaths of the criminals. The white police officer says:

Handisati ndamboona nyaya yakadai muupenyu hwangu hwose. KuGatooma Didimus afa, kuno Jimmy afa. Zvino achatongwa ndiani?  
(p. 188)

(I have never seen a case like this in my entire life. In Gatooma Didimus is dead, here Jimmy is dead. Now who will be tried?)

Perhaps it is just as well that the two criminals die. The trial is not essential. Moreover, the author may not necessarily be conversant with court proceedings. Haycraft (1942:255) has advised that detective story writers should 'try to close your case without recourse to legal procedure' since, among other things, 'legal aspects of crime offer the most technical problems and pitfalls'. Full-fledged Shona detective stories except one, do not end in court.

Because the writer is keen to teach a moral lesson and to show that crime does not pay, the denouement includes spelling out the punishment given to the apprehended criminal. Cawelti (1991:10) says that in the denouement 'the criminal is apprehended and justice meted out.' Accordingly, Chikweya is sentenced to twenty-five years in prison for murder. Bingwa and Edwina are sentenced to seven and five years with hard labour respectively, for attempted murder. Jimmy and Didimus both die, while Anna Mutiro becomes mad. Explaining the type of punishment meted out to criminals at the end of the story is a characteristic of the Shona detective story at the elementary stage of its development.

*Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] shows another dimension that shows that it is a detective story at an elementary stage of development. As the very final act of this story Karumekangu and Mandirasa marry in court. The reader certainly sees no good reason for this arrangement. He sees clearly that this marriage has been contrived by the author. The author is trying to establish harmony where there has been discord. The criminal has gone to jail for a very long time and the marriage symbolises the peace and state of grace which has been restored. The reader clearly sees that this type of ending is influenced by traditional folktales where the romantic hero ends up marrying a very beautiful woman, becomes a rich king and lives happily ever after, without the reader knowing how all these blessings come about.

One of the rules that many critics of detective fiction emphasize is that there must be a rational solution to a puzzle. Puzzles should not be solved by some coincidence without a logical explanation being provided. Knox (cited by Symons, 1972:2) emphasised this point in 1928 in his 'Ten Commandments of Detection' when he pointed out that:

No accident must ever help the detective nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition, which proves to be right.

Supporting the same view Symons (1972:101) reiterates that:

Clues had to be provided, and it was necessary that the detective should draw from them rational and inevitable conclusions. Any conclusions reached purely by coincidence, should be a failure on the part of the author and were unfair to the reader.

What is implied here is that any solution arrived at by the detective using illogical means which the reader cannot comprehend are totally unfair. Haycraft (1942:224) accuses in very strong terms any detective story writer who uses coincidences to assist his characters out of difficult situations as:

...mere romancer who commits the unpardonable sin of letting crass coincidences extricate his characters from their predicament.

The use of coincidence in a detective story is therefore a sign that the author has not obeyed one of the rules that govern the genre. One example of the use of coincidence is found in *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971]. In this narrative there are a number of coincidences that help to bring about the successful conclusion to the Jimmy Makuruku saga. Of course, the discovery of the mutilated identity certificate helps Didimus to find his way to where Jimmy can be found. But the author on his part has contrived situations so that when Didimus gets to Mungezi Reserve he finds all the major actors in the unfolding drama assembled at one place. The coincidences are so complicated that the reader finds them unbelievable. The coincidences bring about a complicated network of new relationships in which everyone is related to everyone else in a new way. For example, at the end of the story it turns out that Rhudiya is Jimmy Makuruku's sister and that Jimmy's actual name is Tichareva. But all along they did not know this. It also turns out that Jimmy Makuruku is Didimus's brother-in-law because Didimus is married to Jimmy's sister Rhudiya. But all along they did not know this. The reader too has not been aware of these relationships until he finds everyone turning up for Jimmy's welcome home party because, in one way or the other, everyone is related to him.

Such coincidences should not be allowed to occur in a proper detective story. A mystery should be solved by the detective using his intellect and deductive powers. The fact that such coincidence occurs in *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] is a clear indication that such narratives are examples of imperfectly developed detective stories.

### 2.3 Conclusion

As we have noted above, the Shona detective story emerges from the type of Shona traditional folktale narratives which have nothing to do with detection. Such folktale narratives have in them some kind of 'criminal' characters who commit some form of 'crime'. The process of finding out such 'criminals' does not involve a detective-like character who carries out step by step investigation involving the examination of clues.

Narratives such as *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970], *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971], and *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] are some examples of the Shona detective story in its formative stages of development.

With the exception of *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970] most of them use proverbs for their titles. This is a result of influence of oral literature which persists long after writing was introduced. The tendency for many writers of such narratives is to want to continue the work of the Sarungano (storyteller) of educating society. As Kahari (1990: 213) points out, 'they all turn out to be moralistic'.

Most of these rudimentary works of detective fiction in Shona do not show at the beginning that they have anything to do with crime detection. They start as something else but gradually they are turned into detective stories. There is a dichotomy that is noticeable. The first part of each narrative deals with other things. But at a certain point a crime is committed and that is where the second part, the detective narrative, begins.

The second part of the narrative, starting from the time a crime is committed, attempts to meet the minimum requirement of a detective story. From that point onwards the story contains a crime, a criminal, clues and a 'detective' to solve the problems.

At this point in the development of the Shona detective story no use has as yet been made of private detectives. We only see policemen from the local police station, and even then, they are not yet good enough to be regarded as true detective heroes in the strictest sense of the word. In *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971], for example, the author uses the aggrieved part as the 'detective'.

The narratives used as examples in this chapter show that in the formative stages of the development of the Shona detective story, the narratives do possess qualities that may be regarded as minimal requirements for classification as forms of detective stories. Yet on the other hand they show flaws that place them far from anywhere near the works of the likes of Edgar Wallace, Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle or anywhere near the works of Morgan Mahanya, James Kawara or Edmund Masundire who also write detective stories in the Shona language.

## CHAPTER 3

### PURE 'WHODUNIT'

#### 3.1 Definition of the pure 'whodunit'

The Shona detective story, the 'whodunit', studied in this chapter is so well developed that in contrast to the rudimentary forms of the genre studied in Chapter 2 various terms can be used to describe it. Rahn (1988:50) has used the term 'proper detective novel' to describe a detective story which implements most of the classical conventions of the genre, while the term 'full-fledged detective novel' has been used by Suits (1985:207) to achieve the same purpose. Haycraft (1942: viii.) and Todorov (1988:159) have used the terms 'bona-fide' and 'pure' respectively to describe well-developed forms of the detective genre. All these terms used by these various critics are quite useful in describing the Shona detective stories studied in this chapter because they help us distinguish proper detective stories from the Shona narratives that have been classified in this study as rudimentary forms.

The Shona detective stories referred to as the pure 'whodunits' have become a genre distinct from the mainstream novel. They show by their characteristics that the Shona detective story has assumed a new dimension different from that assumed by the works of the likes of Paul Chidyausiku, Amos Munjanja and Janiel Mabhugu. The pure Shona 'whodunit' suits very well the definitions of the detective story given by many critics. In very simple terms, Bruce Cassiday (1982:2) defines a detective story as one that 'contains a crime, a criminal, clues, and a detective to solve the problem.'

Cassiday's definition describes a detective story in very precise terms, giving its main ingredients. Skvorecky agrees with Cassiday's definition but his own is more elaborate and throws more light on the main features of the detective genre:

The detective story is a story about the solving of a crime, usually a murder, the perpetrator of which is unknown to the detective and to the reader. The solution is effected by strictly logical means. It poses a crime's basic questions - who? How? Why? - and answers them by the results of the detective's investigations (Skvorecky, 1991:240).



Clearly, a detective story must present the reader with a crime and a detective whose purpose in the story is to try and discover who committed the crime, how he committed it, and the motive for his action.

The *World Book Encyclopedia* (1991:168) adds other dimensions to the definition. It says that a:

Detective story is a work of fiction about a puzzling crime, a number of clues, and a detective who solves the mystery. In most detective stories the crime is murder and the clues lead to or away from the solution.

The new dimension added here is that the crime is a 'real' puzzle. A real good detective story provides the reader and the detective with a strange happening which is very difficult to comprehend, and while not impossible, is hard to solve. No wonder Suits (1985:201) has described it as 'a puzzle in the form of a story'. Another aspect added in this definition is the technique of misdirection by which clues are used to lead to or away from the solution. This is a technique used by writers of detective stories in order to increase the possibility of shock surprise when the criminal is finally revealed at the end.

### **3.2 Quantitative growth**

Development can be measured in terms of numbers or quantities. While there is a plethora of Shona novels published to date those that have diverted from the mainstream novel to become pure, full-fledged detective stories are relatively very few. Quantitatively therefore, the Shona detective story has not made much stride to date. One reason for this state of affairs could be that because the detective story genre the author is working in is, according to Suits (1985:205), a game genre, he is:

bound by game rules in making his game in just the way that the players of ordinary games are bound by the rules of the games they play.

Because a detective story is a special type of genre with rules to be rigidly obeyed some writers have not managed to produce work of acceptable standard according to the publishers. Some writers fail to make it because at the publishing house:

A work was judged poor if it did not sufficiently obey the rules of its genre (Todorov, 1988: 158).

This was confirmed by Haasbroek, a retired educationist and former literary editor with Mambo Press publishers in Gweru. In an interview (1996) Haasbroek revealed that he turned down a manuscript on detective fiction by renowned Shona historical novelist Norbert Mutasa because it totally lacked plausibility as it was a translocation of American science fiction with no relevance whatsoever to Zimbabwean experience. Many writers have contented themselves with writing the usual Shona novels in the mainstream rather than attempt the detective story genre for which S.S. Van Dine in 1928 made 'twenty rules to which any self-respecting author of detective fiction must conform' (Todorov, 1988:162).

The bona-fide, pure Shona detective stories published to date, and they hardly add up to ten, have been written by only four authors, namely, Morgan Mahanya, James Kawara, Edmund Masundire and to a lesser extent, Mordekai Hamutyinei. Of significance here is the fact that Hamutyinei and Mahanya have worked as newspaper reporters before. This job enabled them to get stories that gave them some ideas on writing detective stories. Even of more significance is the fact that Mahanya was once a policeman, while both Masundire and Kawara are still with police and Criminal Investigations Department, respectively. It is not surprising that these three men are at the forefront of writing Shona detective stories. Journalism and police work have, among other things, sensitised these few authors to write detective stories.

### **3.3 Titles of pure Shona 'whodunits'**

One obvious sign of growth is the ability to shed off certain features that are a characteristic of youth. The Shona detective story has shown its ability to do just that. In Chapter 2 we found that most of the narratives described as rudimentary examples of Shona detective stories use proverbs for their titles. The novels described as pure, full-fledged detective stories in this chapter have shed off this characteristic of 'youth' which is a manifestation of the influence of Shona folktale on the written Shona novel. The reason for this could be that most writers of the Shona detective story in its formative stages of development were more concerned with teaching moral lessons than with writing detective stories pure

and simple. For them, the title must teach an important lesson.

The writers of the bona-fide detective stories in Shona, the pure 'whodunits', are more concerned with writing crime detection stories dedicated exclusively to investigations. Their titles do not have to teach any lesson. The story itself will give the moral, and the punishment meted out to the criminal at the end will teach that 'crime does not pay'. There are, however, a few exceptions of the bona-fide Shona detective stories which have proverbs as titles. These are *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976], *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980], and the short story of the title *Seri Kweguva Hakuna Muteuro* [There is no prayer after death] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989], all by Morgan Mahanya.

The rest of the full-fledged detective stories in Shona published after 1980 have titles which are not proverbs, showing that although a few such as those cited above have used proverbs, the general tendency is towards running away from such titles. Mahanya has used the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say?] for one of his short stories in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989]. Hamutyinei's only full-fledged detective story has the title *Ziso Rapindwa Nemhiripiri* [Pepper in the eye, 1988]. One of the most gifted writers of crime and detective stories in Shona, James Kawara, has given his novels the titles *Sajeni Chimedza*, [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] and *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995], respectively. And Edmund Masundire has given his detective stories and detective - cum - thrillers the following titles: *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991], *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991], *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] and *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994.]

In the light of the above titles it would be reasonable to concur with Boas & Smith (1925:217) who say that:

A title should naturally arouse interest in the story and give some clue to its character - that is, it should be interesting and suggestive.

Most of the titles cited above are suggestive and are good appetizers. Any lover of detective stories would be attracted by titles such as *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene] and *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza] while *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up] suggests a story with a plot full of twists and turns, and *Bhindauko* [Versatility] suggests a story about illegal dealings. Moreover, these titles are briefer than those based on proverbs and are therefore more eye-catching. As Boas & Smith (1925:215) have asserted:

Brevity is a desirable quality in a title; a long title is cumbersome, a double title unnecessary.

A modern reader is not likely to be attracted by a long proverb-title like *Dambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje (pahuma)* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded]. Such a title does not point to a detective story. It points to a moral lesson or a lecture. It tends to put the reader off because he knows that the Shona author is at it again: teaching and moralising. The reader is looking for entertainment, not moral didacticism.

### 3.4 The beginning

One dimension that is a characteristic feature of the development of the pure detective story in Shona is the way it begins. Unlike the Shona detective story in its formative stages of development, the pure 'whodunit' begins with a crime. That is the proper starting point of a proper detective story because it is supposed to deal with nothing else other than with crime detection. The beginning must indicate that the story is about crime and its detection. As Boas & Smith (1925:219) have stressed:

The beginning of a story is important because it must at once make clear the situation and the characters, explain all that the reader needs to know about what has taken place before the story begins, and arouse immediate interest.

Nowhere are the words of Boas & Smith (1925:219) more relevant than in a detective story. The beginning of a detective story must show that a crime has been committed and that crime will set in motion the process of investigation. That process of investigation is what the reader is going to read about in the pile of pages that is going to follow.

In starting their narratives with crime the writers of Shona detective stories are also following in the footsteps of Edgar Allan Poe, since:

Poe's statement of the problem at the outset of the story and his step-by-step solution of the mystery became the conventional form of the detective story. (*Students' Encyclopedia*, 1991:560)

There is no doubt that the development of the pure, full-fledged Shona detective story is a product of those authors who read a number of Western detective stories in English. Writers of pure, full-fledged Shona detective stories certainly learnt something from Western detective story writers and this certainly influenced the development of the Shona detective story because writing techniques can be learnt from others. This theory is in agreement with the theory which Chastain has put forward that:

Writing can't be taught, but it can be learned, and the way to learn is by reading the work of other writers. (Chastain, 1982:29)

As Woollacott & Hind (1990:49) have also advised, it is important for the potential novelist to try and read as many novels as possible. For the aspiring author of detective fiction he reads detective stories written by others.

Statements from some of the outstanding writers of Shona detective stories throw some light on this important aspect. Masundire and Kawara admitted having been influenced in a big way by reading Western detective stories. In response to a questionnaire (1996), Masundire indicated that he reads among others the works of James Hadley Chase and Frederick Forsyth. In an interview (1996), Kawara gave as some of his reasons for writing detective stories reading works of writers such as Agatha Christie, James Hadley Chase and Hammond Innes. Mahanya did not mention his favourite authors. Although none of these authors ever read the works of Poe they all admitted having been influenced by

reading some Western detective stories written by Western authors who themselves used the conventional form of the detective story introduced by Poe. For this reason there is a temptation to want to judge their works by the same yardstick used to judge Western detective stories since the full-fledged Shona detective story appears to be an imitation of its Western counterpart, though largely with a local content.

The Shona pure detective story may open with the detective introducing himself and presenting the reader with the crime. The crime, usually murder, may have taken place before the story began. As Mandel (1984:25) has observed:

The initial murder is the heart of the action, and it occurs at the outset of the story, sometimes even before it begins.

Mandel talks of murder because it is the most common and the most shocking, but crime committed can be anything. In Mahanya's *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980] the novel opens with the detective's remarks that:

Ini zita rangu ndinonzi Muzvondiwa. Ndiri mufeyi anozvishandira pachezvake ega. Nhasi uno ndiri kukuudzai nezvenyaya inonzi Ndomene Haichemedzi, iyo inova nyaya yakazoita kuti ndigume ndava mufudzi wemombe nokuva muchairi wemotokari yemhondi. (p. 1)

(My name is Muzvondiwa. I am a private detective. Today I am telling you a story called *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard] which caused me to end up as a herdboy as well as a driver of a murderer's car).

This self-introduction and presentation of the crime by the detective right at the outset on page 1 makes it clear to the reader that this is a story about crime detection. Another short story by the same author with the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say?] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] begins with a similar self-introduction by the detective right at the outset, before page 1:

Zita rangu ndinonzi M'zondiwa. Pazuva ranhasi ndadaidzwa kuti nditsvage mukomana anonzi Robson Pasipanodya uyo akanyangarika masakati machena, zuva rakajeka nyika kuti bhaa.

(My name is M'zondiwa. Today I have been hired to investigate the case of a boy called Robson Pasipanodya who disappeared in broad daylight.)

In a similar way Kawara's detective novel *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] opens with the detective introducing himself in the second paragraph of the first page of Chapter 1:

Zita rangu chairo rizere ndinonzi Zenze Chimedzanemburungwe. Iri zita ndiro riri patwukadhi twandinopa kuvanhu vandinenge ndichishandira. Basa rangu ini Chimedzanemburungwe nderekufeyafeya. Ndinoita utikitivha hwangu pachezvangu...(p. 5)

(My real name is Zenze Chimedzanemburungwe. This is the name on my business cards which I give to the people who hire me. My job, I Chimedzanemburungwe, is that of investigating. I am a private detective...)

This self-introduction by the detective is followed by the presentation of the crime which is the mysterious death of Thabet Urahwenda two weeks before her planned wedding. This makes it clear right from the start that a crime has already been committed and this story is about its detection.

Masundire's novel, *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991], indicates clearly right at the outset that it is about crime detection. It also begins with the detective introducing himself:

Zita rangu ndinonzi Pedzisa Dumbuzenene. Kana ndiri kuita zvebasa vanhu vanonditi Sajeni Dumbuzenene, kana kungoti Sajeni chete... Ndinoferefeta ndiri muMasvingo. (p. 3)

(My name is Pedzisa Dumbuzenene. When I am on my job people call me Sergeant Dumbuzenene, or simply Sergeant... I carry out my investigations in the town of Masvingo.)

In this novel the crime, which is theft from Muchakaza's store, is presented just before the end of the very same first chapter.

In Kawara's *Bindauko* [Versatility, 1995] the detective does not introduce himself and although the crime is presented in the third chapter it is clear from the two preceding chapters that the story is about a detective's investigations. In the first chapter Mabhurukwa asks Gwenembe:

Iwe mubasa rako rokufeya zvingani zvaunoona zvinofungirwa kuti hazviitike? (p. 6)

(In your work of investigating crimes how many things do you see which people think do not happen?)

Mahanya's *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] opens with the murder of Timothy Manenji's wife, Lucia, by an unknown murderer. Sergeant Muzvondiwa's investigations begin immediately as Chapter 2 opens.

The self-introduction by the detectives and the presentation of the crimes right at the beginning of the stories is a clear indication that the Shona detective story has come of age. There is so much evidence as shown above to prove that the pure, full-fledged detective stories in Shona all start in a more or less formalised way, which tends to validate Walker's viewpoint that:

Detective stories have a standard discourse. They start at, or shortly before, the first dramatic event, usually murder. They then display two narrative intentions: one is forward - moving, often toward a further murder or murders and an eventual discovery of the culprit; the other is backward-looking, aimed at the unravelling of events and motivations and relationships which have occurred or developed at a time previous to the start of the discourse. (Walker, 1991:132)

Once the detective and the crime are presented at the beginning the chances of the authors dwelling on aspects that have nothing to do with crime detection are almost nil. The crime in a detective story is only a means to an end, which is detection. The investigation conducted by the detective to solve the crime forms the principal line of action of the story. From the moment the detective is hired to investigate a crime all that the reader reads about till the end is investigation. For example, in *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] 50 out of 54 pages that make up the book are devoted to investigations by Muzvondiwa. In *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] about 118 out of 135 pages are devoted to investigations by the detective and nothing else. Similarly, Kawara devotes 159 pages out of 174 of *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] to the detection and revelation of the murderer of Thabet. Kawara also devotes about 115 pages out of 135 of *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] to the investigations by detective Gwenembe.

There is nowhere in all these examples of full-fledged Shona detective stories that the reader loses sight of the detective at work as what happens in the rudimentary forms of the detective stories.



### 3.5 Use of private detectives as characters

In Chapter 2 it has been stated that the Shona detective story in its formative stages of development does not use private detectives as characters. But the pure Shona 'whodunit' features private detectives. The first Shona detective story writer to use a private detective in his stories is Morgan Mahanya. He introduced Muzvondiwa as the first private detective in Shona literature ever in his novel *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980]. Mahanya's success story was to be repeated by other writers in the 1980s and 1990s. James Kawara used private detectives Zenze Chimedzanemburungwe in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] and Gwenembe in *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995], while Edmund Masundire used private detective Pedzisai Dumbuzenene in *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] and *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994].

The use of private detectives as fictional characters is a new phenomenon in Shona literature. Two factors could have been responsible for this development. One factor could have been that the model for detective fiction is widely available in the form of imported film and television shows, and from books (Lepine, 1987:67). In these film shows and books private detectives are featured as heroes. Mystery stories such as those by James Hadley Chase are among the most popular among Zimbabwean readers. Moreover, more and more Shona people had access to televisions and video recorders after independence.

The other factor that could have led to the popular use of private detectives in the Shona 'whodunits' could be the rise of private detective companies in Zimbabwe which use real life black private detectives to combat crime. One such private detective company is Egg Care Security formed in 1991, which provides security guards and specialises in private investigations. It is headed by Govati Mhora, a retired former deputy commissioner of police (crime) who is himself a *bona fide* and respected private investigator. Admittedly, 'most ordinary Zimbabweans haven't heard of private investigators, so clients are usually large companies and legal firms' (*Horizon*, March/April 1995, p. 9). Private detectives are usually hired by large companies when, for example, they want to prevent or investigate frauds in their firms.

But if ordinary Zimbabweans have not heard about private detectives, writers of pure detective stories in Shona have worked with, or are still with the police force or with the Criminal Investigations Department and therefore have some knowledge of the existence and operations of private detectives. Police and private detectives often cooperate in order to succeed in combating crime. Private detective Mhora of Egg Care Security has admitted that:

We are complementary to the police. There is no rivalry and we have a very good working relationship. The police liaise with us and we share information. (*Horizon*, March/April 1995, p. 9)

Mhora's revelation was confirmed by Chief Superintendent Kawara of the Criminal Investigations Department when he disclosed in an interview (1996) that police and private detectives sometimes work together. Kawara, who is with Criminal Investigations Department, Masundire with Traffic Police, and Mahanya who is a retired police constabulary, have all used private detectives in their works.

One significant contribution to the development of the pure, full-fledged detective story in Shona is the creation of a series detective. A series detective is a sleuth who features in more than one story. The first Shona detective novelist to create a character who features in more than one story is Mahanya. In Detective Muzvondiwa (often spelt M'zondiwa) Mahanya has attempted to create his own Sherlock Holmes. Muzvondiwa features as a private detective in Mahanya's three detective stories, namely, *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980], in the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989], and as an amateur sleuth in *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976]. Masundire follows suit with his two series detectives. Detective Dumbuzenene appears in *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] and in *Dzapingana* [It is all tangled up, 1994], respectively. Similarly, Masundire features Chief Inspector Chiminya in his two detective - thrillers, namely, *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant tusk, 1992], respectively.

In creating their own series detectives Mahanya and Masundire have done what Poe, Doyle and many others in the West have done before. It is quite possible to allow the same detective to appear in more than one story. Schwartz (1975:406) recognised this possibility when he conceded that:

A cat has nine lives, a series detective many more depending, of course, upon the number of stories in which he or she appears.

Arthur Conan Doyle created such a memorable character in Sherlock Holmes that there are many people who believe that Holmes was a living person (Hagen, 1969:622). Similarly, one would think that Muzvondiwa and Chief Inspector Chiminya are living persons. Actually Mahanya revealed in responding to a questionnaire (1996) that Muzvondiwa is a fictional character based on a one time close friend of his who was a member of the British South Africa Police (BSAP) who died in a landmine accident during the Zimbabwe war of liberation.

The use of a single detective character in a number of stories has an advantage that readers become familiar with him. They easily recognise the detective whenever they meet him and they may even grow to love and identify themselves with him. As Haycraft (1942:231-2) puts it, the use of the same detective in a number of novels has an advantage in that:

Not only is a great deal of preliminary structure eliminated because it remains standing between books; readers become devoted to familiar sleuths (indeed, know their names better than those of the authors in many cases) with consequent material benefit to their creators.

Walker (1991:138) holds the same view-point as Haycraft:

The recurrence of the same character is a popular feature of detective novels... It is, perhaps, the strong sense of identity between reader and hero that is the strongest source of appeal.

Champigny (1977:93) echoes Haycraft and Walker when he says that:

Quite a few authors of detective stories have used the same detective in different books... The device also contributes to a legendary effect. The existence of the character seems to stretch beyond the discontinuous adventures that are narrated.

In responding to a questionnaire Masundire (1996) agreed with the just quoted critics. He explained that when he uses the same detective in more than one book, he 'wants to develop my character such that when readers see him in any other book they automatically anticipate action'. Mahanya and Masundire have done what some Western authors of detective stories have done before. As Champigny (1977:41) has noted:

Quite a few mystery story writers have kept the same investigating figure in several texts. The reader who is already familiar with Holmes, Poirot, Tell, Wimsey, Maigret or Marlowe will take it for granted that he is dealing with a straight detective who will succeed.

### **3.6 Contest between criminal and detective.**

As we move from the formative stage of development of the Shona detective story to the pure, full-fledged Shona detective story we find that the quality of the contest between the protagonists, that is, the sleuth and the criminal, is very high. In a pure detective story the detective and the criminal are almost evenly matched. The detective is not going to have his way as is the case in early Shona detective stories. As Haycraft (1942:254) points out:

The unities of the fictional detection demand a single principal criminal and a single principal detective. Both should be believable human beings, of superior and closely matched intelligence.

The detectives are created as men of giant intellect towering over their fellows, with only the villain as a challenger (Waugh 1982:40). In the early Shona detective stories the investigators are never intellectual giants while the villains only manage to offer them token challenges.

The authors of pure detective stories in Shona have shown that they have come of age by providing what Mandel (1984:16) has described as a 'battle of wits' between the criminal and the detective. Like what happens in the classical detective story, the criminals in the full-fledged Shona detective story, 'in order to be worthy foes of the superintelligent detective, had to devise incredible clever plots. The authors invented puzzles that were exquisite pieces of intellectual architecture' (Waugh, 1982:37). The criminals in these Shona tales are equally clever and they spend most of their time harassing the detective. They do not allow the detective peace to plan their arrest. They are not as 'passive' as the criminals in the early narratives who appear almost helpless when they are being investigated. It is this 'battle of brains' between the criminal and the detective that fascinates the reader and provides him with the much needed suspense and excitement. No wonder Mandel (1984:15) has seen it fit to argue that:

The very idea of 'outwitting' a criminal, if it is to hold any fascination, implies the existence of both a criminal with superior wits and a detective of even finer craftiness than the outstanding malefactor.

At first the criminal appears to get the better of the detective but ultimately the sleuth must come out on top. The criminals in the pure Shona detective stories do not run away even if they know that they are being hunted by the detective. In fact they are so daring that they actually intimidate the detective in an attempt to scare him off the cases he is handling. They are so crafty and skilful that they get to know the identity of the person who has been hired to investigate the crime, and they start to harass that person even before he begins to do the job, and even before he knows that someone wants to hire him.

In *Mutikitiivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] the criminals already know that Dumbuzenene will be hired by Muchakata to investigate the case of theft from his rural store even before the detective himself knows about his engagement. But instead of running away from him the criminal actually sends one of his men, Rasarira Guta, to the detective's office pretending to be a Post and Telecommunications man who has come to attend to the telephone. In the process the criminal places a device that would tape the detective's telephone conversations. Instead of running away the criminals warn the detective that:

Musaisa pasi sajeni. Chiteereresai manje ndave kukubayirai zanhi. Vanhu vakabirana siyai vakadaro. (p.19)

(Do not put down the receiver sergeant. Listen very carefully now that I am going to warn you. Leave people who stole from each other alone.)

It is this hide and seek game between the criminal and the detective that makes the pure Shona detective story exciting to read. The challenges posed to the detective by the criminal heighten the tension in the story. The criminal even has the courage to demobilise the detective by stealing his car wheel and leave in its place a threatening note:

Usavhaira! Kana uchida kuenderera mberi nenyaya dzisinei newe uchanongwa waoma. (p. 33)

(Do not get unnecessarily excited. If you want to continue with a case which has nothing to do with you, one day you will be found dead).

The criminals even go to the extent of pretending to be the detective and phone the detective's client and scold him, and tell him that he no longer wants to work for him. The result is that seeds of discord are sowed between the detective and the person who hired him. The whole idea behind a good and well-developed detective story is to have a criminal of superior wits so that when the detective eventually overcomes him the reader can give a sigh of relief and say, 'this is a great detective indeed'. The criminals in this novel are so cunning that the detective himself acknowledges that:

Ini mbavha dzandinoziva pano pasi dzinoti kana dzaba dzonyangarika, kutizira kure kure chaiko kwekuti chero woidza kumutevera haumubati. Kana aba anenge achidei munzvimbo imwe chete? Chinangwa chake chekuba anenge apedza. Zvino kana ave kunetsana nemutikitivha ari kufeya, a, - haunganzwisisi kuti anangei. Kuita basa rekutevera mutikitivha! Kuvhundutsira mutikitivha! Chinenge chiri chivindi chorudzii? (p. 52)

(The thieves I know on this earth disappear after stealing, running away to some far away place that even if you follow him you won't catch up with him. What does he want in the same area after stealing? He has achieved his aim. But now if he harasses a detective who is investigating, it becomes difficult to comprehend. Following a detective! Threatening a detective! What kind of courage is that?)

In the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] detective M'zondiwa who is hired by the Pasipanodya family to investigate the case of their son who was kidnapped is himself kidnapped by the same criminals. The way he is kidnapped is reminiscent of what happens in Western films and detective novels indicating clearly that in its development the Shona detective story has been influenced by similar literature from the West. As the detective starts his car he is given a shock surprise so common in Western films:

Usacheuke ndine 45 M'zondiwa, saka iye zvino ndinoda kuti utore nzira inopfuura nepachikoro cheDonje... zvokuzoita ndozokuudza tave mberi. (p. 34)

(Do not try any tricks. I have a 45 pistol M'zondiwa, so I want you to take the road to Donje School... I will tell you what to do when we get ahead.)

The detective is later knocked unconscious and his car is rolled over a cliff. As it rolls the driver's door opens and he is thrown out and the car bursts into a ball of yellow flames. The next moment the detective is seen lying on a bed in hospital. These challenges to the detective by the criminal and the survival skills of the detective are obtained from Western films and novels. A clear reference to Western influence is made by Tongai in *Akanga Nyimo Avangarara* [He who dares wins, 1982], a detective-

cum-thriller authored jointly by Mzemba and Mudunguri. Tongai says to Taruvinga when he explains how to kidnap Tichaona's wife, Dambudzo:

Ha-a, iwe Taruvinga usaite seusingapindi mifananidzo mhani... (p. 67)

(Ha-a, Taruvinga do not behave as if you don't watch films...)

In *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] the 'battle of wits' between the criminal and the detective is even more heightened. The criminal does not run away after committing the crime. Instead, the criminal keeps hovering over the detective. Before Sergeant Chimedzanemburungwe commences his investigations into the mysterious death of Thabet Urahwenda, the criminals know that he is the one hired to do the job. Hence, they try to harass him and to frighten him away from this case:

Iwe tsikidzi kana kuti Chimedzanemburungwe wanyanya kuvhaira. Upfu hwevamwe hausi hwemumba mako. Kana mapurisa ashaya ngazvigumire ipapo. Ndakuyambira. Usazoti Harare yakupandukira. 127 iyo ibva watorega hako. (p. 9)

(You Tsikidzi (bedbug) or Chimedzanemburungwe, you are becoming too big for yourself. Someone's source of income is none of your concern. If the police have failed let it end there. I have warned you. Never say Harare turned against you. You better leave case number 127 alone).

The criminals have actually managed to enter the detective's office, stole and perused the files in which the cases he is handling are recorded. They have also planted a microphone in his office so they can tap his conversations.

In a pure detective story in Shona the criminal makes elaborate and complex plans as means of trying to get away with his crimes. Detective Chimedzanemburungwe is duped into surrendering his own car to one of the criminals in the pretext that he wants to drive a drunken 'sister' home from a party. The 'sister' is actually the principal criminal, and with access to the detective's car keys the villains are able to have duplicate keys of his car and office made. Most people keep office and car keys on the same holder. The result is that the criminals could match the detective in every aspect. They could get into his office any time. They could also drive his car whenever they wished and use it to commit crimes in order to implicate him. Sergeant Chimedza becomes suspect number one when his car with his papers

is found parked next to the burnt corpse of Dr Dekenye which has been stolen from St Grace's Hospital mortuary. Dr Dekenye's chest has been cut open and his heart removed and placed in the detective's office. All evidence point to the detective as the heartless murderer. The criminals are so cunning that they can literally do whatever they want with the detective, including collecting his clothes from the dry-cleaners using receipts supplied by his own wife. Again the criminals continue to harass the detective until he complains that:

Mubasa rangu ndakanga ndaurura mhondi dzakawanda chaizvo. Mhondi zhinji dzaiti kana dzapara mhaka dzaibva dzahwanda kana kubva dzatotama dzoenda kune imwe nzvimbo kana nyika. Ko iyi mhondi iyi hwayo hwaive umhondi rudzii? Yaidirei kuramba iri muHarare mayaive yapara mhaka? (p. 56)

(In my job I had solved many murder cases. Most murderers went into hiding after committing crimes. But what type of murderer is this who stays in one place? Why does he insist on staying in Harare where he has committed a crime?)

Similarly, in *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] the criminal is more or less evenly matched with the detective. Even before detective Gwenembe knows that he is going to be hired to investigate a case the criminal is already aware of it and plans to eliminate him. While the detective is on a private visit to Mabhurakwacha's farm in Chegutu the criminal phones from somewhere to announce that something terrible has happened to the detective's wife. It is while driving to Harare that Gwenembe is coned, attacked and left for dead, but he survives.

When a Shona detective story presents such a closely contested duel between the criminal and the detective it is a sign of growth of the genre. The aesthetics of the detective story genre is there. Once the crime has been committed at the beginning and the detective has been engaged to investigate it the stage is set for a 'conflict of wits between the criminal and sleuth, in which the detective is traditionally victorious by outthinking his adversary' (Haycraft, 1942:258).



### 3.7 The contest between the reader and the detective

In Chapter 2 it has been shown that the detective in the rudimentary form of the Shona detective story is in the dark as to the perpetrator of, and the circumstances surrounding a crime. The reader has a full picture of events because usually the crimes are committed before his eyes. But a new aspect of development in the pure, full-fledged detective story in Shona is that the reader, like the detective, is also in the dark as to who the criminal is and what the circumstances of the crime are. Both the reader and the detective in a pure detective story in Shona set out to discover independently who the criminal is, how he committed the crime and why. This means that in the full-fledged, bona-fide Shona detective story there is, besides the battle of wits between the detective and the criminal, another battle of wits between the detective and the reader as the latter tries to beat the detective to the solution. This signifies a radical departure from the rudimentary forms of Shona detective stories. As Waugh (1982:33) rightly concludes:

The moment the reader was engaged in competition with the detective in an effort to beat him to the solution, a radical change occurred. The element of fair play became an ingredient in the game.

In *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] both the reader and the detective do not know who murdered Lucia Gwaindepi, Timothy Manenji's wife. In the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say?] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] both the reader and the detective do not know who kidnapped Robson Pasipanodya and his girlfriend, Rosemary; in *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] the detective as well as the reader are in the dark as to who stole from Muchakata's store. Similarly, both the detective and the reader do not know who murdered Thabet Urahwenda in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza 1984] and Dumukwa in *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995], respectively. The detective and the reader are engaged in a kind of competition in an effort to beat each other to the solutions to all these mysteries.

Since the reader is engaged in some form of competition with the detective in order to arrive at a solution it is necessary that fairness becomes the rule of the game. All clues available to the detective should be made available to the reader (Waugh, 1982:34). La Cour & Megensen (1971:120) lends support to this same view when they state that:

The detective must not light on any clues which are not instantly produced for the inspection of the reader.

Irwin (1994:191) also emphasises the importance of fairplay on the part of the writer when he says that:

... the contest depends upon the writer playing fair by giving the reader access to the same clues the detective has...

In the Shona 'whodunit' the writer is fair to the reader. Clues and any other things that have anything to do with the crime are flashed before the eyes of the reader for his own inspection. For example, in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] the packet of chips with the name Gonhi Restaurant is flashed before the eyes of the reader and will play a crucial role in the discovery of the culprit. In *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] the broken frame of spectacles lying near where Pat Muchagonei's corpse was lying is flashed before the reader's eyes, and the next moment he notices that Chidiro wears dark glasses for the first time. In *Mutikivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] the PTC man, the albino and even the small key retrieved from Loice's abdomen all of which have something to do with the crime, are made available for inspection by the reader. When at the end the reader is shocked to discover that Fillia Gwafiridza murdered Thabet in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984], that Chidiro is the one who murdered Dhumukwa in *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] and, that Reverend Father Chipembere is the leader of the gang of criminals responsible for all the crimes in *Mutikivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991], it is not because all along he has been deprived of a chance to inspect the clues made available to the detective.

The reader is surprised precisely because the writer has succeeded to surprise him or her but with no violation of fair play. To surprise without cheating is to manifest genuine mastery of the genre (Mandel, 1984:16). This is exactly what the writer of the Shona detective story has achieved in writing full-fledged detective stories. He has managed to be fair to the reader and still succeed to surprise him by the detective's revelations at the end.

There are a number of ways that the writer uses in order to achieve a shock surprise for the reader at the end. He can just make the clues he presents to the reader seem unimportant. As Grella (1980:86) puts it:

Because the reader seldom possesses the detective's exotic knowledge and superior reasons, the important clues often mean little to him.

Also, clues can be misintepreted by the detective or they can be made available in the story but at the same time misdirecting the attention of the reader elsewhere. The net result is that the person the reader least suspects all along will turn out to be the criminal. This is how the reader will get his surprise.

In *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] clues are presented in such a way that the reader cannot suspect the Reverend Father Chipembere as the leader of the gang of criminals that terrorise Masvingo town. In *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] Fillia Gwafiridza is the last person any reader would suspect of murdering Thabet Urahwenda. The reader suspects people like Pfuvisi and Godfrey Chamuka but he never suspects Fillia. In *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] the reader's suspicions are directed at other people as possible murderers except Chidiro. When, at the end of the story, Reverend Chipembere, Fillia, and Chidiro are revealed as the principal criminals in the novels in which they are characters, the reader is shocked by the detective's revelations.

Sayers (1980:31), a writer of detective stories herself and a critic, calls this device of misleading the reader 'the art of framing lies', and goes on to elaborate:

From the beginning to end of your book it is your whole aim and object to lead the reader up the garden; to induce him to believe a lie, to believe the real murderer to be innocent, to believe some harmless person to be guilty, to believe the detective to be right where he is wrong and mistaken where he is right... to believe, in short, anything and everything but the truth.

### 3.8 The ending

Boas & Smith (1925:228) have asserted that the ending of a story is not as difficult as the beginning because the story has been steadily progressing towards a preconceived end. This assertion is probably true of the detective story, for the main aim of investigating a crime is to discover who committed it and probably why, how and when. All along the story has been developing towards that goal. All the full-fledged detective stories in Shona end with a solution to the puzzle and then a denouement. Unlike what happens in the rudimentary forms of the detective stories, the detective in the pure detective stories in

Shona provides a full explanation of any unanswered questions or obscure points of the mystery. During the formative stage in the development of the Shona detective story there is no proper detective who plays this role. The pure Shona detective story, like its English counterpart, 'moves from a false, misleading, or incomplete perception of the truth to a revelation of the whole truth' (Leitch, 1983: 484) and it is the detective who reveals this truth in the solution section. Cawelti (1991:3) has called this pattern the detective story's double plot:

because in the first presentation of the story the writer tries to tantalize and deceive the reader, while at the same time, inconspicuously planting the clues which will eventually make the detective's solution plausible.

The second plot is the second presentation when:

Through the detective's explanation of the crime, the true story of the events is given along with their explanation. (Cawelti, 1991:3)

There are two ways in which the solution is provided. The criminal may, of his own free will, confess or he may be forced by the detective to do so. This normally happens when the criminal realises that he has been outwitted and has lost the 'contest of the brains' to the detective. For example, in *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] the mystery around the murder of Lucia is clarified by the two principal criminals in the story. Timothy Manenji commits suicide and leaves behind a letter for the police in which he confesses everything. In addition, Michael Chemhere confesses to detective Muzvondiwa in a manner that clarifies the mystery around Lucia's death. Similarly, in the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] Samson confesses to detective M'zondiwa and explains the circumstance surrounding the kidnapping of Robson Pasipanodya and their motives for committing the crime. The difference with the rudimentary forms of the Shona detective stories is that in the full-fledged detective stories the confessions are made to the detective and not in a court of law during trial.

In the better developed Shona detective stories the detective takes it upon himself to explain his findings. In such novels the last chapters are devoted to reconstructing the events that led to the commission of the crime. In *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] Chimedzanemburungwe explains in the last chapter events leading to the crime in retrospect:

Zvakadai rimwe gore, iwe Fillia Gwatiridza. Thabet aida kuchata nemumwe mukomana ainzi Nzenza Popotai. Mumwe mukadzi ainzi Fillia Gwatiridza ndokuita shanje nemhaka yokuti aidawo Nzenza uyu. Nekudaro Fillia Gwatiridza uyu ndokuuraya Thabet kuti iye agosara ofara naNzenza zvakanaka. (p. 163)

(Things happened this way, Fillia Gwatiridza. Thabet wanted to wed with a certain man called Nzenza Popotai. A certain woman called Fillia Gwatiridza became jealous because she also loved Nzenza. As a result Fillia Gwatiridza murdered Thabet so that she could fall in love with Nzenza.)

In a similar way the last chapter of *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] is devoted to the unveiling of the events surrounding the mysterious death of Dhumukwa. Most of that last Chapter 17 is devoted to detective Gwenembe's reconstruction of the criminal record of Chidiro. Gwenembe discloses that:

Ndinoda kukutaurira rungano rwe ndisati ndakubata. Ndinozviziva kuti iwe Chidiro ndiwe wakauraya vaDhumukwa. Ndiwe wakauraya Pat, uyezve ndiwe wakaonda Angela. Nhasi ndiwezve wapamhidza kuponda Sanzurinei. (p. 126)

(I want to tell you the whole story before I arrest you. I know that you Chidiro are the one who killed Dhumukwa. You are the one who killed Pat, and you are the one who killed Angela. Today it is you again who murdered Sanzurinei).

Over the years right from the days of Allan Poe, the moral in a detective story has always been that crime does not pay. Like the classical detective story, the pure detective story in Shona ends with a denouement in which the punishment is meted out to the criminal. While in the rudimentary works of Shona detective fiction there is a tendency to want to end the stories in court, the full-fledged detective stories in Shona shun the courtroom. But like the earlier works, the full-fledged detective stories also spell-out the punishments meted out to the criminals. The reader gets these punishments not in a court of law but as reports of what happened in court during his absence.

In *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] Michael Chemhere is sentenced to death by hanging. In *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own pertard, 1980] Musekiwa is sentenced to death and 'mistress' Sibanda is condemned to twenty-five years in jail. In the short story of the title *Seri Kweguva Hakuna Muteuro* [There is no prayer after death] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] Rex is sentenced to death. In *Mutikitiivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] the Reverend Father Chipembere is jailed for five years, Mrs Chipembere is jailed for three years, Garwe for nine years, Musope for four years and Stefano and Janhi for two years each. In all these cases the reader gets these punishments as reports. No trial is conducted in a court of law as earlier works are so fond of doing.

While in a number of these pure detective stories the reader is informed about the punishment meted out, in many others this is not so. The writer leaves it to the reader to guess what the consequences for the criminal will be. For example, in the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] and in the novels *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984], *Bhindauko* (Versatility, 1995), and *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994] no trials are conducted, and no punishment is spelled out. The writer leaves it to the reader to exercise his powers of imagination. The only full-fledged detective story to date which takes the criminals to court is Hamutyinei's *Ziso Rapindwa Nemhiripiri* [Pepper in the eye, 1988].

There are however, a few things that cause concern to the reader about the ending of some of these pure, full-fledged Shona detective stories. One disturbing trend is the tendency by the writers to want to allow criminals to commit suicide at the end in order to avoid externally imposed punishment. In *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] Timothy Manenji commits suicide. In *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] Godfrey Chamuka commits suicide; and in *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994] Jax also commits suicide. The readers get disappointed by this development because they prefer punishment meted out by society, represented by its courts rather than self-inflicted punishments.

Equally disturbing to the reader is the fact that *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] assumes almost a religious tone at the very end with Michael Chemhere getting baptised and given a Christian name, Joseph. The reader feels cheated. He does not see the reason why this should be so because he has no sympathy for the criminal. Effectiveness of the death sentence in the mind of the reader gets diluted by this inexplicable decision by the author to make the criminal get baptised first

before the noose comes down on him.

*Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] also manifests a certain weak dimension in the very last two paragraphs of the story. When the reader thinks the author has done everything well and is time to end the story the detective gets arrested 'for stealing a police vehicle'. It seems as if the story is going to continue instead, when the detective says:

Ndakazoti ndapedza kurongera mapurisa ndotoda kubva kuti ndichienda kumba mapurisa aye achibva andipindukira zvakare. Vakabva vati ndimbotidzana nevamwe kugara muchitokisi vachifeya-feya kubiwa kwemotokari yemapurisa kwaive kwatora nzvimbo kuTanda. (p. 174)

(After giving all the details to the police I was about to go home when the police turned against me. They said I should join the others in the cells while they investigated the theft of a police vehicle which had taken place in Tanda.)

When the story dictates that it should end then it must end. Prolonging the story unnecessarily spoils things. It is precisely for this reason that Boas & Smith (1925:228) have advised that the danger to be avoided in an ending is prolonging the story unnecessarily after it is over through reluctance to say farewell to the characters.

### 3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter it has been found that full-fledged, pure detective stories in Shona are still very few in number when compared to the other novels in the mainstream. Quantitatively therefore not much has been published in this genre over the past forty years that the Shona novel has been in existence.

There is also a very negligible number of authors who have made the writing of detective fiction in Shona a speciality. The very few who have published Shona detective stories have either had something to do with journalism or police work or both. It has been asserted in this chapter that their involvement in journalism and police work has had a bearing on their literary sensibilities.

It has also been noted that the majority of the pure Shona detective stories no longer use proverbs for their titles. The main focus of the authors of these pure 'whodunits', unlike those who wrote earlier works of the same type, is on crime detection and not necessarily on teaching morals. This is the reason why instead of proverbs which tend to be long and moralistic in intention they use other titles which are briefer and at times indicative of the investigative intentions.

With regards to what is likely to have influenced the writers of Shona detective stories, Western literature in the form of Western detective novels and films seem to have played a crucial role. In addition to that the establishment of private detective companies run by blacks seem to have provided Shona authors with extra models. For the first time a private detective is introduced in Shona literature. In some cases the detective lives beyond the life span of a single novel and thus appears in more than one.

It has also been established that the detective story in Shona begins with the detective introducing himself and the presentation of the crime he is going to investigate. Almost all of the pure, full-fledged detective stories begin in a similar way followed by the detectives investigations and ending in a similar way with the solution.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE THRILLER

#### 4.1 Thrillers with little or no detective interest

The Shona detective story has demonstrated its ability to diversify by developing a variety of it called the thriller. A thriller is an exciting story, often about solving a crime, which may be in the form of a book, a play or a film. The Shona thriller, as Kahari (1990:214) has pointed out, has its genesis in the traditional folktale whose main function is to entertain the audience. In the traditional folktale entertainment comes in the form of the many comic incidents provided by the story-teller. In most of these folktale narratives entertainment is afforded by the description of the amusing antics of various animals (Finnegan, 1970:350). For example, the hare amuses the reader each time he uses his many tricks to fool the other characters especially the big ones like the lion and the baboon.

The Shona thriller on the other hand no longer depends on the description of amusing antics of various characters to provide entertainment. Rather, entertainment is provided by the description of 'a succession of exciting events' (Kahari, 1990:214). The definition of a thriller given by Bedard (1959:35) describes the thriller even more aptly:

The term 'thriller' in a general sense is commonly employed to label any novel, movie, or play which relies heavily upon suspense, rapid pace, and action, especially potentially violent or unexpected occurrences...

Such stories that fit this kind of description have sensational plots which usually deal with crime. In Shona literature such narrative can be classified into two groups. There are those thrillers which have sensational plots dealing with crime but which do not put emphasis on ways and means of identifying the criminal. But as Kahari (1990:214) has observed, they put much emphasis on ways and means of defeating criminal designs. Such Shona thrillers include works like Mutize's *Mary Ponderai* [Name of main character, 1978], Lwanda's *Zvichakurwanawo* [Your turn will come, 1981] and Mzemba & Mudunguri's *Akanga Nyimo Avangarara* [He who dares wins, 1982].

In *Mary Ponderai* [Name of main character, 1978] the eponymous Mary Ponderai abandons her cruel husband and teams up with a gang of criminals. The gang commits all sorts of crimes including drug-taking, taking of illegal brew such as *kachasu*, thefts and violent behaviour. But that is all there is. There is no detective anywhere and there is no investigation taking place. In *Zvichakuwanawo* [Your turn will come, 1981] businessman Mabhinzi and his employees commit a ritual murder of a woman. Thereafter Mabhinzi becomes the centre of a vicious crime as he commits more murders in an attempt to increase his business fortunes as well as to eliminate potential witnesses that could lead to his arrest. Much of the novel is focused on the operations of Mabhinzi the criminal, and there is very little, if any, sensible investigation that goes on. Similarly, *Akanga Nyimo Avangarara* [He who dares win, 1983] is a fast moving thriller which deals with the murder of a young woman called Sekai. But again much of the readers' attention is focused on the two murderers, Tongai and Tarvinga. The reader spends a lot of time reading about the two murderers as they are holed up in their hiding place planning ways and means of avoiding detection. They commit other murders in their attempt to erase evidence. Tongai even murders his accomplice, Tarvinga, because the latter is threatening to 'sell-out' to the police. But the police do not come out to undertake any meaningful investigations that could make this novel a genuine detective story. The reader only sees glimpses of the police now and then, and one of them is even knocked out of his senses by Tongai while on patrol.

The three examples of thrillers outlined above are mainly concerned with defeating criminal design rather than on identifying the criminal. They may be likened to some of Graham Greene's books which he wrote simply for entertainment and which he himself described as 'entertainments' (Scott-James, 1956:177). Bedard (1959:69-70) has concluded that Greene's 'entertainments' are not detective stories because his concern is with the victim or the murderer and not with the detective or process of detection as such. In a similar way Mutize's *Mary Ponderai* [Name of main character, 1978], Lwanda's *Zvichakuwanawo* [Your turn will come, 1981] and Mzemba & Mudunguri's *Akanga Nyimo Avangarara* [He who dares wins, 1982] are mere thrillers and not necessarily detective stories because they are like Greene's 'entertainments', concerned with the victims or murderers and not with the detective or process of detection. The heroes in these Shona thrillers are not even detectives. The heroes are the villains who are neither admired nor loved by the readers in the way that they admire and love great detective heroes of the Shona 'whodunits' like Muzvondiwa, Gwenembe, Chiminya and Dumbuzenene.

## 4.2 The Shona detective-thriller

The second group of Shona thrillers place a lot of emphasis on ways and means of identifying the criminal. They are concerned with the detective or with the process of detection just as much as they are concerned with the victim or with the criminal. Such thrillers which place so much emphasis on the detective and his investigation should be accepted as detective stories because they contain in them what Haycraft (1942:viii) has termed on 'authentic detective strain'. Because of the emphasis put on the detective and his investigation many critics have come to regard the thriller as a legitimate subtype of the detective novel.

This view is supported by Mandel (1984:84) who does not think that the category of detective story should be reserved for the 'whodunit' pure and simple. He rightly argues that:

The mystery of a crime story may lie in any one or several of its basic elements, or in all of them: who, whom, where, when, why, by what means, how (the opportunity). There is no reason why it should only refer to 'who'.... The thriller - in which the 'who' is either known from the outset or irrelevant, or even secondary to some other purpose of the book - may be considered a legitimate offspring of the detective story, provided rules are respected. (Mandel, 1984:84).

Mandel's argument here clearly supports the view that the thriller should be regarded as a legitimate subtype of the detective story. Cassiday (1982:16) also regards the thriller as a 'spin-off of the detective novel'. This shows that the acceptance of the thriller into the family of detective stories is quite widespread.

The Shona thrillers are different from the pure 'whodunits' in that they combine two aspects in one: they combine elements of a detective story with strong elements of a thriller. No wonder Kahari (1990:213) has termed them 'detective-cum-thrillers'. But perhaps such Shona thrillers should be called simply 'detective-thrillers', to use a term applied to Agatha Christie's play *The Mousetrap* by Wren-Lewis (1993:193). This term, 'detective-thriller', shows clearly that the narrative combines aspects of detection and those of a thriller.

In its short history the Shona detective story has developed its own sub-genre that can be called a detective-thriller. The first type of detective-thriller is one in which a crime is committed and all evidence in the hands of the police points to the main character as the criminal. Todorov (1988:164) calls this kind of narrative the 'story of the suspect-as-detective'. In such a narrative the main character appears, at least in the eyes of the police, to be the criminal and hence he has to carry out investigations in order to find out the real criminal so that he himself can be absolved. The main character is a suspect and a detective at the same time.

Typical examples of such narratives are Mordekai Hamutyinei's *Kusasana Kunoparira* [The search for pleasure leads into trouble, 1975] and Edward Kaugare's *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* [To be able to discuss an accident means you have escaped, 1978]. In *Kusasana Kunoparira* (The search for pleasure leads into trouble, 1975) detective Chinovava takes his teenage girlfriend Yuna to Chidzura Hill for a picnic and she is murdered there while he has gone to a nearby township to buy some drinks. Detective Chinovava is assigned to lead the team of detectives to investigate the murder of Yuna but he cannot gather enough energy to do the job because he knows Yuna's dead body is in the boot of his car where he himself hid it. His hope is that the murderer would be found before he himself is wrongly implicated in the murder. Unfortunately the unique prints of his car tyres are found at the scene of murder. Detective Chinovava is now a suspect and detective at the same time.

A similar detective-thriller pattern obtains in *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* [To discuss an accident means you have escaped, 1978]. In this narrative Peter Kufahakurayi is found carrying a paper-bag without knowing that it contains dagga and some stolen items. His 'friend' Josaya, who owns the paper-bag and its contents, is seriously injured by a taxi while trying to run away from the police. Peter Kufahakurayi is taken into police custody and is presumed guilty unless he can prove his innocence, which is not easy unless Josaya can regain consciousness and talk. In these circumstances it becomes Peter Kufahakurayi's responsibility to investigate and find out who the real criminals in this story are. He manages to escape from police custody, and, although he has no qualification nor authority, he carries out investigations like a detective until the criminals are found and handed over to the police. Because he is wrongly suspected he must investigate in order to find the real criminals as a way of absolving himself. It is not necessary that there must be someone called a detective. What is important is that the main interest of the book should rest on investigating to find out who the criminal is.

The two novels rely heavily on suspense and fast pace and are packed with a lot of action. The reader finds such narratives very thrilling and exciting to read.

Another author who has made a significant contribution towards the development of Shona detective fiction is Edmund Masundire. In his two novels, *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992], he has reshaped the thriller into a viable sub-genre of the Shona detective story. That these two narratives are detective stories there is no doubt. In *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] the murder of three teachers including an expatriate at Mhlangeni School in Matebeleland, triggers off the process of investigation by detective Inspector Chiminya of Harare Central Police Station until the culprits are found. In *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] the main theme is the investigation into poaching of protected animals that is going on in the Dande area of the Zambezi Valley. In this novel, investigations become even more complicated because after apprehending the poachers, it becomes necessary for the detective to find out who is this person who calls himself *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk] who is the brains behind the whole poaching business. Investigations in *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] are carried out by detective Chiminya, now promoted to Chief Inspector after his success in investigating the murders in *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991]. The process of full investigation in each of these two narratives gives us a detective story. However, characteristics of a detective story have been discussed in Chapter 3 and will not be repeated here. What is necessary in this chapter is to focus on those properties of a thriller that make it appropriate to regard this type of a detective story as a thriller. A more detailed analysis of *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] is relevant because the two narratives illustrate adequately the detective-thriller pattern that is emerging in Zimbabwean literature in the Shona language.

The Shona detective-thriller is different in a number of ways from the Shona pure 'whodunit'. As Todorov (1988:159) correctly points out the 'whodunit' contains two stories, the first story being the story of the crime which ends before the second story, which is the story of the investigations, begins. All the examples of the pure detective stories given in Chapter 3 begin with the stories of the crimes and then followed by the stories of the investigations. But the Shona detective-thriller does not present two distinct stories. The story of the crime and the story of the investigations are combined into one. The reader cannot quite separate one from the other. We are no longer told about a crime anterior to the moment of the narrative,

the narrative coincides with the action (Todorov, 1988:161). The story of the crime and the story of the investigation are told concurrently. In a pure 'whodunit' it is possible for the narrator to get to a point where he can look back and tell the story of events he has already lived through, survived, and are now part of history. When, for example, private detective Muzvondiwa in *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980] says that 'Nhasi uno ndiri kukuudzai nezvenyaya inonzi *Ndomene Haichemedzi*, iyo inova nyaya yakazoita kuti ndigume ndava mufudzi wemombe nokuva muchairi wemotikari yemhondi' (Today I am telling you a story called *Ndomene Haichemedzi* which caused me to end up as a herdboyc as well as a driver of a murderer's car) he is talking of events that have already passed. The detective is already out of danger and the reader is assured of his continued role as a narrator because as Todorov (1988:161) correctly points out, 'the genre postulates the detective's immunity'. Detectives Muzvondiwa, Dumbuzenene, Gwenembe, and Chimedzanemburungwe give accounts of what happened in the stories in which they were the detective heroes and not what is happening at the time of the narrative.

But with a detective-thriller things are different. As Todorov (1988:161) has noted about a thriller:

There is no point reached where the narrator comprehends all past events, we do not even know if he will reach the end of the story alive.

The action and the narrative in each of *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] take place at the same time, respectively, even though in the latter the author uses an omniscient narrator to tell the story. There is no point in these stories when the detective inspector Chiminya, comprehends all past events. His own life is at risk and the reader is not even certain that his hero will get to the end of the story alive. This is an aspect that distinguishes the detective-thriller from the pure 'whodunit' in which the detective's safety is almost guaranteed.

The detective-thriller in Shona is also characterised by a plot that is based on rapid movement of events. It is an action packed narrative that depends heavily on fast pace and suspense. The following passage from *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] will help to illustrate this:

'Ini handina kumupindura. Nguva dzainge dziri kupera. Ndaida katsvaga Tobias Mapurangai asati anyangarika. Ndakapinda mumota ndichinongedzera kwainge kwaenda Tobias. Mupurisa uya akazarura gonhi opinda ndokugara padivi pangu achibvunza kuti murume weAnglia ainge achitizei. Handina kumupindura kana kumutarisa, ainge anditsamwisa zvikuru. Ndakangomutsa mota chimwii ndokutevera gwara ra Tobias. Kana

zviri zvokutaura taizoita mumashure tawana Tobias. (p.129)

(I did not answer him. Time was not on our side. I wanted to find Tobias Mapurangai before he disappeared. I got into the car while pointing in the direction Tobias had gone. That policeman opened the door, got in, and sat next to me asking why the Anglia man was running away. I did not answer or look at him. He had angered me a lot. I started the car quietly and followed Tobias' direction. I preferred to talk later after finding Tobias.)

The pace of events is very fast because as Kahari (1990:214) points out, 'the primary objective of the thriller is to excite and thrill their readers'. The following remarks by Bedard (1959:34) concerning a thriller are also worth noting:

The thriller generally deals with espionage, crime or detection and its heroes must struggle against the pressure of time as well as physical odds.

In the case of *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] the theme is investigation of a crime and the hero is obviously racing against time and this is what brings thrills to the reader. The Shona detective-thriller therefore differs from the Shona 'whodunit' in that in the latter the pace is slower with the detective hero taking his time to examine one clue after another and questioning one suspect after the other.

The detective-thriller in Shona is also characterised by a lot of violence the degree of which is not quite matched in the 'whodunit'. Marcel Duhamel (cited by Todorov, 1988:162), the promoter of the thriller in France, has summed up this quality of the thriller saying that in it we find 'violence - in all its forms, and especially the most shameful-beatings, killings...'. Violence emerges in the Shona detective-thrillers in many ways. It emerges in the fear generated by the frequent appearance of guys wielding lethal weapons such as guns, pistols, sharp knives and axes. In *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991] guns and axes are used to murder in cold blood the teachers at Mhlangeni School in Matebeleland; Rose, Jackson's wife, is gunned down in cold blood as she comes down the stairs outside the Bonanza Night Club in Harare. Inspector Chiminya's encounter with the dissidents in the forest also brings out this violence:

Akadzikisa bhurukwa rake ndokubva atanga kundirasira mvura kumeso. Ndakagumbuka zvikuru. Spider nechapadivi ainge ari kurodza banga rainge abvisa papfuti ya Tobias. 'Uchiri kurangarira kapfuti kako kaya here? Aka kandiinako. Ndiko kachatora upenyu hwako nhasi'. Ndakaongorora ndikaona kari kavhorovhoro kangu ka38 Automatic.

'Siya zvepfuti tinoda kumuvhiya nebanga', ndiSpider uyu. (p.136)

(He pulled down his trousers and started to urinate into my face. Meanwhile Spider was sharpening a knife he had removed from Tobias' gun.

'Do you still remember your small gun? This is the one I have. It is the one that will take your life today,'

I examined it and found that it was indeed my 38 Automatic pistol.

'Leave the gun alone, we want to cut him with a knife', said Spider.

Violence also emerges in the fear generated by the frequent use of cars to murder people. The detective, Inspector Chiminya, in *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] escapes death by a whisker when he is nearly crushed by a murder car. But Sergeant Madhobha is not so lucky:

Sajeni Madhobha akati fambe fambe nechichovhamubaiwa chake akanzwa kutinhira shure kwake. Waive mutinhimira wemota chaiwo. Chaishamisa ndechokuti mota yacho yainge yakadzima magetsi. Asi mutinhiro wayo waitaura kuti yainge yakatsikwa mafuta zvakasimba. Yainge iri kumhanya zvisina mukare akamboona. Sajeni Madhobha akada kuti adzike pabhasikoro rake kuti ananaidze achibuda mumugwagwa asi ainge anonoka. Kwakangonzwika kuti bhu-u. Sajeni akati ze-e nemumhepo, ndiye kwakadaro puu. Bhasikoro rakapwanyika ndokuti kunze kwemugwagwa ranjanja. (p.139)

(Sergeant Madhobha had cycled a short distance when he heard the sound of a car behind him. The surprising thing about the car is that it did not have its lights on. But its sound showed that it was going at a terribly high speed. Sergeant Madhobha tried to alight from his bicycle so that he could get out of the way but he was too late. The sergeant was hit hard and was hurled into the air before he fell to the ground. His bicycle was crushed to pieces.)

The above examples clearly indicate that *Mhandu Dzorusinguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] are infested with terror. This is the world of a thriller. No wonder Bedard (1959:36) sees no pattern of values in it except senseless violence. In both novels Chiminya is the detective who is investigating but he lives in a world infested with terror. His immunity is not guaranteed. He may not last till the end of the stories. His journeys to Matebeleland and to Dande Area are fraught with all sorts of dangers.

In fact, a closer look at the development of the Shona thriller as a sub-genre of the detective story shows that it has certain qualities that are also found in an adventure story. Bedard (1959) also observed this affinity between a thriller and an adventure story where he says that:



... the thriller, as the term is generally employed, is a rapid paced mystery or adventure story which is not accorded a high place in literary estimates. (Bedard, 1959:35)

There are certain elements we find in Masundire's *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] which are also found in an adventure story. In *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] Inspector Chiminya undertakes a perilous journey from Harare to Matebeleland to investigate the gruesome murder of three teachers at Mhlangeni School. He starts the journey with Jackson but it is apparent that each man is a lonely figure. Their loneliness is aggravated by the fact that they are suspicious of each other, they disagree and they quarrel and fight between themselves. Chiminya and Jackson travel for over one hundred kilometres without saying as much as a word to each other. When, after travelling in silence for that distance, they try to talk to each other, they fight. It is this loneliness which is felt even between two colleagues who are travelling together to work on the same case which makes the whole novel tense. The two eventually separate and take different ways.

The elements of adventure in *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] are clearly brought out in Inspector Chiminya's description of his plight in a country he does not know:

Ndakapinda muPlumtree zuva rava kuda kumedzwa namakomo. Iyi ndiyo nzvimbo yandaive ndisinganyotsoziva zvachose. Ndainge ndisati ndamboifamba muupenyu hwangu. Ndakamisa mota padivi pemugwagwa ndokuvhura mepu yangu ndonyatsoongorora mafambiro andaizoita. Ndapedza ndakaburitsa vhorovhoro muhomwe yebhachi ndokuisa pasiti, padivi pangu. Magazini amabara ndakaaronga nechapadivi. Kwainge kuri kungobatabatawo kwemunhu apinda munzvimbo inotyisa. Zvaiva zviru zvokuti kana wafutwawo ufe neimwe nzira asi wanga wakagadzirira... kwaiva kungofamba munhu uchinamata, wakaita zvokubatira ura mumaoko. (p. 109-110)

(I entered Plumtree at about sunset. This is one place I did not know. I had never been to this place before. I stopped the car by the roadside, studied my map and considered how I was going to proceed. After that I took my pistol from my jacket and put it on the seat, next to me. I also placed near there a number of bullets. These were the precautions of a person who was entering an area which was dangerous. It was a way to prepare to die like a man.... It was a matter of moving in great fear and much depended on prayer.)

It is enough to read such a passage to be sure one has a thriller in his hands, a thriller which shares certain common qualities with an adventure story. The detective has been given an assignment that takes him from the familiar environment of Mashonaland to the unfamiliar and dangerous environment of rural Matebeleland where he is expected to investigate and solve the problem of political dissidents.

In *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] we see this loneliness of the detective again when Chief Inspector Chiminya undertakes a perilous journey to the Dande Area of the Zambezi Valley to investigate poaching of protected animal species that is going on. The Dande Area is infested with dangerous armed poachers. The loneliness, the exposure to danger, the remoteness, the isolation and the vulnerability of the detective travelling through Dande is brought out with pathos in the narrator's observations when the detective is spotted by the National Parks and Wildlife officials:

Havana kumbenge vafamba kwechinguva apo vakaona huruva yainge iri kuti mudenga togo nechekumaodzanyemba. Yaive kure chaizvo huruva iyi, ichiita kunge iri kusimudzwa nechamupupuri. (p.67)

(They had not travelled for any length of time when they saw a column of dust shooting into the air to the south of them. This dust was at a very far off distance, and it looked as if it was being blown up by a whirlwind).

The loneliness and vulnerability of the detective is also clearly brought out in the words of one of the Parks officials:

Ndiwo mapochasi atiri kutsvaga chete. Hakuna mumwe angafamba muSafari area nguva dzaenda kudai. Anenge achitsvagei? Achibvepi? Achienda kupi? (p.67)

(These are the poachers we are looking for. There is noone else who can drive a car through this Safari Area at this late hour. What could he be looking for? Where could he be coming from? Where could he be going?)

The Dande Safari Area in the Zambezi Valley is not a safe area especially late in the afternoon and night time. No wonder Jimmy asks detective Inspector Chiminya the question, 'Ndiwe ani unofamba muSafari area zuva rave kudoka?' (p.68) (Who are you who travels in this Safari area at sunset?) All along several guns have been pointing their barrels at his head.

The lonely adventures of Inspector Chiminya into rural Matebeleland and then the Dande Area of the Zambezi Valley are reminiscent of the Old World Shona novels of adventure such as Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* [Name of main character, 1958] and Mugugu's *Jekanyika* [One who cuts across the country, 1968]. Karikoga undertakes a perilous journey from the familiar environment of Mashonaland to the unfamiliar environment of Matebeleland to bring back his wife Marunjeya who has been kidnapped by the Ndebele Warriors. Karikoga travels alone, armed with only a bow and ten arrows, through the

vast expanse of forest land inhabited mostly by wild animals. In a similar way Jekanyika leaves home and embarks on a perilous journey in search of a father he does not know who has been away from home for over eighteen years fighting endless wars with other chiefs. Karikoga and Jekanyika's journeys, like those of detective Inspector Chiminya, are characterised by 'danger, pursuit, combat' which Todorov (1988:162) says are found in both a thriller and an adventure story.

Todorov (1988:161) has also identified two entirely different forms by which the reader's interest in a thriller is sustained. One form of interest that he identifies as existing in a thriller is curiosity which, as he points out, proceeds from effect to cause. We start with effect and we must find its cause. In Masundire's *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] the reader's interest is sustained by curiosity. The effect in this story is the sight of three corpses of teachers brutally murdered at Mhlangeni School as well as words written with human blood on the walls of a classroom:

'BLOOD THIRSTY VAMPIRE! NGIFUNA UKUNATHA IGAZI, YIMI SCORPION MATOPO HILLS' (p.25)

(Blood thirsty vampire. I want to drink blood, I am Scorpion Matopo Hills.)

The reader gets overcome by curiosity. He wants to know who is responsible for this murder and what his motive is. The detective's responsibility is to carry out investigations that will satisfy the reader's curiosity.

The other form of interest that exists in a thriller is suspense and 'here the movement is from cause to effect' (Todorov, 1988:161). A typical example of this form of interest is illustrated in *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992]. In this story we are first shown the causes in the form of a gang of criminals - Christopher Linganonge, Mandale, Sibisi and Joseph - preparing to kill elephants in the Dande Game Reserve. On the other hand we see Game Park officers in a helicopter hunting down the game poachers, while in Harare the police are planning to send a detective into the area to carry out investigations into poaching activities. The uncertainty of what is going to happen when the three groups confront each other in the Dande Area is what sustains the reader's interest.

In a thriller suspense is also achieved by the device of shifting the reader's focus to and fro between the criminals planning and executing their programmes and the detective or the police planning to rid society of these criminals. This device helps to create suspense which is a principal element in a thriller. In *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992], for example, in the first two chapters comprising twenty-two pages, the reader's attention is focused on the activities of Christopher Linganonge and his gang of poachers. In Chapters 3 and 4 focus is shifted from the poachers to the Parks and Wildlife officials and the police, and in Chapter 5 focus is once again shifted to the criminals. The detective and the Parks and Wildlife officials hunt down the poachers while on the other hand the poachers try to avoid detection. The constant shift of focus from the hunted to the hunter and vice versa creates a lot of suspense and provides thrill and excitement to the reader. What prevails in *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] is similar to what Denning (1987:146) has described in the case of a thriller that involves the problem of mercenaries:

These thrillers are usually constructed as two simultaneous stories, and switch back and forth from the narrative of the mercenary's plan to the narrative of the hunt for him.

In the case of *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] the narrative switches back and forth from the narrative of the poachers to that of the hunt for them. But the reader never loses sight of the fact that an investigation is going on despite these frequent shifts of focus.

In a full-fledged detective story in Shona, the pure 'whodunit', the detective ends his process of investigation in style and glamour. He is the only intellectual giant with the ability to store large chunks of information in his head which he can now put together and come up with the most stunning revelations pertaining to past events, which, until now, have been beyond the comprehension of an ordinary man. According to *The World Book Encyclopaedia* (1991:168) 'the climax is reached when the detective reveals the criminal and tells how the mystery was solved'.

In the Shona detective-thriller such as those developed by Masundire the detective's role at the end of the story is not so colourful and glamorous. Because thrillers are infested with all sorts of dangers for the detective, and because suspense as a form of interest should be sustained even as the story nears its end, the detective is never presented as enjoying great moments at all. Whereas the detective hero at the end of the pure 'whodunit' would be rounding up his suspects for the final show of intellectual dynamism,

the detective in a Shona thriller is still at the mercy of his enemies, the criminals. Right up to the very last few pages the reader still feels that the detective may lose his life before he provides the solution to the crime.

In *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] the detective is still in the captivity of the dissidents (the criminals) right in the heart of some thick forest in Matebeleland and is lying on the ground face up, and with one of the dissident's boots anchored on his miserable head:

Vaiitirana nharo dzavo ini ndakangoti vavava ndakatsikwa mumusoro sehuku iri kuda kushizhiwa. Vaiitirana zvavo nharo kunge vaida kuraya mhuka. (p.137)

(They were arguing between the two of them while I lay there helplessly like a chicken waiting to be slaughtered, and with someone's foot stepping on my head. They were arguing like they wanted to kill an animal.)

This helplessness of the detective is happening with only three more pages to go before the story ends. Similarly, in *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] the detective is shot and get badly injured with only two pages remaining before the story ends. So while in the pure 'whodunit' the end is a moment for the detective to demonstrate intellectual prowess in a Shona detective-thriller the detective is not allowed that moment of glory in the same way. In the Shona detective-thriller the end shows the detective in his moment of triumph but at the same time broken both in spirit and body. In *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] the detective's empty victory turns into grief and distress when he remembers that he sacrificed Jackson's wife on the alter of success:

Ndakatarisa Jackson ndikaona ari kunyemwerera. Zvakandibaya mwoyo. Ndakarwadziwa. Mudzimai wake kani!... Ndakangoona ndava kueredza misodzi pamatama ndava kutopwerutsa miromo. (p.141)

(I looked at Jackson and saw that he was smiling again. It pained my heart. His wife!... I found tears running down my cheeks, I was crying.)

These are the last lines of the last paragraph that ends this story. This realisation turns all he should have achieved into an empty victory. In *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] the detective is saddened to discover that the principal criminal is none other than his own senior at his place of work, Chief Superintendent Dhube. His success turns out to be a hollow achievement because, as he says, he is unable to understand what is happening. He says, 'Ndiri kutadza kuzvibvuma' (p.173) (I am finding it

difficult to accept reality). He cannot believe that the system he serves is rotten and cannot be defended. This is what breaks his spirit. The detective at the end of it all does not feel that sense of elation that is felt by the great heroes of the full-fledged detective stories like Dumbuzenene, Chimedzanemburungwe, Muzvondiwa and Gwenembe.

In both *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] the narratives end with the detective lying in a hospital bed. In *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] Inspector Chiminya and Jackson end in hospital:

Muchipatara chamapurisa chomuBulawayo takapiwa mibhedha yaiva pedyo nepedyo naJackson. Tainge takamoneredzwa nemazibhandeji pamaronda. Jackson ndiye ainzi ainge atyoka mabhonzobendekete. Ini ndainge ndangobvarurwa chidya chete nebara. (p.141)

(In the police hospital in Bulawayo Jackson and I were given beds next to each other. We were wrapped in bandages all over our wounds. Jackson was said to have had his collar bone broken. My thigh muscle had been torn by a bullet).

Similarly, in *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] when Assistant Commissioner Zambara and Mr Johns of Parks and Wildlife visited Parirenyatwa Hospital towards the close of the story:

Vakawana Chiminya akatokotsira zvake ari pamubhedha. Ainge akamonerwa namabhandiji pachipfuva nekumusana. (p.172)

(They found Chiminya fast asleep on a bed. He had bandages on his chest and back.)

It is not surprising that the detective in the thriller should end up in bandages in a hospital bed, broken both in body and spirit. It is a fitting end to a career in which the principal elements are violence, danger, fast action, pursuit and combat. It is a fitting end to a hero who features in a detective genre the world of which is:

usually a nightmare in which violence can and does occur without apparent reason and horror succeeds horror until the reader's appetite is deemed sufficiently satiated. (Bedard, 1959:35)

In the pure 'whodunit' it is the detective who enjoys the privilege of being in a position to provide the only correct explanation of events leading up to the crime. His interpretation of events is accepted over and above all others. Even if the events leading to the crime are provided by the criminal he or she does so under the 'supervision' of the detective since the 'detective is a figure of absolute interpretative authority' (Diemert, 1994:288). This is the privileged position of the detective in a pure Shona detective story.

But in a Shona detective-thriller the detective does not enjoy this special status. Despite all that Inspector Chiminya has done to bring the criminals to justice in *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] he does not enjoy the privilege of being the sole and only absolute interpretative authority. In fact, it is Chief Inspector Zambara, (and not Inspector Chiminya, the investigator of the case) who provides a lot of information about the criminals while the detective who actually carried out the investigations lies injured in a hospital bed. When Chief Inspector Zambara reveals the names of the dead criminals as Scorpion and Spider the detective is also surprised. He says, 'Takatarisana naJackson ndokukatyamara' (p.141) (We looked at each other with Jackson in great surprise). In a pure 'whodunit' it is usually the norm that the detective should confound everyone with his revelations, not the other way round. The detective, in the words of Rahn (1988:57), relates:

step by step how the crime was committed, supplying evidence to support each logical deduction and ending with the formal accusation of the murderer.

In Masundire's two detective-thrillers the detective does not do this part. In *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] it is once again Assistant Commissioner Zambara who interprets the events surrounding the activities of poachers to the detective who carried out the investigations while he lies injured in a hospital bed. Instead of the detective enjoying the privilege of stunning the reader and other characters with his findings it is him who is confounded by some of the revelations made to him by Assistant Commissioner Zambara. When told of the background to the hired car that nearly killed him, the detective shows his ignorance when he says:

O-o, ko, Dick akadii kundiudza nhai? (p.173)

(O-o, why did Dick not tell me?)

In a pure Shona detective story the detective knows all and can provide an explanation for every bit of event.

In Masundire's detective-thrillers we do not have criminals who confess under the 'supervision' of the detective. As we have seen in both *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] the detective ends up lying injured in a hospital bed while the criminals are either dead or are dying. So there is no one to confess and no one to 'supervise' the confessions. Because the world of a thriller is a world full of violence the main protagonists end up injured, dead or dying. In *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] the detective ends up injured and hospitalised while the principal criminals, Scorpion and Spider, are dead. In *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] the detective also ends up injured and hospitalised while the principal criminal, the eponymous *Nyanga Yenzou* himself (real name Chief Superintendent Dhube) is in a serious condition.

Even in Kaugare's thriller *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* [To discuss an accident means you have escaped, 1978] there is no confession done under the detective's supervision. By the time the principal criminal, Sergeant Chatungwa, is found, he is dead, having committed suicide. Committing suicide is a continuation of the violence which is a principal property of a thriller, for committing suicide is committing violence against oneself.

As mentioned earlier, Masundire should be credited for reshaping the Shona thriller into a Shona detective story in which the identification of a criminal is paramount. Masundire was influenced to write detective-thrillers by reading Western novels as well as watching action-packed thrillers on television and film shows. His admission to being influenced in this manner has been noted in Chapter 3. A lot of the things the reader reads about in Masundire's thrillers are a familiar sight on television and film shows and in Western novels.

The fact that Masundire has published four detective novels and a play to date is a clear testimony of his flair for writing books. But that flair and the influence from Western novels and films alone could not have produced the type of detective-thrillers that he contributed to the development of the Shona detective fiction without his own sensibilities as a professional policeman. Those theorists, notably among them,



Formalists, who argue that the author's life, history, interests and other external circumstances in which literature is produced should not be considered when studying a text are missing the point because they deprive literature of its historical conditions by divorcing a literary text from its creator, the author, and its historical context. Masundire's case has lent further weight to the assertion that the writer's background is crucial in determining the origin and development of a genre. As Marxist literary theorists also argue:

Any theory which treats literature in isolation, divorcing it from society and history will be deficient in its ability to explain what literature is. (Forgas, 1982:167)

Similarly our explanation of the origin and development of Masundire's detective-thrillers would be deficient if the social dimension is not considered.

Masundire's *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] were conceived at a time that he was involved in the war against political dissidents in Matebeleland and the time that he was fighting in the war against poachers in the Guruve area, respectively. The two novels were born out of these struggles. Referring to *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] which is about the dissident problem in Matebeleland the author had this to say in response to a questionnaire (1996) that:

He wrote some of the events whilst carrying out patrols in Matebeleland Province where there was the dissident problem.

In a follow-up personal interview (1996) Masundire added that while fighting the dissident problem in Matebeleland he used to carry his gun together with his pen and notebook. Some of the clashes with dissidents he recorded in his notebook during that time became part of the events he included in his story.

And referring to *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] which deals with investigating illegal ivory dealings in the Dande Area of the Zambezi Valley the author's response to the questionnaire (1996) was that:

I was one of the investigating officers in Guruve and at times we arrested people with ivory in transit to different places in Zimbabwe.

It was precisely because of his involvement as an investigating police officer in the two events that the two thrillers were conceived as detective stories.

#### 4.3. Conclusion

The development of the Shona detective story has seen the appearance of a detective sub-genre called a thriller. The thriller should be accepted as a legitimate spin-off of the detective story.

As we have seen, there are thrillers which cannot be regarded as detective stories because the detective and the investigative process are not their major concern. These thrillers are more concerned with the criminal and the victim rather than with the detective and his work. Notable examples are *Mary Ponderai* [Name of main character, 1978], *Zvichakuwanawo* [Your turn will come, 1981] and *Akanga Nyimo Avangarara* [He who dares wins, 1982].

But there are those thrillers which put a lot of emphasis on the detective and the investigative process. These thrillers are detective stories because as Murch (cited by Ostrowski, 1982:8) points out:

... their primary interest lies in the methodical discovery, by rational means, of the exact circumstances of a mysterious event or series of events.

These thrillers are detective stories because in each of them there is a crime and a detective who follows clues until he identifies the culprit out of a number of persons suspected.

Kaugare's *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* [To discuss an accident means you have escaped, 1978] and Hamutyinei's *Kusasana Kunoparira* [The search for pleasure leads into trouble, 1975] have been identified as the only two examples of the 'suspect-as-detective' stories to date. In these narratives Peter Kufahakurayi and Detective Chinovava are the police suspects respectively, and since they know themselves to be innocent the onus is on them to carry out private investigations so as to find the real culprits and exonerate themselves.

Masundire has been credited for developing the Shona detective story further with his two contributions, *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992]. These two narratives are concerned with the detective and the investigative process, from beginning to end.

It has been pointed out that the detective story called thriller differs from the pure 'whodunit' in that it combines elements of a detective story and properties of a thriller. For this reason the term detective-thriller has been used to refer to this kind of detective story. The detective-thriller is characterised by the frequent occurrence of violence, plot based on rapid pace, packed action and emphasis put upon suspense. The role of the detective in the detective-thriller differs somehow from that of the detective in the pure 'whodunit'. Other police officers seem to take away the limelight from the detective at the end of the thriller whereas in a pure 'whodunit' the investigating detective is allowed to shine at the end.

With respect to influence Masundire has confirmed that the two detective-thrillers, *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] are based on real events that happened when he himself was involved in the wars against dissidents and poachers, respectively.

## CHAPTER 5

### PORTRAYAL OF THE DETECTIVE

#### 5.1 The detective as the central character

As we pointed out in the preceding chapters, detective fiction is about crime and its detection. In it there is a character called a detective who occupies a special place that no other character occupies in Shona written literature. Every other novel in Shona that has some degree of detective interest has a character called 'mutikitivha' (detective) or someone who carries out detective work even though he may not be called by that term. Without this character called a detective who carries out detective work there cannot be narratives called detective stories. After all, as one critic puts it, there could be no detective stories until there were detectives (Schwartz, 1975:1). Clearly, the beginning of the criminal investigations department preceded the beginning of detective stories. When detective stories started to be written in the days of Poe and after, the detective came to occupy a crucial role in the genre. Today, to think of detective fiction without thinking of the detective is like thinking of the entire body of Shona traditional narratives called *ngano* (folktales) without thinking of the trickster, the hare.

The central role of the detective in detective stories has been summed up by Haycraft (1942:229) who says that:

In any detective story worth the name, at once the most important and most difficult integer is the sleuth.

Grossvogel's statement is also worth noting:

... the genre features a hero, the detective, whose existence is a mere function of the mystery he is solving... (Grossvogel, 1979:15).

This shows that a detective plays a pivotal role in a detective story. He is there because there is a mystery that he must solve. As soon as the mystery is solved the story loses its interest and it ends, and the detective also calls it a day.

By discussing the way the authors of Shona detective stories portray the detective we are addressing the question of development of the genre. Each author contributes to the development of the detective story by the way he presents his vision of this central character called the detective.

## **5.2 The detective as portrayed in the rudimentary forms**

In the short history that the Shona written detective story has been in existence authors have portrayed the detective in various interesting ways. Long before the gifted, intelligent problem-solving detective appeared on the literary scene, the idea of a detective already existed in Shona written literature. The term 'mutikitivha' (detective) got into use as early as literature appeared that dealt with investigation of crime. Besides the term 'mutikitivha' (detective) the term 'CID' was loosely used by workers and peasants to refer not to the Criminal Investigations Department as an institution, but to individuals who assisted the state with crime investigations. They would refer to such persons as 'muCID' (investigator) if he was one, or 'maCID' (investigators), if they were many. This kind of detective would live among the people in the area where he was investigating a crime and could get supplied with information by his informants in the area who were usually prostitutes or hangers-on who wanted favours like being bought beer and cigarettes. This is the kind of detective that Waugh (1982:41) has in mind when he says that any chief of detectives knows that crimes are not solved by clues but by informants who are 'persons who secretly bring information to the police in return for money, favours, or other benefits'. And Waugh (1982:41) goes on to support his assertion when he points out that 'there is an adage that a detective is only as good as his informants'.

This kind of detective who relies on informants rather than on studying and interpreting clue after clue is portrayed in Shona detective stories we classified as rudimentary forms of detective stories. One such character is portrayed by Pearson Mashiri in his novel *Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga* [Family secrets, 1977]. In this story the detective investigates two drug peddlers, Manuwere (Emmanuel) from Mozambique, and a Greek national called Valakis. This detective lives among the people and is accommodated at Sofi's mother's house where he keeps his bicycle. He spends most of his time at the local headman's kraal where there is always traditional beer for sale. He buys some people beer and

they in turn supply him with information he needs.

The detective in *Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga* [Family secrets, 1977] remains largely unknown to the reader and other characters in the novel. There is nothing spectacular or glamorous about him. He is dirty and untidy. He wears farmer's shoes, a dirty shirt and a big hat. The reader and other characters do not even know the name of the detective because the author does not give him one. He is only identified as 'murume wendebvu' (the bearded man). Everyone, including the author, refers to him as 'murume wendebvu' (the bearded man). That descriptive phrase 'murume wendebvu' (the bearded man) is mentioned more than fifteen times in the story and that is all we know about him. He seems to have no name, no history, and no life outside his present existence at the headman's kraal. This is the way the author of rudimentary forms of Shona detective stories portrays the detective. His vision of the detective is informed by his knowledge of the kind of detectives who came to stay at a place and gather information rather than study and interpret clues at scenes of crime.

In the rudimentary forms of the Shona detective story authors often portray policemen who use rough tactics during crime investigation. Before the concept of private detectives and professional police detectives was used, authors of Shona detective stories used ordinary formal policemen to investigate crimes. Most of the novels in which investigations are carried out by ordinary formal policemen were written in the 1970s during the last decade of the colonial era in Zimbabwe. Investigations are therefore carried out by policemen who often display certain characteristics that are a hall-mark of the Rhodesian system under which they were trained and then served. The policemen of this era were brought up in a culture of colonial violence. The way the police treated black suspects reflected the dominant settler mentality at that time. They tended to be ruthless and rough when dealing with blacks. The police in Rhodesia were a feared organ of state. Authors of rudimentary forms of detective stories in Shona took their models of investigators from these formal or institutionalised policemen they were used to seeing investigating crimes in the rural areas and urban townships where they lived. This point can be illustrated from Janiel Mabhugu's novel that focus on the colonial period.

In Mabhugu's *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] Vhandu, the leader of the police squad investigating crime, displays those imperfectly developed methods of investigating a crime. His language is vulgar and full of threats. His own name Vhandu is an ideophonic expression which suggests violent action. Threatening Edwina he says:

Chiri kumeso chose chichabviswa neni Vhandu. Ambuya hakusi kusvina muchaiwa pano kwamunogaroita kuzvitangwaza zvenyu uko. Simukai izvozvi ndisati ndakugarisanai nambama (p.130)

(Whatever is clouding your vision will be cleared by me Vhandu. Mother-in-law, this is not straining home made brew which you do in your dilapidated little homes. Stand up right now before I clap you.)

Even the innocent are equally harassed. Zedias is also threatened by Vhandu:

Mufana ukabvuraudzabvuraudza mastatements angu pano apa you shall know the other side of me. (p.131)

(Little boy if you confuse my statements here you shall know the other side of me).

Again Zedias is further humiliated:

Taura zvakanaka mufana uchabuda hako mvura kana uchitotamba neni. (p.140)

(Talk sense little boy. You will wet your pants if you want to play with me.)

The whole process of investigation in this novel is littered with such threats. The police of the day did not seem to have been properly schooled to regard a suspect as innocent until he or she is proved guilty. A Report for the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues (*Disappeared! Technique of Terror*, p.34) clearly states that:

Under the law, even in cases where an individual has committed a loathsome crime, the accused is presumed innocent. Then, if he is found guilty, and is convicted, he is punished.

Yet Vhandu threatens to beat up Tarusenga, another innocent young man:

Aizve, mufana, taura kwazvoka. Ndinokuvhara nembama ukapembenuka kana wakavata hope. (p.131)

(Hei, little boy, talk sense. I will clap you and wake you up from your slumber).

The police of the day could harass and assault black suspects because nothing could happen to them. They were protected by the courts which were presided over by white magistrates. Police Inspector Chipore, who is in charge of police recruiting and training in Gweru, said in an interview (1997) that in those colonial days 'waiti ukarohwa nomupurisa warohwa namambo' (if you were beaten up by a policeman it was like you were beaten by the chief or king). In Zimbabwe today magistrates can order reports of police assaults to be investigated and if proved to be true that can be used during trials against the police department and the minister responsible for it.

Vhandu represents the author's vision of the police detective in colonial days in Zimbabwe. The African detectives were particularly rough as they were competing for their white bosses' attention in time of promotions. Inspector Chipore explained in the interview (1997) that before Zimbabwe's independence the black policemen thought that if they were seen by their white officers beating up their fellow blacks they would increase their chances of getting promoted.

The image of the detective the reader often get at this time is a negative one. The reader does not admire this kind of detective. If anything, the reader fears him.

### **5.3 The portrayal of the detective in the full-fledged detective stories**

The portrayal of the detective in those novels in which a private detective is used is different. Most of these detectives are given colourful roles to play. Firstly, they are made the narrators. Dumbuzenene, Sajeni Chimedzanemburungwe, Muzvondiwa and Gwenembe all tell the stories in the narratives in which they are detective heroes. As narrators each one of them is 'the narrative voice or speaker of a text' (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983-87). In this capacity, they help shape the image of the detective hero because this role allows them to talk a lot about themselves. In this regard, Taylor (1981:76) has noted that:



... a first person narrator may reveal in great detail about what is in his or her own mind...

Indeed, in those Shona detective stories in which he has the privilege of being the narrator, the detective paints a colourful picture of himself, his job and his life in general. The detective is pompous and boastful especially when he talks about himself, his abilities and his style of life. This is as Chastain (1982:28) thinks a detective should do when he dictates that:

a private eye must be exactly that: a character who clearly labels himself, and makes his living at being, a private investigator.

Dumbuzenene in *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] opens his narration with boastful remarks about himself and his job:

Kana ukapinda basa iri uchiita zvedzungu haupedzi mazuva uchiri kukakatana naro. Harisi basa rekuti vanaPunha naanaZuze vangatsigwa mumusoro vakadengezera nyore nyore... Rinoda munhu ane ushingi nechido, munhu ane uropi hwakarodzwa hukatesva, uropi hunoti kana hukakweshana nenyaya yakaoma sedombo haugomari kana kupisa zvekuti musoro ubande. Ndiro randinoita ini, basa routikitivha. (p.3)

(If you get into this job without a stable mind you won't last in it. It is not the kind of job that can be done by any Tom and Dick.... It requires a brave and dedicated person, a person with a sharp mind who will get on top of any case no matter how difficult without developing a headache. That is my job, that of a detective).

By implication, Dumbuzenene is boasting that he is a very brave, strong and intelligent person. He also makes his living from being a private detective and he brags a lot about his earnings:

Dikita rinoerera pandinoita basa rangu ndiro rinounza mari inoraramisa ini nemhuri yangu. Muripo wandinowana mubasa iri wakawanda zvekuti handigogodzerwi nenzara pamukova. Tinoguta zvekutotsikawo zvimwe namakumbo pamusha pangu. (p. 4)

(The sweat that comes out when I am doing my job is what brings money that keeps my family going. I get enough money that my family never suffer from starvation. We get more than enough food to eat that we even trample some under our feet.)

In Kawara's *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] the detective is also very pompous, and at worst bombastic. He does not hesitate to boast about his job, the money it pays him, his fame, his family and his personal sense of self-importance. He says:

Ndinoita hutikitivha hwangu pachangu, ndichiwana muripo wekuti ndinotenga upfu ndichisiya imwe yekutomwaya. MuHarare ndaive nembiri. Kana pane aiti aisandiziva kwaive kudaro pamusana pekuti dzaive shanje dzemunhu iyeye kana kuti kundivenga kwake. Kana pandaitsika chaipo netsoka dzangu, ivhu repo raitoziva kuti vatiremera pamusoro ava ndavaChimedzanemburungwe vakanda mumvuri wavo. (p. 5)

(I am self employed as a private detective and I get so much money that I can buy enough mealie-meal and still afford to give some of it away... In Harare I was very famous. If anyone said that he did not know me then it was because he was jealous of me or he hated me. Even the ground on which my feet stepped knew that the weight over it was that of Mr Chimedzanemburungwe who had cast his shadow over it).

This is the nature of the private detective in the Shona detective story. He talks a lot about himself and is very boastful. Perhaps these detectives are being portrayed as professionals who are proud of their calling.

The detectives in the Shona detective stories, unlike 'murume wendebvu' (the bearded man) portrayed by Mashiri in *Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga* [Family secrets, 1977], have got personal names to identify them. According to Haycraft (1942:232) authors should give their sleuths names and characters. He goes on to elaborate:

We readers want to know our heroes' names, first, last, and middle initial if any; we want to know where they live, what they wear and smoke, even what, - though we must not be told too often - they eat for breakfast. (Haycraft, 1942:232)

What Haycraft suggests here is that authors must tell the reader more about their detective heroes. This is the way to help the reader to identify himself with the hero. Unlike Mashiri who portrays his detective as 'murume wendebvu' (the bearded man) without a personal name or history, authors who wrote in the 1980s and 1990s are very particular about giving their detective heroes real names. Readers of Shona pure detective stories and detective-thrillers published after 1980 are familiar with personal names of detectives like Muzvondiwa, Pedzisai Dumbuzenene, Zenze Chimedzanemburungwe, Chiminya, Cathrine Pandarara, and Gwenembe. And as we noticed in Chapter 3 some of them are series detectives who feature in more than one story with the same name. You can call them by these names and they can answer, whereas 'murume wendebvu' (the bearded man) is a description of appearance to which nobody is obliged to answer.

What Haycraft (1942:232) postulates about the use of proper names is reiterated by Champigny (1977:134):

Narrative fiction emphasizes the function of proper names, since the characters are pure creatures of language.

Champigny (1977:134) goes on to suggest that authors 'may also endow them (detectives) with descriptive or emblematic value of nicknames'. Though it is not a widespread practice, at least one detective in Shona detective fiction has a nickname. Sergeant Chimedza in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] is also known as 'Tsikidzi' which means 'a bedbug' because of his ability to penetrate into the most secret places to extract information.

When authors give their detective heroes personal names and nicknames it makes them different from those policemen who have no individual identities but are just known as 'matikitivha' (detectives) or 'mapurisa' (policemen). In *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970], for example, the reader cannot identify with any detective hero because the investigations are carried out by what in the novel are called 'mapurisa' (policemen).

Private detectives in Shona detective stories are portrayed as men with a certain social status. Each one of them, with no exception, has an office, a secretary/typist and a telephone. Detectives Dumbuzenene and Gwenembe have each of them an office, a secretary/typist and a telephone. Sergeant Chimedzanemburungwe, besides enjoying the use of an office, a telephone and a secretary/typist, also enjoys the services of a 'tea-boy' named Josamu. Chimedza enjoys the 'tea-boy's' services that when Josamu is not at work he will not have tea or coffee because he does not even know how much coffee powder to put into a single cup of coffee. He asks himself, "... gara zviya mukomichi imwe munoiswa zvigwaku zvekofi zvingani?" (... by the way how much coffee is put into a single cup?), and when he fails to get an answer he abandons the idea. In the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] M'zvondiwa has, in addition to an office, a secretary/typist and a telephone, two body-guards, Elliot and Timothy.

To the detectives in the Shona detective stories these facilities and personnel are symbols of high social status. The way they talk about them clearly indicates that they do not regard these as normal facilities found in a modern business world. For example, Sergeant Chimedza says:

Musi uno kugara kwandaive ndakaita muhofisi kudaro ndaive ndisina basa randaive naro. Ndaingove ndauya kuzogara muhofisi umu ndichinzwa kutonhora kwaiita zuva rechitanhatu remwedzi weChikumi wegore iri nekuteererawo kunyauza kwaiita tapureta yemusikana aindisevenzera uyo aingunoibaya ari muhofisi make yaive yakadongorera mune yangu. (p.6)

(On this particular day that I was sitting in my office I had no work to do. I had come just to sit in this office and enjoy the coolness of this Saturday morning of the month of June that year and to listen to the stimulating sound of the typewriter that the girl who worked for me was using in her office which opened into mine.)

There is ample evidence from this and from the statements by other detectives that they really enjoy the high status that they think their offices afford them. However, it is important to note that only detectives like Inspector Chiminya who are members of the institutionalised police force have no offices, secretaries, telephones and 'tea-boys' to brag about because they operate from police stations or police headquarters where they are not their own bosses, but have to report to their seniors.

Love is a common theme of many Shona novels in the mainstream. But since its arrival as a specific genre, the Shona detective story has concentrated on detective interest and not on love interest. In doing this the authors were probably obeying S.S. Van Dine who 'placed a ban on love interest' in a detective story (Symons, 1972:2). Hagen (1969:473) also observes that:

Love stories, or even suggestions of romance, were almost unknown back in those good old days.

The detectives portrayed in Shona detective stories are not serious womanisers at all. If they were womanisers they would most likely get emotionally involved in these affairs and this would interfere with their work of detection. Some detective stories have been ruined that way. Sayers (1980:78) has observed that:

Some of the finest detective stories are marred by a conventional love - story, irrelevant to the action...

Sayers (1980:78) goes on to add that:

Far more blameworthy are those heroes who insist on fooling about after young women when they ought to be putting their minds on the job of detection.

Hagen (1969:474) has also observed that:

Today's secret agent or trouble shooter is so busy flitting from bed to bed that it is almost miraculous that he gets any work accomplished. It is a rare story today that does not have at least a glamorous blonde, a smouldering brunette, or a shining redhead popping up to divert the hero at every turn of event.

But in the Shona detective story there is not as yet any detectives who fool around with women in any manner worth the kind of concern expressed by Sayers and Hagen. Occasionally though, one detective may show some love interest towards his secretary or bar-lady but this has been kept to the barest minimum. Love in the Shona detective story has been introduced in very small doses that it is almost insignificant. And as long as it is in moderation and does not interfere with the detective's work it can be tolerated. As Haycraft (1942:250) points out:

Love, once barred from the premises, is permissible in moderation today but it must not be allowed to interrupt or divert the directional flow of crime - and - detection any more than other incidental factor.

For example, in *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] the detective has an affair with Molly, his secretary. He kisses her and occasionally takes her out for a picnic. This only goes to show that the detective is only human. Dumbuzenene himself admits after kissing Molly that:

Zvinhu zvacho zvinorema chaizvo. Kana uri munhu wenyama zvimwe zviedzo zvinokuita muranda. (p.8)

(These things are difficult. If you are a man of flesh you get enslaved by some of these things).

Immediately after the kiss Molly suggests that since they have no work to do on this Saturday morning they could go out to picnic at the Kyle Dam or Zimbabwe Ruins. But before she is answered Mr Muchakata arrives with an offer of a job to investigate theft from his shop. From this moment till the detective concludes this case there is no talk or suggestion of romance that interferes with the directional flow of detection. It is only in the last paragraph of the book, after investigations are completed, that Molly once again suggests the trip to the Zimbabwe Ruins and for that she gets another kiss. The novel ends without any development of love interest. In fact, the kiss makes the detective think of his wife, and he leaves for home.

Similarly, in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] the detective does have some love relationship with Runyeyo, a local bar-lady. But once again love interest is brought in in moderation. Chimedzanemburungwe and Runyeyo do kiss occasionally but their romance is never allowed to disturb the work of investigation. If anything, the detective's major interest seems to be in using this woman to gather information he needs in his investigations.

Dumbuzenene and Chimedzanemburungwe are the only two detectives who show some very slight inclination towards love interest. The rest of the detectives in Shona detective stories - Muzvondiwa, Chiminya, Gwenembe, Catherine Pandarara - have absolutely no time even for a social kiss. The overall picture one gets of the detective in Shona detective fiction is that he is a serious investigator and not a socialiser.

Detectives in Shona detective stories are, by and large, portrayed as happily married men. They are portrayed as loving and caring husbands and fathers. Auden (1980:21) has emphasized this requirement when he commands that 'In his sexual life, the detective must be either celibate or happily married'.

Those detectives who have allowed the reader to explore their family lives show that they are happily married and that they are, in spite of the small love affair at the office or local bar, committed heads of family. They have wives and children whom they love. This means that they all have a stake in the social system.

To illustrate this from the texts, detective Dumbuzenene in *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] describes his happy marriage and commitment to family life in these words:

Nemudzimai wangu, mai Desmond, tine vana vaviri. Kudikitira kwangu kwese mari yakunounza ndeyekungochengeta vanhu vana chete, ini, mai Desmond, Desmond wacho naKudzai chimwana changu chigotwe chisikana. (p.4)

(With my wife, Desmond's mother, we have two kids. The money that comes from my sweat is for taking care of only four people, myself, Desmond's mother, Desmond himself, and Kudzai our little last born girl.)

In *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991] Inspector Chiminya explains this happy relationship between himself and his wife and family:

Pandakabva kuchipatara cheHarare, ndakananga kwaSeke kuti ndimbondoona kuti mhuri yangu yainge igere sei. Zvinhu zvinorema kuti munhu upedze zuva rese usina kumbodongorera mhuri kumba. Kana vari vaya vanobuda kunze kwenyika vachisiya mhuri dzavo hameno kuti vakawanepi hana dzakasimba. Ini handitombokwanisi kana. Usiku humwe chaihwo hunetenge gore. Ndinotonzwa kurwara muviri wose kunge ndine bhabharasi redoro. (p.48)

(After I left Harare Hospital I went straight to Seke to see how my family was getting on. It is difficult to spend a whole day without seeing your family at home. I wonder where people who go out of the country and leave their families behind get the courage. I cannot. One single night away from home is like I have been away for a whole year. I feel sick like one suffering from a terrible hangover after a bout of drinking.)

Similarly, Gwenembe in *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] admits that he loves his wife very much:

Mukadzi uyu ndaimbobatwa nemweya wekumuda hama dzangu. (p. 9)

(I often got excessively overwhelmed by my great love for this woman.)

The contention here is that although there is no marriage that can be said to be one hundred per cent happy the marriages of the detectives in Shona detective stories are happy ones. There is no broken marriage anywhere.

Private detectives in the Shona detective stories are portrayed as being better at their job than the institutionalised policemen. Most clients tend to prefer private detectives to the policemen. They see private detectives as being more efficient in producing quick results. Examples of this trend abound in Shona detective stories. In *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] private detective Dumbuzenene asks whether Muchakata has reported the theft he wants investigated to the police and Muchakata's response is 'Hongu. Asi ndaona sekuti imi mungaite zviri nane'. (p. 17) (Yes. But I think you can do better). Also, in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] Chimedzanemburungwe asks Mrs Matichaya whether the police are already working on the case she has hired him to investigate and her reply is typical:

Vari kuissevenza zvavo asi ndinoona sekunge vatinonokera. Saka tauya kwamuri kuti imi muitewo nerimwe divi kunyange mapurisa vachisevenza zvavo nyaya iyoyo. (p.16)

(Of course they are working on it but we have seen that they are taking too long. So we have approached you so that you can also investigate while the police are doing whatever they are doing about it.)

In *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] Mrs Dumukwa insists, despite the detective's refusal and alternative suggestions, that he and he alone should investigate the murder of her husband. Despite the fact that detective Gwenembe is still in hospital, Mrs Dumukwa insists that:

Chiregai ndingomirira imi vaGwemembe kuti mundiitirewo basa iri... Zvino imi mukandiomesera mwoyo ndochema nani? Kana maramba imi, ndizvozvo. Ndinogara zvangu nenhamo dzangu. (p. 23)

(Let me insist on you Mr Gwenembe to do this job for me... If you insist on refusing to help where will I go? If you refuse then that will be that. I will stay like that with my problems.)

No reference to the police is made whatsoever. In the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] Pasipanodya hires a private detective to investigate the case of his son who disappeared. Of the police he makes it clear that:

Mapurisa akamboedza kutsvaga asi hapana chakabatsira kusvikira pari nhasi. (p.13)

(The police also tried to search but up to this day they have produced no positive result.)



When authors of Shona detective stories portray the private detective as being better than the formal police there is nothing new in that. As Cassidy (1982:9) points out:

From the beginning, the official police were the incompetents, the bunglers, the dupes.

And Grossvogel (1979:99) points to the same tradition of the private detective as being better than the formal police that started from the beginning with Poe:

The tradition that begins with Poe generally accepts that the power of sight of the 'private eye' is better than the collective eye of the official police.

Authors of Shona detective stories have continued with that tradition of portraying the detective hero as being better than the official police whom Waugh (1982:39) has described as 'bumbling idiots'.

Writers of Shona detective stories have moulded a detective who is no ordinary man. The detective in these narratives is a man of superior intelligence with extraordinary deductive powers. Detectives such as Chimedzanemburungwe, Dumbuzenene, Gwenembe and Muzvondiwa are tasked with finding solutions to mysteries that are beyond the comprehension of ordinary men and they always acquit themselves well.

The way each of these detectives manages to reconstruct the events that lead to the commission of crime, and eventually reveal the criminal, beats everyone, including the reader and the police. For example, in the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] it is only Muzvondiwa who has the ingenuity to trace and find two young people who have disappeared without trace. Muzvondiwa does such a marvellous job that even the police are reminded of the statement written on the detective's office door which reads:

Pachokwadi ndichasvika chete, asi kana ndasvika, usada kuzoziva kuti ndazvikapo sei.  
(p. 53)

(I will arrive at the truth somehow, and when I do you should never mind how).

The last ten pages of *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] and *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] respectively, are devoted to the detectives' reconstruction of the events that led to the murders in each of the two stories. The ten pages in each book are the deductions arrived at by the detective as a result of his patience, his examining of clue after clue and his several interviews of several suspects and witnesses. The reader is stunned by these revelations. How any man could arrive at such a conclusion which turns out to be the correct one is in itself a mystery. It is a feat that can only be achieved by a man of great intellectual talents. This is what enhances the image of the detective in the eyes of the reader. Only someone 'who had the potential for achieving the proportions of a mythical figure' (Chastain, 1982:27) could do that. As Grella (1980:86) correctly points out:

The fanciful methods and incredible ingenuity of most fictional murders elude everyone but the detective. Only he is granted the power to arrive at the correct deduction from the tenuous and ambiguous.

The detective in the Shona detective story is indeed, as Wright points out, 'a character of high and fascinating attainments - a man at once human and unusual, colourful and gifted' (cited by Symons 1972:101). The world of a detective story 'is filled with signs and codes which the detective can understand' (Mead, 1987:140) and in the Shona detective story he is the only one highly skilled in the art of reading and interpreting these signs. There are many objects, signs and happenings that the reader and other characters meet in the story but which may appear to have little significance to them because they are not endowed with the intelligence to read significant meaning in these things.

It is the detective, 'the single character allowed to have high intellectual attainments' (Symons, 1972:11) who can read these things correctly. For example, in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] it is only the detective who has the necessary intelligence to read meaning into the packet of chips left in his car by the criminals. The reader does not see any significance in it at all. In *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with ones' own petard, 1980] the criminal, Goredema, springles petrol on the house in which the detective is sleeping at night and sets it on fire. But by that time the detective has already escaped. Asked later by Simbarashe how he knew that Goredema intended to set him ablaze the detective replies:

Kufunda matauriro, masekero namatarisiro anoita munhu waunenge uchitaura naye. (p. 59)

(You study the way the person you are talking to talks, laughs and the way he looks at you.)

You can suspect, by looking at a person, that he dislikes you, but to know that he is going to set the house you are sleeping in on fire requires a sixth sense that can only be made available to a detective.

Writers of Shona detective fiction have also produced detective narratives in which the detective hero is portrayed as a tough and energetic character. The reader cannot fail to be impressed by the immense ability of the detective hero to achieve feats of great magnitude. It has been pointed out in this chapter that the detective in Shona detective fiction talks a lot about his office and regards it as a symbol of high status. However, when there is work to be done the detectives do not sit in their offices. They move around a lot. They cover great distances, interview large numbers of witnesses and suspects and examine clue after clue. This they do in very short periods of time. Kahari (1990:295) has called these narratives 'day/week-long thriller-cum-detective genre' because of the amazing ground and volume of work covered in very short periods. For example, the amount of work that detective Chimedzanemburungwe in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] and Dumbuzenene in *Detective Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] cover in only about three days is amazing. This can be done by someone who has more than the touch of a superman about him. In *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] detective Gwenembe interviews seven major witnesses and suspects without a break, and some of them repeatedly. The interview with Mupfupi alone covers nearly nineteen pages of continuous interrogation. Throughout the whole story there is nothing to suggest that he ever went home, ate, rested or slept. As Carpenter (1987:90) has observed 'they (detectives) seem to go on for days without nourishment'.

To add more glamour to the flamboyant detective, he is portrayed as having great capacity for storing volumes and volumes of information without committing anything to paper. The authors use the device of 'the detective's habit of keeping all the threads of the mystery in his own head, committing nothing to paper, confiding in no one' (Waugh, 1982:38). It is amazing how much information Gwenembe can pour out from his head when he explains his findings to Chidiro in the solution section of the story. He pours out almost ten pages of evidence from his head. Similarly, Sergeant Chimedzanemburungwe pours out more than ten pages of evidence without the assistance of a notebook. Chimedza and Gwenembe are like Marlett, Cyril Hare's detective in *The Tenant of Death* (cited by Carpenter, 1987:90). Of Marlett

it is said that:

His memory is prodigious, he never takes notes but never forgets a detail, no matter how seemingly insignificant (Carpenter, 1987:90).

Similarly, most detectives in Shona detective stories, perhaps with the exception of Muzvondiwa who uses a tape-recorder, depend on their memory and take no notes.

The image of the detective in the Shona detective story is ambivalent. As pointed out earlier on in this chapter, the detectives in Shona detective stories are happily married men. Yet they are, on the other hand, never men of families and homes. They are always on demand, so they are always on the move. The world is too full of wickedness that the good men of literature have no time to withdraw into the privacy of their homes. For example, detective Dumbuzenene in *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1995] is so busy with detective work that he has no time to care for his wife who is expecting their third child and she complains when he comes dangerously late to take her to hospital where the baby is born on arrival:

Ndizvo zvamungabvunza izvozvo? Imi mungapedza zuva rese musina kuzondiona asi muchiziva kuti mazuva angu akwana? (p. 11)

(How can you ask that? How can you spend the whole day without checking on me and yet you know that my time to have the baby is now?)

It is not because the detective does not love and care for his wife and children. It is because he loves and cares for the world that he has no time to confine himself to his own family. Also, in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] when detective Chimedzanemburungwe instructs his wife not to leave him any food for supper because 'ndine basa rakandiwandira chaizvo' (p. 30) (I am too busy) the wife, in a resigned voice, replies:

Ndanga ndisingasiyewo. Musi wamunouya nguva iripo munombosvikotanga kubaya munya wanezuro newamarimwezuro musati madya rinopisa. (p. 38)

(I have no intention of reserving food for you either. The day you will come home in good time you will start by eating yesterdays' as well as yesterday but one's cold sadza before you get a hot, fresh meal.)

This clearly shows that the 'happily' married detective is not a family man. He is a man of the world and he has to keep it safe.

The detective in the Shona detective story, as Rahn (1988:81) puts it, is 'first and foremost the agent of justice'. He is portrayed in these narratives as a man who wants to see justice done that he will not give up a case without apprehending the criminal. Even when he is dismissed by his clients who hire him he insists on doing the job even for no reward. For example, in *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] the criminal phones Muchakata and scolds him saying that he no longer wants to work for him. The result is that Muchakata gets furious and stops the detective from investigating his case. But the detective vows to go ahead with investigations, whether he is going to be paid for it or not:

Ndakakwesvaira ndakananga kugedhe ndisina kana simba. Asi basa ndaizoenderera naro mberi chete, kusvikira ndabata mbavha dzaida kundiita munhu wadzo. (p.99)

(I started off towards the gate in shame and feeling dejected. But I was determined to go ahead with investigations, until I got the criminals who were humiliating me.)

In a similar way Sergeant Chimedzanemburungwe in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] is dismissed by his employers, Mr and Mrs Matichaya, because they erroneously believe that he murdered Dr Dekenye whose body was found burnt and abandoned. In spite of being stopped from continuing with investigations into the murder of Thabet Urahwenda, Chimedzanemburungwe vows that:

Zvamareva VaMatichaya ndazvinzwa asi ini ndiri kuenderera mberi nenyaya iyi. Ndave kuisevenza nechido changu kwete nechido chenyu. (p. 78)

(I understand what you have said Mr Matichaya but I will continue with my investigations of this case. I am doing it not because it is your wish but because it is now my wish.)

Like Ross Macdonald's detective, Archer, the detective in the Shona detective story often gets fired by his clients, yet he feels compelled to go on with the job. 'He sees his job in almost Christ-like terms' (Sayers, 1980:108). This is the kind of detective that is portrayed in the Shona detective stories. He has a strong sense of responsibility towards society. As Walker (1991:137) explains:

... the hero of the detective story is our representative, standing for our ideals of law, order and justice, with the authority and the intelligence which we would like to have in order to penetrate the surface reality of life around us, to discover the culprit and to restore order.

#### 5.4 Revolutionary war hero turned detective hero

In chapter 4 it has been pointed out that Masundire has made a significant contribution to the development of the detective story in Shona with his two detective - thrillers, *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992]. The detective featured by Masundire in these two novels represents an interesting development in the portrayal of the detective hero in Shona detective fiction. In his portrayal of Inspector or Chief Inspector Chiminya, Masundire has given rise to a kind of detective who is more than just an investigator of crimes. Masundire has portrayed a detective who represents what Macdonald (1980:179) has called 'a close paternal or fraternal relationship between writer and detective.' Macdonald (1980:179) has further pointed out that:

Throughout history, from Poe to Chandler and beyond, the detective hero has represented his creator and carried his values into action in society.

Nowhere in Shona detective fiction is this relationship between writer and detective stronger than in the works of Masundire.

Masundire has introduced into detective fiction a detective who is at the same time a revolutionary cadre with a revolutionary war history behind him. His detective, Chief Inspector Chiminya, fought in the war that liberated Zimbabwe. His detective is therefore a revolutionary hero. Chiminya himself tells his history in *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991]:

Pahondo yerusununguko ndakagara musango kwamakore mashanu ndiri mukomuredhi. Mhuri yangu yakatombokanganwa nezvangu, ichifunga kuti ndakatsakatika muhondo. (p.29)

(During the war of liberation I spent five years as a comrade in the bush. My family had given me up thinking that I was dead).

The omniscient narrator in *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] also tells us that:

Paakapedza chikoro akamboenda kundorwa hondo yerusununguko kwemakore masere. Achibva ikoko ndipo paakasvikotanga basa rechipurisa. (p.33)

(After finishing school he went to fight in the liberation war for eight years. On his return he joined the police force.)

Although there is a discrepancy on how long he was in the liberation war the undeniable fact is that he was in that war that ushered in a new black government in Zimbabwe.

Masundire has introduced a former guerrilla fighter as a detective into Shona detective fiction. As a result the detective is not only an investigator of crimes. He is also an exponent of the ideology of the government he helped to put into power and which he works for as an official police detective. He (the detective) makes a lot of social and political pronouncements which represent and support the thinking of the government he serves. It is also very easy to discern in the detective's pronouncements the author's own voice. The detective works for the Zimbabwe government in the fiction, while the author, who created this fictional detective, also works for the same government in real life. For example, in *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991] the reader can detect the author's voice behind the detective's praise for government:

Ko, ivo vanhu kurarama handiti upenyu hwavo hwaiva mumaoko ehurumende! Kana pane anoshora hurumende panyaya dzechikafu nguva yenzara handifungi kuti mumusoro mune mbariro dzose. (p.13)

(Is it not true that the well-being of all the people is in the hands of government! If anyone despises government on matters of providing people with food during times of drought and hunger then I don't think he is normal).

The detective is obviously praising government of Zimbabwe for implementing the drought relief programmes in those years of drought and hunger. Even the way the detective hero condemns political dissidents and poachers would make a minister of Natural Resources and Tourism look at him with envy. He condemns dissidents who murder teachers and tourists because, as he argues, if foreigners do not visit the country to see its wild animals, its beautiful places like the Zimbabwe Ruins, Hot Springs, Chinhoyi Caves and Kariba Dam, the country would lose valuable foreign currency. The detective portrayed by Masundire in his detective - thrillers is not only an investigator. He is also a conscientiser of society as well as a spokesman for the ruling class and protector of its interests, though he himself belongs to the working class. As Holdaway (1992:129) correctly points out, 'economically, the police

(at any rate all but the most senior officers) are working class!’

When Masundire, himself a police officer with the Zimbabwe Republic Police, uses a former guerrilla fighter as a detective hero in his detective stories, he is probably celebrating the rise of many former nationalist guerrillas to positions of influence in the police force in independent Zimbabwe. The current Commissioner of Police, Augustine Chihuri, is himself a former combatant in the liberation war in Zimbabwe.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The detective as we have noted in this chapter, is the most important character in a detective story. Any detective story worth its salt should have a character who carries out detective work, whether he is known by the term detective or not. The rudimentary forms of detective stories in Shona even have ‘detectives’ who have no names. It is common to find investigators who are identified not by names, but by name of profession such as ‘mapurisa’ (policemen) or ‘matikitivha’ (detectives).

The image of the detective in Shona detective stories is an ambivalent one. He is portrayed as a happy family man yet on the other hand he cares so much about the world that he has no time to spend in the home.

With regards to the private detective there is ample evidence in Shona detective fiction to suggest that he is by nature a status-seeker. The way he brags about his work shows that he feels good to have an office, a telephone, a secretary/typist, and sometimes business cards, a ‘tea-boy’ and body-guards.

And turning to his abilities, the detective in Shona detective story is portrayed as an intellectual giant towering above everyone else, who ‘relies on his or her own superior perception, intellect and often arcane knowledge to solve the mystery’ (*The Macmillan Family Encyclopedia*, 1980:692). He is so good at his work that it has become the norm for clients to prefer him to the institutionalised police.



The detective is also portrayed as tough and full of boundless energy. The volume of work he covers in a matter of two or three days is astonishing, to say the least. The author does not make his detective relax in an office and wait for witnesses to come to him. They do as Haycraft (1942:225) has advised that:

Do not sit your detective at a table and parade the witnesses before him. Move him around...

The detective in the Shona detective story is a serious minded investigator who has no time to waste on love matters when there is a job to be done. Love matters come into the life of only two detectives and it comes in such tiny doses that it is almost insignificant. In the life of the majority of the detectives there is not even the slightest suggestion of romance.

A significant dimension in the development of the Shona detective story is the introduction by Masundire of a former guerrilla fighter in the Zimbabwe war of liberation as a detective hero. This type of detective investigates and makes social and political comments that betray his, and his creator's, political allegiance.

The emergence of different faces of the detective, from the ordinary and crude policeman or investigator, to the gifted private detective and the partisan professional police detective such as Chief Inspector Chiminya, signifies aspects of the development of the detective story as a fictional genre in Zimbabwean literature in the Shona language.

## CHAPTER 6

### 6. IMAGES OF WOMEN

#### 6.1 Introduction

The 'images of women' approach to literature basically deals with the way women are depicted in fiction. It addresses the question of whether authors portray women positively or negatively. Whether women are portrayed positively or negatively will depend largely on attitudes and values prevailing in the society that produces the literature that portrays them. As Fishman (1992:1) points out, literature shapes and reflects popular conceptions of the nature and capacities of women.

In Shona fiction women are portrayed largely as stereotypes. This implies that they are presented as photocopies of the same things. As Ferguson (1986:30) explains, the term 'stereotypes' is taken by sociologists from printing, where it refers to metal plates used to make exact copies. In Shona fiction women hardly depart from the stereotype. Chinyowa (1994:126) has also observed that to a large extent the Shona authors' vision of women has been rather stereotypical.

The images of women portrayed in Shona literature are those of mothers, wives, prostitutes, unmarried women and divorcees (Gaidzanwa, 1985:11). Most of the novels were written by male authors who had embraced patriarchal values. Women writers were very few and even they did not want to depart from the approach adopted by their male counterparts.

In a strictly patriarchal culture such as that of the Shona people the place and productive role of a woman is in what Emck (1994:391) and Vogel (1983:14) have termed the domestic space and domestic or family sphere, respectively. This means that women have, as Ferguson (1986:5) puts it, 'been fenced into a small place in the world' - the home. From an early age, girls in Shona society are supposed to be conditioned emotionally and psychologically for a life of marriage, which entails looking after a grown up man she will call a husband, bear and care for his children, and look after relatives as well, especially the in-laws. As Eichenbaum and Orbach (1984:21) have explained:

A girl grows up knowing that she is expected to marry a man for whom she will provide nurturance, care and emotional support, and bring into the world children who will depend on her

A woman who knows and fulfils this role is regarded as the ideal.

In Shona fiction the ideal woman is the one who displays characteristics of passivity, helplessness, submissiveness, absolute obedience, humility and total acceptance of her man no matter how useless. Such is the behaviour of women like Tsitsi and Munhano in Patrick Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* [Wait I shall return, 1963] and *Pfumo Reropa* [Spear of blood, 1961], respectively. Such women are expected to suffer in silence while their men misbehave. Women who behave this way are portrayed as the ideal women because they conform to patriarchal expectations. As Gaidzanwa (1985:11) has noted:

Women are expected to behave in a comforting, non-aggressive and nurturant ways.

Moi (1985:58) also concurs when he explains that:

... the ideal woman is seen as a passive, docile, and above all selfless creature.

Such women are the ones who are portrayed positively as saints in Shona literature. But those female characters who do not conform to patriarchal expectations of female behaviour are portrayed as bad women. They are usually portrayed negatively as prostitutes, thugs or murderers. They are negatively portrayed as monsters in contrast to the ideal women who are portrayed as saints. Moi (1958:58) has described the so-called female monster as:

the woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative, who has a story to tell  
- in short, a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarch has reserved for her.

What this means is that in Shona literature those women who conform to roles that patriarchy has assigned for them are portrayed positively as good, while those who do otherwise are portrayed negatively as bad.

By discussing whether images of women in Shona detective stories are stereotypes or whether they are more convincing we will be addressing the question of development of the genre. It is important to assess and see where authors of Shona detective stories are imitating the authors of novels in the mainstream and where and to what extent they are breaking new ground with regards to the way they portray female characters in their works.

## 6.2 Women as wives

The women who will be considered under this sub-heading are those women who play the role of wives. Firstly, in Shona detective stories, the image of women as wives is very prominent even though women who play the role of wives are in all cases minor characters. The prominent husband-wife relationship in these narratives is that between a detective and his spouse in which the wife is completely dwarfed by the husband. This is the only meaningful husband - wife relationship that is depicted in these narratives. The relationship between a wife and a husband who is not a detective is often not depicted because it usually has nothing to do with the theme of detection.

The portrayal of women as wives in Shona detective stories is not very different from the portrayal of women in most Shona novels in the mainstream. In most of the cases images of women as wives are stereotypes. Most of the detectives' wives are what can be described as ideal wives. They are depicted positively since they fulfil the roles to which patriarchy has assigned them. As Gaidzanwa (1985:29) clearly states:

The role of a wife is closely tied to that of the husband and children. A wife is judged in terms of how she behaves towards her husband and how she looks after him, the household and the children. The ideal wife is one who is totally committed to serving the interests of her husband and her children even at the risk of martyring and sacrificing her own interest.

Most wives in Shona detective stories meet the description of an ideal wife given by Gaidzanwa. For example, in *Kusasana Kunoparira* [The search for pleasure leads into trouble, 1977] mai Sara, detective Chinovava's wife, is an ideal wife who cares very much for her husband:

Mai Sara vaindida. Mukadzi uyu ainditeerera nokundiremekedza. Chido chavo chikuru rwainge rusiri ruchengera kwete, asi kuti vaida kuchengetedza murume wavo kubva kungozi netsaona idzo dzinowira varume vazhinji. (p.11)

(Sara's mother loved me. This woman obeyed and respected me. Her's was not misguided jealousy; she wanted to protect her husband from all sorts of dangers that befall most other men).

Chinovava's wife remains in the home looking after the children. She is faithful to her husband while the husband is flirting around with young girls and when he gets into trouble after Yuna is murdered while he is picnicking with her, he comes home and we see his good wife falling on his knees, weeping and ready to forgive. This is the ideal wife depicted in Shona literature. Mai Sara is like Tsitsi in Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* [Wait I shall return, 1963]. Tsitsi is neglected and ill-treated by her husband, Matamba, for many years. But when Matamba is blinded by rivals in the city where he has been having a good time, he comes home to his wife who does not only forgive and accept him, but goes on to have another baby by him. Like Tsitsi, mai Sara is an ideal wife.

In *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] the detective's wife, mai Desmond, is another example of a female stereotype. Detective Dumbuzenene's wife is an ideal wife. The images of this woman as a wife are given to us largely by her husband. He is the one who comments on what he thinks an ideal wife should be. The wife herself hardly says anything about herself. The husband determines the parameters within which she should operate. Mai Desmond belongs to the domestic sphere. Her business in this world is to give birth to children, look after the home and prepare food and take good care of the husband. Detective Dumbuzenene says of his wife:

Mai Desmond vacho havana tikiti. Chavo kungoita zvimabasa zvepamusha nokundiberekera vana. (p.4)

(Desmond's mother is unemployed. Her role is to carry out domestic chores and to give birth to my children).

According to patriarchal tradition the home is the ideal place for well-behaved and sensible women. As Dumbuzenene says, 'Musha unogara wakachengetwa nemudzimai ini ndichishuzha mumasango' (p.4) (The home is looked after by the wife while I go out to fend for the family). This is what Murray (1973:16) refers to when he says that a woman's world,

has been a world of birth and death, of food and love, of comfort and blood - a very basic world...

When detective Dumbuzenene says that, 'Upenyu hwechinyakare chaihwo ndihwo hwandinoda' (p.4) (The traditional way of life is what I want to maintain), he is expressing resentment to any arrangement that disrupts the cultural status quo in which women's sexual roles are clearly defined and male dominance guaranteed. This has also been noted by Mashiri (1994:15) who points out that:

Cultural preservation not only involved a conservative protest against the breakdown of traditional family structures, but also the restriction of women to their proper subordinate positions in domestic space.

Dumbuzenene does not even allow mai Desmond to be a second breadwinner in the family because it is not acceptable 'kuti mumba muite machongwe maviri (p.4) (it is not allowed to have two cockerels in the same house). The wife is not even allowed to get into her husband's office. Dumbuzenene tells us that:

Ndine hofisi yangu pachangu yandinoitira basa rangu, hofisi yekuti kana mudzimai wangu haakandi rutsoka. (p.3)

(I have my own office where I do my work, an office in which even my wife does not set her foot).

In mai Desmond we get the image of a wife who has been reduced to a total dependant. To her the home is like a prison. As the husband says:

Chete mudzimai wangu akange asingafambi-fambi zvake. Aingogara mumba zvake kunge ndakamudyisa chipotanemadziro. (p.46)

(My wife was not in the habit of going places. She stayed in the house like one who had been tamed by being fed on love portion).

But there is no woman who does not want to enjoy the sweetness of freedom. Mai Desmond is only doing what she knows she is expected to do as an ideal wife - that is, to stay in the home. Mtuze (1990:49) has portrayed the image of such wives more aptly when he says:

Staying at home or domesticity for women in this context is of paramount importance. It is like national service.

Another woman who is a stereotype is mai Chipeneti, detective Chimedzanemburungwe's wife. Her part in the story is very small. She is married to a star detective and her role is to do domestic chores, look after the children and prepare nice food for the family. Her husband, Detective Chimedzanemburungwe, appreciates the fact that she can cook very well. It is in this domestic role of cooking that he sees her usefulness and value. He says in appreciation of food well cooked:

Ndakanga ndatononga imwe nyama yaive yakakangiwa zvemberi. Ndakaimondera ndichidada nechemumwoyo kuti amai VaChipeneti ndaive ndavawanirwa nevadzimu. (p.95)

(I had already picked one piece of meat that was expertly fried. I chewed it with pride in my heart that I had been given Chipeneti's mother (his wife) by the ancestors).

A wife given to a man by ancestors is special in Shona tradition. Mai Chipeneti is a special gift from the ancestors for no other reason other than that she has played her domestic role well as a cook. No wonder Ferguson (1986:21) has asserted that:

How well they (women) played their roles, in the judgement of males, determined their value in society.

Her ability to provide good food has given her value and importance. And according to May (1983:23), a woman's ability to provide food for her family is both an important duty and a source of status.

Mai Chipeneti also gives us an image of women as creatures delimited by their sexuality. Like mai Desmond, Dumbuzenene's wife, she too operates in the domestic sphere and has no role to play outside the home. She has no say whatsoever in her husband's affairs and life outside the home, except to bring him food. As Chimedzanemburungwe himself reveals:

Amai vaChipeneti vakamboda kuti vati bufu bufu nezvekusungwa kwandaive ndaitwa ndikabva ndakurumidza kuti vazive zvekumba zvepabasa pangu vasiye zvega. (p. 96)

(Chipeneti's mother tried to enquire about my arrest and I quickly reminded her to stick to domestic issues and leave matters pertaining to my job alone).

Throughout the story mai Chipeneti is mentioned in connection with nothing sensible except her emotional attachment to her teapot, which helps to emphasize the ideology of domesticity associated with a woman's life. *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] deals with the serious theme of murder and its detection yet wherever we meet mai Chipeneti she is presented as being worried about nothing sensible except her teapot. This depicts an image of a woman who is feeble, fluffy and brainless.

An example of mai Chipeneti's feeble mind is given on the very last page of the novel. When Detective Chimedzanemburungwe is narrating to the police the events surrounding the crime he has just finished investigating, Chimedza tells us that:

Amai Chipeneti vaive vakatobatiriranwa nemamwe mapurisa maviri vachida zvekunditema mbonje chete. Vaida poto yavo. (p.174)

(Chipeneti's mother was being held by two policemen because she wanted to injure me. She only wanted her teapot).

Her behaviour in this sense should not be misconstrued to mean that she is a typical problem wife. Her exaggerated behaviour in this case is meant to belittle and denigrate her by showing her as a woman with such a small brain that she cannot see the difference between trivialities and serious issues, that is, she cannot see the difference between the loss of a teapot and the murder mystery that her husband is solving, destroying the teapot in the process.

The image of an ideal wife is also brought out in the depiction of mai Tambudzai (Tambudzai's mother), Inspector Chiminya's wife in *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of independence, 1991]. She is described as 'mai vomusha' (mother of the family) and as 'munhu ano rudo somudzimai wangu mai Tambudzai' (such a loving wife like Tambudzai's mother). Although she is a nurse by profession the use of the term 'mai vomusha' (mother of the family) to describe her shows her as an ideal wife who is capable of managing a home well. Moreover, Tambudzai's mother is depicted as an ideal wife because she was a virgin when she was married by Chiminya. Inspector Chiminya himself says of his wife:

Ndakarwa hondo zvakasimba chaizvo ndiri gandanga muno muZimbabwe asi ndakadzoka tava kuzvitonga ndikawana mukadzi achiri mhandara, achiri kungogara munhanga. (p. 5)



(I fought in the war of liberation in Zimbabwe as a guerrilla fighter but I came back at independence and found the woman still a virgin, and unmarried).

Patriarchal tradition expected women to remain virgins until they got married to their husbands but the same was not necessarily expected of men. Here Inspector Chiminya is delighted and boasts about the marital purity of his wife yet tradition does not expect the same from him. These expectations of marital purity contribute to the image of women as creatures delimited by sexuality.

As we have seen, the image of women as wives in Shona detective stories has not quite changed from what it is in the mainstream novel. Goodness in wives is associated with passivity and self-punishment. Only Gwenembe's wife in *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995], is depicted as being a problem wife. This woman, Chimokoto's mother, is described as a 'petticoat tyranny' and that her husband fears her. As Ferguson (1986:21) has pointed out, a woman who rebels - especially if she does so successfully - is both feared and abhorred. Gwenembe's wife seems to be a problem wife who is feared by her husband. Unfortunately, the reader is not told much about her. As a problem woman, Gwenembe's wife is a stereotype, an image that is common in Shona literature.

### 6.3 Women as workers

Working women in Shona detective stories play the role of minor characters. Images of working women that will be considered here are taken from full-fledged detective stories and from detective - thrillers. Women working as detectives will not be considered in this section. They will be considered separately.

Working women in Shona detective stories are found in professions traditionally associated with females. In colonial days women who ventured out of the home to become professionals were usually found in the teaching, nursing and clerical and secretarial fields. Generally, women in Shona literature are often featured as teachers, nurses or secretaries.

In the Shona detective stories the image of women as nurses is common. It has been pointed out earlier on that as wives women are expected to look after their husbands and children. Outside the home we still see women as nurses looking after injured detectives. The women themselves are not given the glamorous role of the detective but when the men who play this role get injured during investigations - and it happens often - they come to the hospital where the female nurses take good care of them. There are several examples to illustrate this.

In *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] Detective Gwenembe is injured in an attack and is taken to Chegutu Hospital where we see Sister Mataruse comforting him by caressing him on the shoulders. Gwenembe himself tells us that:

Mumwe wavo aive adzoka atondibata musana achinyemwerera meno aive akachena serokwe rake nekakepesi kaaive akapaikira mumusoro nechapahuma. (p.17)

(One of them had returned and was holding my back and she was smiling, showing her teeth as white as her dress and her little cap which was perched on her forehead).

In *Mhandu Dzorunguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991] Inspector Chiminya is attacked by one of the criminals and is admitted to Parirenyetwa Hospital. When he wakes up he tells us that:

Ndakatendeudza musoro ndikaona munhu wechikadzi ainge akapfeka zvichena ari padivi pangu. Ko, zvaari nesi! (p. 39)

(I turned my head and saw a woman by my side who was wearing white clothes. How come this is a nurse!)

Detective Chiminya's own wife is a nurse at Chitungwizwa Hospital. In *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] Timothy Manenji's wife, Lucia Gwaindepi, is a nurse before she is murdered.

Like it is in the mainstream Shona novel nursing is considered an ideal profession for a woman. The women who feature as nurses are depicted with positive images. As long as they are nurses, images of whiteness are used to symbolise the softness, the kindness, the love and caring attitude that a nurse should have. Authors take an interest in the nurses' dress, appearance and good heartedness. The nurses

are depicted as 'saints' and 'angels' and it is important to note that there are no male nurses in these narratives.

The other image of a working woman that features more prominently than that of the nurse is that of a secretary/typist. The job of a secretary/typist has always been, and is still largely, being associated with femininity. As Jensen (1986:43) points out:

Typewriting and women are most intimately connected through the role of secretary, a role that became identifiably female with the widespread adoption of the typewriter by the turn of the century.

All the private detectives in Shona detective stories have female secretaries/typists who work for them and none of these secretaries/typists is male. Detective Dumbuzenene has Molly as his secretary in two stories in which he is featured as a private detective; Detective Muzvondiwa also features in two stories as a private detective with Gladys as his secretary/typist; Sajeni Chimedzanemburungwe has Laiza as his secretary/typist; while Detective Gwenembe's secretary/typist is Ida.

All these young women - Molly, Gladys, Laiza and Ida - type the detective's work, file and keep records of cases investigated, answer the phone, keep the detective's engagements, and sometimes make tea or coffee for him. These are the duties of the private detectives' secretaries. As Jensen (1986:44) correctly notes:

"Secretary" had become the term to describe the woman who typed, took dictation and perhaps answered the phone and did filing.

Over and above all else women who are private detectives' secretaries are depicted as the objects of their bosses' admiration. For example, Molly is Detective Dumbuzenene's lover. Detective Gwenembe also says that he has a special liking for Ida's voice. Detective Muzvondiwa is even more open about his feelings towards Gladys. He says:

Gladys uyu musikana wekuti kana ukangoti ziso rako kwaari kande unobva waerekana wangoti mate gutyanga kumedza nokuda kworunako ruri pameso pake. (p.11)

(This Gladys is that kind of girl, who, if you look at her, you will be forced to swallow some saliva because of the beauty on her face).

Gladys is being depicted here as a sex object with what Jensen (1986:47) calls 'agreeable appearance' and 'pleasing to the eye'.

The overall impression the reader gets is that the image of a woman as a nurse and the image of a woman as a secretary/typist occur over and over again in Shona detective fiction.

#### 6.4 Women as victims

The term 'victim' here is used to mean someone who is hurt or killed by someone. In a detective story the word victim refers to someone who suffers the action of a criminal. The role of women as victims therefore implies that in a genre in which there is someone who commits a crime on one hand such as murder, and someone who investigates the crime on the other, the woman is the one usually found in the middle, that is, the one against whose person the crime is committed. In Shona detective literature the woman is usually the victim of the crime usually committed by men, although cases of women who commit crimes is also increasing. The role of detective hero who investigates the crime is reserved for men. In the triad - criminal, victim, investigator - a woman usually becomes the victim, occasionally the criminal and rarely the detective.

The majority of crimes committed in Shona detective stories in which women are victims involve murder. Although men also die the majority of those who die are women. In all the detective stories and thrillers mentioned in this study there are no less than seventeen murders and two attempted murders all involving women, especially young girls. Some of these murders are actually the main events that trigger off the processes of investigation in various novels. Some are sequential murders which are committed by the criminals as ways of eliminating possible witnesses of the initial murders. Whatever the case may be the majority of those murdered are women.

Examples of women as victims in Shona detective stories are numerous. In *Karumekangu* [My Little husband, 1970] the first Shona novel to deal with crime and detection, the victim of murder is a woman, Sarudzai Samanyanga. In *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976] a woman, Lucia Gwaindepi, is the victim of murder. In this same novel two other women, Priscilla Smith and Emilda MaNdllovu, are

also victims of murder and attempted murder, respectively. Both women are attacked by the criminal in his attempt to eliminate people who knew him as a criminal and who might report to the police.

In *Kusasana Kunoparira* [The search for pleasure leads into trouble, 1977] a young woman called Yuna becomes a victim of murder at the hands of a young criminal called Temba. Another young woman called Erina is also seriously injured in an attempt by the same criminal on her life. In *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] the murder of a young woman, Thabet Urahwenda, by Fillia Gwatiridza, triggers off the process of investigation by Sergeant Chimedzanemburungwe.

Young women also become victims of kidnapping. In the short story of the title *Muchineripi* [What else is there to say] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989] investigation is triggered off by the kidnapping of two young people, one of them being a woman called Rosemary. In the same short story another young woman called Gloria is murdered in a hotel in Gatooma in what appears to be an attempt to silence a witness by the criminal. Also, in *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980], a sixteen year old school girl, Jessica Musemwa, who was kidnapped five years ago is subsequently murdered and her body dumped under a bridge in Bulawayo. In the same story Shaireti Maposa becomes a victim of ritual murder, while another woman, a maMoyo, is also murdered by her husband so that he can marry a certain school teacher called Sibanda.

In other cases the process of investigation is triggered off by some other initial event which is not murder of a woman. But whatever the initial crime is a lot of women, especially young women, still become victims of subsequent murders. Most of them die because they are known or suspected by the criminals to have certain information which, if passed on to the police, may lead to the unveiling of the criminal.

As examples, in the short story of the title *Seri Kweguva Hakuna Muteuro* [There is no prayer after death] in *Zvinoera* [Taboo, 1989], a man is murdered in a vegetable garden and police investigate the case.

This is the initial crime. But a young woman called Patricia is subsequently murdered and dumped into a dam by her boyfriend who is the criminal. In *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] the initial crime to be investigated is theft from Muchakata's store, yet two young women, Loice and Garwe's house-maid, both become victims of subsequent murders because they have information that is dangerous for the criminals if it falls into the hands of the police. In *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] investigation is triggered off by the murder of Mr Dumukwa yet somewhere along the line two women, Patricia and Angela, also become victims of what appears to be sequential murder. In *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991] Rose, the only woman character in the novel to make any meaningful impression on the reader, is shot dead as she comes down the stairs of Bonanza Night Club in Harare. She is murdered by the criminals who want to blackmail the detective who is investigating them. And also in *Ziso Rapindwa Nemhiripiri* [Pepper in the eye, 1988] the crime being investigated is the murder of a school teacher called Zondi, yet in an event that is difficult to comprehend, a young female shop attendant by the name of Chenesai, dies from burns sustained in a fire that destroys the shop in which she is working.

In all these examples women are victims. The image of women as victims is taken straight from the vision of women in Shona traditional society. In Shona traditional society women have always been victims of male domination and oppression.

In Shona society women, especially young girls, have always had to 'die' so that man could 'live'. For instance, if there is ngozi (an avenging spirit) to be appeased so that it does not cause further deaths in a family it is always the girl child who is used to compensate the aggrieved family; in the event of severe starvation in a family it is the girl child who may have to be sacrificed by being given away to a rich family in exchange for grain so that the family may survive; if a young man cannot raise enough money to pay bridewealth for his wife, it is the girl child who must be sacrificed in an exchange process which may be described as barter in humans; and, if, in the old days when giving birth to twins was taboo, the twins happened to be a boy and a girl, it was always the girl baby who the midwives killed secretly and only presented the baby boy to the patriarchs. In these modern times if there is not enough money to send everyone to school, it is always the girl child who must be withdrawn from school so that the boy child can receive education. Examples of images of women as victims in Shona culture are many.

Such images of women as victims of male oppression occur in some Shona novels in the mainstream. For example, in Joyce Simango's *Zviuya Zviri Mberi* [Happiness lies ahead, 1974] a young girl, Tambudzai, is pledged in marriage by her father to an old man who already has five other wives. In another story *Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga*[Family Secrets, 1977] a young woman called Maria is pledged in marriage to another family so that her own family can get grain and avert starvation. Such novels show the oppression suffered by women in Shona society.

Shona detective fiction has continued with that tradition of using women, especially young women, as victims. Whenever there is a crime to be committed and that crime happens to be murder then a woman is the most likely choice for the grave. No wonder in Shona detective stories the majority of characters who die are women. It seems women in literature die just because they are female. Victimising women, mostly by murdering them, appears to be a common way of treating women, in a fictional genre which appears to be mainly a domain for male chauvinism.

#### 6.5 Women as criminals

The majority of women characters in Shona detective stories play minor roles, that is, as wives, secretaries/typists, nurses and victims. Occasionally women are given prominent roles to play but when they are given such roles they are made the villains and not the heroes. In doing this writers of Shona detective stories have not differed significantly from writers of other Shona novels in the mainstream. In the mainstream novel main characters and heroes are usually men and not women. As Kahari (1990:216) has correctly noted, 'heroines are few and far between in Shona literature'.

If a woman is made the main character then usually she is the villain not the hero. This is how Mutize portrays Mary Ponderai in the novel *Mary Ponderai* (Name of main character, 1978). Mary Ponderai is a female thug.

In a detective story there are two sides. One side is dominated by the detective hero and the other side is dominated by the criminal. The detective and the criminal are almost evenly matched intellectually. On those rare occasions when a woman has been given a prominent role to play she has been made, not the detective hero, but the criminal. For a woman character created by a male author this is a complement because she is, in terms of intellect, almost on par with the detective. But because the authors choose to make a woman the criminal and not the detective hero her portrayal is negative. The more rewarding and glamorous role of detective hero is reserved for man and the woman protagonist is assigned the role of the villain. There is obvious bias in favour of the male gender.

A look at those few narratives in which there are female criminals will help to illustrate this negative portrayal of women. Kawara, in his story *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984] gives a woman a leading role to play. He makes Fillia Gwatiridza one of the protagonists but instead of making her the detective hero he makes her the principal criminal. She is a murderer who kills Thabet Urahwenda. Fillia Gwatiridza, a woman, is the one who is put on the wrong side of the law and a male, sergeant Chimedzanemburungwe, is assigned to investigate her and enjoy the glory when he succeeds, while the woman suffers punishment.

Similarly, in Kawara's other detective story, *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995], two women are given very prominent roles to play but both are made principal criminals. Chidiro and her daughter Maud are portrayed as first class criminals. Instead of making women prominent detectives they are made prominent criminals. In Shona literature a woman is portrayed with positive images for as long as she keeps the place to which society has assigned her, that is, in the home. This is the ideal place and sexual role of a woman according to the tradition. When a woman leaves the 'hearth' to do what Blake (1986:31) calls 'unwomanly things', she is described with language that conjures up the worst monster-like images. For example, Chidiro murdered Dhumukwa and that is the crime that Gwenembe investigates in this novel. Chidiro is portrayed with all sorts of negative images. She murders a man using a bow and arrow. She is also in the habit of hunting guinea-fowls with bows and arrows - a thing unheard of in the Shona world. Mabhurukwa is so shocked about her behaviour that he wonders:

Wakamboonepi mukadzi anovhima hanga nemiseve? (p.7)

(Where did you ever heard of a woman who hunts guinea fowls with bow and arrows?)



In addition to Dhumukwa she also murders Pat, Angela and Sangorinei.

Chidiro's daughter, Maud, distinguishes herself as an international criminal. She is a Zimbabwean who disguises herself by dressing like an Arab woman and she uses a foreign name, De Souza, in her international operations. Maud makes two trips abroad every week and on each occasion she smuggles gold which is made into earrings, bracelets, belt and shoes which she wears on such trips. She has business operations all over the world including Spain, South Africa, United Kingdom, Canada, France and Zimbabwe.

While Chidiro and Maud have been depicted negatively as criminals their portrayal is also not stereotypical. They are not the old-fashioned, traditional and submissive type of women. They are assertive women who have abandoned the 'hearth' and have broken into big time crime. Chidiro and Maud are perhaps the most sophisticated criminals who have built a huge business empire unparalleled in Shona literature. This is the best that Shona male authors can do for women. They realise that the female spirit, once imprisoned for a long time, is breaking loose. Kawara, the author of *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] and a professional detective himself, conceded in an interview (1996) that:

We have women who are very shrewd criminals. Yesteryear writers were shielding women and portrayed them as nice, gentle, and submissive. Now women have taken greater part in crime itself, and some have become millionaires through it.

Kawara also explained that the portrayal of Maud as a business woman who crosses the border on numerous business trips was influenced by the thousands of Zimbabwean women who cross the borders into neighbouring South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Namibia on shopping trips. *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] is one of the most recent detective stories to be published and hence the portrayal of women in it is different. Women are no longer stereotypes. As Mawela (1994:47) noted in a recent study of Venda novels:

... the female characters who are portrayed in modern or more recent literature do compete with male characters in all spheres of life. They are self-assertive and very confident.

Another female character in a recent publication who is not a stereotype is Emma Bhandasa in Masundire's novel, *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994]. Emma Bhandasa is an assertive and confident woman who knows what she wants and how to get it. Like Chidiro and Maud, she has been projected into prominence but in a negative way. She is the principal criminal who murders her mother and husband with a pistol. Her behaviour conjures up images of horror. Because she wants money from her husband's insurance policy she murders her husband and then her mother and, after removing their clothes, places them in bed naked in a position that is very uncompromising. When private detective Dumbuzenene arrives to investigate she somehow manages to trip him, remove his tracksuit bottom and underwear, and force him between her own naked thighs, and the police arrive to find the detective in that uncompromising position. The detective is arrested for 'murder and rape' he did not commit.

The trend in more recently published Shona detective stories such as *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994] and *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995] is to portray women as characters who play more assertive roles and not, as Mtuze (1990:32) puts it.:

Shadowy figures who hover on the fringes of the plot, suckling infants, cooking, (and)plaiting their hair.

As Mtuze (1990:105) further points out:

Some modern women are so assertive that they will even resort to murder or crime to achieve their goals and objectives.

This is what Fillia Gwatiridza, Chidiro and Maud, and Emma Bhandasa do. As for Emma Bhandasa, she does not only outwit the detective brainwise, she also, as we have seen above, overpower him physically.

## 6.6 Women as detectives

In the preceding sections of this chapter we have seen women portrayed as wives, nurses, secretaries/typists, victims and as criminals. Women in Shona detective stories are everything but the detective heroes. In the words of Murray (1973:17) women 'were always an underclass', and as such they are not

allowed to play the big roles in a positive way. They only play big roles if they are criminals. The colourful and glamorous roles of detective heroes are reserved for male characters. Such negative portrayal of women stems from one fundamental principle, 'the social and sexual subordination of women' (Ngcobo, 1988:150). Observations made by La Cour and Mogensen (1971:118) with regards to the treatment of women characters in detective fiction throws some light on developments taking place in Shona detective stories. They rightly observe that:

Though women frequently figure as the victims or villains in crime stories, the more rewarding role of detective is usually reserved for men. (La Cour & Mogensen, 1971:118)

La Cour & Mogensen's observation is correct if we consider that all private detectives in the Shona detective stories published to date are men, namely, Chimedzanemburungwe, Dumbuzenene, Muzvondiwa and Gwenembe. There is no single woman who is a private detective. Also, prominent professional police detectives in charge of full investigations are men, namely, Muzvondiwa and Chiminya. Although there are two or so women police detectives, none of them is given complete charge of an investigation. Men are always there to take control of things. No wonder Emck (1994:384) has described the detective story as 'an intensely masculine genre'.

There is clear evidence to prove that whenever a woman is made an official detective she is terribly overshadowed by her male counterparts. The two or so women detectives there are in Shona detective stories are portrayed in a manner that reflects the bias and reluctance of a hostile patriarchal society to allow women to share glory with men. As Ngcobo (1988:150) has explained:

There is an age-old fear that the independence of the female spirit will destroy the pillars of our society.

In Shona culture women are minors, hence they cannot be expected to lead men in any capacity. May (1983:22) found out that in Shona society women remain political and jural minors all their lives as wards of their fathers or other male kin, and, when they marry, their husbands. Similarly, Petersen (1988:13) rightly observes that in African traditional society:

Women are marginalised in their husbands' homes, valued mainly as breeders and treated, legally and otherwise, as minors.

This attitude towards women permeates African literature including Shona detective fiction in which female detectives are minor characters and not detective heroes. They are not allowed to shine like a beacon as male detectives are allowed to do. This may not be surprising because the few female detectives there are were created by men. Not even one single Shona detective story was written by a woman, hence women's vision of a female detective hero has not yet been presented. Men create women detectives half-heartedly because they think that women should settle down to do what Blake (1986:31) has described as 'their real and only womanly pursuit, care for their homes and families'.

What shows that men create female detectives half-heartedly is the absence of real female detective heroes. The few female detectives there are play second fiddle to male detectives. For example, in Hamutyinei's *Ziso Rapindwa Nemhiripiri* [Pepper in the Eye, 1988] three police investigators, namely, Sergeant Gombakomba, Reza and Molly, are tasked to investigate the murder of Seba Zondi. Although there is a female detective among them it is obvious that the whole operation is being led by a male, Sergeant Gombakomba. Reza usually drives, while Molly sits between the two men in the jeep, as if to emphasise that women need men's protection. Occasionally, Molly asks some questions but as the author says, 'VaGombakomba vaitsvaga mhondi yakauraya Zondi mudunhu raGutu' (p. 38) (Mr Gombakomba was looking for the murderer who killed Zondi in Gutu). It is obvious that Molly, the female detective, is overshadowed by a man who is the leading investigator.

Molly only features prominently when her womanly instincts make her go to talk to Zvichaera, another female, who looks sickly from an advanced pregnancy:

Molly akarurama kuna Zvichaera akanga agere mumadziro emba akatambarara achiteerera muviri wake waidzimba-dzimba. Nguva yake yakanga yava kuswederwa. Molly akangomutarisa ndokuona kuti chokwadi mwanasikana akanga ava kukurirwa nemimba. (p.59)

(Molly went straight to Zvichaera who was sitting with her legs stretched out and leaning on the wall of the house and showing signs that she was not feeling well. Her time to give birth was getting close. Molly looked at her and concluded that the girl was quite heavy with pregnancy).

The way Molly behaves, talks and questions Zvichaera indicates that she is a woman concerned about another woman suffering from a womanly problem rather than a detective doing pure detective work. One may therefore understand the stance taken by Haycraft (1942:230) when he judges that:

In all fairness women (and boys) do not make satisfactory principal detectives. They may and often do, figure as important and attractive assistants.

The only other novel in which a woman plays the role of a detective is Masundire's *Dzapiringana* (It is all tangled up, 1994). In this novel the reader gets a much more improved image of a woman detective although it does not take long for one to get disappointed again. When Catherine Pandarara appears for the first time on page 29 she introduces herself in the same manner that male detectives like Dumbuzenene, Chimedzanemburungwe, Muzvondiwa and Chiminya do in the stories in which they feature as detective heroes. She says:

Ini ndinonzi Catherine Pandarara. Ndiri Detective Woman Inspector paMasvingo Central Police Station. Ndinoshandira Homicide Section. Ini ndiri mubato rinoita basa rokufeyefa nyaya dzoumhondi. Mubasa rokufeya iri handipfeki nyembe dzebasa. (p.29)

(My name is Catherine Pandarara. I am a Detective Woman Inspector at Masvingo Central Police Station. I work in the Homicide Section. I am in the section that investigates murder cases. In this job of investigating I do not wear uniforms).

No other female detective in Shona literature has been portrayed with more positive images than Catherine Pandarara. She has the rank of Police Woman Inspector with male officers as her subordinates. She is addressed as 'shefu', a term that in Zimbabwe today is used to address someone with a high-ranking position in a political party or at work places. She has such a high rank that she is entitled to the use of a government vehicle and is authorised to carry a gun wherever she is. She herself tells us that:

Somunhu anoremekedzwa nenyembe dzouinspector ndinobvumidzwa kushandisa motokari dzebasa pane chose zvacho chandinaita. Kana pfuti ndinayo yandinofamba nayo pose pose pandinenge ndiri. (p.33)

(As a respected person with the rank of inspector I am allowed to use a government vehicle for whatever I want to do. I even have a gun which I carry with me wherever I am).

It does not happen so often in Shona literature that a woman is given a high status and is saluted by men. Detective Woman Inspector Catherine Pandarara orders her male subordinates around and she expects her instructions to be followed to the letter. She says:

Ini kana ndapa munhu basa handidi kuti aite napake paanofunga. Zviya zvokuti hanzi munhu ataura mukadzi saka zvaatura hazvina kukosha, kwandiri hazviitwi. Zvokudheerera nokuti ndiri mukadzi handidi. (p.38)

(If I give someone a job to do I do not want him to do it in his own way. I do not tolerate anyone who thinks that my instructions are not important because they have been given by a woman. I do not want to be looked down upon just because I am a female).

This is a much more improved image of a woman. She speaks her mind with confidence and challenges men. She may be a woman but she has power in her hands and she is determined to show her toughness.

While the portrayal of Catherine Pandarara shows that the image of a woman detective is a much more improved one it is also easy to note that men are creating the female detective almost reluctantly. Catherine Pandarara was created by a male author. The same author, Masundire, also created Dumbuzenene and Chiminya as male detective heroes. Dumbuzenene and Chiminya are featured boldly in the stories in which they are detectives and narrators. But by using the device of naming his chapters after various characters in *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994], Masundire denied Catherine Pandarara the chance of becoming the first woman detective hero in the same mould as male detective heroes like Dumbuzenene, Chimedzanemburungwe and Gwenembe. Catherine Pandarara only features prominently as a detective in the three chapters that are named after her because she is the narrator there. But she loses significance in the rest of the chapters that are narrated by and named after other characters. She becomes overshadowed by men. The author should have made Catherine Pandarara the narrator and the principal detective from beginning to end, if he was sincere in his intentions of creating a female detective.

Also the very last page of the story *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994] clearly demonstrates that Masundire, writing as a representative of the patriarchs, created a female detective half-heartedly. The last page has a chapter headed 'Nyamavhuvhu 1989' which is told by an omniscient narrator and which carries a newspaper article which sums up the achievements of the investigators. The article reads in part:

Mapurisa eCID achishanda pamwe naPedzisai Dumbuzenene, Private Detective, akafeyafeya nyaya iyi akazosunga matsotsi ose. (p. 108)

(CID police, working hand in hand with Pedzisai Dumbuzenene, a private Detective, investigated this case and arrested all the criminals).

The name of Catherine Pandarara, the female detective, has disappeared at the time to reap glory. There is no mention of her name whatsoever in this newspaper article. She loses individual identity as she becomes part of a police department, the CID. The story ends with the name of Pedzisai Dumbuzenene, a male detective, boldly written in the minds of the readers, and that of the female detective, Catherine Pandarara, pushed into the background and, eventually, into oblivion.

The female detective does not make her own image any better. In her own words Catherine Pandarara suggests that a woman 'who puts on a dress' is not strong, but she is weak. Her statements suggest that strength, bravery and power are manly attributes. She says:

Kana munhu uine kakumbo kehuku unonzwa kugadzikana muhana. Unonyatsonzwa kuti hapana chinaitika kwauri. Hapana anokutanga kana. Unenge uchitova murume pachako. Vose vanhu vanokuona vanoti uri mukadzi nokuda kwerokwe, asi nechomumwoyo mako unenge uchiziva kuti uri murume. (p.35)

(If you have a pistol you feel safe. You know that nothing will happen to you. No one will provoke you. You will be a man. All those who see you know that you are a woman because of your dress but deep in your heart you know that you are a man).

Reading between the lines the reader gets the impression that Catherine Pandarara is equating the power of a gun with the power of a man. She says that a gun makes her feel like a man and not like a woman any more. The gun gives her the strength and courage of a man. The implication of her statement is that a woman is weak but a man is strong. When she wields a gun she ceases to be a woman but a man. This statement by a woman detective does not improve the image of herself as a female detective.

As further proof of Catherine Pandarara's dependence on men, when Detective Superintendent Meyo sends her during the night to go and investigate murder that has taken place in the 'new suburbs' in Masvingo, she wakes up a male detective to go with her. In her own words she says, 'Ndakamutsa mumwe mutikitivha wechirume ndokubva tose tarova masango takananga kuma 'new suburbs'. (p.36) (I woke up another male detective and we went to the new suburbs together). It is not because there were no other female detectives, it is because women want to depend on men for protection. As Eichenbaum and Orbach (1984:56) have asserted:

Women collude in the perpetuation of the myth of the strong man, for if there is a strong man the woman can imagine that she is safe, that she is being cared for and looked after.

It is for the above reasons that we assert that male authors who have attempted to create female detectives have done so half-heartedly. They have not made them real detective heroes who stand head and shoulder above everyone, including men. They have created them but have kept them under the shadow of men.

## 6.7 Conclusion

The images of women as depicted by male authors in Shona detective stories published to date are not very different from images of women as depicted in the mainstream novel. Authors of Shona detective stories seem to be confirming most of the male stereotypes about women, except in a few cases.

The main images of women depicted in these Shona detective stories are those of wives, nurses, secretaries/typists, victims, criminals or villains, and to a lesser extent, detectives.

Images of women as wives are mainly those of women married to detectives. Most of them, perhaps with the exception Gwenembe's wife, are depicted as ideal wives. Theirs is what Trollope in the Vicar of Bullhampton believes is a woman's one career, marriage (Condray, 1972:49). With the exception of Chiminya's wife who is a nurse, the rest are not allowed to be employed, not even to interfere with their husband's work.

The most common image of women in these narratives is that of women as victims. In Shona society women are victims; in the mainstream Shona novel women are victims as well; and now in Shona detective fiction the images of women as victims are very common. The number of women who die in these narratives far outnumber that of men.

In Shona literature women who are main characters are few and far apart. Mutiso (cited by Makgamatha, 1992:85) has observed that as well when he asserts that powerful women characters are relatively rare in African literature. When they are made main characters they are portrayed negatively. This same trend is discernible in Shona detective fiction. There are no female detective heroes of note. That is a



male preserve. When women are given main roles to play they are portrayed negatively as first class criminals which shows that authors of Shona detective stories are biased against women. Until women authors produce their own writers of full-fledged detective stories in Shona and present their own vision of the female detective hero negatively portrayed female characters like Fillia Gwatiridza, Chidiro and Maud, and Emma Bhandasa, will continue to emerge as main characters.

## CHAPTER 7

### GENERAL CONCLUSION:

In this research it has been noted that a detective story is one in which a crime is committed and a detective is engaged to carry out step by step investigation of the mystery surrounding it until the culprit is unveiled.

Crime is not a new phenomenon that came with modern literature. From the beginning of life literature has been concerned with crime. Black (1991:29), for example, has noted that the Old Testament begins with stories of Adam and Eve, eating the forbidden fruit in Eden, and of their sons who became the first murderer and murdered victim. Shona oral literature too has stories of characters who commit crimes of all kinds. In all such stories the culprit is always found out and punished, thereby giving the big moral lesson that crime does not pay. But the process of discovering the criminal does not involve a detective who uses logic to solve the mystery, thus leading to the conclusion that the Shona detective story emerged from the non-detective folktale.

The emergence of a literary genre is sometimes determined by socio-historical developments. The emergence of the Shona detective story as a specific genre separate from the mainstream novel was a response to such socio-historical developments in Zimbabwe. With urbanization and industrialisation crime grew to proportions where efficient systems of investigation became essential. This scenario influenced authors to write stories in Shona in which crime and investigation featured.

However, when the stories involving crime and detection first appeared the authors did not deliberately set out to write detective stories as such. Rather, they wrote ordinary stories in which crimes and detection happened to feature. Amos Munjanja admitted in an interview (1996) at the Zimbabwe International Bookfair that when he wrote *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971] he was not even thinking about a detective story. He said that he was just writing a story and crime and detection happened to be some of the many events in it.

This is true of many authors who wrote especially before 1980. They wrote about issues that concerned society at the time, and one of those was the rising rate of crime, especially in urban centres. They were not writing crime and detection stories in the same way that Poe wrote *Murder in the Rue Morgue* or Conan Doyle wrote *The Hound of Baskervilles* or Agatha Christie the detective thriller, *The Mousetrap*. But whatever they had in mind at the time of writing novels like *Karumekangu* [My little husband, 1970], *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out, 1971], *Ndambakuudzwa Akaonekwa Nembonje* [You pay heavily for advice not heeded, 1979] and others, the authors were giving rise to the Shona detective story. Such works mark the formative stages in the development of the detective story in Shona. They are so imperfectly developed that it has been necessary in this research to regard them as rudimentary or elementary forms of the Shona detective story. For example, their beginnings show that they were never conceived as detective stories and they also dwell on side issues which are not vital to a record of crime and detection. Even the quality of the detective and his style of investigation are still very elementary.

Moreover, the rudimentary forms of Shona detective stories still show signs of folkloric influence. The authors are still concerned with teaching moral lessons and hence there is too much inclination towards moral didacticism. A clear indication of this is the use of proverbs as titles, such as *Rina Manyanga Hariputirwi* [Evil will come out]. But because there is in each one of them a certain degree of detective interest, it is reasonable to regard them as some kinds of detective stories, though at an elementary stage.

The evolution of the Shona detective story into a fully-fledged, pure detective story and detective - thriller could not be fully realised until there were narratives which featured the highly gifted and intelligent detective and which showed right from the start that they were conceived as stories about crime and detection. The publication of stories like *Rufu Runobereka Rufu* [Death begets death, 1976], *Ndomene Haichemedzi* [Hoist with one's own petard, 1980], *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984], *Mutikitivha Dumbuzenene* [Detective Dumbuzenene, 1991] and *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995], confirmed the advent of the detective story in Shona as a specific genre.

Each of these narratives has been developed by the author into a battlefield where two great minds, that of the detective and that of the criminal, fight for supremacy, with the mind of the detective customarily coming out the better. This is a step better than in the rudimentary form where the 'battle of wits' is almost non-existent.

The ability of a genre to diversify is a sign of growth. Shona detective fiction has not only developed the pure detective story, but it has also seen the development of the detective - thriller. Starting with Hamutyinei's *Kusasana Kunoparira* [The search for pleasure leads into trouble, 1975] and Kaugare's *Kukurukura Hunge Wapotswa* [To be able to discuss an accident means you have escaped, 1978] it has attained its highest level of development to date in the two works of Masundire, namely, *Mhandu Dzorusumunguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991] and *Nyanga Yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992]. The thriller distinguishes itself by the rate of violence experienced in it. Hagen (1969:474) describes reading such a novel as 'virtually a trip around the world with violence, murder and intrigue as boon companions'.

Because a crime is there, a detective or detectives are there and the process of detection is there, the thriller is also a kind of detective story. The only difference is that it is based on fast action, suspense and violence.

In a sense it can be said that a detective story is about the life of a detective, especially if the detective himself is the fictional voice of that novel. Once crime has been committed the state of grace in a society is removed and it is the detective who must restore it. The detective therefore occupies a special place in any detective story. After all, the narrative is so-called because someone in it carries out detective work.

The quality of the detective story depends on the calibre and quality of the detective. In the rudimentary forms of Shona detective story the quality of investigation is low because the detective or police detective used is very ordinary and possesses no special abilities or brains. For example, 'munume wendebvu' (The bearded man) in *Chakafukidza Dzimba Matenga* [Family secrets, 1977] merely sits at one place and collects information from informers and does not carry out step by step investigation of a case.

With the publication of *Ndomene Haichemedzi* (Hoist with one's own petard, 1980) a new development is noticeable with the introduction for the first time in Shona literature of a private detective, detective Muzvondiwa. Muzvondiwa is followed by other successful private detectives such as Dumbuzenene, Chimedza and Gwenembe. These detectives are modelled along the lines of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, Van Dine's Philo Vance, Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, to name just a few. Unlike the detective in the rudimentary forms of Shona detective stories the private detective in the fully fledged, pure detective stories is portrayed as a highly gifted and intelligent individual. Authors of such pure detective stories in Shona wrote under the influence (consciously or unconsciously) of past writers of detective stories in English which they admit they have read. The other influence came from western detective films.

Edmund Masundire has introduced a new dimension to Shona detective fiction by creating a new kind of police detective who is a former guerrilla fighter in a revolutionary war. Chiminya, who first appears as a police inspector in *Mhandu Dzorusununguko* [Enemies of Independence, 1991] and later promoted to Chief Inspector in *Nyanga yenzou* [Elephant Tusk, 1992] is portrayed by the author as a detective and a political ideologue at the same time. In addition to his detective work, Chiminya takes it upon himself to defend and explain the position and policies of the Zimbabwe government that he fought to install and for which he is now working as a fictional detective.

The Shona detective story has also reached a point when authors feel comfortable to use the same detective in more than one detective story without making him redundant and boring. Such detectives, like Dumbuzenene and Chiminya, who feature in more than one detective story are called series detectives.

With regards to the way women are portrayed we find that the Shona detective story has tended largely to confirm the male stereotypes of women so common in the mainstream Shona novel. Women in Shona detective stories continue to be portrayed as ideal wives and to a very small degree, problem wives. Those who are employed outside the domestic space are placed in occupations traditionally regarded as suitable and ideal for females such as nursing, secretarial and clerical jobs. Men who are the sole authors of Shona detective stories to date are not keen to present women realistically. Jones, Palmer & Jones (cited by Mtuze 1990:25) are probably accurate when they conclude that male authors resort to stereotyping merely because they are either unable or unwilling to present woman in her totality. The

most likely thing is that writers of Shona detective narratives are unwilling.

Yet most authors are willing to have women characters as victims of murder and kidnapping. Death, and especially murder, is at the centre of the crime story. There is hardly one without murder. The majority of those who are victims in Shona detective stories are women, especially young women.

As wives, workers and victims, women play minor roles in Shona detective fiction. As Mutiso correctly points out powerful women characters are relatively rare in African literature (Makgamatha, 1992:85). But on those rare occasions when women are made main characters they are portrayed negatively as villains. Thus, Fillia Gwatiridza in *Sajeni Chimedza* [Sergeant Chimedza, 1984], Chidiro and her daughter Maud in *Bhindauko* [Versatility, 1995], and Emma Bandasa in *Dzapiringana* [It is all tangled up, 1994] are prominent women characters in these narratives but they are portrayed negatively as criminals.

With regards to the use of female detectives in Shona detective fiction we find that this is very rare indeed. The only two female detectives of note, Molly and Catherine Pandarara, are not allowed by their male creators to realise their full potential as male detectives are allowed to do. Catherine Pandarara is the only female detective who nearly realises her full potential but because the male author who created her is aware of her invasion of a predominantly male world, and hence a man's genre, he cuts short her ambitious detective programme. She is kept under the shadow of her male colleagues by a detective-story writer schooled by patriarchal ideology. This confirms Makgamatha's statement that:

...the African world has been depicted in written literature as a man's world. (Makgamatha, 1992:85).

The images of women we have in Shona detective stories are actually men's images of women because all the Shona detective stories published to date have been written by men. Men have therefore reserved the glamorous role of the detective hero for their kind. This is the trend that Shona detective fiction has taken so far. There is no single woman who has written a Shona detective story to date. Women in Shona detective fiction have therefore been portrayed by others, that is by men, giving weight to Murray's remark that:

Since her appearance in Genesis woman has been a prisoner of the imagination of others, is seen trailing clouds of glory or dust or whatever is flung at her, always as the object, not as the creator of her own self, fully fleshed-out in the primary imagination. (Murray, 1973:19)

The image of women, especially female detectives, created by women themselves is a thing of the future.

As we have seen, the Shona detective story emerged when authors began to write narratives that had some detective interest but which, unfortunately, included a lot of other issues which had nothing to do with crime and detection. Although such narratives have continued to be authored to this day, there are some writers who have produced what in this research have been described as bona fide or pure detective stories and detective-thrillers with characteristics that make it reasonable to regard the Shona detective story as a specific literary genre in Zimbabwean literature separate from the mainstream Shona novel.

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## **PEOPLE INTERVIEWED**

Bvindi, F. Harare: February 6, 1996.

Chipore, O.S. Gweru: March 4, 1997.

Haasbroek, J. Gweru: January 14, 1996.

Kawara, J. Bulawayo: January 4, 1996.

Musundire, E. Gweru: December 6, 1996.

## **PEOPLE SENT QUESTIONNAIRES**

Mahanya, M.

Musundire, E.