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EXPLORING THE DIGITAL SPACE AS A SITE OF LITERARY CREATION

By

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## DECLARATION

I, Tatenda Gora, hereby declare that this dissertation for the Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in English and Communication at Midlands State University, hereby submitted by me, has not been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other institution, and that this is my work in design and execution, and all reference materials contained herein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that the above statement is correct.

Supervisor: Prof H.T. Ngoshi \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to Higherlife Foundation and my special family for their unwavering support and efforts during my study period. May the good Lord richly bless them.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I hold a lot of respect for my supervisor Professor H.T Ngoshi, an intellectual, dedicated, hardworking and determined woman, my inspiration, I indeed learnt a lot from her. Thank you for your dedicated mentorship throughout the preparation of this report. A big thank you goes to my family and friends for their unwavering support during my study period, your numerous interventions indeed redeemed this thesis. I would also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Enock Malandi for being a shoulder to lean on when the chips were down. To God Almighty, I am grateful for the gift of life.

## **ABSTRACT**

Advancements in technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have of late revolutionized the business industry, communication and social life as a whole. This has been made possible by various digital media platforms, the most popular being Facebook and Whatsapp. The field of literature seems to be no exception as there is material of a literary nature on these digital media platforms. This study intends to demonstrate how with the rise of digital media platforms literary production has been revolutionized and democratized. To achieve this, the study draws examples of literary texts circulating on Facebook and Whatsapp. It also goes on to look at the genres, style and thematic concerns of the literary texts circulating on digital media platforms. Ethical issues posed by self published literature and intellectual property issues are at the core of this study as these texts do not go through the publishing process. The research is informed by the Uses and Gratifications theory which propounds that the use of particular media is determined by need. It is as a result of needs gratification that new media technologies have become popular as compared to the traditional media as research has shown that people now spend most of their time on these new sites. It emerges in this study that digital media platforms especially Facebook and Whatsapp offer quite a number of needs as compared to the television and the radio. The fact that social media platforms are not censored has also contributed to the popularity of these platforms as they promote freedom of expression. Circulating on social media platforms are novels, poems, short stories and other material. Digital media platforms have revolutionized literary production in the sense that literary texts can now be accessed online easily, sometimes free of charge. However these platforms can be a threat to our culture and unity as a nation because anyone is free to post anything without sometimes even considering the implications of the content on the next person.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Originally any form of literature was in print but now the concept is rapidly changing as literature can now be found in the digital space. Authors have not been left in the process; they are now sharing their creative works online via social media platforms like Facebook and Whatsapp. They are taking advantage of the rise of social media and transforming the traditional view of literature. Instead of going through the trials and tribulations of being published, authors have resorted to online creativity. Fùlòp (2015) argues that social media turns communication into interactive dialogue, allowing for the creation and exchange of user generated content and providing a structure for people to get organised, exchange information and collaborate. Social media allow for interaction on a global scale which makes it possible for users to add content or commentary and to form groups quickly.

The advancement in technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed the face of literature. This is mainly as a result of the advent of social media platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp in 2004 and 2009 respectively. Traditionally there were stages that had to be taken for one to become an author and to publish a book which is completely different from what upcoming authors are now doing. Books are now being published online and being read online. Social media platforms have taken precedence in this new era, the digital age, for example Facebook and Whatsapp are social media platforms where creative writing is being shared. The number of Zimbabwean authors publishing online keeps increasing by the day as they seek to

overcome challenges within the industry and authors seem to have embraced technology as they are using these platforms to promote their work.

Upcoming authors like Ignatius Mabasa as quoted in Newsday (2014) have argued that this is as a result of lack of response by the local publishing industry especially to new writers. Online book publication has proved to be a good marketing strategy to the authors as they can now capitalise on the huge Diaspora market as people are longing to find a way to connect with home.

There are several costs that are incurred to finally have a hard copy of one's work and these costs do not take into consideration whether the book is going to sell or not. This issue is pertinent to the country and needs to be addressed because everyone is now a potential author which may be a possible danger to our literature as literature is the mirror of society and carries our culture. Some online novels and short stories are very explicit; they lead to moral decay so if this continues unmonitored we might be heading for a disaster as a country. Traditionally, literature has been viewed as existing in the library and book shops, but things have changed. We are now living in an era dominated by technology. Literature is no longer found in hard copies only but there are also soft copies as well. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen the way we view literature changing. The emergence of these social network platforms has led to online publication of novels, short stories and poetry, which is contrary to the traditional way of book publishing. In their quest for popularity and to make their talents known authors have resorted to marketing their work on social media platforms where there is wide coverage as the readers are from all the corners of the world making use of these social media platforms.

The introduction of Facebook in 2004 and Whatsapp in 2009 has led to the drastic changes in literary production. It has been noted that the problem with these social networking sites is that everyone is now a potential author as credentials are not required. These works also are not censored hence they may be vulgar leading to the violation of our culture and identity. Also in addition, anyone can read them even though the contents are not proper for their age.

The increase in the number of scholars who are now publishing their books online has led to the interest in this topic. There are so many groups of novels, short stories, poems on both Facebook and Whatsapp where reader group members reach 2000, 3000 and 4000. On Whatsapp members are around 250 because the number of members are limited hence if a group is full the same author opens another group which is a sequel to the first one so as to cater for their other readers. Some authors have argued that they are just writing to explore their own creative abilities, some are there for fame and popularity, and some are there to pass a message through their works whilst some are there for financial gain.

There are quite a number of groups which authors have come up with as a platform to advertise and market their literary works. Some books are for sale whilst some are for free. They are found in three languages which are Shona, Ndebele and English whilst authors codeswitch and codemix. On Whatsapp the researcher has come across groups such as Hungwe and Madhuu novels, Linda stories group 1, Mabhuku (Novels) 24/7, Kudzie Stories Group 5, Nollen Novels group 01, Bright Novels, Books, Novels and Stories 6, Books, novels and stories 6 , Linda Stories group 6, Novels and Operah Manexy Group 1. Most of these groups are full.

On Facebook there are groups such as M. M Stories, E. M Shona books and series, Gideon Shumbaimwe=Writer of Shona/English novels, Emmanuel Manexy Dhliwayo books and

poems, Mabhuku, Malvin Brown Shona and English books, Shona Novels by Boss Tafa Munyori, Dr T. M Stories, Sir L.M novels, Novels Tichitandara, Mabhuku-Novels, Books and Novels- Mabhuku, Ma books Novel#Nzou, Shona novels, Series nema novels Zim ladies, Writers- Ndebele and English novels@Makhox and Zimbabwe shona novels, Elton Macheka Publishers, Suwani stories, Brajey Stories, I-Queen stories, Max Stories, Stephen Tsodzo Majoni Books and Manjenjenje novels and short stories. Membership in these groups ranges from 1 000 to 80 000. These comprise the readership.

Some of the leading authors are Stephen Majoni, Ignatius Mabasa, Emmanuel Chimombe, Elton Macheka, Winnie Dube, Marlvin Brown, Gideon Shumbaimwe, , Gerald Tevera, Courage Kandira, Zigy Mhlangena, Patie Chidhuza, Lyn Lotus, Maxwell Nyikadzinashe, Levis Mahlatini, Mauleen Rejoice Sikopo, Chris Hungwe, Masimba Musodza, Tinashe Nyandoro, Tevera Gerald, Patie Kasaka, Tatenda Zvenyika, Adrian Mbada, Linda Kubonera, Grandy Mupindu, Tony Masara, Precious Chikwengwe, Prisca T. Ncube, Bright Daukire, Tofara Dube and Chriswell Chindenga among others.

The literary texts that are circulating on digital media platforms are so many. Authors and literary works that are found on social media show that indeed the digital space has become a site of literary creation. Notwithstanding this development, Zimbabwean scholarship has been deafeningly silent yet this is an area that needs urgent attention.

## **1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The study aims to demonstrate how with the rise of digital media platforms, literary production has been revolutionised and democratised.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To identify examples of literary texts and their genres circulating on digital platforms
2. To examine the thematic concerns and stylistic issues in the texts.
3. To assess ethical and intellectual property issues in relation to social media literary production.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Social media by nature has revolutionised communication. It has turned everyone into a journalist, a fiction writer, and poet etc; it is being used as a platform for sharing jokes, informative messages, religious messages, advertising, and widespread communication of information in general. However, among what is being shared which is of interest to this study is information of a literary nature, novels, short stories and poems and this has eluded criticism. Social media platforms are advancing as the digital age continues to advance and is now inching into the field of literature.

Much has been said about how the digital media has transformed people's lives socially, politically, economically, religiously but very little has been said in relation to literature in Zimbabwe. This area seems to have been ignored especially in Zimbabwe. In the Western world they are critiquing this but in Zimbabwe scholarship seems to be silent on this particular issue probably because the impact of social media on literature is being taken for granted. The study therefore is of paramount importance as it seeks to unravel the issues behind the change in the way we view literature and bring to light the hidden power of literature, its importance and impact on communities.

## **1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW**

After revolutionising societies in the developed world around 1990, the digital revolution also spread to developing countries which mainly consist of African countries around 2000. The introduction of technologies such as the computer, internet and the cellular phone has paved way to accessing digital media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and other digital platforms. A lot has changed as a result, companies now market their products and services online, students are now studying online, social life is now centred online, physical interaction is fading away. The field of literature however is not an exception; it has taken the digital era by storm as authors have resorted to online production of their literary work.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines digitalisation as the adoption or increase in use of digital or computer technology by an industry, organisation or country. Zimbabwe is also part of the growing technological world as one of the manifestations is in the book and literary publishing industry. It is gradually breaking away from the traditional way of literary production, and publishing houses soon will be irrelevant and no longer viable due to the digital revolution in the new millennium. Mabasa (2014) quoted in “Newsday” argues that literature in Zimbabwe under the traditional era where production of literary work was centred on publishing houses has been grounded to zero profitability and no measures have been taken to protect the authors, mainly on the issue of piracy. So as to curb this, authors have resorted to marketing their work online which has proved worthwhile to some authors and not necessarily that they are fed up with the old system.

Reggian (2008) argues that the popularity of digital media platforms has led to the development and popularity of yet another genre which makes use of cartoons to communicate a particular message. It has been ten years after the assertion of this argument

and indeed this genre has gained momentum on social media platforms especially Whatsapp and Facebook. This is because they promote freedom of expression, which is also why jokes especially those targeted towards prominent people like presidents are becoming more and more popular. Whatsapp now has end to end encryption so it is difficult to track the people behind the jokes and cartoons. This freedom of expression challenges the government's 2003 legislation, Access To Information and Protection Of Privacy Act which is meant to control the press and public order. Thus choice of social media over other media is influenced by its ability to allow freedom of expression as it is part of the people's rights which is denied by other media; hence the use of a particular medium is influenced by the need and satisfaction of the user.

Chirere (2015) in an interview with "The Herald" suggests that authors use social media platforms to promote their work as he has also done the same with his poetry and it yielded results as the readers responded positively. This could be a solution to the writers as digital reading is rising. Roy (2008) employing uses and gratifications in the context of the internet argues that the main gratifications sought in the use of the internet are; self development, educational opportunities, user friendly, convenience, accessibility, wide exposure, global exchange, relaxation, escape, pass time, entertainment and interactivity and it so happens that social media platforms are able to offer all these to the users hence its popularity.

Hill (2010) argues that the writer must take into consideration the 'real' world situation in which the reader may receive the information. Themes in literary texts circulating on social media platforms are structured in a way that they articulate issues that readers come across almost on a daily basis for example theme of materialism where people are doing the unspeakable just to get rich and how love is now associated with riches. Mitchell (1995)

argues that the problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the problem of the image. When it comes to style in literary texts circulating on social media, the image has become dominant. The authors are now incorporating emojis which in a way complements the overall meaning of the texts, hence the democratization of literature.

A report commissioned by the Canadian Arts Funders has it that in this era dominated by technology there does not have to be a physical object like a book for something to exist as an artwork and that anyone can become a writer nowadays thanks to technology. In line with what this report says it is indeed true that we can no longer keep on only recognising literature in physical form only because of the advent of new technologies as the literature that is found on social media platforms is of the same form sometimes though they differ in some aspects, the way they are written and even the messages they convey are at times similar. The only difference is the medium which is the vehicle that is going to convey the message. Thus, it is fair to also consider online works as artwork. However, on the issue of anyone becoming a writer, there is a case of digital divide; it is not always the case that everyone has got access to the required gadgets whilst some are not tech savvy. Despite these differences social media has managed to change how literature is viewed. It is no longer about the conventional way, but the new online way of doing things. This idea that it is not only a physical book that can be called a literary text but also an electronic text points out to how the rise of digital media platforms, literary production has been revolutionised as all along it has been the traditional book that one would imagine when they hear the word literature. As time is changing, the conventional ways of doing things are also changing to suit the new environment in this case it is the book publishing industry that is gradually changing.



Kozma (2005) argues that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are a principal driver of economic development and social change worldwide. This is indeed true because the way people used to interact socially back then and in this information age has dramatically and drastically changed, literature can now be accessed on the internet it is no longer about going to the bookshop to look for a book hence a shift in the people's lives. People are now able to come together online in form of groups and interact, for example groups of novel readers where they get to meet authors and converse on issues concerning their work and so on. However, some argue that it has changed for the worst because social structures are being pulled down as a result of these new technologies. There is divorce and family disintegration being caused by the use of these new technologies.

Brennen and Kress (2014) define digitalisation in their article as the way in which many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructure. It can also refer to the structuring of many and diverse domains of social life around digital communication. In the context of Zimbabwe, interaction is now mainly based on the digital media for example, Facebook and Whatsapp. Communication has been made easier and cheaper. The literary texts that are circulating on these digital platforms articulate thematic concerns of a social nature hence the validity of the above point. However, of importance to note is that it is not everything that is centred on technology, some still believe in the old way of doing things as they are considered to be authentic and reliable. All in all, digital platforms have proved to be useful especially in the field of literature because the reading culture seems to have been revived in Zimbabwe as the ratio of people who could actually visit a bookshop to buy a book to read cannot be compared to people who can be found in Facebook and Whatsapp groups today.

Landow (1991) argues that new media is taking every field by storm, literature not being left out in the process. ICTs are rapidly transforming the way people do business, access information and services, communicate with each other and even entertain themselves. Literature can now be accessed online, and so many novels, short stories, folktales and poems are now just a click away. Literature can be both a form of entertainment and education hence caters for different groups of people. Authors can now communicate with and reach out to a wider readership encompassing those in the Diaspora via social media platforms. It is fast and efficient as the literary works reach everyone in seconds and there is a platform for feedback whereby readers comment and the author takes heed of these comments. This is why online literary production seems to be gaining more popularity and success as compared to the traditional literary production.

Literary production has been revolutionised in the sense that before online publication, it was a one way of communication whereby the author would just throw the book at the reader and did not care to know how the reader is fairing with the text. Hayles (2007) builds on this saying that the new media now is building on these weaknesses hence becoming preferable because it allows creative participation of contributors, interactive feedback of users and formation of a participant community. Such social platforms allow users to interact with one another and make announcements which the public receive. In this case this relationship is between the author and the reader.

Mabasa (2014), a renowned author, in an interview with “Newsday” has it that while one of the reasons for local authors to engage online publishers is embracing technology there are other numerous factors like lack of response by the local publishing industry to both old and new writers. He also argues that it is a vote of no confidence on the local publishing industry.

For him publishing online is a good marketing tool as writers may be able to capitalise on the huge Diaspora market. Selling online also affords the writer more control as the contracts are not restrictive unlike publishing locally where the publishers get a paltry percentage of royalties as low as 10%. These online scholars find it easy to publish online as there are so many costs that are incurred to get hold of a printed version despite the possibility that it might not sell. However, one is guaranteed that online, their books can sell though the returns are low. With digital media platforms books there is an option of self publishing; writers no longer have to wait for months and years to get their work published.

According to Waelder (2016) digital media platforms have revived literature. Lately the assumption has been that the reading culture in Zimbabwe is now dead especially for literature in indigenous languages, worse off, written by writers with no names, many would be scholars had given up, but this is no longer the case ever since the digital space emerged as a site of literary creation. From the comments that readers post online, it is clear that upcoming authors are being recognised and appreciated regardless of their names. Most of the authors that the researcher has come across are new in the industry, but they are not being segregated because they are doing a good job, entertaining and educating the masses and being the voice of the voiceless in societies.

Nyandoro, an online author and a student who started writing in 2016 and has released his material for free online, says by using facebook and whatsapp as media for publishing his text, *Ndakaitei* he has reached some readers many of whom have received the text positively. However, some writers argue that with social media platforms it is not always the case that if one comments positively it is good. They argue that there is this tendency to follow the crowd's opinion and what most of the readers are saying. A reader can hit the 'like' button on

an author's facebook page just to please them and not necessarily that the work inspires them and is of greater quality. For Nyandoro, he is just writing to explore his own creative abilities and not expecting monetary profit from his writings Digital media is the way to go for him.

Waelder (2016) argues that Digital production and online distribution allow artists to by-pass traditional gatekeepers like bookstores by placing work online directly. Social media platforms are regarded as powerful because they allow artists to reach the specific audiences that are interested in what the artists make, in this case literary production. This is because social networking sites encourage people with similar interests to link up and follow each other. An opinion or a review on one of these sites is likely to fall on receptive ears, just as a link to a book is likely to find an audience; these links are always circulating and readers use them to join groups. Since this new literature is electronic it can move to any part of the world hence the readers may interact with the authors by responding to their works directly or through online communities. They may comment on the work, critique it, share it and recommend it.

The sector of writing and publishing of literature is being radically transformed by digital evolution, online literary practices and digital publishing. Manovich (2001) to some extent agrees with this literary transformation arguing that the entire production process has been digitized. Baker (2005) in her article has it that publishers play a role in helping determine who is a professional author, who fulfils this role if the centrality of the publisher is diminished? Do we need other gatekeepers? If a publisher does not provide the value addition of editorial oversight, what is their contribution to the artistic process? All these questions are pointing out the importance of publishers in literary production.

There may be no way to copyright work that is posted on these platforms; hence anyone can claim other peoples work to be theirs. Chris Hungwe, an online scholar is a victim of this. His novel *Chakakosha Chii* was stolen by one who calls himself Professor / Madzibaba and he edited the details of the author with his and changed the title to *Ndakaitei*. Hungwe had to circulate notices to his readers that he is the original owner of the novel. Gendolla (2007) argues that the brevity of social media messages and the lack of formalised grammatical structure could well be considered to be proof that it cannot be a form of literature. However, other critics who responded to this argue that social media may not be ‘proper’ literature but it does offer innovative and attractive possibilities for people in terms of expression, creativity, collaboration and participation just as is the case with the groups that are on digital platforms. Rogers (1962) has it that innovation, communication channels, time and a social system influence the spread of a new idea. This explains why social media platforms have taken over the production of literature, the channels that are being used and the media which is fast and efficient to access information in this digital era. The above scholarly views are of paramount importance to this study as they are laying ground on the issues that the researcher is going to deal with in her attempt to demonstrate how with the rise of digital media platforms, literary production has been revolutionized and democratized. Some of the scholars have managed to provide some of the reasons why the digital media has become so popular, why there is a digital migration of readers, why authors are now opting to use digital media platforms to promote their work among other reasons. These will act as the basis of this research as the researcher is going to build on these ideas to achieve the aim of this research.

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Given that this research is based on why new technologies are becoming more popular than the traditional methods of literary production, looking at the factors behind this development, this research is going to be informed by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). Roy (2008) argues that the uses and gratifications theory is one of the oldest and influential theories in the field of communication and media research. He argues that the theory was coined at a time when the attention of researchers was drawn towards what people do with media. This theory was coined by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch in 1970. It argues that people do not just choose media for no reason and that they actively seek out specific media forms to fulfil their needs. Theories such as the magic bullet and agenda setting proposed that media has got qua effects on the audience to which these do not really apply in this technological world where it is no longer the television, radio, newspaper but there are now many platforms, it is no longer one medium to many people but many media to many people. Thus what applies here is choice; media is no longer imposed on people so they can choose what they want according to their needs. It is the people who choose what to do with the media not what the media does to people. Audience members seek out the mass media to satisfy their needs. Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas (1973) developed the theory by identifying needs that audiences usually seek from the media which are; knowledge, acquiring information, understanding, emotions, entertainment, feelings, credibility, status, interacting with family and friends and tension release needs. Basing on this research, authors seek credibility and status while readers seek entertainment and tension release needs.

The theory argues that people do not just choose media for no reason and that they actively seek out specific media forms to fulfil their needs. The theory looks at what it is exactly that

causes the difference in interest, why it is that people prefer one media to the other. Why is literature on social media gaining ground and what are the differences in what is found in the literary texts produced and circulating on social media which is not in the conventionally produced texts?. The printed conventional novel and online novels are both mediums transmitting a message within a text so what is arousing interest in reading online and not going to the library or bookshop? Is it to do with the thematic concerns that differ or the form of one that is convenient compared to the other?

UGT suggests different people use the media in different ways, in order to achieve certain goals or fulfil certain types of needs. For example one of the reasons why literature has been democratised is the introduction of the internet. Authors are now storming the online platform as it comes along with some merits such as wide coverage as they can reach out to the whole world, Zimbabweans in the Diaspora in this case, platforms for interactive comments, less costs incurred to publish their texts, the publishing process now being fast and efficient, freedom of expression as online texts are not censored. All these factors impact their choice of using social network platforms.

The researcher could not use other theories like the Two Step theory and the Spiral of Silence theory as both the authors and the readers have freedom of expression. They tell it as it is whether political, economic, social, cultural and so forth. The readers are not just passive consumers but they have a platform where they can air their views, and they can express themselves in whatever way they feel like without influence or fear of being victimised or of undermining the opinion leader who is the author here. Individuals can share whatever they want without fear of social isolation.

Uses and Gratifications Theory generally is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. This goes both ways for authors and their readers. Authors choose Facebook and Whatsapp as platforms to market their work, sell ideas, become popular and many others whilst readers choose these platforms also for entertainment, educational and other purposes. In Zimbabwe the reading culture was dying gradually, especially reading of works that are written in vernacular, but now because of the change of the medium almost everyone is now an active reader because the texts can be accessed freely online.

## **1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The research falls into five distinctive chapters. Chapter One is the introductory chapter which includes the Background to the study, Aims, Objectives, Significance of study, Literature review, Theoretical Framework and chapter outline of the research.

Chapter Two entitled “Digital Media Literary Texts” will be identifying examples of literary texts and their genres that are circulating on digital platforms, among these being novels, short stories, poems and folktales paying particular attention to social media platforms like Whatsapp and Facebook.

Chapter Three will be examining the thematic concerns of the texts that are circulating on digital media platforms. A few texts are to be chosen in order to highlight the major and critical issues that the authors are articulating. Recurring issues are also going to be examined looking at their impact on the society where they are being produced.



Chapter Four will be assessing the ethical and intellectual property issues in relation to social media literary production. The motive behind is to examine how this is impacting on society and the world of literature.

Chapter Five entitled “Conclusion” concludes the study. It will be giving an account of how the aim of the research has been achieved. It will also explore the weaknesses associated with the research and give recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF LITERARY TEXTS LITERARY TEXTS CIRCULATING ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND THEIR GENRES**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

The chapter identifies the literary texts that are circulating on social media platforms. It goes on further to look at the genres that these texts can be categorised into. In classifying these texts, the theory of genre is going to be applied based on views from various scholars in this field. Apart from the traditional genres such as poetry there are also other genres that the chapter is going to explore which are becoming popular as a result of the use of new media technologies which include social media.

#### **2.1 SOCIAL MEDIA LITERARY TEXTS AND THEIR GENRES**

According to Chandler (1997/2000) the term genre comes from the French word for 'kind' or 'class'. He argues that the term is widely used in various disciplines to refer to a distinctive type of text. Sabao (2014) argues that the concept of a theory of genre continues to be elusive. This is as a result of different scholars proposing for the classification of genres from different perspectives which are; content based, style, linguistic features, communicative purposes and audience/discourse community. However these approaches working independent of each other leave out some aspects in their classification because some texts may have same style but different content then how are such scenarios dealt with. This study is going to incorporate some of the approaches in categorizing literary texts that are

circulating on social media platforms as the working theory of genre seems to be clouded. It is very important for the writer to apply the defining features of a genre that their texts deal with because when the reader sees a poem or a novel they already have their expectations pertaining to that genre. When their expectations are not met they simply leave for other texts.

Circulating on digital media platforms mainly are fictitious texts, nonfiction is rare on these platforms, cartoonature and jokes. Fiction according to Janovsky (2005) is any work written in prose that is not real. It is written in sentences and paragraphs. A fictional work is a story with events and characters that are not real, in other words, although the situations may be based on real life events, they are not actual. Janovsky (2005) argues that since fiction is based on imagination, the subject matter in fiction works can be nearly anything and it can take place in the present day, the future, or the past. It can incorporate the most fantastical ideas or follow an everyday life. Some examples of works of fiction are legends, folk tales, fairy tales, short stories, and any novels. For the purposes of this study we are going to look at the novel and the short story since they are the ones circulating on social media platforms.

### **2.1.1 THE NOVEL**

It falls under prose. According to Janovsky (2005) genre refers to any works that share certain characteristics. If enough characteristics are in common, then the pieces are said to be in the same genre. Some of the novels circulating on social media are; *Never Give Up, Africa Ahead, Broken Dreams, Not All That Glitter Is Gold, Set Me Free, , Scandal Marriage, A*

*Sinful Journey, Educated Idiot, Moment Of Pain, Love At First Sight, Kamusikana kekwa Mwazha and Ndakaitei and Bambi Isandhla Sami Nkosi.*

Some of the defining features of a novel are style, plot, character development and setting. Davidson (1995) argues that a novel is a long, written fictional story of about 55,000 words or more. Novels are characterised with suspense, they are structured in a way that it provide enough suspense to keep the reader interested enough to keep turning pages for several hours it takes to read the book. The novel is structured in a way that it becomes unique to novels, the sentences and paragraphs are quite long as compared to poetry. Categorizing genres based on structure as proposed by Widdowson (1979) becomes problematic when it comes to a novel and a short story as they are much similar. They make use of sentences and paragraphs and the length of the paragraphs and lines are more of the same. Davidson (1995) also argues that the two most important elements of a novel are character development and plot. Protagonists in novels are carefully crafted to appeal to the readers in different ways as they go about resolving the conflicts that arise in the plot which brings out the themes of the novel. Some elements of the novel include setting, dialogue, narrative and scene, point of view, theme, style and language. Novels circulating on social media have got these characteristics; they are more of the same with the traditional novels. The way that elements are explored makes literature on social media interesting, Character development and plot of most of these novels is just good, it leaves the reader begging for more. Davidson also argues that the novel comes in a variety of genres which include horror, science fiction, romance, historical and many others. Hill (2011) argues that fiction as pretence and make believe is a great part of who we are and helps make sense of events and our reactions to those events, safely explore what can be dangerous and what is unknown and fear inducing. It also allows one to dream and imagine. It pushes the reader beyond the immediate and factual into realms of possibility.

Novels are much more structured than poetry. Davidson (1995) also argues that novels must be written in sentences and paragraphs with all the proper punctuation and grammar, which makes it prose. Usually, fiction is broken up into chapters which we see in novels circulating on social media platforms. Novels can further be categorized into horror, romance, historical, fiction, science fiction but this chapter is going to look at horror and romance since these are the ones that are more dominant when it comes to social media literary texts.

## **HORROR NOVEL**

Horror stories are intended to horrify and scare the readers so that they. This is achieved through the way the author manipulate language. The language used should be frightening and strong that it provokes scary images within the reader's mind. The language used should inform the reader's reactions, since literature is different from movies where one sees what is happening it is language that makes one 'see' what is happening in novels. Horror novels employ circumstances and settings that are scary. Examples of horror novels on social media are; *My Wicked Snake Sister*, *In Love With A Ghost and Creepy*, *Scary events*. In *My Wicked Snake Sister*, the way the snake acts at times the way it kills people is very violent to the extent that one may stop reading as a result of fear, the reader may also not prefer to read it at night because one may have a nightmare. The way Isabella relates with her snake is horrific to the reader though she is used to it. The description of events is so scary that one may think it is really happening. Sometimes the snake licks people violently and the way it chases the people one will be just crossing their fingers wondering what will happen next. In *Creepy*, *Scary Events*, Taona is struggling against strange things, goblins, witches and very big bird like creatures which torments him on his way to the village from the bus station. The way that the goblins act and how they are described is scary.

## **ROMANTIC NOVEL**

Romantic novels are centred on love. The plot revolves around issues to do with romance. Love is exaggerated in these texts. On social media novels there is the development of another genre of erotic romance. Examples of these novels are; *Mwana Wa Landlord Huchi*, *Bamukuru Kani* and *Bedroom Bully*. The language that is used in these novels is so explicit that some a even have reading age restrictions of 18years and above, but unfortunately there is no one on social media platforms who can make sure those who are below 18 are not reading the novels. These texts are sexually explicit, which may be one of the reasons why the online readership is growing day by day because people seem to be interested in things that are explicit especially the young generation. This can be evidenced by the secular movies and songs that are selling largely because they will be having sexual scenes. A good example is the movie “Fifty Shades of Grey”, which sold millions of copies with some even going as far as purchasing it online. The music that is trending to the youth is that of Nicky Minaj and others whom in their videos are almost and actually naked. Thus this genre seems to be attracting both the young and the old. However it promotes acculturation as these works have nothing to offer in terms of cultural value enhancement as they thrive on eroticism. The idea that we have someone joining a group that they fully know that the whole purpose is to distribute novels and also having someone creating a group whose purpose is to circulate novels that they have written to their readers shows that there is need and satisfaction that is being sought by these two parties. We later get these gratifications through comments that the reader wants to be entertained and to be educated on life as they articulate life stories while the author wants their stories to reach the people and to be read. If both parties get what they want then they stay on these platforms but if not they move on to the next medium that can satisfy them.

## 2.1.2 SHORT STORY

Under prose there is also the short story. Poe (1849) in his theory of the short story argues that a short story must be short and must be straight to the point, interesting that it can be read in one sitting without disturbances. The story must have a single intention whether to scare, amuse or terrify. However short stories on social media platforms are not living up to this. They do not have some of the characteristics of a short story. At one point you are being scared and the other you are being amused or terrified. Characters in a short story have to be limited but in these short stories there are quite a number of characters and it becomes more of a novel for example in *The Generous Orphan*. Labelling it a short story therefore might point out to the idea that the authors do not know the characteristics of a short story. Some of the short stories circulating on Whatsapp and Facebook are; *How An Angel Broke My Heart, Crush Then Love, How I Met My FB Friend, The Generous Orphan, But Why, Trisha And The Prince, The Intelligent Poor Girl, My Evil Twin Sister, Yolanda, Miyedzo Pa Girls High and Ura Mapako*. There should be no suspense in a short story since it is short but in the short stories circulating on social media it is there as they can go up to chapter 58 and it is what leads to its continuity in the form of seasons. Seasons is a technique that is being used to create suspense as the story keeps on continuing, chapters are within seasons for example Season 1 Chapter 10, Season 2 chapter 4 and these seasons can go up to even season 5, yet short stories should not have sub plots. With digital platforms now the short story has become different from the traditional one that we are used to. The short story has become the long story. The difference between a short story and a novel on social media is difficult to tell because they are more of the same. The work should be driven by a particular tone but in some of these stories the tone varies probably because they are long. Uses and Gratifications theory is concerned with satisfaction so if in this case the reader gets bored by the stories that

they will be reading they simply move on to other media that they feel can satisfy them. Thus, it is survival of the fittest as there is competition to keep up with the needs of the readers so that they are satisfied.

### **2.1.3 POETRY**

Poems are short pieces written in lines and stanzas unlike short stories. Poems are rich in figurative language. Widdowson (1979) proposes a stylistic approach that adopts a features discrimination thus looking at the language and vocabulary that is used in a text, and which also incorporates structure. It is easy to identify a poem just looking at its structure before getting into the contents; the stanzas are unique to a poem. The language is highly figurative thus for a text to be called a poem it should have stanzas, figurative language and other features that define a poem. This is the kind of classification that Widdowson adopts. Poems share specific characteristics which include length and form. It involves the use of devices such as a simile, metaphor, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, alliteration, rhyme, and much more. Poetry is characterised with imagination. It also arouses the reader's emotions. The diction used in poems is ambiguous at times and it is not so clear which is why we end up with surface and hidden meaning of a poem. Examples of poems found on social media are *Life, Unvoiced pains, Poems include Girl Child, Dapurahunanzva Re Nhetembo, Nhava Yenhetembo, Ndaizopindura Ndichitiiko, Kwangu Kubara Kubudisa Mapundu Muura, Tsono Pagadziko, Mazai Emheni, Chiuya Utiyambuse, Ndihoweiwo Ihwi Rangu, Chiuyaka Nakai, Chisionekwi Mudzi Webwe and Umhlaba Lo!*. These poems are free flowing; they do not follow the rules as to the number of lines and length of stanzas. However the form is just the same as that of traditional poems, they also make use of the above mentioned devices to their effect. The poem *Life* is rich in metaphor and imagery. In order to appeal to the reader's



emotions, poetry is the best; it is highly imaginative thus the choice of diction must be rich in creating images in the mind of the reader.

Poetry captures feelings for example the poem on Tsvangirai's death laments his death and at the same time praises his deeds whilst he was still alive. The tone is sad and the way the poet uses diction makes the reader feel the loss even though they did not like him during his lifetime. There is also a poem by Emmanuel Dhliwayo titled *Girl Child* but it is in Shona. He is from Masvingo so he uses his Karanga dialect which is not usual in formal writing, for example *Ndihweiwo Ihwi Rangu*, this could be because he wants to express his feelings in the language that he is so competent in so as to arouse and provoke the readers' feelings and emotions. Genres appeal to people in different ways and they also depend on the individuals' interests. The poems that the researcher has come across are quite rich in vocabulary and are educative and entertaining in nature, they explore most of the issues that people face on a daily basis. The poems deal with current issues ranging from political, economic to social life of the Zimbabweans. The online poem has not really shifted from that of the traditional one, the form remains the same but changes are seen in the way that language is employed by some of the poets otherwise the poems are worth reading.

#### **2.1.4 CARTOONATURE**

Reggian (2008) argues that the popularity of digital media platforms has led to the development and popularity of genres which make use of cartoons to communicate a particular message. Masotta (1982) defines a cartoon as a series of drawings that constitute meaning. It can contain text or not. The message may be light hearted, humorous, mocking, savage and symphatheic. Each cartoon has a number of visual and language features that

create the overall impression. These include the use of symbols, colour, caricature and stereotype. These quickly convey the cartoonist intention in a single frame. The cartoon is short. Shearman (1992) argues that the narrative and everything in a cartoon has meaning. In general the meaning carries a moral or a social background. The text has been considered not necessary lately but Johnson (1937) asserts that the text is fundamental because it reduces the ambiguity of what is narrated in the images. Cartoons circulating on social media are not censored, so people just post whatever it is they feel like posting. It is different from a newspaper which is censored that at one point. Chronicle's popular cartoonist, Musapenda is fired after he was alleged of publishing a tribalistic cartoon. On social media the president of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Munangagwa is being mocked. In one of the cartoons he has got dreadlocks and is wearing Rastafarian regalia and there is a caption reading "Jah ED" and in some platforms the Jah ED is not there but the caption in a way says we had seen it coming that the president is a Rastafarian. All this is because of the scarf that he wears which has got the Zimbabwean flag's colours is now being associated with the colours of the Rastafarian culture. One might not stop laughing at the sight of the president in that regalia and his association with the Rastafarian movement hence satisfaction of their needs which is one of the goals of the uses and gratifications. The other one is that of Nelson Chamisa, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, which is the opposition party in Zimbabwe. His body features are exaggerated and he is only wearing diapers, which points out to the idea that he is a "baby" so he should leave politics. This is in the context of Zimbabwean politics where we have those for President Emmerson Munangagwa mocking Chamisa saying he is young and he did not participate in the Liberation Struggle so he cannot be president. In relation to this, uses and gratifications theory proposes that media consumers are actively choosing specific media content according to their needs. Thus the cartoonists are finding the digital platforms

useful in passing their message as these reach almost everyone who is active on digital platforms for example on whatsapp it can circulate in each and every group, though one may not like it but they will have seen the message. These come with certain ideologies which the cartoonists want the people to be inclined to. If there are any effects in the use of a certain media, these are consciously or at least actionably intended. One of the reasons for choosing specific media according to this theory is to escape from boredom and stress so one would like the media that will relieve their stress and this is where we have jokes and cartoons coming in. The technique used by the cartoonists is a guarantee that one will laugh at the sight of their work. Gratifications that are usually sought by the audience in this context are entertainment and relieving stress, these are right at the reader's disposal, just a click away.

### **2.1.5 JOKES**

Jokes are now being passed along through the internet as a result of the popularity of social media. Hetzron (1991) defines a joke as a short humorous piece of literature which uses words within a specific and well defined narrative structure to make people laugh and is not meant to be taken seriously. The funniness culminates in the final sentence called the punch line and no continuation relieving the tension should be added. Bhatia (1981) with regards to how genres can be classified argue for a content based approach, what it is that is in the text. Thus texts should be classified according to their content for example jokes are known for their humorous content no matter how different the jokes are at the end one laughs. Chandler (1997) also supports this kind of classification. Walle (1976) also argues that it is in the punch line that the audience becomes aware that the story contains a second conflicting meaning; irony can be used to achieve this. These jokes come with the heading "Joke of the day/quote of the day". Among the jokes that are circulating on social media platforms is that

of the president of the Republic of Zimbabwe sitting next to Paraffin who was popularly known in the film industry for wearing his scarf always and there is a caption, “Look alike”, hence Shearman’s (1992) argument that the meaning of a joke carries a social background. Recently there was also a joke on the issue of the farming of marijuana being legalised. The joke was mocking the president that all along when he was travelling around the world they thought he was looking for investors yet he was looking for marijuana seeds. People have expressed concern on his achievements since he assumed office, they believe he has done nothing as one of the achievements has been identified as the change of the shape of the scud, which is a container for traditional beer in Zimbabwe. The other one is that of the former presidents of the Republic of Zimbabwe and South Africa sitting next to each other and Mugabe was saying, “I told you that you are following me soon”. This came after Mugabe was ousted and the same had happened to Zuma too. This mocking of presidents by anyone who feels like is only made possible by the use of digital media platforms since these jokes are passed on anonymously. People now have freedom of speech; they can now express their feelings. These jokes are likely to have reached the president since he has a facebook page where he interacts with people so the issue of the scud is likely to worry him and maybe he will take action so as to address the grievances of the people.

After Morgan Tsvangirai’s death there was a joke of him being in heaven and joins a Whatsapp group together with the late comrades like Canaan Banana, Josiah Tongogara, Edson Zvobgo, Rekayi Tangwena, Mbuya Nehanda, Herbet Chitepo and many others and they are discussing the current situation in Zimbabwe from the political to economic and social issues. In a way this joke is meant to critique the current situation in Zimbabwe in a satirical way without it being blamed on living people saying it but the dead ones discussing it. Jokes evoke laughter therefore visit a particular media where jokes are circulating shows

that one is in need of entertainment hence their satisfaction and if they find them to be boring they leave for another. The use of a particular media is not by force but by choice.

In one of the jokes the president of the Republic Of Zimbabwe is sitting next to Paraffin who was popularly known in the film industry for wearing his scarf always and there is a caption, “Look alike”. Some of the needs sought in jokes are entertainment, just to pass time and relaxation; hence use is influenced by need.

With the rate that literary texts are being published on social media platforms it is no doubt that digital media platforms are here to stay so the best that can be done is to accept change so as to adapt and survive in the new world of technology. Despite the shortcomings that the literary works have they also have a positive impact in our lives especially from a literary point of view as they are reviving and keeping the world of literature alive. The reading culture was slowly dying and fading away but now people seem to be interested in reading because of the new forms that this literature is coming in and also the medium used to convey the message. With the use of laptops and cell phones one can be reading their novel whilst interacting with friends at the same time because the medium is one. The digital media has also come up with new genres, jokes and cartoonature which are quite a development.

## **2.2 CONCLUSION**

The chapter managed to identify literary texts that are circulating on digital media platforms. It explored genres such as poetry, horror and romantic novel. However it emerged that apart from these mentioned genres, there are also other genres which are becoming more popular as a result of the popularity of digital platforms. Such genres include cartoonature and jokes.

These jokes are mainly circulating on Facebook and Whatsapp as compared to other digital platforms.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEMATIC CONCERNS AND STYLE OF DIGITAL LITERATURE**

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Chapter focuses on themes that literary texts circulating on social media explore. It is going to look at the themes that the texts have in common, that message that is at the core of their writing. Some of the themes include; love, marriage, materialism, regret and wickedness. In the identification of these themes, style plays a major role; hence the chapter will also incorporate the style that is being employed by authors on social media. This includes the diction used, use of emojis, the form that the texts take and the structure.

#### **3.1 THEMES**

A theme can be defined as the central topic a text treats. It can be identified through analyzing the way language is used in the text by the author, looking at the plot that is the exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action and the resolution; how the author treats these brings us to the theme. The analysis of characterization also falls into the category of identifying a theme. Paying attention to these, the thematic concerns of literary texts circulating on social media can be identified as that of; love, betrayal, hatred, religion, marriage, corruption, divorce, deception, loss of innocence, education, nature, death, manipulation, early marriages versus early divorces, appearance versus reality, weight of forgetting, witchcraft, reconciliation, evil versus good, domestic violence, poverty, oppression, regret, reconciliation, jealousy, wickedness, disappointment, revenge, youth, beauty and many others. Fries (1995) argues that the choice of theme in literary texts

influences not only the structure of a text, but also meanings that are being portrayed by the texts. Thus the theme seems to sort of lay the ground for the author, it points out to the meaning that the author wants to convey and also determines the organization of the structure.

King (2000) also argues that a theme is a statement about life and that a good theme teaches a valuable lesson about life and expresses the author's opinion. He also believes that the author's mandate is to communicate on a common ground with the reader, although the experiences may differ from the story, the general underlying truths behind the story may be of help. The understanding of a theme depends on one's previous experience of life. It also enlarges one's understanding of life. Literary texts can have more than one theme, all of them complimenting the other so as to bring about the concerns of the texts.

The literary element of theme is the central, underlying and controlling insight of a work of literature. It is the 'glue' that structures and binds the ideational and interpersonal meanings (Hill, 2010). Through the use of theme the reader is introduced to the author's view of the world and revelation about human nature. This is what we discover in online literature where we get to deduce the writer's view towards the Zimbabwean society. Theme is seen to contribute to the understanding of a text's meanings, to the organisation of the ideas in a text, and to a reader's interpretation of the message. It becomes easier to analyze a text after identifying its thematic concerns. Themes enhance the understanding of language at various levels. Theme helps in understanding the starting point of the message, understand the way in which the message is organised, and it is a major device that helps us understand a particular message in a text.



Going back to the theory that the researcher mentioned in Chapter One, choice of thematic concerns seems to be determined by the contemporary times, the media that is now being used and the kind of readers that are emerging hence the dominance of certain themes at the expense of the others. Gurevitch, Katz, & Blumler' (1974) approach is all about satisfying one's needs, if the work is not appealing to the readers they simply move on to the next option available. This is because the media is not exposed to the audience and they are not passive recipients but they actively select what they want. It is more of a give me what I want and I will stay or annoy me and I will leave situation. Thus the authors have to stick to what makes their readers happy. Zinsser (2006) argues that writers do not tell their readers what they want them to get from their writing; it is the reader's duty to come up with conclusions. This can be made possible by looking at how language is used, and how the plot runs thus bringing out the theme which is the central idea that will attach meaning to that particular literary work. It is the big idea that needs to be considered since theme is the message from the author. Below are the themes that online literature is tackling with examples from a few selected literary texts:

### **3.1.1 LOVE**

Looking at online literary texts, the theme of love is portrayed as the worthiest of all pursuits. The authors put forward the belief that love conquers all despite the trials and tribulations that the lovers may go through in the hands of family and society. This is seen in the protagonists in the texts at they end up uniting with their partners now happily married and living happily ever after. The theme of love is brought out through the subjects and the rest of the characters and the events within the text. Taking the novel; *Kamusikana kekwa Mwazha*, for example, Zivanai, a Rastafarian falls in love with Ropafadzo, a church girl of the Mwazha Apostolic

Sect. Their union proves to be difficult as Ropafadzo's father does not want her to have anything to do with a Rastafarian as they were two worlds apart as a result of their differences in religion. However, the two love each other such that when Ropafadzo's father said this she ran into a moving vehicle and Zivanai gets injured trying to stop her and this is when the father realised that indeed they were meant for each other. He later agreed that they get married and gave them his blessings. The author deliberately employs Zivanai to portray the controversial religious issues in our contemporary society. In the novel, *Alice's Diary*, there is Alice who is an orphan and lives with his brother and they are living in abject poverty. She meets a man who loves her. His name is Lifat but the problem is Lifat's mother who does not approve of their relationship because the girl in question is neither a lawyer nor a doctor. She did not even complete her O' Level studies. They go through a lot of physical and emotional trauma in an effort to build their relationship against all odds but at the end they get married. The author has articulated the relationship between love and class that is prevailing in the society through his characters and the way the narrative is structured.

Hill (2010) argues that the writer must take into consideration the 'real world' situation in which the reader may receive the information. The issues of love and class therefore are relevant as this is what is happening in the contemporary situation where marriages are being compromised because of some selfish interests like material things in exchange for love. This mainly applies to the youth of this age where real love is now rare. Concerns related to the genre and the intended audience will influence the choice of theme. Martin (1992) argues that the choice of theme constructs a particular angle of interpretation on the topic of each text. This show that the writer's experiences may influence their choice of themes and the audience, in this case the online readers, may be the reason why the themes are circulating around social activities as the media they use is mainly for interaction. Basically themes that

a particular text tackles and how it does it is what distances it from the next text and differentiates it from a million other texts

### **3.1.2 MARRIAGE**

There is also the theme of marriage. Marriage is characterised by extramarital affairs and divorce. There is also the issue of arranged marriages, bareness and marriages of convenience and intercultural marriages. In the text *Interracial Marriage*, Lisa's and Raj's marriage does not take place despite the fact that she is pregnant for Raj because they are of different cultures. Lisa is Zimbabwean whilst Raj is Indian so this union was not taken lightly in the Indian culture. Lisa is hurt and bitter because Raj is about to wed an Indian woman and she changes her name to Diana and becomes maid to Raji's fiancé so that she could get rid of Jasmine, Raj's wife to be. Thus, Lisa and Raj cannot get married because of their racial background. Race stands as a barrier. This actually happens in our context where we have conflicting cultures like Ndebele and Shona do not really approve of Shonas getting married to their Ndebele counterparts, there is tension between these ethnic groups. Muchemwa (2016) argues that the hatred, animosity and hostility that exists between these ethnic groups dates back to the history of Gukurahundi, which was a series of massacres of Ndebele civilians by the Zimbabwe National Army from 1983-1987. This has indeed strained and impacted on present relations as the shonas were the ruling class. This validates the view that theme must teach us something about life and that it should appeal to the readers.

The novel, *Vamwene Nemuroora* deals with bareness in relation to marriage. Bruce is married to Beauty but she fails to conceive for six years and this brings misery into their marriage. The mother-in-law starts to ill-treat her because she cannot give her a grandchild

and forces her son to marry a second wife. There is also deception in the text as Chido the second wife deceives her husband and everyone else that she is pregnant yet she cannot give birth because of the numerous abortions that damaged her womb. Chido frames Beauty for food poisoning and connives with the doctor so that she can be chased out of the house. Her machinations work and Beauty is thrown out of the house. This theme brings out the nature of the relationship that exists between mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law especially in the African context. It also teaches valuable lessons about life such as being careful how one treats people as they may treat them the same and facing their fears as they can overcome them.

### **3.1.3 REGRET AND APPEARANCE VERSUS REALITY**

The texts also articulate themes of regret and appearance versus reality. There is regret in the text *Vamwene Nemuroora* as the mother-in-law now blames herself for chasing away Beauty and forcing her son to marry her friend's daughter who later turns against her. Chido pretends to be a good and cultured woman before getting married to Bruce but she later starts to show her true colours, ill-treating her mother-in-law and the aunts whom she used to like, taking Bruce for granted. Bruce falls in love with another girl, Ruvimbo and wants nothing to do with Chido and Chido now regrets ever treating her husband like she had done as she is about to lose him. In the text; *Monalisa*, Blessing is married to Monalisa and he regrets ever marrying and sending her to college because now that she has been exposed she now calls him poor yet he was sacrificing to send her to school. She is now involved in extramarital affairs and sleeps with her man on their matrimonial bed. There is also regret in the novel; *If I Had Known*, Ruth is a wayward child, she starts having boyfriends in grade six and gets pregnant in form two but does not know the father. She even dates married men and does not

respect her parents. Because of her love for money, she is initiated into Satanism and in the process kills her mother, sister and friend for rituals, and dies at the end after she had broken some of the cult rules. Before she dies she regrets her actions and wishes she had heeded to her parents' advice but it was too late. This brings us to the lesson that the author is trying to put across about the society; the good is honoured whilst evil is punished. The protagonists in the above texts have a lesson to learn from the resolution of conflict which in most cases applies to real life situations. These themes are being supported by evidence from the texts. The authors' choices of plot, character and language are controlled by the themes of regret and appearance versus reality.

### **3.1.4 DISAPPOINTMENT/ BETRAYAL**

*Hupenyu Hwangu* brings out the theme of betrayal. Since a theme is an opinion expressed on the subject, the readers get to know of the betrayal through Max who is the protagonist. However, it is not only through Max that the readers get to conclude that the text is about betrayal, there are other contributing factors such as the thoughts and conversations of different characters. Actions and events in the text determine the theme. Max leaves Mellisa for Rosemary. Melissa feels betrayed considering the time that they have been together, she feels her time has been wasted. To make matters worse Max tells her that he has found someone better, she is heartbroken. Mellisa takes poison. In *Trisha and the Prince*, Vic chooses Trisha a village girl over Samantha who has come all the way from Australia to see him. This does not go well with her and she is ready to do anything to destroy their union. Samantha comes up with a lot of pranks so as to get Vic's attention but she fails dismally hence disappointment.

### **3.1.5 MATERIALISM AND WICKEDNESS**

Online texts also explore materialism and vanity as leading to the downfall of characters, wickedness and the issue of rituals. Oscar is married to Thembi in the novel *Heartless Mother*. Oscar is poor so he stays at his mother-in-law's place. Oscar gets involved in an extra marital affair with Marcy and the mother-in-law discovers it. She feels that her daughter's marriage is threatened as she has not been able to give Oscar a child for thirteen years. Finally, Thembi gets pregnant but her mother also discovers that Marcy is pregnant and she gives birth to twins whilst her daughter's baby dies. Thembi's mother connives with the nurse so that she exchanges the babies and she did. Before that she had tried to poison Marcy which is wickedness as this would lead to the death of an innocent baby. In *Hupenyu Hwangu*, Rosemary's step mother is very evil; she ill treats her, calls her all sorts of names and does not give her food. She is also beaten mercilessly most of the time. In *If I Had Known*, Ruth's killing of her mother, sister and classmate for rituals is wickedness as apart from her mother these other girls were virgins and one of them was her sister. She does all this in the name of becoming rich. In *My Father, A Monster*, Fungai is raped by her own father for ritual purposes. She is the key to his riches. She becomes pregnant for her father. She runs away from the house and chooses to become a housemaid even though her father is rich. Fungai's father shows how evil and wicked he is by raping his own child for material things. The lesson here is that people should not wish for what others possess instead they should be happy with what they have and work for the betterment of their situation.

### **3.1.6 BARRENESS**

The theme of bareness is dominant in online literature. It has been explored in so many texts. In *Heartless Mother*, Thembi is barren for thirteen years, In *Hupenyu Hwangu*, Rosemary's

step mother is barren and in *Memory*, Memory's aunt is barren and in *Vamwene nemuroora*, Beauty is barren and Chido can no longer conceive. There is also abuse in these texts. This abuse manifests from father to daughter, mother-in-law to daughter in law, sister-in-law to sister-in-law, husband to wife, wife to husband, brother to sister, sister to brother, and mother to son. This is brought out in so many texts online. Through the subjects and their feelings towards being barren, one is able to understand them better because they are the protagonists who are the drivers of the action as Fries (1995) notes that including the subject as part of theme aid the understanding of the thematic development of a text.

It is the style of a particular text that helps in bringing about the themes of a text. The structure of a text, the language punctuation, grammar and many more. Therefore it is also of paramount importance to look at the style of literary texts that are circulating on social media platforms and see how they help in shaping the thematic concerns of the texts.

### **3.2 STYLISTIC ISSUES IN THE LITERARY TEXTS**

Digital media platforms seem to be maintaining the traditional art of writing to some extent and at the same time emerging with their own style which is unique to online literature. The upcoming online authors are experimenting with technology and coming up with their own style unique to them. In online texts there is no much of literary devices as they do not really pay attention to the rules of writing, their work is plain. Taking poems and prose for example, there are certain devices that can be found in a poem, the figurative language that makes up a poem but it is not surprising reading these throughout without coming across a simile, oxymoron, personification, irony, metaphor, imagery, hyperbole, allusion, symbolism,

repetition, euphemism and other literary devices. This is highly possible with texts circulating on social media. These stories do not take the mentioned devices into consideration. Those which do are very few because becoming an author is not an overnight thing; one has to be equipped and one has to be schooled in order to be able to apply these devices in a piece of work. The problem that we are having with digital literature is that anyone can be an author, as long as one can afford the gadgets and is willing to write.

Parks (2013) argues that style is bound to change as literature is going digital so as to suit the digital forms. Thus the style that the authors are using is that which is suitable for online literature. Choice of how to write and how to present their information is determined by the medium which they are using since social media platforms are mainly for entertainment and interaction though they serve other functions. Thus, trying to be formal and serious may chase the readers away as it is the need that determines the use and it also seems it is the new style that they seem to have fallen in love with hence the digital migration of readers. This migration is as a result of readers knowing what they want and having the freedom to choose and they seem to have found it in these literary texts on social media. Some of the stylistic features are going to be discussed below:

### **3.2.1 LANGUAGE**

Halliday (1994) describes language as a semiotic system, a systemic resource for meaning. For Halliday, language is a meaning potential. It is through language that people exchange meanings. He further concurs that the basic organising principle of language is functional. Looking at actual texts this way will help us understand the way in which meaning is made through language. Thus, the need to examine the role that language is playing in meaning



making. The language that is used by the authors in creative work circulating on social media is not formal, be it in Shona, English or Ndebele.

The language used in these texts is not standard be it English or Shona. There is the use of colloquial language, which some may call slang. The use of such language can be influenced by the media that they are using as digital platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp usually are used by the young generation. According to Zimbabwe's National Telecoms regulator, POTRAZ, 34% of internet data used is directed towards Whatsapp. It also indicates that the majority that makes up this group is the 15-44 age set. This indicates a young population which is engaged with social media and as such is likely to consume most of its contents through such platforms, hence the choice of language by the authors. Therefore, this language seems to be justified because the readers are familiar with it and also considering that Whatsapp and Facebook are primarily for socialisation though there are other functions. Therefore the authors are making use of that language in which the people interact with on a daily basis on these platforms. Since these people are the supposed readers authors have to present their messages in a way that they understand and like. This could be why these literary texts are becoming popular, the authors identified need hence satisfaction of the readers. The authors are doing what suits the platforms that the readers and they are using. The language that the authors are using is not standard. A few examples that can be drawn from these texts are "bae" for "lover", "liner" for "telling" "momz" for "mother", "wknd" for "weekend", "bro" for "brother", "sis" for "sister". Language is dynamic, it is ever changing, what "Ndeipi", a Shona word which required an answer is now a form of greeting. It has assumed a new meaning over time which might be the case with the language on social media platforms that their meanings are changing as society is also changing. The person who can understand these terms is the one who is familiar with that language, which is why

someone who is older, of the other generation may not understand, the text may become vague to them. Authors on social media code switch and code mix so as to accommodate their different readers. It is through the language used, the literary devices, diction used in a particular work for one to come up with a text's thematic concerns, hence the importance of style when it comes to identifying themes in particular texts.

### **3.2.2 FORM**

With the advancement in technology, these texts are accessed in electronic form. The literary texts can now be found in PDF form, which makes it easy to read as the whole book can be accessed at once not in chapters which have been an inconvenience to the readers as some chapters end up missing. The way the paragraphs and sentences are structured varies with the author. Some paragraphs are long while some are short. The presentation of the texts varies from author to author but most of them use the same trend though there may be slight differences. At the beginning of the novel at the top there the title of the text, then the name of the author, their pen name as most of them have got pen names, followed by the author's contact details for comments to their inbox. This applies to both Whatsapp and Facebook. Some authors tell their readers that they are still learning, which is why they badly need these comments. Then next is the chapter that the text is now at as in these groups sometimes the texts are sent chapter by chapter and not the whole novel or short story. At the end of each chapter in some texts there are contact details again probably for emphasis. Authors believe comments are at the core of their existence as they give them the strength to continue and get to know how the readers are faring with the text and where they are right and wrong and so on as this is how their authorship develops. Some engage their readers by posing questions

on what they think is going to happen in the next chapter, and then tell the reader that this can only be found out in the next chapter. This is to make readers stay tuned for more.

Some of the chapters are left hanging; there is a lot of suspense in the texts as when the book gets to around Chapter 10 where the story now starts to be interesting, authors start selling the remaining chapters and the reader in a bid to know what happened next are compelled to purchase the text through Ecocash, a mobile money transfer system. Usually the remaining chapters will be going for \$2. The previous chapters will be for free so as to introduce the text to the reader. This is actually a strategy that the authors use to sell their work. However, some of the texts are for free throughout.

### **3.2.3 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE**

In the introductory chapter when a character is being introduced the reader is given a background check, their name, age, role and their physical description and anything else that define them in the text. Usually there is the name of the narrator at the start of each narration. Therefore, whenever the narrator changes, the name also changes and almost every character in the texts is a narrator as they will be articulating their own experiences. The authors interchange the narrators. The texts are usually in the first person narrative. There is also a technique that they are using, as stated above almost all the characters are narrators so there is repetition of some sort as an incident may take place when there are two characters involved thus we will have both narrations but from each characters' perspective as their experiences usually differ. This can actually happen throughout the text.

### **3.2.4 FORMAT**

The font that the authors use usually is the same though there are some who either increase it or decrease it. Some authors bold the whole text while some italicise and some do not. Spacing also varies with the author. Typing errors are much visible in almost all of these literary texts. Generally there is no particular form that authors ascribe to, each author does what they feel is good to them. The punctuation is poor, sometimes it is put where it is not necessary and sometimes it is not there.

### **3.2.5 SELF PUBLISHING**

These texts do not go through the editing process therefore there are numerous grammatical errors. In one of the texts, *Our Arranged marriage* it is said “I felled in love”. Truly speaking this is serious. Some in a bid to avoid such mistakes code switch and code mix because sometimes there are words that are in Shona but they are not there in English and the other way round. So the author chooses to express their issue in the language that they are comfortable with which is why we end up having English in a Shona text and also Shona in an English text. The language that is used in these online texts is not censored which means that their choice of words is not limited and there is no prohibition thus they are free to employ whatever utterances they feel like. The language is explicit; it does not make use of euphemism. Writers say it as it is. Sex scenes are described as they are, which is not acceptable as there are young readers who are not supposed to be exposed to such kind of language as it has negative effects on them. Culturally, this is not accepted but digital media platforms are quite difficult to monitor. Authors make use of links to advertise their works to the readers.

### **3.2.6 USE OF EMOJIS**

There is the use of emojis in almost all of the texts. This is as a result of the digital era being dominated by the image. This is supported by Mitchell (1995) who argues that the problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the problem of the image. The authors therefore are incorporating emojis with text to make the message appealing to their readers as they are exposed to these in their socialisation especially on Whatsapp. Emojis therefore are most likely to make the reading interesting. It helps in arousing, stirring, captivating and capturing emotions and feelings of the reader. Emojis intensify the issues being articulated by the author. Usually utterances that involve emotions are accompanied by emojis that suit them. There is the use of emojis that express love, happiness, sadness, surprise, bitterness and a whole lot other images like, roses, family, crown, lips, kisses, food, ring, flags, the list is endless. Even titles have got these emojis. These also enhance understanding as where words fail to really express, the reader if they are good at reading images then can understand by deducing meaning from images. Emojis and text complement each other. Emojis are important in bringing out the mood, atmosphere and tone of a text which play a crucial role in the identification of the author's message to their readers, thus the importance of style.

### **3.3 CONCLUSION**

It can be noted that style plays a crucial role in the development of a theme. It is through the style that the author employs that the reader gets to understand the overall meaning of a text. Thus its inclusion when talking about themes is very much important. The major thematic concerns of literary texts circulating on social media platforms are; love, materialism, marriage, themes that are dominant on social and others. From the above discussion, it appeared that literary texts on social media articulate issues that affect people in their day to

day lives. The style that is used by the authors is influenced by the medium which they are using and the needs of the readers since it is need that determine use of a certain medium. A medium will be used more when the existing motives to use the medium leads to more satisfaction. This means that for the writers to keep on writing they need to be supported by their readers whereas for the reader to keep reading, the writer has to employ what it is that interests the reader.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES**

#### **4.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is going to look at the ethical and intellectual property issues paying particular attention to the problems that emanate with the introduction of online literature where we have literary texts circulating on social media. It intends to bring to the core how self-publishing of literary texts is impacting the ethics of book publishing. Online texts seem to be violating the ethics that traditional texts adhere to and this poses danger to literature and it has got quite a number of implications. In the literary world, a text of literature is supposed to go through the publishing process before reaching the reader. This is because there are ethics that are considered and they should not be overlooked. There are issues that have to do with religion, culture, human rights, and gender and identity issues. These are sensitive issues that can cause controversy if not properly addressed. There are also legal issues to do with copyright and how its absence in relation to some texts circulating on social media is a setback to the online authors. The chapter is also going to explore how the missing role played by editors in traditional publishing houses is impacting on book publishing ethics.

## **4.1 ROLE PLAYED BY EDITORS IN THE BOOK PUBLISHING PROCESS**

First we will look at the roles of an editor which takes us to what online literature may be missing by not engaging the services of editors. Editors act as mediators between the author and the reader. They look at the appropriateness of language, checking for spellings, grammar, punctuation, style, inadequate and irrelevant information and other emerging issues. This avoids conflicts between the writer and his or her readers. The author by all means possible must avoid bias. The use of language is very important as it is through language that we get the meaning of the text thus it really needs attention. In online texts some of the sentences are ambiguous and the language obscure that the message sometimes ends up being difficult to grasp. When it comes to writing there should be consistence in punctuation as wrongly placed quotation marks may change the meaning of the whole utterance. In self published texts, sometimes the punctuation marks are not even there and when they are there sometimes they are wrongly placed.

Steen (2014) argues that quality remains a stumbling block to improving public perception of self publishing. According to her online authors are just so many and they emerge almost on a daily basis with little experience of the publishing world and as a result authors naively find themselves infringing ethical standards. Online texts are not professionally edited and formatted hence loss of hope and trust in their texts by the readers. Steen (2014) expresses worry in that self published texts only pass through the hands of the author and the family and friends for review and approval which is different from to traditional texts which go through the publishing process. These texts are just exposed to the reader without even going



through a round of self editing or proof reading as evidenced by the errors in some of them, which are so trivial that they could have been corrected if one had proofread the work.

According to Halloway (2002) ethics means different things to different people. He shares Steen's view that there are always instances where the texts lack coherence as a result of lack of proper editing with inconsistencies in grammar, horrible editing, poor grammar and incoherent storylines. He believes that online authors take shortcuts as they rush to publish without all the pieces that make a quality book. Hawkins (2013) argues that when one takes the route of self publishing one should also take on the liability that comes with the legal issues. The fact that there are no gatekeepers online does not mean that authors should do what they want; they have to stick to what is right in the face of their profession. Uses and Gratifications suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media and users are goal oriented in their media use. In this case the use of social media by the authors is goal oriented in that they want to put across their messages, gain popularity as traditional media is not affording them the opportunity due to its stringent requirements on authorship. However, in as much as they want the advantages that come with the use of social media they should take into consideration the book publishing ethics so that at the end of the day both sides, the readers and the authors gain from the use of social media.

## **4.2 ETHICAL ISSUES POSED BY SELF PUBLISHED LITERATURE**

Online self publishing has posed quite a number of issues in Zimbabwean literature. The fact that there is no evidence suggesting that online literary work goes through editorial processes takes us to the issue of ethics. The chapter is going to look at the ethical issues that are arising as a result of the use of social media free to all for literary production. The Oxford dictionary

defines ethics as moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity. In short, it is the moral correctness of specified conduct. In as much as the authors are running away from the idea of publishing their work the traditional way for reasons such as the issue of royalties, the popularity of digital media platforms and the digital migration of readers, they should consider ethical issues in their writing. According to the Uses and Gratifications theory, need determines use of media so creative writers saw an opportunity through which they could curb problems they face in becoming published authors and they grabbed it, hence the use of digital media platforms to circulate their literary works. This was a welcome development to the readers, since there is easy access to digital media as compared to traditional texts. This is evidenced by the reader's comments in the Whatsapp and Facebook groups for literary texts where the researcher is a member in almost twenty of these groups. The idea behind the researcher joining these groups is to get to interact with the authors and the readers taking note of their responses for the purposes of this research. However, the problem that arises now is that of ethics, the right things to do in these new platforms of literary production.

There are already established ethics dating back to the beginning of literary production. Some authors have resorted to self publishing because publishing a text is said to be expensive yet the royalty percentage is low, the time it takes for a particular work to be published and the requirements considered for a particular work of art to be published, censoring of books and so forth. Publishing a piece of work is not a one night thing; it is a process which requires one to be vigilant. The text has to go through thorough editorial before getting into the reader's hands. The editorial process includes content editing, copy editing, proof reading and corrections and some other stages which do not apply to these literary texts circulating on social media, for example cover design and blurbs. For the purposes of this study the main

focus is going to be on content editing, though some aspects of copy editing are going to be grasped. The main concern is on how the ignorance of issues such as religious, tribal, cultural, gender and many others impact on a people's way of living, affects the world of literature and the society of readers at large.

In the publishing process, under substantive editing, the editor looks at how language has been employed. Apart from these there are also emerging issues that have potential to cause conflict if not considered; tribal or ethnic issues, religious beliefs, human rights, gender and many other issues that require attention. Some of these issues are discussed in detail below;

#### **4.2.1 RELIGION**

Religious issues are quite sensitive. They can divide people if not properly dealt with. Authors should make sure that their work accommodates people belonging to different religious groups; there should not be practices of a particular church or religion that should be despised. Online authors seem to not consider these, their job is to just write and whoever they offend is not considered an issue. This is as a result of not knowing the ethics of their writing profession so they go about publishing what they feel like they want to; after all there are no gatekeepers in online self published literature.

The readers were complaining on social media that Emmanuel Dhliwayo, a self publisher who is a member of the Prophetic, Healing and Deliverance Ministries church insults members of the Johane Masowe Apostolic Sect and one actually vowed that he was no longer reading his novels because of that. However, the author seemed to be surprised saying that he did not do such a thing, suggesting he could have done it unconsciously which is why there is need to employ the services of an editor since content editing is their job so that the work

does not cause tension amongst the churches and readers from diverse religious backgrounds. Emmanuel Dhliwayo could have been influenced by his church doctrine but an editor is neutral when it comes to such issues. As an author he now has a bad reputation which might make him lose potential readers from that sect. Thus, religious issues should not be taken for granted and self published authors must learn from this. Uses and Gratifications however deals with satisfaction of needs and use so at the end of the day if one feels offended they will simply stop engaging and associating themselves with that particular author's work, which becomes a loss to the author. They should ensure that there is no offensive material in their work. It is acknowledged that they do not have the resources to hire an editor; at least they can afford to revise their work before sending it to the readers.

#### **4.2.2 GENDER**

There are issues of gender in online texts. The relations that exist between men and women can be quite controversial. The role of an editor is to look at issues such as gender. They check if the storyline is gender neutral or biased, if the character's behaviour is representative of the target population that is being dealt with. There should be equitable distribution of resources between the genders. There are sexist stereotypes in quite a number of online texts. Women are portrayed as prostitutes, witches, docile, powerless, dependant on men for survival and not having a voice, women oppressing each other, men as superior and powerful in society. This perpetuates patriarchal values. The literary texts should not take sides; they should be neutral. These biases can be influenced by existing traditional values, but things are changing and authorship should take note of that. It should promote new gender relations in this 21st century. Women are no longer completely powerless, power can now be negotiated and it is not every man who has power in society. Thus, women should be empowered not to

be looked down upon; they should be involved in the public sector where we should see female characters in the texts assuming power, having their own businesses, being independent and controlling their sexuality and not to only concentrate on men and patriarchy, which has marginalized women in the past. It is time for them to be emancipated socially, economically and politically. Women should not only be kept in the private sector where quite a number of them are portrayed as belonging to, whilst men are in the public sector. Such gender stereotypes should not be tolerated.

### **4.2.3 TRIBAL ISSUES**

The rise and use of social media is most likely to cause tension among tribal groups. All tribes should be portrayed as equal; none should be given preference over the other as this can cause unnecessary conflict and tension. There are texts that have been circulating on Whatsapp and Facebook mocking the Karanga people of Masvingo who are portrayed as backward and primitive. The texts are full of hate speech which may hurt someone's emotions. This saw tension growing between the Zezuru and Karanga people, at one time in the researcher's class' Whatsapp group controversy arose as students from Masvingo could no longer take the insults and the tension is directed towards the one who sent the joke and the people who laughed and seemed to enjoy the texts. The students from Masvingo also retaliated by sending a very long list of people who have illustrious careers in the Liberation Struggle like Zvobgo, saying schools that excel in Zimbabwe are from Masvingo, the greatest comedian Zimbabwe has ever had, Vharazipi, is from Masvingo so what is so special about Harare. This could lead to class action if not dealt with in an appropriate manner. All this was arising in the context of Zanu PF succession matrix where it was suggested that a Karanga was supposed to assume power and this came so as to denigrate the Karanga group. This

brings us to the issue of human rights; they should not be violated for example the right to dignity. The above situation violates the rights of the Karanga group as they belong to Zimbabwe, but they are being denigrated; they are victims of cyber bullying.

#### **4.2.4 CULTURE**

The use of new technologies is in a way ignoring the existence of some of our fundamental cultural aspects. Traditionally it was not possible for an author to write and publish the vulgar or obscene. This could be because traditionally published texts go through rigorous editorial processes and are censored but this is not the case with this new literature that is emerging. Online work is not censored and anyone can write anything, for example erotic stories that are circulating on social media platforms. There is no attempt to be decent in referring to sexual experiences in the texts. This type of literature is very explicit and culturally it is not acceptable as it is morally degrading. This is a violation of people's conscience as some people are easily offended by such kind of writing. There is the young generation on these Whatsapp and Facebook platforms and for them to join the groups of literary texts they are not asked for their age, no one cares who is in the group and such erotic stories are posted. This means the generation that is being raised will be culturally dead as they may think that this is acceptable.

Online literary texts do not go through the proper editing process thus they have got a lot of shortcomings. The language that is used has grammatical inconsistencies. The language that is used sometimes is not appropriate for certain age groups, it corrupts them since there is no monitoring of information on social media platforms especially considering the fact that the authors do not really know who their exact audience is as the literary texts do not specialise.

A good example of such texts is *Babamukuru Kani*. In this text, sexual encounters are described as they are from the beginning to the end. The author uses diction such as penis, clitoris, and orgasm to describe this. In the text, Babamukuru is described licking Jane's vagina and clitoris, he inserts his huge penis into her tight vagina and she mourns and the description goes on. When this is expressed in English it is even much better but in Shona it is so embarrassing and culturally immoral especially considering our Shona cultural background where obscenities are not supposed to be uttered anyhow. Exposure to this may lead to moral decay in the society. Online writers as users of the media have found social media platforms as best fulfilling their needs thus in order to maintain their popularity, readers should also be satisfied with their work.

Apart from ethics that are haunting online literature there is also the issue of intellectual property that is impacting on the production of digital literature.

### **4.3 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES**

There are quite a number of legal issues that authors face and these affect self publishers. Hawkins (2013) argues that the publishing industry has changed unless one is an A-list author, one who is well established in the book industry, they are responsible for much in the writing, editing, promoting and the publishing process more than in the past where the author would put his ideas into writing then send it to a publishing house where much of the work is done by the editors. To her, when one takes on the route of self publishing one also takes on the liability that comes with the various legal issues such as registration of their copyright.

### **4.3.1 COPYRIGHT**

Online authors seem to be aware of the basics of copyright when it comes to their literary works. According to Hawkins (2013) there are a few other key legal concerns associated with copyright that can greatly impact authors and self publishers throughout the entire process, from conceiving the idea to all the subsequent updates, from pre-marketing to post-publication marketing. She also believes that self publishers have emerged as a result of the changing landscape of the publishing world which now requires digital presence as the world is also going digital, which comes with a host of legal issues that one must be aware of. Authors therefore must be taught these issues of copyright. The literary work is not complete after writing it; they also have to safeguard their right to it. Traditional authors are protected because their publisher will have their legal department check their book out before it is printed. In the case of self publishing it becomes difficult to fully lay claims on a particular work of art as it is prone to theft.

Literature is being produced on digital media platforms but there is no digital platform that is dealing with copyright issues which becomes a problem because authors need to have right of ownership to the work that they will have produced. This shortcoming has led to quite a number of issues such as plagiarism and theft of one's work and not just a part, but the whole novel or short story with some claiming it to be theirs. They simply edit the authorship details and put theirs in place of the real authors'. One of the authors' works was stolen and he had to put notices all over Whatsapp to notify the readers that he is the original author and someone was claiming authorship of his work, but unfortunately readers may not be in a position to tell who the real author is because there is no evidence.



Surely after going through the above stages alone the author deserves to have their work to themselves and not for it to be stolen after such labouring by a person who did not even contribute to its production. The issue of copyrights is at stake when it comes to online literature since it is not protected, anyone can claim anyone's work and anyone is free to edit anyone's work. There is nothing that is peculiar to a certain author's work as everything can be edited. Chris Hungwe is a victim of this; he circulated notices to his readers that his novel, *Chakakosha Chii?* had been stolen by someone who calls himself Madzibaba/Professor who was claiming it to be his by changing the details of the original author and putting his and changing the title to *Ndakaitei?* He even went on to sell the book to the readers yet Hungwe was giving it for free. Laika Mwanyali recently posted notices on Whatsapp notifying her readers that someone who calls herself Seth Fie had stolen her novel *First Kiss* and she was selling it. She even publishes Seth's number. She is hurt that someone is making money with her novel yet she has been giving it for free. She also says that she has quit writing and this Seth should continue writing. Laika as a result of this is no longer has the passion and desire to write. This is quite difficult to deal with because there is no way one can prove if the work is one's. Thus, there is need to set up online publishing houses by any means possible. The failure to abide by copyright law which governs the distribution of a work promotes plagiarism.

### **4.3.2 PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is considered to be the robbery of intellectual property rights. Literary texts on social media are open to everyone, they can be edited, just like was the case with Laika and

Hungwe's novels. Some steal the idea, some the chapters while some steal the whole book and pretend as if it is their original work. Utterances are borrowed and no one knows who copied the other because it is not recorded anywhere. There is no one who holds the rights so anyone can reproduce anything without seeking permission first.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the chapter looked at issues to do with book publishing ethics where issues such as religion, culture, tribe and gender have been explored. These issues should be taken into consideration as they can be controversial. The chapter also discussed issues to do with intellectual property where focus was on copyright issues and plagiarism. The absence of copyright for online scholars leads to plagiarism.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

The research intended to demonstrate how with the rise of digital media platforms, literary production has been revolutionized and democratised. The research was guided by three objectives; the first one was identifying examples of literary texts and their genres that are circulating on digital platforms. The second objective was examining the thematic concerns and style of the literary texts and the third objective was assessing ethical and intellectual property issues in relation to social media literary production. These objectives were addressed in Chapters Two, Three and Four respectively.

The introductory chapter that was also Chapter One sought to explain the area of study, justify it, provide the theoretical framework, literature review and outline chapter organization. In this chapter, it was argued that almost all aspects of people's lives are now centred online and physical interaction is now fading away as a result of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs). The field of literature has not been an exception; it has taken the digital era by storm as authors have resorted to online and social media production of their literary work. Self publishing seems to be the way to go now and the existence of traditional publishing houses seems to be at stake. Kozma's (2005) ideas were employed. He argues that the way people used to interact in the past and in this information age has dramatically and drastically changed. This brings us to the focus of the theoretical framework used in the research. The Uses and Gratifications theory holds that people's use of particular media is determined by certain needs and goals that they want to achieve. Thus, according to Kozma's (2005) argument the change of media can influence change in needs hence

preference of social media platforms by authors over traditional media as their needs and goals are being fulfilled. Their stories are now everywhere. Rodger's (1962) ideas were also explored in the chapter. Rodgers (1962) argues that innovation, communication channels and time influence the spread of a new idea. This view in a way explains why social media platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp have gained momentum and diversified the production of literature. The channels being used are fast and efficient when it comes to accessing information; it is just a click away to get what one wants.

In Chapter Two, the researcher focused on the literary texts that are circulating on Facebook and Whatsapp. The main focus was on the genres to which the texts fall into. Quite a number of texts were identified ranging from poems, short stories, novels. Cartoonature and jokes were identified as new genres that are emerging as a result of the popularity of social media platforms. Cartoons have been there in traditional media like newspapers but they are becoming more prevalent now as the online platforms are not censored. It emerged in the chapter that most of the online texts fall into the genre of fiction and poetry. As for nonfiction, the researcher did not come across such texts on Facebook and Whatsapp. The fictional texts can further be classified into horror, erotic romance, science fiction and so forth. This discussion met objective number three which sought to discuss the issue of genres pertaining to social media literary texts.

Chapter Three looked at the thematic concerns and style of literary texts circulating on social media. In the analysis of selected texts, the chapter explored themes that are found in the literary texts on social media. Some of the themes discussed were love, betrayal, hatred, religion, marriage, corruption, divorce, deception and many others. The study established that the themes that social media literary texts articulate are more of the same compared to those

that traditional texts explore. Incorporating the Uses and Gratifications theory, at least based on this study, what seems to be the major reason for the emergence of the digital space as a site of literary creation is the choice of the media in satisfying the needs of its audience. In this case it is both the authors and the readers whose goals are being achieved. The chapter also looked at issues to do with style. It emerged that style differs depending on the media being used. Whatsapp and Facebook being digital platforms have their own way of presenting information as compared to traditional texts. This is best exemplified by the use of emojis in literature found on social media. Authors are experimenting with resources that come with digital platforms to their advantage. However, there are some stylistic features which apply to both the traditional and online authors. This chapter met objective number three in that it managed to identify themes explored and stylistic features used in literary texts on social media.

In Chapter Four, the researcher moved on to assess the ethical and intellectual property issues inherent in creative literary works circulating on Whatsapp and Facebook. Copyright issues have been found to be pertinent as this literature is prone to theft and plagiarism because no one holds the rights to a particular work. This in a way has a negative impact on authors. As rightfully noted by Steen (2014), quality remains a stumbling block to improving public perception of self publishing. People do not really take self publishers seriously as they do with published writers. Looking at the observations from the chapter, self publishers do not take book publishing ethics seriously, some of them are shifting from the existing ethics that an author should observe when writing a piece of literary work. This becomes problematic in the sense that literary texts that are being published on social media platforms are so many that if each text does not live up to the ethics then the world of literature might be heading for disaster. A work of literature must to some extent be neutral with regards to sensitive

issues by all means possible so that at the end no one feels offended, segregated, unwanted and so many other implications that inclusion of sensitive issues may arouse. Bias and issues that are likely to cause conflict should be avoided which is why the services of an editor are required. To validate this, Barthes (1967) argues that meaning lies in the reader and not the author. Therefore, authors need to be cautious because their intended meaning can be misinterpreted by the reader. This chapter answers objective number three.

The study has managed to establish why authors and readers are storming the social media platforms, which has been attributed to the technological advancements in these times that we are living in. Almost everyone is trying to belong to this new world of technology hence preference to use these platforms to circulate stories. The study has also explored what makes up this online literature ranging from themes, form and other features. The literature is to some extent inspired by the huge ever-growing numbers of social media users. However the challenge is that the study only looks at literature that is found in Zimbabwe and it was quite a challenge to select literary texts to use in this particular study because the literary texts are so many it is difficult to choose.

The researcher would like to recommend that the bodies responsible for the production of literature in Zimbabwe do something so as to recognise this literature that is being found online. It would also be better if these authors are allowed to participate in the literary awards so that they can be motivated. If possible the introduction of legal bodies that will be regulating the rights of this kind of literature so that authors are entitled to their work and heavy penalties put for those who infringe this law.

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