

Chapter Four

Gender Sub-Streaming in the School Curriculum: The Case of the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC)'s Literature Component

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Abstract

The school, it is granted, is the place where human minds are moulded positively. Yet, some scholars, more importantly Freire (1972) and Althusser (1993) challenge the apparent misrepresentation of the school, in particular, and the education system, in general. This paper draws on various concepts expounded by these scholars in its exploration of how gender is implicated in the composition of the school curriculum. The focus is on how representative the English set books, which constituted the literature component of the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) from 1980 to 2001 when Z.J.C. was examinable in Zimbabwe, are in terms of gender. The research was mainly based on textual analysis, guided by some discourse analysis techniques. The findings show that the government's effort to introduce young readers to the world of literature through the ZJC books is biased against women. The composition of texts studied during the 1980-2001 period exposes this bias. The subject matter, the characterisation and the language of these texts are implicated in the socialisation of boys and girls into specific gender roles and identities. It is important that school curricula be reconstituted along gender sensitive lines. While it might be a challenge to be wholly gender neutral, efforts can be made to eradicate some of the blatant biases against a certain gender. Hopefully, such changes will make the institution more gender inclusive.

Keyword: gender, english literature, gender biased curriculum

Introduction

This paper explores ways in which the school curriculum in Zimbabwe has reneged on its promise to integrate women within its practices. It does this by focusing on seven texts studied under the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (Z.J.C.) literature in English component between the years 1980 and 2001, when the Z.J.C., a course taken during the first two years of secondary education, was examinable in Zimbabwe.

The researcher argues that by widening educational opportunities for women, the government, schools, families and other stakeholders have appropriated a gender mainstreaming perspective. However, widening these opportunities has not been adequate. A counter force, which is herein labeled gender sub-streaming, has erased the little that could be achieved through the participation of men and women in educational activities. This counter force is considered a form of “streaming gender away” (Mukhopadhyay, 2004).

Gender mainstreaming has been the running motto of many government and private institutions in the world since the concept was introduced in 1985 by the Third World Conference on Women that was held in Nairobi, Kenya. Although efforts have been made in several sectors to adopt the various tenets of gender mainstreaming, most have been met with mixed results. At its best, gender mainstreaming involves “the integration of *gender equality concerns* into the analyses and formulation of all policies, programmes and projects” while creating “initiatives to enable women as well as men to formulate and express their views and participate in decision making across all issues” (Mukhopadhyay, 2004, p. 95). What is evident is that gender equality forms the basis of all gender mainstreaming initiatives. Without this single component, gender mainstreaming becomes improbable.

Booth and Bennett (2002) define gender mainstreaming in terms of assessment of how policies, legislation and programs affect men and women in various levels and areas. This approach acknowledges the diversity and plurality of individuals along gender lines. By embracing this diversity, gender mainstreaming makes equality its primary goal. The general design is for women and men to benefit equally in all spheres including politics, the economy, legislation, education and various other programmes. Gender mainstreaming involves incorporating a perspective, which constantly calculates the implications, for both men and women, in all decisions.

As previously noted, sub-streaming is considered a form of streaming away, a systematic dissimulation of one gender category from dominant culture through various methods, in this case through the school curriculum: choice of literature set books for Z.J.C. students in Zimbabwe. Sub-streaming is an act of expiation. It is a counter-force. The broadening of educational opportunities for women is seen as an act of integration. The female student is therefore integrated, only to be marginalised. In a nutshell, where men and women’s participation in educational activities is considered evidence of gender mainstreaming, the curriculum fails to fulfil the obligations of such integration. There is little, if any, co-ordination between the two.

Paulo Freire (1972) centres education in his humanist approach to freedom. Education is seen as moving in either of two dialectic directions: total liberation or dehumanisation. Its dehumanising nature is represented by the ‘banking concept’ of education whose motive is to “regulate the way the world ‘enters into’ the students” (p. 49). This form of education has “the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating [students] to adapt to the world of oppression” (p. 52). The goal of the ‘banking concept’ of education is mental domination. This runs

contrary to ‘problem-posing’ education which restores the humanity of those who are at the fringes of society.

Along with other ‘ideological state apparatuses’ such as the church, the family and the law, the school is structured in a way that allows for the reproduction of the prevailing situation (Althusser, 1993). Kambarami (2006) notes how these institutions contribute to the socialisation of girls into passive and obedient subjects of a patriarchal society. What she does not say is that these institutions are part of a broader ideological structure whose objective is the re-enactment of social inequalities. Therefore, the school generates much interest in the present discussion because it is part of the apparatuses that not only reflects the dominant patriarchal ideology and its insistence on the maintenance of gender inequalities, but also reproduces these inequalities. Through the curriculum, the modes of instruction, relations between teacher and student and choice of literature, among others, the school creates a partial form of reality and sustains it through a similar process.

More importantly, in modern societies, Zimbabwe included, the school occupies the larger part of a child’s life. Althusser (1993, p. 28) notes that the educational apparatus is “the dominant ideological state apparatus in capitalist social formations”. Most secondary schools in Zimbabwe, for example, run throughout the year, with breaks during the months of December, April and August only. Lessons begin from seven in the morning to four o’clock or half past four in the evening from Monday to Friday. Given this scenario, one can conclude that the school takes over from the family as the governing site of gender socialisation. Althusser explains that the school:

Takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most ‘vulnerable’, squeezed between the Family State Apparatus and the Educational State Apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of ‘know-how’ wrapped in the ruling ideology...or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state [...] (p. 29).

The school possesses the ability to manipulate its pupils in ways that support the dominant class. By claiming to provide knowledge, schools explicitly exercise the role of creating and shaping individual’s values, beliefs and perceptions.

The report on developments in Zimbabwe’s education prepared by The Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO, The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture and The Ministry of Higher Education and Technology in 2001 portrays the education system in Zimbabwe in a positive light. Its thrust is on highlighting major developments in the education system from 1990 to 2000, highlighting the structure and management of the education system, explaining the curriculum content and learning strategies in schools and identifying major achievements between 1990 and 2000, as well as some of the challenges that have been faced. Notably, the Zimbabwe’s Education Act of 1987 is silent on the issue of gender, an issue taken up by Chirimuuta (2006). Furthermore, gender equity is absent from the objectives of curriculum development. Yet, equity in education, along the lines of gender, is

underlined among the ‘major achievements’ in the education sector between 1990 and 2000. The report insists that “there has been a steady increase in gender parity” (p. 30). This declaration is based on participation statistics. The report says:

In the Primary school sector, the participation of the girl-child is almost at par with that of boys as evidenced by participation ratios and parity indices. At independence, girl child participation was slightly lower due to inherent discriminatory socio-economic and cultural factors. Over the years, the trend has hovered around 49% participation and a parity index of 0.97. This can be attributed to supportive government policies that include free and compulsory education at independence; proclamation and upholding of children’s right to education; financial support for the girl child; and gender equity sensitization programmes (p. 28).

This equal participation is not limited to primary schools. Secondary schools and tertiary institutions are also deemed to have improved significantly. It has to be underscored that in the report, participation is made the yardstick of gender equity. It is almost considered an end in itself. Yet, participation has to be considered together with what individuals partake in.

Mukhopadhyay (2004, p. 98-99) demonstrate how participation has come to replace real efforts at gender mainstreaming. She explains that:

While gender mainstreaming implies the integration of *gender equality concerns* into the analyses and formulation of all policies, programmes and projects, in organisational practice this has increasingly come to signify that gender equality goals can be achieved solely by increasing the number of women within organisations and in positions of decision making. This line is generally pushed by well-meaning donors. Most gender mainstreaming checklists mention this as an item that has to be ticked off in order to determine whether or not a client government department or an NGO has made progress on gender equality. For them, this is easier to measure than to what extent gender analysis has entered into the formulation of policies, programmes and projects. While it is important to push for equality of opportunity for both women and men within development organisations, this cannot be the be-all and end-all.

Gender mainstreaming, therefore cannot end with participation. In schools, the subject matter, the learning procedures and the literature to be studied all have to be central to how gender equality is ultimately realised.

This is the logic Chirimuuta (2006) drives home. She observes that the Zimbabwean government has put into practice policies whose purpose is to create gender equality and harmony. Some of these policies have been realised through the introduction of women representatives in Zimbabwe’s parliament, ministries and other organisations. Contrary to the 2001 report on Zimbabwe’s education system, Chirimuuta insists that these moves have not been successful. She remains cynical of these initiatives to integrate women into mainstream society because they fail to address the real challenges faced by women. According to her, gender-based problems are on the rise. This is due to the superfluous nature of gender policies which target symptoms and

leave the stakes on which gender inequalities rest intact. Among these pillars is the education system. It is by intervening into the education system that most gender-related challenges will be resolved.

Chirimuuta (2006) observes the need to revisit the country's education policies, which found impetus in the need to redress colonial injustices and overlooked the plight of women. Overall, the policies have remained blind towards women. This blindness has resulted in a limited number of female participants in educational activities. Women remain a minority. Apart from revising education policies, there is also need for equitable representation of models within literary works and among authors, and other educational materials. The lack of balance between male and female models as well as authors and theorists worsen the condition of women. They create the impression that to be is to be male. Additionally, knowledge is presented as the preserve of men.

The present study explores the possibility of reading the absence of active women in Z.J.C. literature set books as a form of 'streaming' women away from the main current or centre. Women are made participants of an exercise which does not earn them equality. Instead, they are brought closer to the realities of patriarchy without being empowered on how to overcome them.

Brief analysis of Z.J.C. literature set books

Seven English set books have been recycled over the period from 1980 to 2001. These texts are Michael Gascoigne's *Tunzi the Faithful Shadow* (1988), Dan Fulani's *God's Case No Appeal* (1981), Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1996), Ben Hanson's *Takadini* (1997), Patricia Charter's *Crossing the Boundary Fence* (1988), Margaret Mucheri's *Friend Billy and the Msasa Avenue Three* (1989) and Sandra Braude's *Mpho's Search* (1994). Of these, the first four were written by males, which leave three to female writers. It has to be appreciated that there is a narrow disparity of gender representation in the composition of these writers for Z.J.C. A ratio of four to three in favour of male writers might easily be considered gender inclusive. However, being a male or female writer does not necessarily presuppose that the text will bear the gender sensibilities of the author. Being a female writer does not guarantee that women's concerns will be addressed in the text. Moi (1985) makes an important observation about women's writing over the years. By distinguishing between the female and feminist traditions of writing, she argues the case that representation does not naturally derive from shared experience.

The female tradition of women's writing comprises of texts which "reinforce the belief in the universal truism of man's dominance and superiority over woman and in the rightful place of the woman being in the kitchen" (Moyana, 1994, p 25). These texts do not emancipate women from the patriarchal dogma. Instead, they socialize women into accepting of male domination as inevitable. Feminist writing, on the other hand, is characterised by its political commitment to the emancipation of women. Basing on this difference, the researcher locates all Z.J.C. literature texts written by women in

the female tradition. Three reasons can be used to justify this categorisation. Firstly, all the texts, except Chater's *Crossing the Boundary Fence* (1988), position the male as central to the narrative. These texts have male protagonists, whose depictions are understood as celebrations, ranging from concealed to overt, of multiple forms of masculinities. Women, on the other hand are auxiliary characters who remain at the fringes of the narratives. While *Crossing the Boundary Fence* (1988) has two female protagonists, the researcher has reservations pertaining to their depiction, as shall be noted in the discussion on individual texts. Secondly, female characters in all the texts written by women approve of traditional gender roles. The women in these texts are portrayed as content with their 'feminine' roles which are virtually domestic. Thirdly, stereotypes against women abound in these texts. Female characters are conceived as patient, caring, 'motherly' and hardworking. The implication of this position about women's writings is that while the number of texts written by women narrowly measures up to those written by men in number, these texts do not necessarily speak the language of the woman.

Among the texts Z.J.C. students read are texts which nevertheless portray male children who are not necessarily masculine. These males are, in varying degrees, victims of patriarchal societies. Among such texts would be Braude's *Mpho's Search* (1994), Hanson's *Takadini* (1997) and Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1996). Whilst these texts are important in bringing to light some of the challenges faced by male children (problems which are usually subordinated to the topical girl-child imperatives), they do not find adequate parity in texts which depict challenges which female children face in the same societies. Still, only one text, *Crossing the Boundary Fence* (1988) provides this alternative representation. Faced with this discrepancy, one can understand the need by girl-child activists to agitate for the rights of the girl child who in so many ways has been sacrificed in literary endeavours.

Stereotypes about men and women are not only limited to the works of female writers. One comes across them in texts by both sexes. Lips (2008) provides a list of some of the stereotypes associated with men and women. The following discussion of literary texts seeks to illustrate the arguments raised in this section. Because it offers a cursory analysis of the seven texts, it cannot obviously say everything that needs saying. What the researcher hopes to do is to provide a way of looking at these texts in light of the need for a radical alteration of the curriculum so as to integrate women's issues in literary studies and other areas.

***Friend Billy and the Msasa Avenue* (1989) by Margaret Mucheri**

Friend Billy and the Msasa Avenue Three (1989) falls loosely within school adventure- cum- crime thriller stories for children, although the events of the story take place during the school holidays. The book opens with four friends, Billy, Siphon, Tendai and Tonderai musing over the uneventful holidays. As luck would have it, a neighbour, Mrs Gunner requests the boys to watch over her place while she is away. This throws the boys in the way of a crime syndicate happening across Mrs

Gunner's house. The boys become instantly involved as they attempt to impede on the criminals' plans. At being discovered by the criminals, the five boys are taken to a forest where, it is hoped, they would be killed by RENAMO 'dissidents'. This does not however materialise, since the boys are saved by some hunters and then join forces with the local police to trap the criminals, who are finally nabbed in Harare.

A stark absence from the ensuing summary is that of women who have significant roles in the text. So far one woman, Mrs Gurney has been mentioned and the part she plays is to provide a conduit for the narrative since she provides the boys with an opportunity for adventure when she lets them stay at her house which is situated across the criminals' abode. Of course other women could be mentioned in the summary, but their absence would not kill the story. In short, Mucheri's story is about boys who assume roles and behaviours characteristic of their gender category as determined by most African and Western societies. Interestingly, after the boys' ordeal with the criminals, which could easily be considered dangerous, the old age cliché 'boys will be boys' is used as justification of the boys' behaviour.

The boys take on menial jobs at Mrs Gurney's house because "she is a widow" who "needs a man about the house to do the harder chores and manage things" (Mucheri, 1989, p. 9). Kambarami (2006) notes how deep women's dependency on men runs in African societies. The woman has to rely on any man, whether it's a bunch of kids in their early teens like Billy and his friends. The boys are also extroverts and adventurous, as seen in their involvement with the criminals. They are calculating, brave and risk-takers. In the meantime, no girl character is mentioned throughout the text and no adult female character plays any decisive role in the text. Female characters mentioned in the text are depicted in their 'motherly' and 'wifely' roles. For instance, Mrs Mhaka, Tendai's mother, first appears "wiping her hands on her apron" (p. 3) and Mrs Bhengu, Siphos mother, has to leave her husband in the lounge, where they are both watching television, to make some coffee. During the garden party hosted by the president in honour of the boys' role in the capture of the criminals the women are presented thus:

Mrs Rogers had managed to find the right hat and the right afternoon ensemble for the occasion. She looked at the delicate tea set with pleasure [...] Mrs Mhaka and Mrs Bhengu wondered how they might achieve the light touch the President's cook had in making pastries and cakes. (p. 67)

Compare this with "[t]he fathers conversed in low voices with the President [...]" (p. 67). All these are indications of how gender roles and expectations are reproduced as natural in the text. The author appears comfortable with these gender biases. In short, Mucheri's text is about boys. It portrays male characters in the exercise of 'masculine' roles and female characters acting 'feminine.'

***Mpho's Search* (1994) by Sandra Braude**

Mpho's Search traces a young boy's journey to Johannesburg in search of his father. Mpho, the boy, encounters various challenges on his journey. Unlike Mucheri's four male protagonists, Mpho is no action hero. He is a victim of various unscrupulous elements, such as baas du Toit who exploits him, the thief who steals his blanket, Jan who tries to sexually abuse him and the gang, led by Steven, which he ends up with at the shelter for street children. Finally, Mpho catches up with his father in Johannesburg after spending time at the shelter for street children in Hillbrow run by Father Roger.

What is striking is that the people in Mpho's life are virtually all male. It is as if females are not in any way a part of the experiences he faces. Gogo, a female character, with whom he has spent twelve years of his life, exists as part of a memory he clings to. While, *Mpho's Search* (1994) does not portray the male protagonist as an action hero, it should be noted that Mpho's decision to leave for Johannesburg echoes numerous tales of men who embarked on a similar journey for different reasons. The boy's search is a symbolic search where the male is both the subject and object of the search. The search eludes women whose place has been deemed insignificant.

The author is also intent on insisting that boys must not cry. Mpho is conscious of what it means to be male, a consciousness which the author does not challenge. He knew, even as he was surrounded by challenges that "he could not let anyone see him cry. He was a man [...]" (Braude, 1994, p. 4). Mpho does cry after his blanket is stolen in Soweto. However he becomes more resolute, deciding once and for all that "whatever happened, he would act like a man" (p. 13). This insistence on assigning emotions to sexes tends to perpetuate the notion of hierarchical differences between males and females.

The events in *Mpho's Search* (1994) take place in the context of Apartheid South Africa. Short of saying women have no story in Apartheid South Africa, Sandra Braude depicts the male at the centre of 'real' life challenges, which he inevitably overcomes. In the text women are not central to the story. Female characters are once again marginal. There is no female model to look up to in *Mpho's Search* (1994). It is, virtually, a story about the male.

***Oliver Twist* (1996) by Charles Dickens**

In so many ways, *Oliver Twist* (1996) is like *Mpho's Search* (1994). It depicts a male child protagonist who is a victim of an industrialised society. Oliver, the protagonist, also lives at the mercy of various adults who either abuse him or leave him to suffer. After spending time in the care of Mr. Bumble at the workhouse, he is taken in by a philanthropist, before joining a gang of street thieves and robbers. Oliver's vulnerability in an industrial European city provides fodder for the narrative. This is not very surprising, given that most of Charles Dickens' novels depict male children as victims in similar societies. It would seem as if girls do not inhabit the industrialised

world in any way. While female characters do feature in Dickens' novels, males are the central characters.

The reader of *Oliver Twist* (1996) is again introduced to a male child who battles with challenges deriving from a hostile adult world. The only female character deserving of mention is Nancy, the prostitute, who is murdered by one of her accomplices Bill Sikes. That a female character is also portrayed as a victim of the industrialised society is commendable. Nevertheless, it falls short in representing the plight of women. In any case, the male is saved. Oliver lives while Nancy dies. Showing female characters as perpetual victims does not liberate women in any way. If anything, it teaches them to accept this victimhood.

***Takadini* (1997) by Ben Hanson¹**

The author of *Takadini* (1997), Ben Hanson, presumably, dedicates his book to "the rejected and forlorn who are trying to find acceptance and a meaning to their lives" (p. 4). Three subjects seem to occupy the boundaries marked in Hanson's dedication: the pre-colonial Shona society in Zimbabwe, the plight of women and the plight of albinos. Regardless, the protagonist of the story is Takadini, the male albino whose plight the author seems more interested in. From the title to the events in the story, one is left without doubt that the story, like the other stories referred to above, is the story of a boy. The text would fit more into the fold of *Mpho's Search* (1994) and *Oliver Twist* (1996) which depict male children facing various challenges in hostile societies.

From reading the text, it cannot be denied that Takadini's problems are, by extension, Sekai's problems. For example, Sekai has to run away from her home because she gives birth to Takadini, an albino. From then on, all her actions revolve around Takadini. She perceives herself as the mother of Takadini. Her refusal to marry again is premised on her being an albino's mother. Because she fears no one would accept her child, she decides she will remain single. The problem this poses is that the woman is conjured up within the sexist tradition which understands women as the wives of their husbands or the mothers of their children. Sekai, the woman does not have an independent existence. She is just the extension of the males in her life. Not only does the text teach women to accept the burden of motherhood, but it also fails to develop their independence.

After creating the illusion that the woman, as seen through Sekai, has successfully fled from patriarchal tradition, the text fails to sustain this illusion. The ending of the text where Takadini's child is born to celebrations that "*its a man child*" (p. 145 author's emphasis) speaks volumes about how women are marginalised from society. That exultant declaration shatters the illusion of female acceptance and liberation.

¹ *Takadini's* representation of women is the subject of an article submitted, by the researcher, to the journal *Diesis: Footnotes on Literary Identities*.

God's Case No Appeal (1981) by Dan Fulani

Of all the texts studied here, only *God's Case No Appeal* (1981) does not have a child protagonist, male or female. Theophilous, the male protagonist of the story leaves his legal profession in England to assume a traditional chieftainship post, with the title 'Boma', in his rural home, Adagali, in Africa. The African society Fulani portrays is one which upholds patriarchal values and expects men and women to conform to prescribed gender roles.

In *God's Case No Appeal* (1981), only two female characters are mentioned by name. One is Maud, Theophilous' wife, and Mary, a friend. Other references to women include the mention of the Adagali tradition where Bomas had many wives. This reference invariably extends to attempts by Luludinku, the Boma's advisor, to influence Theophilous into taking a second wife. While Mary is portrayed more positively, she is just a fleeting character. Maud, on the other hand, is vocal but petty. All in all, she is a frivolous character who earns the reader's contempt. Since she is the only one of the two female characters mentioned by name in the text, her role becomes of great concern to a feminist sensibility. She is the typical traditional woman who nags and dwells on the frivolous. Her manners are ridiculed and the threats, against the decision to return to Africa, she directs towards her husband remain empty. She is even aware of her powerlessness as a woman as she attempts to win her son to her side against Theophilous' decision to go back to Africa. When she explodes "you wait" (p. 8) after losing the argument to her husband, the reader is almost deceived into thinking that she will hold her own, only to soon realise that she intends to inform Daro, her eldest son, who in turn supports his father's decision. Indeed, Maud accompanies her husband back to Africa. Her quarrelling and nagging is juxtaposed to Theophilous' composure and dignity. Even as they disagree on going back home, their attitudes and actions are juxtaposed to show how men and women's worlds differ and exist within a hierarchy. The man, as expected, wins in the end.

Crossing the Boundary Fence (1988) by Patricia Chater

Crossing the Boundary Fence (1988) is the closest a Z.J.C. set book has come to portray female children in a positive light. Not only does it have female protagonists, it also portrays them in roles traditionally associated with the male sex. Musa and Spiwe are both actively involved in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle as *chimbwidos*,² while the seven girls, among the thirty-five missing pupils from St Stephen's Secondary School, become, presumably, armed fighters. A hint of gender equality in the liberation war camps is raised by Shadrach, who is proposing love to Musa, when he says "men and women do the same work" (p. 115). However, this view is not developed. Untenable as this view is, it is no wonder that the author decides to leave the matter. The part played by women during the war has been previously suppressed. This makes the text important in dismantling the view that women were absent from

² *Chimbwido* was the name given to female war collaborators during Zimbabwe's liberation war which culminated into independence in 1980.

the war effort. However, the text would have done justice to present female characters who were actually at the forefront of the war. The downside of Chater's representation of women through Musa and Spiwe is that it depicts women in their traditional roles. Much as women are involved in the liberation war, their participation, at home and as *chimbwidos* is confined to tasks socially reserved for women, such as cooking, washing the pots, fetching water and carrying babies on their backs. The men, on the other hand perform roles such as ploughing.

Women's problems are not addressed in the texts. More than being individuals, Diana, the white girl, and Musa are representative types of the belligerent races in colonial Zimbabwe: whites and blacks, respectively. Their friendship is not an expression of sisterhood but a union of races. The plight of women is subordinated to the more 'important' issue of racial reconciliation. Peterson (1995) explains this tendency among the literary efforts of the early African nationalist type when she argues that they were more interested in fighting against imperialism, a move which resulted in the subordination of women's problems. Clearly, women are made part of a nationalist agenda which does not end with their liberation.

***Tunzi the Faithful Shadow* (1988) by Michael Gascoigne**

Tunzi the Faithful Shadow (1988) is the story of Temba, a boy, who finds a dog and secures the permission of his parents to keep it. Together, Temba and the dog embark on hunting trips, one of which ends with them being kidnapped by armed bandits. The bandits decide to use Temba as a conduit in their robbery of Moyo's shop. With the assistance of Tunzi, Temba manages to alert the locals about the impending robbery. This eventually leads to their rescue and the subsequent arrest of the two bandits.

Two female characters are introduced in the text. There is Temba's mother, MaNcube, whose ability to heal the dog's snare wound would have set her apart from the other women portrayed in the Z.J.C. set books. However, as someone capable of healing a wounded animal, she remains within the boundaries of what is expected of women. She is the nurturing type. She plays the role of a typical African mother who worries about the welfare of her children. The other female character, Toko, who is Temba's young sister, is shown in two separate incidents which have little bearing on the major concerns of the text. The two incidents, one when she is saved by Tunzi from a snake and the other when she follows Temba on the fateful day he gets kidnapped, both reflect patriarchal attitudes towards women. Toko is a helpless and inexperienced female child who should be protected from harm and kept in the safety of the home. Leaving the domestic space is considered "a special treat" which she is afforded by Temba at his discretion (p. 32). Some of the gender biases reproduced in the text include the association of boys with live pets. It is generally believed that dogs and cats are boys' pets while girls deal more with inanimate objects. Boys are also associated with adventure and outdoor activities.

Masculinities are also celebrated in the text. The way Temba admires his father's physique attests to this celebration. Dhlula, the father is presented as "a heavy man,

well built, strong in arm and leg...” (p. 24). Temba is more or less of the same breed, seeing that he is “a big man” (p. 24). It is no surprise that Temba bonds more with his father than his mother. He gravitates towards the masculine. Toko also admires her father but is aware that “girls were supposed to learn from their grandmothers and mothers and that boys should learn from their fathers ...” (p. 35). The author chooses not to comment on this recommendation. The way Gascoigne distinguishes between Temba and Toko during their conversation also requires mention. Where Temba ‘says’, ‘laughs’ ‘adds’ or ‘exclaims’, Toko ‘squeals’, ‘squeaks’, ‘cries’ or ‘yells’ (p. 34-36). Women are associated with high pitched sounds, which brings out their playfulness, whereas men remain composed and serious.

Conclusion

What emerges from the ensuing discussion is that women as a group are systematically streamed away of the dominant culture in society. The literature component of Z.J.C. illustrates how efforts to make gender central to the school curriculum continue to fail. Instead of striving for gender equality, which is an essential component of gender mainstreaming, the curriculum excludes women from literary discourse. Female writers are underrepresented in the Z.J.C. literature set books, as well as in the content of the books read at that level. All the texts do not strive for equality between the sexes but they tend to be biased towards males. It can be concluded that they privilege a patriarchal viewpoint which considers men as dominant and women as subordinate.

The education authorities should work towards the improvement of this anomaly. Efforts should be made to incorporate female perspectives in all areas of the school curriculum. It is no secret that both colonial and post-independent education systems have a patriarchal character. This is the reason why the female perspective needs to be integrated within the curriculum. Although literature texts which carry this perspective are already available, they still fall below expectations. Without attending to some of these areas of society, gender mainstreaming will continue to fail.

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