

Is Pfambi Prostitute and Prostitute Pfambi? Is Hure Whore and Whore Hure? Is Prostitute Both Pfambi and Hure and Is Both Hure and Pfambi Prostitute? A Review of Gaidzanwa's understanding of a 'Prostitute' in Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature (1985)

Tyanai Charamba & William Zivenge

Abstract

Gaidzanwa's critical work Images Of Women In Zimbabwean Literature has a wide readership especially at higher institutions of learning such as universities and teachers' colleges. Because of that, her views on women in particular and on gender issues in general shape a lot of people's self-awareness, life awareness and critical consciousness. It is because of the untold influence of her views on members of the Zimbabwean society that the views need to be visited and revisited by different practitioners with an idea of reworking them to give her readers new dimensions and directions of perceiving and receiving the nature of conduct between men and women in Zimbabwe and the images of women in Zimbabwean fiction. One such area in Gaidzanwa's critical work that need to be reworked is her understanding, interpretation and general perception of images of women as prostitutes in Zimbabwean literature. Gaidzanwa seems to assume that, there is a natural equivalence between the English term 'prostitute' and the Shona terms 'pfambi' and 'hure'. The assumption seems to be a real generator of her weaknesses as a literary practitioner who desires to battle and grapple with the nature of the presentation of the philosophy of life of the Zimbabweans in literature. Her assertions on the use of the term 'prostitute' in literature need to be reworked by a researcher who correctly understands that, there can be closest and not natural equivalence whatsoever between words from different languages and who also has an understanding that, literature needs to be analysed and criticized using the history and culture of the writer's society. By resorting to the Western definition of prostitute in order to analyse and criticize the images of women as 'pfambi' and 'mahure' in Zimbabwean literature, Gaidzanwa directly and deliberately resorts to Eurocentric critical canons to make conclusions and suggestions on the nature of the portrayal of women as 'pfambi' and 'mahure' in Zimbabwean literature. Gaidzanwa is supported in that use of a Eurocentric dimension and direction when criticizing Zimbabwean literature by the likes of Mashiri (1994) and of other upcoming critics of Zimbabwean literature. For the present researcher to effectively analyse Zimbabwean literary texts, he resorts to the use of indigenous terms: 'pfambi', 'hure', 'mahure' and 'nzenza'. The terms are discussed in full below. Sticking to the Shona terms helps him to make a clear distinction between them and the English terms 'prostitute' and 'whore'.

Introduction

Gaidzanwa sticks to a single English dictionary meaning of prostitute to dismiss the allusion by writers to some female characters as 'pfambi' or 'hure'. Prostitute according to the *Longman Dictionary Of Contemporary English* (1978: 1136) is "someone especially a woman who earns money by having sex with people who pay for it. Male prostitute, a man who earns money in this way." Gaidzanwa prefers this definition of prostitute in her literary criticism to all other meanings of prostitute the dictionary supplies. She ignores for instance, the other formal meanings of prostitute the dictionary gives. The other meanings are; "to use your skills, abilities etc in a way that does not show their true value, in order to earn money....a) to have sex in return for money b) to do unpleasant work just to get money." Gaidzanwa considers all those female characters that