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Exploring Time and Ecclesiastical Allusions in Charles Mungoshi's Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva

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ABSTRACT

This paper unravels the interplay between the perception of time and Ecclesiastical allusions in Charles Mungoshi's novel Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva to irradiate the cyclical nature of humanity's existence, fate, and personal transformation. Through a close textual analysis informed by Narrative Theory and Postcolonial Literary Criticism, the study investigates how Mungoshi employs time not merely as a chronological framework but as a fluid, recursive narrative device that mirrors cosmological understandings of temporality that are largely grounded in an echoing of the theme of vanity in the biblical Ecclesiastes. The paper further posits that time in this novel is presented in a manner that is dissimilar to the narrativisation that is presented in the same way that the Preacher in Ecclesiastes does. The research additionally uncovers subtle Ecclesiastical allusions that are drawn from both Christian symbolism and indigenous spiritual frameworks, which serve to interrogate moral agency, redemption, and the tension between tradition and modernity. Findings reveal that Mungoshi's story centres predominantly on individual introspection and psychological evolution, often at the expense of broader socio-political critique. While this inward focus powerfully conveys the protagonist's existential journey, the paper argues that a more explicit engagement with collective societal dynamics would have enriched the novel's commentary on colonial Zimbabwean identity under White minority rule.

Key Words: Time, Ecclesiastes, intertextuality, allusion, hebel (vanity)

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INTRODUCTION

Charles Mungoshi, also known as Charles Lovemore Muzuva Mungoshi, is one of Zimbabwe's literary luminaries, known both at home and abroad for his writing prowess. The novel *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva* by Mungoshi is worth reflecting on because while he does not use the novel as a pulpit as does Chakaipa and Zvarevashe, he has also heavily depended on a biblical book as a backdrop for this novel. He has written prose, poetry, and drama. He has also written in both English and Shona, getting prizes in literature from both languages. The Mungoshi aspect is critical in Zimbabwean literature such that when the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (2004) came up with its list of the country's best 75 literary publications, Mungoshi appears in both the English and Shona categories. Chirere applauds this prowess by noting:

> In 1975 alone, for instance, Mungoshi published two books: *Waiting for the Rain* (a novel in English) and *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva* (a novel in Shona). These two works exude separate amazing qualities that one wonders how they could have been written "back to back" (Chirere, 2005, np).

These novels are testimony to the late author's ability to multi-task his brain. In the history of Zimbabwe, he is the only one who has achieved this feat and as far as this writer knows, no creative writer globally has had such a literary accomplishment. What is quite interesting about the year 1975 is that he did not just produce masterpieces that were localised to Zimbabwe. He went on to win two International PEN awards. More importantly for this paper, however, is that while readers and scholars have celebrated *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva* and its architecture, what also stands out in the novel is how time is presented, and equally essential is how the author alludes to the book of Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth) on time and vanity.

Time

Mathematically, time can be characterised as a continuing and constant order of events that ensue in series, from the past through the present, and to the future. It quantifies, measures and compares the duration of events or occurrences that would have taken place between them. In Hinduism, time is not just linear but is both rectilinear and cyclical. In Islam, time is universally

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accepted as created by Allah who acts through historical events which are themselves markers of time. Time is, however, viewed as being eternal although it does not encompass Allah (Stern, 2016). Dabbagh and Noshadi (2015) also engage with the challenges that are associated with the concept of *time* and state that this is a real challenge for all humanity. All this is because different people perceive the notion of time differently.

According to Plutarch (circa 105 and 115 CE/Dryden & Clough, 2001), "It is so hard to find out the truth of anything by looking at the record of the past. The process of time obscures the truth of former times, and even contemporaneous writers disguise and twist the truth out of malice or flattery - *Parallel Lives.*"

Plutarch (circa 105 and 115 CE) creates the impression that time conceals and probably complicates the truth. He posits that writers also distort the truth for different reasons that include malevolence and obsequiousness. What is clear in these words is that time at times gives writers space to recreate the past in a manner that suits them. However, it is essential to note that even though Plutarch seems to have argued that time allows for the distortion of history, he also posits that not all that has been achieved over time can be put down but that which the writer considers significant. Despite this observation, Plutarch's perceptions are in some way varied from Hindu and Islamic ones. While Plutarch largely sees time as distorted and tempered by the writer's desire to focus on the significance, others view it as both a divine creation and as cyclical, which means it is interwoven with history.

Martin (2016) adds to this discourse by stating:

> Time is not a strictly literary category, yet literature is unthinkable without time. The events of a story unfold over time. The narration of that story imposes a separate order of time (chronological, discontinuous, *in medias res*). The reading of that narrative may take its own sweet time. Then there is the fact that literature itself exists in time.

From the above words, time is not a continuum that is straight when it comes to literature, although it is bound to historical events. It not only locates events in a given period, but it also disjoints that time through strategies such as *in medias res.* Therefore, the issue of time in literature does not align

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with the scientific one, but with memory and how memory orders some events, in most cases, in order of impact. So, over time, some even get forgotten and only those considered as most important are remembered and presented. What is, however, clear is that in literature, time helps the reader to understand when something happened.

In the context of Mungoshi's novel, time is more than when; it is also about phases, awareness and awakening within the characters. The author also uses time to highlight the *hebel* concept, where there is the presentation of life as meaningless even to the well-meaning like Rindai. Hebel is an essential weaving thread that ties together the tragic events that characterise Rindai's life from early on in her life when she is brought up by a mother who is a divorcee and lands into the hands of an uncaring husband who is in the cusp of joy-chasing. Compounding her tribulations is a friend who becomes her biggest traitor and her mother-in-law has a venomous lashing tongue. This is captured in the word *nguva* and other phrases as already noted. What is essential is that time is linked to memory and over time people rely on memory to look at the past to reflect on what happened or what could have been. Time reveals as much as it tears apart and heals. Time also creates pretenses, as Rex does at the end of *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva*. He pretends to be trying to forget, yet inside he is hurting. Time also shows naivety and how people change as they learn, at times from fate's cruel claws as in Rindai's situation when she discovers that Magi, whom she thought was her best friend also turns out to be her worst betrayer.

Theoretical Framework

The study is informed by two theories, Narratology (Narrative Theory) and Postcolonial Literary Criticism, which complement each other robustly in an interpretive analysis of Charles Mungoshi's *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva*.

Narratology, which is also known as Narrative Theory, is deployed as a lens that creates scope for the writer to critically and eloquently engage with the text so as to analyse the mechanics of storytelling, predominantly how Mungoshi constructs and manipulates time as a narrative device. Key questions that help in amplifying this theory include:

- How does the novel's temporal structure (e.g., flashbacks/analepsis, foreshadowing/prolepsis, repetition, or non-linear sequencing) reflect a cyclical conception of time?

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- In what ways does the narrative rhythm mirror Shona cosmological ideas, such as seasonal recurrence, or karmic repetition, rather than Western linear progress?
- How does the protagonist's internal experience of time (psychological time) contrast with external, historical time (e.g., the era of White minority rule in Rhodesia)?

By focusing on narrative form, the study attempts to reveal how Mungoshi's stylistic choices embody philosophical and cultural understandings of existence, fate, and transformation.

Linked and complementary to the above theory is Postcolonial Literary Criticism. The significance of this framework is that it situates the text within Zimbabwe's colonial socio-historical landscape. It helps the researcher to interrogate some of the following:

- How Mungoshi negotiates indigenous Shona epistemologies (e.g., concepts of time, community, spirituality) against imposed Christian and colonial temporalities (e.g., linear salvation history, progress narratives, biblical typology like Ecclesiastes).
- Whether Ecclesiastical allusions function as tools of critique, syncretism, or resistance, for instance, repurposing the "vanity" theme from Ecclesiastes to question colonial modernity or individual alienation, especially in an environment characterised by the rural-urban divide resulting from the colonial migrant labour system.
- Why the novel's focus on individual introspection might reflect postcolonial disillusionment, where collective liberation narratives gave way to personal existential crises under failed nationalist promises.

This Postcolonial Literary Criticism is an important lens that ensures that the writer's analysis is not only textual but also historically and politically grounded.

A synergy of the two approaches reflects their significance because, through Narratology, it speaks to *how* time is represented in the text, while by engaging with Postcolonial Criticism, it explicates *why* that representation matters in a specific cultural and historical context. Together, the

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two theories allow the researcher to argue, for example, that Mungoshi's cyclical narrative structure is not merely a stylistic choice but a decolonial reassertion of indigenous temporality, subtly challenging both colonial historiography and imported religious frameworks, even as the novel remains entangled with them through biblical allusions. This double-methodological approach, thus, yields a rich, layered interpretation that is both formally precise and culturally resonant.

Research Method

This study is underwritten by an *interpretive literary analysis*, which is a qualitative, humanistic research methodology centred on the close, critical reading and interpretation of literary texts to uncover meaning, thematic complexity, cultural significance, and ideological undercurrents. Rather than seeking empirical generalisations, this approach treats the literary work as a site of layered discourse that reflects and shapes human experience, identity, history, and belief systems. In this method, the researcher focuses on text-centred inquiry where the primary data are the literary text itself. The researcher engages deeply with language, narrative structure, and intertextual references. The methodology also follows the hermeneutic process, where he moves between parts of the text and the whole, by reflecting on textual details and wider cultural and philosophical reflections, refining understanding through iterative reading. Worth noting is the fact that in this methodology, while it is strongly grounded in textual evidence, interpretative analysis acknowledges that meaning is not fixed. It places value on nuanced, context-sensitive readings that have the potential to reveal multiple and even competing interpretations. The argument, as advanced through this method, is that analysis builds a coherent scholarly argument that Mungoshi reconfigures biblical notions of time to articulate a distinctively Shona existential vision. This method's appropriateness lies in the reality of how Mungoshi deploys time and ecclesiastical allusions to explore fate, transformation, and the vanity of life.

Discussion

The next segments of the paper discuss various interpretations that are in tandem with interpretative analysis.

The Time Factor in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva*

Creative writers grapple with time, as is evident in the novel *Measuring Time*

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(Habila, 2007). *Measuring Time* is a historical novel that measures time informed by the logic of comparing historical periods. Themes such as the effects of the Biafra War, ethnic prejudice, dislocation and hunger are some of the tropes that characterise Nigerian life in the post-independence period. Despite the fact that the novel is a story largely evolving around Mamo, a sickle-cell sufferer whose life is not viewed as going to last, that same ailment is symbolic of a sick Nigerian society, something that people have learnt with the passing of time.

Time is also a critical factor in Mungoshi's *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva*. This is reflected in the title of the novel itself, which can be loosely translated to 'That is how time passes'. This novel's title reflects the cyclical conception of time, a trait that is also characteristic of modernist pessimism. Modernist pessimism views history and related events in time as a mere duration that, however, does not give life a purpose, but in fact reveals some ugly truths. Rex refers to Magi and says, "*Paitombove nedzimwe nguva dzaairatidza kuneta, kusagutsikana, kusafara*" (Mungoshi, 1975, pp. 84-85) (There were other times when she looked tired, dissatisfied and unhappy). This reflects the vanity of life because it erodes even beauty. In addition, time, at least as it progresses, does not enrich, but corrupts and destroys, as happens to Magi's sister Sekai. According to Magi, "*Hapano wasvika musi Gideon akafungawo twake. Muchinda akasvika ndokusvikokiya gonhi, zvikanzi nhasi hapana kwaunoenda, unotorara kuno chete*" (Mungoshi, 1975, p. 29). (Then on this other day Gedion came with a mind of his own. The guy locked the door and said today, you are not going anywhere, you will put up here). This is the night that Sekai conceives and Gedion disowns her. She ends her life by throwing herself before Gedion's car. This incident illustrates how time and the urban settings become monsters that devour at the core of African values. However, more important is the realization that the word *nguva* (time) is used 266 times in the entire novel. These times are reflective of how the city eats into people's core, such as the diminishing of Rindai's beauty that Rex at one time saw as exceptional. The word 'time' refers to different transitional periods, ranging from when Rex and Rindai got married to the time they move out of Rex's parents' home and set up on their own. It also refers to when there is the realisation in Rex that while both Magi and Rindai are beautiful, they are each different. In addition to that, the time factor is made very clear when there are allusions to the biblical book

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of *Ecclesiastes* that appear to strengthen the theme of time and what happens in life's seasons. This is reflected in the changing times as reflected in these words, "*Hakugari kuchingova makore chete, and uyewo hakungorambi richingovawo zuva bedzi. Zvinodzidzana. Zvinoedzana kuda kuona kuti mukuru ndiani*" (Mungoshi, 1975, p. 100). (It is not always cloudy, neither is it always sunny, with the sun always shining. It is a see-saw. There is a weather tussle where each condition attempts to impose itself as the stronger one). Through it, he highlights how time cheapens people and things, hence bringing up the theme of *hebel* or vanity which, is also a critical factor in *Ecclesiastes*. For instance, there was once a time when all was well but there are changes that occur over time and through lack of time.

The discussion on time will not here handle all the 266 appearances of the word *nguva* (time) but only those that the writer perceives as strongly contributing to how time is a marker of transitions as well as having an erosive effect on certain relationships, events and behaviours. This also includes instances where the word *nguva* may not be directly mentioned, yet what is described captures the real essence of changes as wrought by time.

Mungoshi is the least expected when it comes to the use of the bible in his writings when compared to the likes of Chakaipa (1961, 1975), Zvarevashe (1978, 1983, and 1991) and more recently Mabasa (1999). Yet a close reading of his seminal novel *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva* reveals this reality. He has used the bible to buttress his themes of the changes of times as reflected in the refrain "*Paive nenguva ...*" (Mungoshi, 1975, pp. 131-132) (There were times …) and to highlight a desperate situation and wasted time, *"Yakapera nguva yedu ini nemhuri yangu ...*) (Mungoshi, 1975, p. 133) (The good times with my family are gone …). The references to the bible are more allusive and are not as poignant as is the case in the earlier mentioned three novelists' works. However, it is stated:

> I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind: [2] God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil (NIV, Ecclesiastes 6:1-2).

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Rex Mbare is at one time besotted with Magi, Rindai's friend. The two end up having an affair, the result of which is a pregnancy and the subsequent death of Rangarirai (Ranga) after being left behind with Magi when Rindai learnt the truth about Rex and Magi. As he reflects on the messy affair that he is now trapped in, Rex goed through a mental comparison of the two women in his life. What is noteworthy is that time has made him realise that despite being beautiful, Magi's beauty is not as deep as that of Rindai. Veit-Wild (2017) discusses Rex's psychological turmoil when she avers that Rex summons himself to court over his disastrous misdemeanours. All this is a result of the passage of time that has in some way given him space to 'grow up' and reflect. Part of this growing up includes the realisation that Rindai is a better woman when compared to Magi. He reflects:

> *Magi kaive kakorodzi kana kakova kane mvura inorwadza nokucheka kwayo kachiri kupwipwinyika nokutamba-tamba pamatombo egomo rina mawere akadzika zvikuru. Rindai aive dziva hombe rine mvura yakanyarara, yakachena, inotonhorera. Asi pasi pedziva iri pakanga pasingaoneki. Kunyarara. Kudzama. Kutyisa* (p. 82).
>
> (Magi was like a small stream with water which is painful because it is cold and which produces smoke and dances repeatedly on stones of a mountain with deep steep slopes. Rindai was a big pool with quiet water, clean, cool. But the bottom of this pool could not be seen. Quietness. Depth. Fearfulness).[1]

Rindai has depth of character, while Magi is shallow.

The statements "*Paive nenguva …*" (There was a time …) and "*Kwouyawo nguva*" (Then there was also once a time …) (p. 132) are significant in that they point to times when there was once peace and tranquillity in the lives and marriage of Rindai and Rex. However, the use of the past tense *pai-* points to a time when there was bliss, something that is no longer there in the present situation. The use of these statements is more of a lament by the persona Rex Mbare over lost

[1] Translation by Veit-Wild (2017, p. 13).

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time whose bliss is now irretrievably lost. These developments capture the reality that time exposes people to the vagaries of life, such that their "tragedies and triumphs, our fears and foibles, our insights and insufficiencies" (Carlsen & Gilbert, 1985, p. 2), are brought into the open. While Rex and Magi come out as beasts of shame, Rindai appears to have been strengthened by the very same tragedies despite the loss of her daughter. Through her, the reader learns that time every so often builds character.

The events that are reflected in Rex's reminiscences adequately serve to affirm that the concept of *hebel* (vanity [Magi, Rex]), and the meaninglessness of life (Rindai, Ranga, Zacks) become clear over time. Rex laments the fact that over time, one realises that Harare is the one that gives space for time wasting, but the city itself does not get wasted in the process. He says:

> *Ndakaona vaisimbopfeka sutu vachipinda mumakaki, vachizopindazve mumamvemve. Ndakaona vaisimboita mari yokufurisa madzihwa, vachipona namazviita mumabhawa. Ndinoziva vaive nemotokari dzangova uraro hwembwa, ivo vokwatidza tara netsoka* (pp. 145-146).
>
> (I saw those who were once known for being smartly clad in suits go down to wearing khakis and finally graduated into rags. I know those who at one time had cars which today are dog kennels, while they have turned into pedestrians).

These words amplify the changing fortunes in people's lives. However, more important is the fact that they point out the reality that life is vanity (*hebel*). This explains why at the very end Rex decides to grapple with his demons and move out of Magi's life. Unfortunately for him, fate has other arrangements because Rindai comes to Harare before he makes his move and the result is that Rindai decides to move out. This leads to the tragic demise of Rangarirai, who is run over by Zakariya Munyati, who at one time has tried to seduce Rindai when he was Magi's lover. All these tragic events confirm that life is a fleeting moment, there was a time when Rex saw Rindai as exceptionally beautiful, but time wears down such perceptions. This consequence reflects the far-reaching societal transformations in Zimbabwe, where traditional values and

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contemporary influences recurrently intersect, shaping individual lives across generations. It invites readers to reinterpret the colonial experience through an innovative lens. Time, in this context, serves as both a marker and a measure of change, capturing the gradual erosion of tradition and the complex struggles of adapting to evolving social realities.

The issue of changing times and highs and lows that these bring in people's lives are amplified in the statement:

> *Hakugari kuchingova makore chete, uyewo hakungorambi richingovawo zuva bedzi. Zvinodzidzana. Zvinoedzana kuda kuona kuti mukuru ndiani. … Manyemwe oukomana nousikana akanga ounduka, tava kuratidzwa kuti kana iro gumbeze rorudo, nyangwe yanga iri ngamba yakaita sei, rine nguva yaro yaricharatidza zvaro mbabvu dzaro* (p. 100).
>
> (It is not always cloudy, neither is it always sunny, with the sun always shining. It is a see-saw. There is a weather tussle where each condition attempts to impose itself as the stronger one. … The careless joys associated with the early romantic days were now wearing off, and we were now learning that even the love blanket despite its thickness and warmth, has a time when it shows its ribs).

These words speak to the changes and shifts that occur in the lives of couples over time. They emphasise the fact that familiarity destroys or tempers with novelty. This may lead to a seismic shift, as happens when Rex ultimately falls into a relationship with Magi, Rindai's friend. The comparison that the protagonist places between his relationship with his wife Rindai, and a blanket that eventually wears out, is probably a significant pointer to how some people's excitement wears off over time. The reference to the shifting weather patterns and changing seasons is equally significant. It loudly speaks to the same issue of the change in Rex's romantic outlook.

At one time Rex even asks, "*Ko, ndizvo zvataimhanyira here izvi? Ko, kusada kushayana kuya kuripi nhasi? Ko, mukadzi uyu zvandaimbofunga kuti pamwe haadyi sadza, inga zvaanenge anotodya kana iwo*

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matumbu neguru rese?" (p. 101). (Is this what we were rushing for? What happened to that feeling of not wanting to miss each other? Why is it that this woman whom I thought does not eat *sadza* even eats offals?) He then goes on to wonder if what is happening with him is also what was happening with Rindai. The change in Rex gets so bad that at one time he bashes his wife for having visited him in Harare unannounced. This incident adds to the growth of the chasm that has already been emerging between the two, Rex and Rindai. The next time Rindai visits Rex, their daughter Rindai is run over by a car and dies. Time here is presented as building towards a tragic result in the marriage of these two.

The issue of time and how everything becomes meaningless, not just to Rindai and Rex but even to the reader, is augmented when it is noted that the novel *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva* has some loud allusion to the biblical book of *Ecclesiastes*, also known as The Preacher or Qohelet. This allusion is best framed in the word 'intertextuality'. This refers to the deployment and use of other sources, including texts that the author may have read in the past. In the case of Mungoshi, it is evident that one of the sources is the bible.

To have a full comprehension of Mungoshi's allusion to the bible, it is crucial to appreciate the reality that he was at one time a student at Daramombe, where he spent a year he labels as a very pious and religious one. This was a year that he says was characterised by prayer, abstaining from food and confessions (Veit-Wild, 1992). After that year, Mungoshi nevertheless left the Christian faith. It is consequently this writer's contention that this year of concentrated religious immersion and entanglement as well as the years later spent at St Augustine's Penhalonga left some lingering biblical rudiments that he was to later use in his writings. Above and beyond the subject of faith among other works, he also read the bible, which he says "was in a very weird, very old print with letters and it was hard to read" (Mai Palmberg (30 September 2003, "It is the old story"). What is clear is that, at its core, Mungoshi's treatment of time in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva* unravels the complicated interplay between individual histories and the socio-cultural forces that form personalities' lives.

Mungoshi also acknowledges that the bible is one of the reading materials that were available to him and others. He states that this was a result of the fact that there was not much literature at that time. Literature in

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indigenous languages, specifically Shona was published in 1956 (Chiwome, 2002; Kahari, 1990; Mutswairo, 1956). Mungoshi avers that in addition to the novel of Mutswairo, there was the Christian bible that had been translated into Shona by what he perceives to be some very enthusiastic White missionary. He further laments the paucity that characterised this translation, noting that some of what was supposed to be poetry, sounded very outlandish to the ear. He adds, "Well, nobody read much, they read the Bible but otherwise what we called stories we heard from our grandmothers". These words are significant in that they speak to the possibility of some biblical aspects spilling over into his creative works, among them *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva*, where the allusions to the biblical *Ecclesiastes* cannot be taken as a mere coincidence. This writer, thus, argues that this is a clear case of intertextuality that takes the form of allusions. Interesting to note is the fact that this is not the last time that he alludes to, and echoes the bible. He does the same in the novel *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) through the character Martha. She says, "*Mwari wangu mandisiyireiko*?" (Mungoshi, 1983, p. 102) (My God why have you forsaken me?), which is an echo of Jesus Christ's cry of anguish after the crucifixion (Matthew, 27: 46). This is further buttressed by the use of psychological realism as a tool to amplify the fluidity of time. Time is, thus, presented not as a chronological progression of events, but as dynamic and fluid, something that is interwoven with memory, history and social change, especially as it impacts individuals in what is largely a predatory world. Worth noting is the reality that Mungoshi employs a non-linear storyline, entwining past and present to underscore time's volatility and its deep influence on personal identity and relationships. For Rex, in particular, the ostensibly absurd passage of time becomes inextricably tied to his mounting uncertainty and disenchantment, mirroring the disentanglement of his marital bond.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality refers to how texts, especially literary ones, films and other creative arts productions, achieve meaning by means of their referencing or evocation of other earlier texts. This term 'intertextuality' itself was coined by Julia Kristeva (1966) and since then it has been widely accepted by postmodern literary critics and theoreticians. She used it to refer to the interdependence that she argued exists between texts. According to this Theory of Intertextuality, no text is a stand-alone entity. It posits that

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"all texts have their existence and their meaning in relation to a practically infinite field of prior texts and prior significations" (Allen, 2019, np). This theory, thus, entrenches the idea that a text cannot exist as an enclosed or autonomous object, but is open and ties up with others before and after it. It is important because:

> This is for two reasons. Firstly, the writer is a reader of texts (in the broadest sense) before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind (Still and Worton, 1990, p. 1).

This is a critical insight. It means that all great writers come from somewhere and this includes works they have read as well as even watched and also participated in. The issue of textual spill-overs has its origins even in classical literature through what is known as *imitatio* (Gawley & Caitlin-Diddams, 2017). This is a situation where writers of the classical period built their literary integrity through the reuse of the themes, language and style of their predecessors (Coffee, 2013; Gawley & Caitlin-Diddams, 2017). Intertextuality also needs to be understood not just as a focus on how the author adopts and adapts other sources, but also how the reader brings experiences from other readings to a present text (Mason, 2019, p. 3).

Concerning intertextuality, Miola (2004) gives seven types of intertextual characteristics that include the reader's own experiences when they come to a text. What is, however, important for this paper is what he calls the *source proximate.* He avers that this is the most familiar and frequently studied type of intertextuality where the focus is on sources and texts. The source functions as the book-on-the-desk; the author honours, reshapes, steals, ransacks, and plunders. The dynamics include copying, paraphrasing, compression, conflation, expansion, omission, innovation, transference, and contradiction. This, this writer argues, is what Mungoshi does in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva.*

Mungoshi's Ecclesiastes

The foremost proposition of intertextuality is that when writers appropriate material from other texts, their works attain other layers of meaning. Therefore, when a script is scrutinised in the light of a dissimilar text, all the suppositions and effects of the other texts present a new

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significance and meaning to the text. There also comes the issue of other influences in the way of interpreting the new text. It is, therefore, the disputation of this author that writers (including speakers) use different methods to bring forth these interconnections. One of these formulae, this writer argues, are proverbs that bring in allusions to the bible, thus bringing new insights into texts such as subversion, for example. Mungoshi also uses Shona proverbs to further buttress his Ecclesiastical motif.

The first thing to note concerning the Ecclesiastical motif is that there is a reference to time in a manner that alludes to the book of *Ecclesiastes,* found under the broad category of the biblical Wisdom Literature that has its origins in the bible. Worth pointing out, however, is the fact that time is presented as, and not narrated in the same way that the Preacher in Ecclesiastes does. However, a closer reading will reveal that Mungoshi has been influenced by this book. This is not the first time that he has used a religious text in his writings. In *Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo* he has used the song '*Kwasara kunesu',* a Christian hymn which is sung when Timoti was buried in Harare (Mungoshi, 1970, p. 89).

In light of the foregoing, it has to be noted that there are at least two continuous pages that discuss the idea of time and how it manifests itself in different situations. The author writes:

> *Mwedzi wese wakanga uzere nenguva dzakaita saiyoyi ... Paive nenguva yemhuri yese... Paive nenguva dzokutaura zvinyoronyoro nowangu wapamwoyo, vana vese varara... Ndidzo dzimwe nguva idzo.* (pp. 131-132).
>
> (The whole month was full of times like this one … There was family time … There were times to talk quietly with my loved one when all the children were asleep … These were some of the times).

The above statements, mostly anchored by the refrain, '*Paive nenguva...*' (There was a time), besides highlighting what the earlier paragraphs have discussed, also clearly underscore the point that there is a time for everything. Interestingly, they allude to *Ecclesiastes* 3:1, which states, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens" (Today's New International Version [TNIV]). This is

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interesting because Mungoshi has never been perceived as a writer who has a Christian inclination in his life. Mungoshi, however, exemplifies this allusion by further stating that there are times when conflicts or clashes flare up but so are times of tranquillity, as when water flows in a plain, and the changing of seasons. This is abundantly amplified in *Ecclesiastes* 3: 2-8, which follows 3: 1. These verses, which are written poetically in the original text, are as follows:

> ... a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace (Eccl. 3: 2-8) (TNIV).

In the novel, the author captures the issues of different and changing times in the words:

> *Hongu, pamwe paitukanwa, paipopotwa, asika ndiko kuerera kwahwo upenyu. Kana nemvura inopopota wani mumakomo ikawana matombo anoikanganisa, kana yava pakati sandara mubani yozvifambira madiro, chinyararire, muruwadzano nezvese zvakaitenderedza: runyararo, rudo, kuwadzana, runyara-a-a-aro-o-o-. ... . Ndiko kuerera kwoupenyu, mazuva achipinda, zhizha richipa nzvimbo kumasutso, masutso achipa nzvimbo kuchando. Chando. Wozoshama kuti zuva radoka. Yasvika nguva yokudzokera kwatakabva. Kufara kwapera, kutandara kwapera, totarisira zviri seri kwechikomo icho* (p. 133).
>
> (True, in some instances there were squabbles, but that is how life flows. Even water squabbles on the hills if it comes across some stones that

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> temper with its flow, and it goes quiet when it gets to a flat area in the valley, in quietude: peacefulness, love, harmony, calmness-ss-ss … That is how life flows, with the passing of days, and summer giving way to autumn, and autumn to winter. Winter. And you get surprised that the sun has set. Now is the time to go back to where we started, where we came from. Happiness is now gone, relaxation is gone, and we look forward to seeing what is behind that mountain).

The changes and fluctuations that happen in life because of the shifting sands of time are brilliantly painted in the above words that the author has seen worth quoting at length and translating. They succinctly speak to the ecclesiastical theme that is one of the major but subtle aspects of *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva* – the issue of how time not only passes but also affects people, especially relationships.

The above texts are examples of what Miola (2004, pp. 19-20) describes as a form of intertextuality where earlier texts provide plot, character, idea, language, or style to later writings. In this situation the author's reading and remembering inform and direct the matter that he is writing on. What is worth noting is that the author credits, restructures, nicks, ransacks, and plunders as well as restructures his sources. This is done through means such as copying, rephrasing, compression, conflation, expansion, omission, innovation, transference, and contradiction. This is precisely what Mungoshi does in the above case where he adopts, adapts and restructures what is in the biblical text of *Ecclesiastes*. Therefore, through the interlacing of time with Ecclesiastical allusions in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva*, Mungoshi hollows out the novel's thematic timbre, framing human life as a spiritual odyssey defined by trials, moments of revelation, and an enduring quest for meaning. This link invites reflection on a vital question in Mungoshi's work: whether time is simply a cyclical recurrence of travail or a divinely directed process that eventually leads to transformation.

Mungoshi has also transferred the concept of there being a season for everything, in the words, *"Ndiko kuerera kwoupenyu, mazuva achipinda, zhizha richipa nzvimbo kumasutso, masutso achipa nzvimbo kuchando. Chando*" (p. 133) (That is how life

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flows, with the passing of days, and summer giving way to autumn, and autumn to winter. Winter). These words are more of an allusion to the original in *Ecclesiastes*. The parts that deal with time while nicked, are also compressed and have the actual verses omitted or not even referred to unlike what Mabasa does later in *Mapenzi* (1999). There is also transference of the very idea of time and the concept of there being a time for everything, reflected largely in some proverbs that are discussed below.

The biblical verse is, however, not only reflected in the above statements but also in the proverbs that the author deploys in his narrative. Mungoshi has used several proverbs to emphasize the ecclesiastical idea of time and how each event occurs because there is a time for everything. He has again attached his proverbs to the notion that there is a time for everything as he has done through the use of the refrain *"Paive nenguva..."* In addition to the use of the word *nguva* (time) and other formulae, the author's use of some Shona proverbs helps to underscore the effect that time has on people's lives and events.

One of the axioms that he uses is *rine manyanga hariputirwi* (p. 9) (that which has horns cannot be covered) which is a truncated version of the canonical proverb *rine manyanga hariputirwe mumushunje* (that which has horns cannot be covered in a bundle of grass). This proverb re-echoes and reinforces the same idea of the importance of how time allows events and situations to unravel. The speaker, Mai Masaga, introduces this proverb with the words, *vakuru vakati ...* (the elders said …) to underscore, in this case, that despite the allegations of infidelity that were being levelled against Rindai, it was important for people to be patient since time unravels events including misdeeds, at its own pace. The same proverb is rendered in the words *"Asika rine manyanga unongorizivawo iwe"* (p. 29) (but you know the horned one). The author has extracted this from oral tradition, truncated it and used it to highlight Sekai's plight. This proverb is the same as the one used by Mai Masaga above. The difference is that when used by Sekai it is further truncated with only two words now retained, and the other parts are rhetorical devices that Magi uses to emphasise that because of time, Sekai's pregnancy is not going to remain hidden.

In this proverb, time is furthermore shown as being unfair and cruel to women who hope to have their victimhood covered by the same people who maltreated and abused them. It

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reflects the Ecclesiastical element of there being a time for everything, both good and bad. The use of the enclitic –*wo* at the end of the truncated proverb is to emphasise how time finally catches up with 'culprits'. The image of horns is equally significant here in that it shows that horns do not show out immediately when an animal that is in the horned category is born. They come out as time progresses, just as pregnancy takes time to show. The same is true of Sekai's pregnancy. Even though it started in secret, the passage of time makes it manifest, and because of rejection and disgrace, she commits suicide, again showing that there is a time for everything, a time to live and a time to die. There is the statement "... *zviya zvinonzi here, tenda kana kuti fara wasvika"* (Mungoshi, 1975, p. 29) (… by the way, it is said be grateful or be happy when you have reached your destination). The more common is *dende rinoputsika wasvika* (the calabash breaks when you have arrived). Maybe through these proverbs the narrator, through the character wants to caution on the dangers of premature celebration. On the issue of time, the idea is that if people are not patient in matters that require fortitude, they will not reap the benefits. It is important to note here that this novel was written way back in 1975 when virginity was still considered very important. Time may also have 'destroyed' its value.

There is the use of proverbs, truncated, readjusted or creating new ones from even idioms. All the three are intricately interwoven. Some of the proverbs are used as the bedrock of the theme of time and how it passes. What comes out of proverbs that focus on time is that events may take time to unravel but they will eventually come to pass, for instance, "*Imbwa inonetawo wani nokurindirira guyo"* (p. 61). (Even a dog gets tired of keeping vigil over a grinding stone). This proverb is an author's creation that was derived from the idiom, *kugarira guyo sembwa* (waiting on the grinding stone like a dog), which means waiting in vain. Through this proverb, VaMbaimbai is expressing the idea that there comes a time in life when one gets tired of waiting. He is using this derived proverb to attempt to come to terms with the possibility that Rindai may have an affair with Maswera because she has waited for long for Rex to come back to her but this has not happened. Even though VaMbaimbai does not explicitly state that there is a time one gets tired of waiting, this reality, which is an allusion to Ecclesiastes 3 is captured in the converted idiom.

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The proverb "*inodya matehwe kana ikagara isingavhimiswi"* (p. 61) (it will eat hides if it is not taken out for hunting) is a principal clause that is a derivative of the proverb, *imbwa isingavhimiswi inodya matehwe/matoo* (a dog that is not taken out for hunting will end eating hides). This proverb is used here to emphasize the point made in the foregoing paragraph's presented axiom. It, however, goes further to also bring to the fore the fact that Rindai is still sexually active, and needs to have her sexual needs attended to. It thus posits the idea that if she fails to have these satisfied for a long time, she may end up having an affair, just like a dog that is in its prime and has the urge to hunt; it will end up eating hides if it is not taken out for hunting.

In her letter to Rex, Rindai writes, "*Tiri kuwirirana here, Rex*? *Ndiwe wega nyakuzvitaura kuti hatidi kutaura tave Chivhumudhara zvinhu zvaidai zvataurwa tichiri Harare*" (p. 67). (Are we in agreement Rex? It is you who said we should not talk about things that should have been discussed in Harare when we are already in Chivhumudhara). This proverb reiterates Ihueze and Umeasiegbu's (2015) idea when they note that proverbs can be used at the reflective level as Rindai does in her letter to Rex reminding him of the dangers and problems of backtracking and backsliding as he was now doing in their marriage. Rindai deploys the coined proverb, *hatidi kutaura tave Chivhumudhara zvinhu zvaidai zvataurwa tichiri Harare* (p. 67) to remind Rex that he is the one who had said those words. Even though it is intended to make him reflect on what he is doing, it is also a call that he actively thinks over the issues at hand. This proverb is also anchored on time, the idea that certain decisions have to be made on time. The distance between Chivhumudhara and Harare takes time to traverse, and therefore to go back to Harare requires time. It may thus mean that Rindai's love for Rex may also be on the wane because of time, and it can no longer be as strong as it was in the past.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the concept of time as it is presented in Charles Mungoshi's novel *Ndiko Kupindana Kwemazuva* and also how the novelist alludes to the biblical book of *Ecclesiastes* to fully flex his theme of changing times. He has also used proverbs to buttress this theme. This was possible through the analysis of some statements where the word *nguva* (time) and other related statements speak to the concept of time and how its passage manifests

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different results. The paper has noted that through intertextual allusions to the book of *Ecclesiastes*, the novelist has successfully captured not just the issue of how time passes. Through these allusions, Mungoshi also manages to emphasize the emptiness and meaninglessness that characterizes human life. The novel becomes an echo of its biblical anchor in Qoheleth that brings and sustains the theme of vanity as Rex is to later learn. He has also brought to the fore the leitmotif that some things may take time to unravel and this may result in either good or bad consequences. For instance, time proved that Magi is not an honest friend but a husband snatcher. Time also revealed to Rindai that Rex was not honest with her. Time also revealed to Rex that the joys of the world cannot be chased and overtaken; just like time teaches that some people learn about wasted stages of life late when it is too late to go back.

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