

Masculinities and the “colonial unconscious” in Shimmer Chinodya’s *Dew in the Morning*

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Abstract

This article examines the gendered dynamics surrounding masculinity and the “colonial unconscious” in Shimmer Chinodya’s novel, *Dew in the Morning*, in the context of its narrated and narrative times. These are situated in, and emanate from, the encounter between colonized black African subjects, namely migrants and indigenes, set apart by different degrees of assimilation of colonial modernity in an unnamed area in Northern Zimbabwe. The article argues that narration in the novel is mediated by a colonial unconscious that results in the discursive construction of binary dichotomies and masculinized hierarchies between these subjects. The empowerment of the migrant subjects mainly involves the appropriation of colonial modernity, and the “big man” model of African Masculinity, to inform their more profitable agrarian activities. The resultant differential economic empowerment between the migrant acculturated subjects and the local conservatives in a colonial setting creates hierarchies of masculinity between the former and the latter. The process of masculinization helps to reinforce patriarchal domination and/or exploitation of women, less powerful men, and the natural environment in this localized context. The narrative thus casts aspersions on the masculinities of both the migrants and the indigenes and their suitability to mediate the post-colonial realities of the novel’s narrative time.

Keywords: Colonial unconscious, “big man”, masculinities, modernity, Zimbabwe