

Making the Chain Longer and Stronger: An Intertextual Reading of Ignatius Mabasa's *Mapenzi*

Jacob Mapara

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7386-3929>
Chinhoyi University of Technology,
Zimbabwe
jacob.mapara@gmail.com

Beatrice Mapara

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2435-7226>
Catholic University of Zimbabwe,
Zimbabwe
beatriz.mapara@gmail.com

Abstract

Literary texts are at times anchored in others that have come before them. This article thus notes that the relationship that exists between written works as well as oral works has been an abiding phenomenon since the emergence of the written word, whether it is Sumerian, Greek or Roman. This practice, also called intertextuality, is prevalent today in African literature. Informed by this tradition of intertextuality, the authors analyse Ignatius Mabasa's novel, *Mapenzi*, and argue that the use of direct and indirect references to other creative works by the writer goes a long way in enhancing the text's thematic and stylistic development. The article further observes that the intertextual references found in Mabasa's novel evidence that he is a well-read artist who sees intersections between what he writes and what others before him have also written about. The article concludes by delineating the differences between plagiarism and creativity, in that an intertextual reading of *Mapenzi* reveals that as a creative work, besides connections to prior works, the novel has a life of its own, and has in fact carved a space for itself within Zimbabwean Shona literature. The article sums up such intertextual play as *hochekecho* ("interlinkages"), the creation of catenae between literary texts.

Keywords: intertextuality; documentary interactions; paratext; echo; allusion; subversion

Introduction

Some literary works are by nature deliberately built on others that preceded them. A case in point is that of Virgil who based his epic the *Aenid* on Homer's *Odyssey* and



Iliad. Yet, despite its obvious linkages to these Homeric works, the *Aenid* is more than an imitation of the earlier works. It is a story about rebirth, a new beginning for those who survived the sacking of Troy. So, while the *Aenid* mirrors the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, the image that comes out is an entirely different one, although it has allusions to the two earlier texts. This can be attributed to the fact that in literature there is no text that exists in isolation from others. It is significant that an informed perusal of Shona fiction and other genres reflects this reality: Shona writers often create their works in response to prior works and establish a reference for those that come after them. Interestingly, readers of texts also rely on their knowledge of works they have read before in their analysis of new ones. The act of reading and writing thus becomes a dialogic engagement where we respond to previous works just as they relate to the new ones being written and/or read. This engagement is clearer in some Shona novels such as Ignatius Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) and in musical works. One cannot ignore, for example, the journey motif that binds the two novels *Jekanyika* (Mugugu 1969) and *Ndinofa Ndaedza* (Honzeri 1991), as well as the challenges that the protagonists Jekanyika (*Jekanyika*) and Revai (*Ndinofa Ndaedza*) face in the two novels. Yet, at the same time, one observes that despite obvious resemblances between *Jekanyika* and *Ndinofa Ndaedza*, the two novels are not the same. This reality is also borne out by Mabasa's *Mapenzi*, which speaks to several Shona novels and poems as well as songs, but is a powerful literary production on its own. *Mapenzi* alludes to and echoes works such as Charles Mungoshi's *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) in terms of narrative technique and to some extent characterisation. It also, among other works, speaks to poems such as Wilson Chivaura's "Panyika Tingayemurei?" ("What is Admirable in This World?") (1965a, 6). Thus, the intertextuality of the novel with other Shona texts is striking and worthy of critical study.

Intertextuality

The term "intertextuality" takes in the widest feasible range of documentary interactions that include those of sources and influences that come to bear on a piece of writing (Miola 2004, 13). Intertextuality is thus the way that texts refer to and influence other manuscripts. As a term, it was first used by Julia Kristeva in her 1966 article "Word, Dialogue and Novel." She coined the term in responding to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory that signs gain their meaning through structure in a particular text. She opposed this theory, arguing as an alternative that readers are at all times influenced by other texts, sifting through their archives, when reading new ones. Kristeva's response to de Saussure was informed by Mikhail Bakhtin who developed the theory of dialogism. Bakhtin countered the Saussurean theory of language, arguing that language is a product of social situations and is thus bound up with specific social elements. The crucial concept in his theory is that a word reflects the human-centred and socially bound aspect of language. The main proposition was that language responds to previous utterances and to pre-existing patterns of meaning, but also promotes and seeks to promote further responses. A reading of Bakhtin's theory thus shows that it ties in with Kristeva's

intertextuality. This theory argues that one cannot recognise an utterance or even a written work as if it were singular in meaning, unconnected to previous and future utterances or words. Thus, “a word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee” (Bakhtin and Volosinov 1986, 95). In a previous work (Bakhtin 1984, 201), Bakhtin stated

The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation. In this process the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from the power of those concrete contexts into which it has entered.

When applied to literature, the above claim means that literary works are interconnected and feed into one another, since they are in dialogue about the same world. The main proposition of intertextuality is consequently that when writers appropriate material from previous texts, their works acquire other layers of meaning. Therefore, when a manuscript is examined in the light of a different text, all the postulations and effects of the other text give a new import and significance to the new text as well as influence the way in which it is interpreted. It is thus the contention of this article that authors (and even speakers) use different formulas to bring about this interconnection. One of these formulas is characters that introduce allusions to other literary works, including the Bible, thereby bringing new insights into the text.

Intertextuality is critical in the understanding and interpretation of a literary text because it serves as a necessary bridge that enables the reader to see how other texts have influenced the writer and how, through the writer’s creativity, different texts are deployed in the artistic creation to convey certain meanings. In literature, intertextuality refers to a situation where a text engages with a second text or other source that may be written, or may even be in the form of an image. It may dialogue with another written text through different means, for example, the title of the text, a scene, character or storyline. It may also be through parody or the description of an image, thus giving an illustration a verbal capacity that it has lacked. Dialogue may also occur through reference to a song and having characters comment on it, but in a way that articulates and accentuates the writer’s theme or characterisation. Intertextuality has the capacity to create a chain that links a text with others that precede or succeed it, which is exactly the case that can be observed when a few examples from Mabasa’s densely intertextually linked *Mapenzi* are analysed.

Unravelling the Knots—*Mapenzi* and Other Texts

One interesting relation that exists between *Mapenzi* and another Shona literary text is its apparent ties to Mungoshi’s *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983) both in terms of style and characterisation. The first noticeable aspect is the use of a paratext that in *Mapenzi* is a four-line and two-stanza poem by Chirere that reads as follows:

Patinorara
Handipo patinoda kurara
Zvatinodya
Handizvo zvatinoda kudya

(“Where we sleep,
Is not where we desire to catnap
What we consume,
Is not what we desire to eat.”)

This paratext is similar to what is found in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* which starts off with the following song:

Zuva ravira tinovatepi?
Zvaunotaura handizvinzwi,
Zvandinotaura hauzvinzwi,
Mudondo muno tinovatepi?
Tenge tadhakwa
Haiwa, tadhakwa!
Chokwadi tadhakwa

(“The sun is set where shall we sleep?
What you say I do not understand,
What I say you do not comprehend,
In this jungle where shall we nap?
We seem drunk,
Indeed, we are inebriated!
Truly we are smashed”)

As in Mungoshi’s masterpiece, the purpose of this poem is not just to create a similarity between the two texts—like Mungoshi’s, the poem that precedes the main story in *Mapenzi* serves as an abstract of the whole story. In *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?*, the song serves to underscore the turmoil in Chimbimu’s family, the lack of communication between the siblings and the family’s ultimate collapse. The poem in *Mapenzi* plays a similar role of foreshadowing the main theme of the novel, which is individual and family distress. A reading of the novel reveals that many of the characters are plagued by one misfortune or another. For example, nothing seems to work for Hamundigone. He is kicked out of his job as a teacher for an alleged mental ailment. As for Mai Tanya, her marriage to Saba is a disaster and it ends in her death. Bunny is in mental anguish because his girlfriend Maud has succumbed to AIDS and he is troubled by the fear that he may have been infected. The short poem thus sums up the turmoil and anguish that affect the characters, but also goes beyond that to undermine the Zimbabwean government by highlighting the turbulence and disorder that characterise post-independence Zimbabwe, as is reflected through the dog Harare.

Another fascinating aspect about *Mapenzi* and its relation to other works, including songs such as those of Simon Chimbetu, Leonard Dembo, Thomas Mapfumo and Oliver Mtukudzi, is that it is also linked intertextually to one of Mabasa's other works. An example of this intertextual link is found in the use of a poem that is part of the author's dedication in the novel *Ndafa Here?* (2008). The poem focuses on the need for women to stand by one another instead of partnering with men who are largely the main transgressors when it comes to female victimisation. The poem foreshadows the story of Betty who is abused by both genders—men and women. Her husband abandons her as soon as he gets to the UK, while her brother-in-law Pasi wishes to bed her. Her worst nightmare happens when her father-in-law fondles her breast. Her sisters-in-law and mother-in-law treat her terribly. They make plans with Watson, her husband, as if she is not there. When one reads *Mapenzi* again, after reading *Ndafa Here?*, the challenges that Hamundigone has faced become clearer as it becomes even more evident that he is dealing with a cruel and insensitive world.

Mapenzi and *Ndafa Here?* are also interwoven through the use of words that are repeated verbatim in Hamundigone's poem (Mabasa 1999, 9–10) as well as words by the same speaker (1999, 137). An example of this is the statement "*Handisi imba yakasara kumatongo*" ("I am not an abandoned house left in a formerly inhabited area"). These same words are repeated verbatim in *Ndafa Here?* (2008, 110). There are also the words "*Handisi ndove yedhongi kumakura*" (1999, 140) ("I am not a donkey's waste that is in old abandoned fields"). We argue here that the repetition of these words *literatim* in a novel published nine years after *Mapenzi* is not by happenstance but is one of the writer's ways of giving value and a voice to the marginalised who in this case are Hamundigone and Betty. The writer aims to show that those who are despised and looked down upon, as is the case with these two characters, are the ones who at the end become the main heroes and survive the onslaughts against them.

In *Mapenzi* the dog Harare and where it is currently domiciled speak about national decay in the same way that Ayi Kwei Armah addresses it using the dilapidated bus in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969). This dog was bequeathed to Jerina (Mai Heaven) when her white employers hurriedly left Zimbabwe in 1980. Her former employers left money for the upkeep of the dog, but Jerina squandered the money when she set up a shebeen and bought herself a house in Chitungwiza. The dog Harare, once called Salisbury, was forced to adjust and live like other hounds in the high-density neighbourhood of Chitungwiza. At the end, it becomes just like other dogs, and Mabasa sums this transition up in the following way: "*Yakabva yazove Harare yatinoziva iko zvino*" (1999, 100) ("It became the Harare that we know today"). The dog Harare is therefore a symbol of the decay that characterises not only the city of Harare, but also the whole country of Zimbabwe. This anti-hegemonic thread is explicit, especially with reference to today's Harare that is summed up as "*Harare yatinoziva iko zvino*" (1999, 100). The Harare that most Zimbabweans know is a city that is without basic services like water and sewer reticulation. It is also a city full of uncollected garbage, just like

its dormitory town of Chitungwiza. This use of symbols to represent decay or deterioration also echoes what is in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* where, for example, lightning and a falling leaf represent the destruction of the Chimbimu family. Just as Armah uses symbols of filth and decay in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (Goldie 1979, 94), so does Mabasa when he describes the dog Harare's predicament as reflected in its fight for food. The dog's scars also reflect a tumultuous and struggle-laden life that is reflective of the predicament of most urban Zimbabweans after independence. As a symbol, the canine Harare thus successfully highlights the decay that characterises post-independence Zimbabwe.

Mabasa also alludes to Mungoshi's first novel, *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970) ("Brooding Causes Heartbreak") through Hamundigone (Mabasa 1999, 5), who asks:

Makambozvinzwawo here kuti makunun'unu maodzamwoyo? Pane vamwe vanhu vachafa vachingogununa, vachisina nemwoyo yacho vachazowana zvavanoda vasisina hanyan'a nokutsvaga, vageza maoko saPirato.

("Have you heard that brooding causes heartaches? Some people will die grumbling, even after losing their hearts and will get what they want after loss of interest in searching, having washed their hands like Pilate.")

This allusion is significant as Mabasa's homage to Charles Mungoshi, which in our reading of *Mapenzi* acknowledges the positive influence and impact that Mungoshi, through the novels *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* (1970), *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (1975) and *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983), has had on Mabasa with reference to style, themes and to some extent characterisation. Stylistically and in terms of layout, strong parallels exist between *Mapenzi* and *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?*, as already referred to above in the case of the paratext song before the latter commences, which is referenced in *Mapenzi* in a poem by Chirere at the beginning of the novel.

When compared to Mungoshi we observe that Mabasa does not allude to the Bible for the same reasons that Patrick Chakaipa does in his novels such as *Pfumo Reropa* (1961). While Chakaipa makes use of the Bible as a subtle form of preaching, and Mungoshi uses it for characterisation through contrasting the dramatis personae, Mabasa brings attention to the Bible to articulate a political issue. Our interpretation of the reference to Pilate when placed in the colonial Rhodesian context is significant because it leads us to infer that *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* compares the internal conflict that is taking place in Mushayazano's family to that which is occurring in independent Zimbabwe. As the name Mushayazano ("one who is bereft of any ideas") suggests, the head of the house and everyone else in his home is at a loss regarding how to deal with Chingweru, his voluble and domineering wife. Chingweru is so powerful that she dictates whom Monika, their daughter, is to marry. She "usurps her husband's powers, but only with temporary impunity" (Pongweni 1989, 50), deciding that Timoti cannot marry their daughter, but Mujubheki can, as he is a "been-to" who has presumably been to

Johannesburg in South Africa and is believed to have a lot of money, some of which he has used to pay Monika's school fees. When critically analysed in the context of Rhodesia, the reference to *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* reflects how Zimbabweans, after being denied political freedom or being given only a constricted political space, end up venting their political fury on one another. This reality is also captured by Moyo (2008, 2), who argues that family violence results from structural brutality that is associated with a political economy that has sacrificed many of its citizens' livelihoods, as can be seen in Zimbabwe where historically life has been lived through structural violence, with the nature and consequences of this violence visible in all aspects of Zimbabweans' social life. Therefore, as the tragic hero's name Mushayazano suggests, he has no plan and has run out of ideas on how to deal with his family, and at a macro-level Zimbabweans are also at a loss because of the limited space for political manoeuvring in their country.

We assert that while in *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* brooding leads to fights among members of one family, and by extension among blacks in colonial Rhodesia, in *Mapenzi* brooding leads people to give up on the expectations that were promised before the attainment of majority rule as well as at independence. This is because independence has not delivered the good life and freedom that were not only expected but also promised. The people have given up and washed their hands "*saPirato*" ("like Pilate") (Mabasa 1999, 5). The allusion to the biblical case of Pontius Pilate, who handed over an innocent Jesus to the Jewish authorities to be crucified despite his innocence (under Roman law) and instead released a criminal called Barabbass (Matthew 27:11–25), is a parody of the political situation in Zimbabwe, where criminals who are politically connected are released scot-free or become beneficiaries of presidential pardons. The people of Zimbabwe have it within their power to change the status quo, but like Pilate, they are handing over a good country to political manipulators and the power hungry who have no regard for serving the nation but only their own gluttonous and villainous selves. The allusion to Pontius Pilate as a symbol of the Zimbabwean elite is evident when we note that Pilate had political power that he derived from his office as the Roman prefect of Judea. With that power he could have stopped the crucifixion and death of Jesus, but he did not. What he in fact did was to wash his hands of Jesus, a clear sign of giving up. When applied to the Zimbabwean populace together with the ex-combatants like Hamundigone who were never compensated for injuries sustained during the war, it means that the majority of the masses have the power to change their predicament, but like Pilate they are handing the country over to those who do not qualify to lead it and are only interested in enriching themselves. The actuality of the power that Zimbabweans have is voiced by Raftopoulos and Phimister (2004, 356) who argue that trade unionists, public-sector workers and a broad range of civic actors have all at one time demanded economic and political changes of one kind or another but have somehow run out of steam.

Equally important to note is that the effect of the biblical allusion is to draw the reader's attention not only to the performance of Pontius Pilate washing his hands as a symbol of giving up on Jesus, but also to the dangers that the people of Zimbabwe face if they give up fighting for real political and economic freedom. While the echoing of *Makunun'unu Maodzamoyo* and the reference to Pilate consequently help to unearth the linkages that exist between *Mapenzi* and other texts that precede it and that have influenced it, the insinuation induces the reader to reconsider the text with heightened interest since she/he is compelled, especially by the evocation of the biblical image of Pontius Pilate, to think again about Zimbabwe's predicament.

Mapenzi is largely told from the point of view of Hamundigone, a demobilised ex-ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) combatant who has also lost his job as a high school teacher for allegedly teaching his students what is outside the official syllabus. On his way to Harare to get his pension worked out for him by the Ministry of Education officials, Hamundigone cryptically laments and comments on the misfortune that has visited ex-fighters like him, while those who did no fighting have benefitted. He feels used and discarded and thus exhorts those who are travelling with him to answer a riddle (Mabasa 1999, 9) that he poses:

Pinduraiwo chirahwe chikukutu ichi:1
Poto yakatsva ichibika sadza pamoto,
Asi kutebhuru kukaenda ndiro dzaive musherefu?

(“Please solve this difficult riddle
The pot was burnt cooking *sadza* on the fire
However, the plates that were on the shelf went to the table.”)

In this riddle, the burnt pot refers to the veterans of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, some of whom died or were injured and left traumatised by the war (Nyota and Mapara 2011, 161). Thus, Mabasa through Hamundigone makes clear the sad reality as regards most of the veterans of the liberation struggle—that those who did the actual fighting have been sidelined and are largely unemployed (Kriger 2005, 249) while those who did nothing, or were even on the other side of the political divide, jostle for places and get them in the now independent state. There is a general feeling of having been used because most of the veterans of Zimbabwe's liberation war have become paupers (Muchemwa 2011, 122).

Hamundigone's riddle is even more engaging because it also echoes Nyamubaya's poem “The Train Was Overbooked” (1986, 5), where the following words are poignant:

Those on the waiting list:

¹ All translations are by the authors.

Got seats also to Salisbury.
Who else took the booked one?
It was discovered right in Harare:
With no tickets and no passports:
Crooks in the waiting room:
Really made it to Harare.

There are clear parallels between Nyamubaya's words and those of Hamundigone. The crooks in the waiting room, just like those on the waiting list who got to Harare (then Salisbury), are the same as the plates on the shelf that ended up on the table instead of the pots that really did the cooking and were thus in direct contact with the fire. It is those who had no war credentials who benefitted from the sweat and blood of those who perished while fighting for Zimbabwe's freedom. Through the riddle, Mabasa, while echoing Nyamubaya, successfully draws the reader's attention to the tragic reality that characterises the Zimbabwean socio-political space, where the majority of the masses and the bulk of former liberation war fighters have been excluded from enjoying the fruits of liberation and the nation's wealth. The plates which were on the shelf are akin to fence-sitters who are just like those "With no tickets and no passports" to whom Nyamubaya refers.

The riddle that alludes to Nyamubaya's poem is also significant in that it draws illuminating parallels between Zimbabwe's fate and that of the former liberation war fighters (Musvoto 2007, 64). The reference to the pots highlights the lack of moral worthiness on the part of the crooks who have hijacked the table and populated it despite not having done anything to ensure the country's freedom. It is unfortunately these political leaches and parasites that now exploit the country's resources at the expense of the Zimbabwean majority, most of whom bore the brunt of the war in their rural enclaves. What also comes out of the riddle is the lack of empathy that characterises those who have occupied the echelons of power. The fact that they are without remorse is shown by them occupying the highest positions without shame, as is reflected by being at the table, a place where everyone can see who is seated where and also get to know who did what.

One of the major political cesspools that Africa finds itself in is that of geriatric autocrats at the political helm of some nations. They are not necessarily there because they are wanted, but because they manipulate systems, including elections, and claim that they are still wanted. One case in point is that of Zimbabwe which, until November 2017, had to live with the overbearing presence of President Robert Mugabe, and his wife who has a very acerbic tongue. This issue of autocratic political leadership is one of the matters that Mabasa pays attention to, and through Hamundigone he lambasts those who still want to remain in power despite old age, which is actually a veiled attack on Mugabe who in 1999 when *Mapenzi* was published was 75 years old. Hamundigone laments (Mabasa 1999, 27) the fact that he has been forced into retirement when he is still able but points out:

Pane vamwe vanhu vandinoziva, kana nemi ndinovimba kwenyu varikowo, vachembera zvekuti kana kufunga zvakatwasanuka havachagoni, asi vari pabasa. Vanhu ivavo kana kupenga unozviona kuti vanopenga, asi hapana anovaudza kuti varegere basa.

(“There are some people whom I know and I hope they are also in your places, who are old such that they no longer think straight, but they are still in employment. You can even see that these people are mentally challenged but no one tells them to resign.”)

Although on the surface Hamundigone is complaining about being kicked out of employment, Mabasa is actually raising an issue of concern—that after close to 40 years in power Mugabe still wants to hang on as Zimbabwe’s leader. Mugabe, like most African dictators, was not prepared to step down, perhaps because he feared for his life since he saw both the opposition as well as even those in his own party as a serious threat to his person both physically and materially (Southall, Simutanyi, and Daniel 2006). Although Mugabe was finally kicked out by the military, the sad reality is that most people had given up on the possibility of ever seeing his back, as they had failed to evict him through elections. In his reference to the old who do not want to step down, Mabasa alludes to Chirikure’s poem “Ticha VaCD (kuna baba vangu pakutora penjeni)” (1994, 87) (“Teacher Mr CD [To my father on being pensioned]”) in the anthology *Chamupupuri* (“The Whirlwind”) (1994). In this ode, the poet encourages those who have played their part in the workplace to retire and give space to younger blood to take over. From a political perspective, it is clear that the persona in the poem is encouraging senior politicians to give way to younger leaders in their parties to take over the reins of power. Even though the persona does not say that one should retire from politics at the age of 65, he is still underscoring the need for senior political players to pave the way for younger ones, and for political parties to set limits on how long one should stay in power at national and party level.

What is equally fascinating about the above reference to retirement is that it dovetails with the view of Miola (2004, 19) concerning the “source proximate,” one of the seven subtypes of intertextuality that he identifies. Miola states that the source proximate is the most common and regularly studied variety of intertextuality because it focuses on sources and texts. Miola posits that in this variety, the author credits, restructures, nicks, ransacks, and plunders. She/he does this through means such as copying, paraphrasing, compression, conflation, expansion, omission, innovation, transference, and contradiction. This is true and is in tandem with what Mabasa brings to the fore when one looks at a comparative analysis of Hamundigone’s words and those found in Chirikure’s poem mentioned above. Through acts of innovation and transference, where a mad man talks instead of a child praising his father, and where a poem is replaced by prose, Mabasa manages not only to talk about age, but to bring to the fore the thought that constantly changing political leaders is key to national health because a leader who overstays cannot continue churning out new initiatives that are beneficial to the country.

Through Hamundigone, Mabasa posits that leaders should not overstay their welcome in office but should leave when the electorate still has respect for them, as reflected in Chirikure's poem "Ticha VaCD" which celebrates that the teacher has retired while he still has all his senses.

One other issue that Mabasa grapples with is that of AIDS, especially AIDS-related deaths. Given the fact that he was writing in 1999, at a time when those suffering from the epidemic were condemned to an early death because there was no anti-retroviral therapy, Mabasa paints a gloomy picture not only for the infected but also for the affected, especially those who were sexually linked to the affected. This is what he brings out in the case of Bunny, former live-in lover of Maud. Through Bunny's torment and mental mayhem, the author is engrossed in enhancing the idea of the meaninglessness of life. Bunny is so nettled and plagued by his anguish that he, in an internal monologue (Mabasa 1999, 38–9), says:

Hupenyu hunotyisa. Hauzwwisisike, hunenge kurova. Unorarama, asi wati wambozvibvunzawo here kuti chaunoraramira chii? Kuraramira kutya, kuzeza, kusaziva.

("Life is frightening. It cannot be understood, it is like disappearing forever. You live, but have you ever asked yourself what you really leave for? Leaving for fear, being frightened, not knowing.")

Bunny goes on to wander in the caverns of his mind, wondering why people struggle so much in life, buying beautiful cars and erecting big houses, yet at the end they all die—becoming dust as Solomon states in Ecclesiastes (The Preacher) (Mabasa 1999, 102). Bunny ends with the words, "*Ndipo paunoti chokwadi hupenyu hapana nezvahuri sezvakarehwa naSolomon kunaMuparidzi*" (102) ("That is when you realise that life is meaningless as was said by Solomon in 'The Preacher'"). These words are important in that they highlight how through referring to the biblical book of Ecclesiastes, Mabasa buttresses the hollowness of life despite all the efforts that people make to be successful. While Bunny is lamenting the loss of his lover Maud, he is also melancholic about the fact that no matter how hard people work to ensure that they are not only successful but also that they live comfortably; at the end they will all die. The dilemma then is whether it is even necessary to work hard.

Besides openly referring to the book of Ecclesiastes, Mabasa also echoes and alludes to Chivaura's poem, "Panyika Tingayemurei?" ("What Is Admirable in This World?") (1965a, 6) when, through Bunny, he refers to the purposelessness of life. Although he does not use the words that are found in the poem, the drift of Bunny's words makes it clear that the two works are in dialogue. This intertextual discourse is best summed up by Lemaster (2012, n.d.) who comments that intertextuality is important since it plays the role of bringing about a conversational dialogue between two "texts." Given that both the source text and its intertext are narratives, and therefore not static items or

images, as readers it is possible that we can engage the full plot that each of the two texts contains, thus enabling us to create a narrative conversation and continuum.

Another of Chivaura's poems that is also brought into dialogue with *Mapenzi* is "Miromo Yenyemwero" ("Smiling Lips") (1965b, 19–20), which comes out when Bunny reminisces on the romantic moments he shared with the now hospitalised, bed-ridden and terminally ill Maud. His thoughts (Mabasa 1999, 37–8) flow as follows:

Unoziva, kana kuti nditi ndiyo miromo iye yandakambotsvoda, miromo yandaiona nyemwerero nyoro zvinoramba.

("You know, it is even difficult for me to accept that these are the lips that I once canoodled, lips on which I enjoyed soft kisses.")

These words, though in the text referring to a very ill Maud, unlike in Chivaura's poem where they refer to an already dead lover, are ominous in that they also foreshadow the impending death of Maud that is earlier on captured in references that are made to Ecclesiastes as well as to Chivaura's poem "Panyika Tingayemurei?" ("What Is Admirable in This World?"). Bunny's thoughts further elucidate his fears and his regret about getting involved romantically and sexually with Maud, despite the fact that they had used condoms that Maud had insisted on.

The dialogue between Chivaura's poem and *Mapenzi* becomes clearer when one realises that Chivaura laments the fact that life is meaningless, because after a celebration of the birth of a person, what follows is a dark cloud of sadness. He (Chivaura 1965a, 6) laments this burden that humanity carries:

*Zvarwei nhasi, mangwana fei
Zvino pasi tingayemurei?
Ungane nhasi, hwedza parare
Gutei nhasi, mangwana ziye!
A! Chivigwa nevhu munhu uzorore.*

("Born today, and die tomorrow
So what is there to admire in this world?
We gather today, and day after tomorrow we disperse
Satiation today, tomorrow it is hunger
Ah! It is better to be buried and rest.")

The above stanza is important in that it reinforces the senselessness that characterises human life that Mabasa projects through Bunny in *Mapenzi*. By bringing the two texts into conversation through this intertextual reference, Mabasa manages to develop an understanding of the insignificance of human life as presented in both texts. He has additionally managed to present the two texts as complementary, even though they are

of different genres, in that they both emphasise the point that is brought out in Ecclesiastes as regards the vanity of life (Ecclesiastes 1:1–18).

When compared to other Shona novels that have come before it, it is vital to note that *Mapenzi* is the most advanced and complex in terms of intertextuality. It is advanced in that it uses more than four multilayered texts. The complexity is evident in that despite their multiplicity these texts are coherent and form an interesting story that manages to address several themes. As already observed, there is the use of other texts in terms of narrative technique such as *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* and *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (Mungoshi 1975; 1983). Mabasa goes further still in that he improves on the technique and even introduces characters that invoke other texts intertextually, such as an animal character (Harare) as well as a posthumous one. The latter does not speak through a medium, as Chipso does in *Muchadura* (Ribeiro 1967), but on her own, just as Danny Fisher does in Harold Robbins's (1974) novel *A Stone for Danny Fisher*. Through echoing and in some way mirroring Danny Fisher, Mai Tanya laments her miserable end at the hands of Saba who ultimately unintentionally kills her. Through Mai Tanya's internal monologue as a spirit, the reader learns of her regret about how she lived her life and how she ruined it through her lack of patience and also by giving in to public pressure which made her believe that she was running out of time to get married. Through her, the reader learns that people have to think about their lives carefully so that there will be no regrets in the future. What is however more compelling, as one goes through the sordid memories that Mai Tanya narrates, is that one realises the parallels that exist between this character and Danny Fisher (Robbins 1974). In *A Stone for Danny Fisher*, the eponymous character posthumously says, "You open your eyes in slow wonder and gaze upon the six stones lying on my grave" (Robbins 1974, 350). These are the words of a dead man just as those of Mai Tanya (Mabasa 1999, 164):

Kana pane wandisina kudzorera, ndinokumbira kanganwiro kuti ndiwane kufamba rwendo rwemweya zvisina minzwa nemavhinga.

("If there is any one whose money I have not returned I ask for forgiveness so that I travel on my spiritual journey without facing challenges.")

While in the case of Robbins's novel Danny Fisher is talking to his child, in *Mapenzi* Mai Tanya is asking those whom she owes money to forgive her. The effect of Mai Tanya's words buttresses the point about some African indigenous religions where it is believed that if someone dies before paying back what he/she owes, that person is likely to face censure and turbulence on his/her journey to the realm of the ancestral spirits. Her words are therefore a prayer for intercession so that on her last journey she travels well despite the challenges that she has faced in the physical human world.

Conclusion

This article has discussed the intertextual linkages that exist between Mabasa's *Mapenzi* and other works. It has mainly highlighted that intertextuality in literature enriches the recipient text as much as it helps deepen the reader's understanding of the source text. The article has also observed that when compared to other works, the use of intertextual dialogue in *Mapenzi* is so dense that it is almost impossible for one to go through a page without coming across evidence of this. The intricacy of this woven web of texts notwithstanding, their ultimate importance lies in the ability of the writer to use them for subversion, among other issues. In fact, what actually is observed as one goes through *Mapenzi* is that in spite of the dense presence of intertextual references, these do not become an impediment to the understanding and appreciation of the main themes of the novel. These actually serve to enrich the novel's multilayered themes that range from betrayal of the former combatants by the political leadership to the plundering of national resources for the benefit of a few. We argue, then, that the intertextual analysis of Shona literature is of paramount importance because it will go a long way in unravelling some of the sources that underlie these literary productions. Besides the unveiling of sources, we perceive the reading of Shona literature with an intertextual lens as inspiring wider reading. More importantly, it demands that readers go through texts with commitment and with greater attention.

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