

Paradigm shifts in the perceptions of death in Shona literary creations

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Abstract

This article aims to establish a paradigm shift in the way Shona traditional culture perceives death and funeral proceedings and in the manner that literary creations that were published before Zimbabwe attained political independence in 1980, perceive the same aspects. The article will also establish that there has been a paradigm shift in the manner that literary creations which were published before independence and those that were published after independence treat death and funeral proceedings. Thus, the article will establish that Shona culture perceives death and funeral proceedings as painful but not as monstrous and fearsome. Although that is the case in Shona culture, those Zimbabweans of Shona expression who created literature before independence view death and funeral proceedings as both painful and monstrous. However, some literary creations, which were published after independence, treat death and funeral proceedings as neither painful nor fearsome. In fact, there is a tendency by writers of Shona expression who published literary works after independence, to treat death and funeral proceedings as if they are natural and normal occurrences. They at times depict them as if they are lucrative life experiences and proceedings. The article has been written on the understanding that the paradigm shift in the manner death and funeral proceedings are treated in literary creations is indicative of some metamorphosis that Shona culture is undergoing as politico-economic and socio-cultural conditions and circumstances change in relation to the changing eras of Zimbabwe's history.

Introduction

In order to establish and discuss the paradigm shift which is occurring in the manner the Shona of Zimbabwe in general and writers of literature of Shona expression in particular perceive death and funeral proceedings, the writer of the article selected poems by Wilson Chivaura (1965), Modikai Hamutyinei (1969, 1972) and Maureen Mataranyika (1994), and a short story by Emmanuel Chiwome (1998). Chivaura and Hamutyinei's poems represent