

Critical Appreciation: Sofola's Concept of Dual-Sex in Norbert Mutasa's Novels

by

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Abstract

Drawing examples from the pre-colonial Igbo society, Sofola (1998) has argued that pre-colonial African societies enjoyed a dual-sex system which had roots in the philosophy of 'holistic harmony' and 'communalism' and in the principle of 'relatedness'. For Sofola, that philosophy was violated by the European thought system that has roots in the philosophy of 'individualistic isolationism'. Two of Norbert Mutasa's novels: *Nhume YaMambo* and *Misodzi Dikita Neropa* expose the nature of a dual-sex system that prevailed in the pre-colonial Shona society. As such, the novels provide an atmosphere and an environment that can aid an intellectual, who has a keen interest in the up and coming theories of African Womanhood, to question the degree to which tenets of some of those theories, which have been developed in some parts of Africa, do apply to African cultures that are separate and apart from their founding cultures and traditions. Using Mutasa's two novels, this article grapples with the extent to which Sofola's concept of a dual-sex system applies to the pre-colonial Shona culture. Generally speaking, the article debates on the applicability of some of the tenets of the theories that are originally developed in some parts of Africa to the Zimbabwean situation.

Introduction

Nnaemeka (1998: 11) notes that, Kamene Okonjo, Zulu Sofola, Flora Nwapa and Sabine Jell-Bahlsen extensively discuss "The Igbo dual-sex institutions of shared authority and power". After they extensively discuss the Igbo dual-sex system, these scholars generalize their findings on all African cultures. For instance, Sofola (1998: 53-4) says that,