

## **4<sup>th</sup> IBBY AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

**22<sup>nd</sup> – 24 AUGUST, 2017, KAMPALA, UGANDA**

**THEME: *Rethinking Contemporary Literature for Children and Young Adults in Africa***

**PAPER TITLE: *Time travel as an innovative tool for Children's books.***

### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper will seek to demonstrate that a reading culture and an interest in books by young people in Africa can be sustainable if the books they read are exciting and relevant. One approach of producing exciting books is to base them on oral traditions. Such books will assist the children to appreciate the African idiom, imagery and culture. It is now necessary to move away from flogging colonialism as a negative force in Children's literature. In any case colonialism is remote to the present child. They cannot relate to it in the same way as those who experienced it do.*

*The traditional view is to associate oral tradition with primitive societies, backwardness, removed from modernity and old fashioned. Children and young people in Africa would then have a tendency to float and lose self-esteem and fail to identify with their own roots. In some instances they may even despise their own traditions and want to "borrow" from other cultures which they still will not do well. The paper will seek to demonstrate that oral tradition was the contemporary culture of yesteryear. It is therefore necessary to go back in time, capture the cultural stories and their themes while reflecting contemporary realities to give them a new appeal and taste more palatable to today's child.*

*Some Zimbabwean writers have already started doing this with various level of success. They have employed euphemism in their stories. The spear in an African home is commonly seen as an offensive or defensive weapon, Daddy's tool. In oral tradition, as in the new stories the spear demonstrates that life is a struggle, nothing comes easy, one has to work for anything of value. This is similar to the American gun lobby who believe every household has a right to own a gun. Yet with the spear you do not need a licence. The spear in the traditional society was a symbol of manhood. A man has to have it even if you do not use it. In some contexts the spear is projected as a romantic tool. The extent to which a writer can blend this traditional tool in children's literature as a hunting or survival instrument or for amorous liaisons will create interesting reading. Examples are already replete in oral tradition. Style and use will naturally vary with age of the target audience.*

*It will be shown that authors would need to incorporate modern experiences to make the stories relevant to the contemporary child. Oral tradition has numerous other facets i.e. talking animals which can be used to carry messages to address any topic: ecology, conservation, policy making, child abuse, counselling, human relations, humility, career guidance, sex education etc. Wise sayings in oral tradition are in the indigenous languages, highlighting the need for young people to learn and know their mother tongues. It will also be demonstrated that oral stories are a rich base for cartoons.*

*One writer has drawn parallels between hunting in the traditional dense, overgrown rural jungles with the skills required to surf the net. Both require skills, knowing what you want,*

*different contexts but similar techniques and approach. The paper will survey the general theory in writing children's books and use Zimbabwean examples to drive the point home. It is hoped that this will be enriched by comments from the other regions in Africa.*

**Presenter:** Virginia PHIRI. Author: fiction and non-fiction, accountant, now retired.

## **Introduction**

Defining children's literature is not easy as it entails defining a child. Chitando (2008) highlights this challenge as conception of being a child is culturally determined. It also determines how children are perceived. Once the child has been identified, there is also the question whether it is literature for children or literature by children? Is any literature with children as characters children's literature? Should then the appropriate name not be Literature for children (Meniru, 1992)? Since children in some instances include those above 12 years should it not be called Children and Youth Literature (Khorana, 1998)? The critical point is that there is need for literature that addresses the needs of children regardless of age. Okpewho (1992) defines literature as a creative text that appeals to our imagination such as stories, plays and poems.

Emily Chen, in her notes on Children's Literature quotes Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (2005)'s definition and footnotes it as follows:

**“Children's literature is good quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interests to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction.” (p. 3)**

\*Note: A *trade book*, by design and content, is primarily for the purpose of entertainment and information. Trade books are often referred to as library books and story books. They are different from *textbooks*, which are for the purpose of instruction.

The definition above captures the age range considered to be children and highlights the content of that material that is to be deemed children's literature in all generic genres. Gamuchirai Gwaza (2016) at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair emphasized the need to develop good reading material for children. In her own words “It is not enough to simply teach children to read, give them something that will stretch their imagination... The books must be engaging and attractive with appealing art because children read with all their senses.” It is this stretch of imagination that we refer to in this paper as ‘Time travel.’ Good

literature must be able to draw the reader into its world and logic convincingly for one to buy into its values and lessons.

### **Good children's book**

Gwaza (2016) highlighted key features of children's literature that make it engaging and attractive to children. She defines a good children's book as enduring and having a universal appeal regardless of context in which it was written. It must be of good quality in terms of literary techniques, illustrations, paper quality, colour, layout and design, as well as font size and shape.

The illustrations (pictures, drawings) must challenge the children's observation skills as they make the story more meaningful and make characters more memorable to the children. This is even more important for stories set in a world alien to the children. Children in Africa have enjoyed folktales from Europe with descriptions of a snow storm and understood because of the provided pictures. Similarly contemporary children are introduced to traditional African settings in folktales with characters wearing the fashion of the day (*nhembe*) and instruments of the day (spears, bows and arrows, knobkerries, water pots, *hari*, *mapfihwa*, grinding stones(*guyo*) e.t.c). By following the actions of the characters, they learn how these instruments were used. In Zimbabwe this has been a challenge but authors are now working hard on this quality as evidenced by Albert Nyathi's *My Daughter*, Nyathi and Mabasa's *My Son* (2016), which are poetry books on the dangers of dating. Their target audience are teenagers but younger children enjoy the pictures of the different animals and description of their natural behavior. This is crucial in contemporary society that lives in cities and barely interacts with animals. Fortune Tazvinga's *The River god uNyaminyami* (2013) actually comes with separate colouring book and sketch book to encourage children's creativity. These are just a few examples but they reflect the encouraging improvement in Zimbabwean children's literature that authors and publishers are investing in relevant illustrations for good stories.

Good pictures must be in relevant colours. Zimbabwe has a fairly long tradition of children's literature which includes Shona folktales translated into English by Ben Chirasha *Traditional Tales of Zimbabwe* (1988), Charles Mungoshi's *Stories from a Shona Childhood* (1989), and literature based on knowledge of the old world or African environment such as Ellison's *Musapa finds the Rainmaker* (1986), Ben Hanson's *Don't Swim in the River Gwayi* and Stephen Chifunyise's *Takura and the talking Branch* (1995). These are very interesting stories with pictures but unfortunately they are in black and

white. The pictures are also squeezed on the same page with the text showing they were not a priority. Chitando (2008) notes that the authors are motivated by cultural nationalism to guide children in their search for identity as Africans. The challenge is that interest may be lost to this noble cause as the books are not attractive. Colour sets the general tone of the book. Books rich in colour instill the desire to read in children. Appropriate colours also make the objects more realistic. Glossy pictures are also durable. Again post 2000 children's books in Zimbabwe seem to have improved on this aspect whether in English, Shona (Mabasa's *Meri nebhutsu tsvuku*, Chirere's *Baba vaRudo*) or Ndebele (Pathisa Nyathi's *Kolobeja*).

Paper quality is also important as different textures evoke different things for the children. Children love books they can touch and feel without fear of tearing them. In a research in Ghana (Emenyonu 2015) it was noted that parents refused to sign for their children to access library books because they feared they would tear them. Good paper quality does not easily tear and children as young as two years get to enjoy opening books and looking at the pictures to learn more about the world they have not yet experienced. The touch and feel books include animal skins so that they can feel the texture and at times smell the animals. Urban children without farm or rural experience can smell the goat, sheep and chicken feathers. However these cannot be included on poor quality paper.

The layout and design is also important especially now in the digital age where the book competes with other media. Books with pop out formats, sound, touch and feel as well as 3 dimensional pictures encourage children to read. At times the books are shaped like the animals, fruits or any main object in the story. Such books complement their television viewing experience with programmes like *Zack and Quack* based on pop up images. It also encourages children to be creative as they try to create their own books.

Font size and shape is also important. Small font is taxing for children to read especially those just learning to identify letters and read for themselves. It also teaches the children to write legibly and pay attention to how they present their work. For older children fancy font adds to the mystery and at times used as codes which make the stories exciting. In Nathaneal Z. Mpofu's books for teenagers, they crack codes of letters written in mirror image. It appeals to teenagers who love solving problems and encourage active reading.

In all the qualities listed above, what must be remembered is that the choice of literary style, illustrations, colour, paper quality, layout and design as well as font must be determined by targeted audience, the specific group of children. Chitando (2008:11) adopts Nana Wilson-Tagoe's age ranges of 4-5, 7-8 and 9-12. The literature must be matched to the children's sensibilities and developmental abilities (Smith [www.excelsior.edu](http://www.excelsior.edu)). Wilson-Tagoe therefore declares,

What I would call a children's book is a book that is produced largely with a child's interest and needs in mind, one that deals honestly with children, portrays them candidly and in a medium to which they can respond with imagination and pleasure. (quoted in Chitando 2008:11)

### **Contemporary Children's Literature in Zimbabwe**

Having noted the desired qualities of children's literature, we shall now turn to examples from Zimbabwe. The contemporary world includes many challenges that are to be addressed in literature if the world is to be represented truthfully for our children. These include environmental degradation, diseases such as cancer and HIV and AIDS. They live with these challenges and need to see how other people deal with the same challenges. Chitando (2008) explores Zimbabwean children's literature that deals with war, racial conflict, poverty, gender discrimination, intolerance and HIV and AIDS in order to envision a more peaceful world. The history of colonialism can also not be forgotten that has necessitated cultural nationalism to instil African pride in future generations. Even as Zimbabweans, they have to be aware of cultural diversity so that they are confident citizens of the global world, anchored in the culture of their people. By culture we mean the norms and values that govern interaction with other people and the environment.

This paper is more concerned with how the literature is presented to capture the intended audience. As noted earlier, literature includes poetry, drama and prose (folktales, short stories, novels). Each form requires specific literary skills for success and children are equally sensitive to whether a story is well written or not. At times authors think the message (lesson) is more important than the skills but this also accounts for the lack of interest in some books. Note that in definitions given above, maintaining the interest of the children is a key feature of children's literature.

### **Poetry**

Poetry works by careful selection of words that evoke images to pass on the message to reader or listener. By its nature it is usually meant to be performed and hence some words make sense when read out loud or performed as the sense can be linked to the sound produced. One has to be alert when reading poetry. Albert Nyathi and Ignatious Mababsa are Spoken word artists with a strong interest in culture and fate of indigenous languages in Zimbabwe. It is therefore not surprising that the influence of indigenous culture seeps through in *My Son* (2016). This is a sequel to *My Daughter* (2012). The persona in both texts is a father advising a daughter and son to be careful in the dating game. The dominant imagery is that of hunting reflecting Shona and Ndebele culture where females are pursued by males and hence the hunter and hunted metaphor for dating. The subject matter is therefore timeless and universal. However what draws one to the texts are the colourful picture; a girl facing a giraffe, with a peacock spreading plumage looking on, a hyena with dripping saliva also seemingly watching and a wild dog sniffing on the pathway for *My Daughter*. *My Son* has caption of a setting sun, antelopes in the shadows and a leopard steadily watching something, a young man holds a spear ready to attack and seems to be moving stealthily on the lookout for danger. The boy and girl are clearly African and hence Zimbabwean children can easily identify with the girl's kink hair and boy's clean shaven head.

The poems borrow the structure of traditional poetry that clearly reflect to whom they are addressed. The daughter is nameless making the poem applicable to any daughter under similar circumstances. There is a picture of a father sitting on a stool and a daughter on the reed mat in a rural set up seemingly in conversation. The message is that fathers and daughters must spend time together which is an admonition to absent fathers or those that think their role is simply to discipline when angry. The four opening lines therefore augment this message and reads,

My Daughter, when I demand that you  
Be home before dark everyday  
I, my daughter do not hate you dear,  
I am merely trying to protect you, (*My Daughter p6*)

Rules are meant to protect children and not to boost a father's ego or a mere show of power. The poem goes on to enumerate the dangers represented by the various animals; drooling hyenas, panting leopards, hungry lions, proud peacocks, jittery and jumpy, jumpy monkeys,

trumpeting elephants, scaly crocodiles, deceptively innocent porcupines, ruthless tigers, giraffes that look down on you, seemingly smiling puff adder, black mambas, sly jackals, vultures, hesitant but calculating steps of the chameleon, bright eyed proverbial hare, deadly fish, slimy snail, flimsy flippant butterfly, buffalo, secretive tortoise, hissing cobra; silky, spotty leopard; leaping, croaking frogs; crawling, creeping crab; innocent looking rat, creepy crawly scorpion, dog and python. Each animal represent a certain kind of man who is likely to harm the little girl. The girl is warned against rapists, cassanovas, sugar daddies, and dandies, men that will sexually, physically and psychologically abuse her resulting in heartbreak. The assonance makes the poem more memorable and lyrical which the children will enjoy;

From the flimsy and flippant butterfly,  
Flirting and fluttering everywhere  
Displaying its attractive colours  
To all who care to watch its movements,  
Flattering as it flies along. (*My Daughter* p26)

The effect is two-fold, children enjoy the poetic language and also learn to create their own while enjoying the message. The message itself has two layers, the literal meaning and the metaphoric one and hence appeals to both children under twelve and young adults. Young children learn the characteristic of animals while the more mature enjoy working out the hidden meaning in the tradition of riddles and proverbs in traditional literature. The poem is concluded by a reminder that all that glitters is not gold, a warning that the girl must choose a suitor very carefully.

*My Son* addresses the boy as the hunter. He is given the name Shakespeare, a pun on the spear as a hunting tool, and euphemism for male organ. The poem then begins with a blunt instruction;

my Son  
My son Shakespeare,  
Do not just shake your spear everywhere. (p3)

There is a full stop to show that this is the main message of the poem. It goes on to list the reason for the injunction pointing to various types of animals. The double meaning continues throughout, pointing at real animals in the wilderness and also as representations

of certain type of girls. These are leopards, buffaloes and antelopes/ wounded from previous encounters with hunters; skunk whose smell makes one dizzy, chameleon's make up, sacred animals like the pangolin, python, old crocodile who seduces with tears, trampling elephant, laughing hyenas, circling vultures, old, slow tortoise, baby animals, limping animals, porcupine, and kiss of a cobra. The deceit of the various animals is couched in traditional tales and sayings that are alluded to. Though the poem is mainly in English it actually incorporates saying in Ndebele, Shona Venda and Kalanga to give it a clearly Zimbabwean flavour.

*Ubude kabuphangwa mntanami,*

*Njalo isala kutshelwa sibona ngomopho,*

*Tjilambo layiwa tjozwibongegwa*

*Abadala bathi akuqili elazikhotha umhlana*

(No trickster can lick his back)

*Babuye bathi inyathi ibuzwa kwaba phambili.*

(Seek the counsel of those who have gone ahead of you)

*Kumhanya hakusi kusvika mwanangu.*

(Speed does not guarantee arrival at destination)

*Was a lipfa u vhudzwani u dho lipfa vhulaloni.*

(If you do not listen to my advice now, you will listen to me from your grave)-Venda (*my Son* p33)

The challenge here is that not all the statements are translated for non-speakers of the indigenous languages. However, they make the message direct to a Zimbabwean audience who get the warning from the proverbs in their original and hence the meaning is not distorted by translation. It also encourages children to learn their indigenous languages as they find the imagery as equally exciting as that in English. The main message of the poem is that seeking a partner is as perilous as hunting in the jungle and one has to exercise caution. Modern distractions are included in the poem with reference to social media. There are many stories of people that have dated on social media and have ended disastrously. The persona also says, "Do not try to be Ben 10, seeking heroism that results in your misery."(p24). The meaning here is layered again. For the young ones who watch the cartoon series Ben 10 the meaning is literal in that one must choose battles they know they

will win. For the young adults this has the colloquial Zimbabwean meaning of a young man who provides sexual favours to an older woman for material benefits such as money, clothes and cars. Eliot Ziwira (2017) argues that the book does not address contemporary challenges of sexual abuse but is couched in traditional taboos of don'ts. He seems to miss the point that poetry works by allusion. The hunter is urged to use all his senses and know what and when to hunt, when to run away so as not to become the hunted by predatory animals. He is also told not to hunt baby animals and old slow ones hence he is not to become a predator himself. Ultimately he must remember that

To be a great hunter,

It is not all in your spear.

*Unoti ndobaya, wobva wabaiwa ndiwe!*

A great hunter listens, studies, understands,

Is cautious and sometimes avoids,

He uses his ears, his eyes,

His judgement and his heart,

To steer his spear.

A great hunter makes one choice,

Stands by his choice, is proud of his choice.

You have the power to choose,

Shakespeare. (p32)

Those that want issues categorically stated may miss the point but clearly poetry is not for them and would be more comfortable with prose.

## **Prose**

There are more works of prose in Zimbabwe than poetry and drama. There is very little, if any, works of drama for children. Prose works range from collections of folktales to those that rework the old material into contemporary works to completely new stories. Some of the stories are based on reality while some are simply imagined by the author. In this section I will refer to Fortune Tazvivinga's *The River god uNyaminyami* (2013) and Farayi Nyandoro's *The Unwelcome Visitors* (2016). The first one reworks the Tonga myth of the Nyaminyami while the second is based on a true story that went viral on social media of a

young boy who made a device to chase away lions and save his father's livestock in Kenya. The reworking of old stories into new ones that captivate children is common internationally. A good example is Disney programmes that rework the old stories but for one to understand the new they must have knowledge of the old. In this way culture and tradition is preserved while including contemporary concerns. A good example is Disney's *Goldie and Bear*. To understand the characters one has to have some knowledge of the English folktales and nursery rhymes; *Goldilocks*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Humpty-dumpty*, *Itsy-bits Spider*, *Jack and the Bean Stalk*, *Three Little Pigs*, *Thumbelina* and many others. Children who play games outdoors, attend slumber parties and build club-houses can relate to the world of Goldie and Bear while still learning the social values of generosity, sharing, not taking advantage of other people's hospitality and many other lessons drawn from the original tales.

Tazvivinga's *The River god u Nyaminyami* has the classical beginning of folktales, "Once upon a time, in the deepest southernmost part of the African sun, there was a land called Zimbabwe. In the land was a chiefdom where two twin brothers Chinyamuluvu and Busongo, were born to Chief Siyamunyambela and Queen Chimvula of the baTonga people." Evident in this introduction is the mixing of the old and the contemporary. The old world is in the idea of a chiefdom that is functional and the contemporary is in the mention of Zimbabwe, a country created at the partition of Africa, formerly known as Southern Rhodesia. Sibling rivalry leads Chinyamuluvu to kill his brother which leads to the death of the parents leaving him to rule over his people. However, his reign leads to his people's suffering because he usurps power and is evil hearted. The ancestors intervene by changing Busongo into Nyaminyami and letting him rule his people from the river. He is transformed into a human being again by the song of a maiden, Zambezi. They fall in love. Busongo fights his brother and brings an end to his evil rule after Chinyamuluvu publicly confesses to killing Busongo. Busongo turns back to Nyaminyami and Zambezi requests to join him, a request the ancestors grant. White people then come and construct a dam wall separating Nyaminyami and Zambezi who had visited her people. Nyaminyami heats the dam wall trying to make his way to his wife which results in earth tremours and many people die. Zambezi sings the magical song again to calm her husband and this is how they are united in spirit though still physically separated.

The story is undoubtedly Zimbabwean, based on the culture of the riverine people, the Tonga of the Zambezi valley. Tazvivinga is clearly an outsider to the community but uses

the story to foster a Zimbabwean identity and memory. This fits in with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (2009) idea of re-membering African history and culture. From the story children learn of the religious system of the Tonga people. They also learn that Kariba is a corruption of the name Kariva, most likely an orthographical error. Her story also tries to account for why the river is called Zambezi. According to the story it is named after the courageous, beautiful girl who played a part in the defeat of an evil ruler. Children are then inspired to act in a way that brings honour to their names as well. Her reworking of the story is therefore based on contemporary realities. The Tonga say the original name is *Kasamba wezi* meaning those who bath in the river must be knowledgeable, implied is that they will not be caught unaware by crocodiles. The displacement of the Tonga people and the building of the Kariba dam are historical events as well as the periodic earth tremours. The story thus seeks to account for these events in a way that interests children. The story ends as follows;

The dam wall still stands even to this day, but legend has it that Nyaminyami is still looking for a way to reach his love, and sometimes the wall and the valley experience mild tremors that science can never explain even if they tried.

Nyaminyami still misses his Zambezi and maybe one day the good faith of the ancestors will shine upon him and the barrier will be broken!

The story thus ends on a hopeful note which is another feature of folktales and that hope is placed in the power of the ancestors thereby validating African traditional beliefs as being still relevant in this global era. The story also highlights that modern science does not have all the answers and hence the need to embrace multiple worldviews. When children see artefacts of Nyaminyami they will be able to retell the story and enjoy them in the same way they appropriate toys and clothes with images of their favourite cartoon character.

Farayi Nyandoro's *The Unwelcome Visitors* is clearly labeled that it is for children in grade 7-8 which is upper primary school. The boy in the story is 14 and loves science. He is therefore always experimenting with old radios and various electronic paraphernalia. The setting is clearly contemporary society. The story begins with an attack on the Kantai livestock while Kazungu is away at boarding school. His parents decide not to tell him so as to not disturb his studies. In a village meeting, six men are selected to kill the lions as in the old days. The chief warns them against doing so as the animals are protected by law as a major source for earning foreign currency by the government. The villagers are angry as the law seems to protect the animals at their expense. The Amani six go ahead and kill the lions

leading to their arrest. Kazungu sees the story in a newspaper while at school and goes home. While at home he goes to the kraal to check on the remaining cows while carrying a torch. The lions run away and that gives him the idea to make lion-lights. Kazungu figures out that lions are afraid of moving lights so creates lights that switch on at timed intervals in different places to give the impression that someone is moving with the lights. The invention is successful and published in the newspaper. It leads to Kazungu being sponsored to attend a Science exhibition in America attended by young scientists from all over the world. He is accompanied by his father who appreciates what his son has done in bringing family honour.

The story shows a transition from the old values (honour coming from killing lions) to a modern approach that seeks preservation of wild animals and coexistence. On a higher level the story speaks of shunning violence and bloodshed as a solution to challenges and seeking peaceful means. Kazungu Kantai becomes an entrepreneur, making the lights for everyone in the village for a fee. While his father had bemoaned a loss of income when the cattle were killed by lions, Kazungu finds another avenue of making money. He vows that he will study electrical engineering and invent gadgets that will make life easier for his people. In this the author encourages children to be innovative in their interaction with their environment. They are as good as any other children across the globe and have the same potential. It is then hoped that in the future, Africa will produce more inventions. Children are also encouraged to seek the link between the education they receive and their real life experiences. It locates African children in the global experience starting from the local. The story is well woven to join all the little pieces together into a coherent form where one can glean the workings and structure of contemporary society. The story ends in triumph in the following words;

As Kazungu was going back to his seat while holding a certificate, a plaque and a cash prize, Father ran towards him with the hands outstretched. The excited parent eventually hugged his son and lifted him while shouting with joy.

“Congratulations son,” said Father. “Thanks a million times for bringing glory to our family.”

The boy’s project and presentation attracted a lot of media coverage, making his name go to places, much to his delight.

Kazungu had not only flown his country's flag high but also written his name in history books through his gadget.

With most of the people attending the one week event being young scientists from across the globe, Kazungu was comfortable as he felt he was in good company. The youngsters freely exchanged ideas and contact details.

From his experience, the boy was convinced that the ideal degree course he should eventually pursue at University was electronics engineering. He hoped to use the knowledge acquired from the studies to come up with more gadgets that would help solve problems the people in his country faced, and make life easy for them.

For the time being, Kazungu continued to bask in the glory of his project. With the acclaimed 'lion lights' now being widely used, peace prevailed in Amani Village. Attacks on the livestock ceased. The place, thus, began to live up to its name- a haven of peace. (*The Unwelcome Visitors* p61-61)

## **Conclusion**

Genuine children's literature must address the concerns of children and engage their interest. They must learn about their past, present and the future. This is done in different ways by different authors depending on their skills and the material they are working with. Regardless of form and content, the packaging must be child friendly and attractive to sustain interest and stir imagination. In Zimbabwe the main genres are poetry and prose. An author must choose a form they are comfortable with so that children also engage with the literary skills specific to that form. Poetry is dependent on well thought out diction that evokes images that relay the intended message. Prose tends to give more details but the author has to carefully place the material so that it builds up to a story that informs and entertains its audience. At times the material is reworked traditional stories and at times the stories are drawn from contemporary experiences. The key idea is that children will be able to identify with the story one way or other. The lessons to be drawn from children's literature are usually universal and timeless. Writers of children's literature must therefore research intensively to enable children to time travel into spaces that may never reach physically but come back from those travels enriched with wisdom relevant to their ages. Sindiwe Magona, a South African author's comment on the role of children's literature in the global age may be the best way to close this paper;

Children's books are to travel, because if you subscribe to the creation and work of organizations such as the United Nations which promote understanding between the peoples of the world, where best to start, if not the children? Understanding, and this happens with film, if you go to South Africa, everybody is talking about "Frozen". We are all Frozen the world over. If it can be done with film, why not with books? Let us all get Frozen! (Emenyonu & Emenyonu 2015:179)

Children must be exposed to literature from all over the world and writers may help by translating into indigenous languages classics from other societies, and their own into English and other languages. Then can time travel through imagination be real for our children.

## References

- Chen, Chi-Fen Emily *Children's Literature*. [www2.nkfust.edu.tw/emchen/Clit/htm](http://www2.nkfust.edu.tw/emchen/Clit/htm). Accessed 28/03/2017.
- Chifunyise, Stephen J. 1995. *Takura and the Talking Branch*. Harare: Children's Media Trust.
- Chirasha, Ben. 1988. *Traditional Tales of Zimbabwe: Honeybird and the Greedy Man*. Harare: Longman Zimbabwe Pvt. Ltd.
- Chirere, Memory. 2013. *Baba vaRudo*. Harare: Bhabhu Books.
- Chitando, Anna. 2008. *Imagining a Peaceful Society: A Vision of Children's Literature in a Post-conflict Zimbabwe*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Ellison, A. M. 1986. *Musapa Finds the Rainmaker*. Harare: Longman Zimbabwe Pvt (Ltd).
- Emenyonu, Ernest and Emenyonu, Patricia (ed.). 2015. *Children's literature and Story-telling. African Literature Today 33*. Ibadan; Suffolk: HEBN Publishers; James Currey.
- Gwaza, Gamuchirai 'Accessibility by Attraction' unpublished paper presented at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair Indaba, 25-26 July 2016, Crowne plaza, Harare.
- Hanson, Ben J. 1988. *Don't Swim In the River Gwayi*. Harare: Longman Zimbabwe Pvt (Ltd)
- Khorana, Meena. 1998. *Critical Perspectives on Postcolonial African Children and Young Adults Literature*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Mabasa, Ignatious. 2013. *Meri nebhutsu tsvuku*. Harare: Bhabhu Books.
- Meniru, Teresa E. 1992. "Children's Literature- Progress and Problems" in Chidi Ikone, Emelia Oko and Peter Onwudinjo (eds), *Children and Literature in Africa*. Ibadan: Heinemann Books (Nigeria), 43-51.

- Mungoshi, Charles. 1989. *Stories from a Shona Childhood*. Harare: Baobab.
- Mungoshi, Charles. 1991. *One Day Long Ago: More Stories from a Shona Childhood*. Harare: Baobab books.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. 2009. *Re-membering Africa*. Nairobi. Kampala. Dar es Salam: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.
- Nyandoro, Farayi. 2016. *The Unwelcome Visitors*. Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.
- Nyathi, Albert. 2012. *My Daughter*. Harare: Lion Press Zimbabwe Limited.
- Nyathi, Albert & Mabasa, Ignatius. 2016. *My Son*. Bulawayo: IMBONGIARTS Publications.
- Nyathi, Pathisa. *Kolobeja*. Bulawayo:
- Okpewho, Isidore. 1992. *African Oral Literature: Background, Character and Continuity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Russel, David L. 2009. *Literature for Children: A short Introduction*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Smith, Joseph. 'Using Developmental Theories When Choosing Children's Books' [www.excelsior.edu/media/owl/sampleClassificationandDivisionEssay.pdf](http://www.excelsior.edu/media/owl/sampleClassificationandDivisionEssay.pdf). Accessed 28/03/2017.
- Tazvivinga, Fortune. 2013. *The River God uNyaminyami*. Zimbabwe: Haus of Glueck

Josephine Muganiwa  
 Lecturer in literature in English  
 Department of English  
 University of Zimbabwe  
 Box MP167  
 Mt Pleasant, Harare,  
 Zimbabwe.