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Original Article

Depiction of Shona marriage institution in Zimbabwe local television drama, *Wenera Diamonds*.

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Abstract

Marriage is a highly celebrated phenomenon among the African people. It is one of the important institutions among the Shona and Ndebele people in Zimbabwe as expressed in the saying ‘*musha mukadzi*’ and ‘*umuzingumama*’ (home is made by a woman) respectively. However with the coming of colonialism in Zimbabwe, marriage was not given the appropriate respect it deserves. This has given impetus to this paper where the researchers in the study through drama want to bring out the depiction of marriage institution in a post -independence television drama, *Wenera Diamonds* (2017). This paper therefore, aims to show the impact of neo-colonialism on Shona marriage institution. The neo colonial period is characterised with the perpetuation of Western imperial interests through protocols of diplomatic relations, treaties and existing bilateral agreements which marked a new phase of relationships with former colonisers. The aim of this article therefore is to depict marriage institution in neo colonial Zimbabwe in *Wenera Diamonds* (2017), a Zimbabwean television drama. Using qualitative research methodology, the research

employs content analysis to elucidate the depiction in the said performance. Guided by the African womanist perspective, the article argues that the indigenous knowledge needed for African social development is rendered irrelevant by a dysfunctional set of values of the western hegemony. Against that, the paper establishes that the depiction of marriage institution in *Wenera diamonds* is a reflection of imperialist colonial forces on the black person hence the need to go back to basics and resuscitate their culture.

Keywords: marriage, depiction, Zimbabwe, post-independence, Neo-colonialism, *Wenera diamonds*,

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1.0 Introduction

In African societies in general and among the Shona in particular, marriage institutions have been most hit by changes in some core human values of the institutions founded on traditional values. Thus, this article is a reply to the evolutionary change that continued to take place in our times as a result of new forms of cultural contact created by neo colonialists. As one of the institutions still clinging albeit limply to life, the marriage institution needs all that can be done to make it survive and be stronger. This paper addresses factors that are caused by neo colonialism, which is the continuation of imperialist interest and the subjugation of Shona social institutions after independence in 1980. The suppression of colonial powers has continued negative reparations on the Shona marriage institution. In other words, the diplomacy of European supremacy and their interference mechanisms in changing the status and levels of relationship with her former colonies through a continuous and perpetual domination of her social structure prevailed. This is manifested through rapid urbanisation, globalisation and modernisation which has brought severe consequences on the Shona traditional marriage institution after independence. In that respect, those

marriage values which were criticised during the colonial era are done away with. New perceptions on the Shona marriage institutions have emerged in Zimbabwe. This paper indicates the extent to which western interference mechanism such as globalisation, rapid urbanisation, and modernisation as neo-colonial motives have caused problems in the marriage institution. The task of this article is to indicate the extent to which this neo-colonial agenda affected the Shona marriage institutions by depiction of the marriage institutions in *Wenera Diamonds* (2017) drama. The article further interrogates the circumstances surrounding such depictions so as to justify the assumption that, European agenda on African marriage institution in general and on the Shona traditional marriage institution is not static. This article indicates that, the philosophy of marriage institution in Africa and among the Shona people in particular remains the same and aims to bring out the emerging perception of the Shona marriage institution as portrayed in this television drama.

Marriage is considered an institution and is interpreted differently by human societies. African marriage is a complex institution that generally proceeds by stages, most of which are characterised by the performance of prescribed rites. It is not

called an arrangement of just a system or an organization, it is an institution. According to Tatira (2010) the word institution means rules of conduct, meaning who does what, when, how etc. The institution constitutes how people survive conflict, and struggle in an equitable progressive way. In African community an institution is like a body that has an immune system for future challenges. In addition, Tatira (2010) argues that the institution of marriage is a union of commitment with rules and regulations that represent the people's culture, it is a communal relationship, a rite of passage which bonds two people, two families and even two communities and nations enshrine obligations and values. That is how the institution of marriage has been run for generations, there are rules of conduct transmitted from one generation to the other culturally as to what is the role of mother, what is the role of father, what is the role of the first born and what is the role of the last born and even the role of the grandparents, girl child in her different capacities, boy child among others and one did not rebel against these roles, rules, values, beliefs and tradition within the institution (Meekers, 1993).

According to Meekers (1993), everyone in the marriage institution is a “measurable

performance indicator” for example, the mother would be appraised by how the children perform at school and how well behaved they are, the quality of the cooking and the cleanliness and other things that exist in the house. He further argues that, the food she cooked and the children are her portfolio presented to the family for evaluation. The father was appraised by how good he was as a provider and as a backup system to discipline the children when the mother failed to get the desired behavior. The grandparents are the monitoring that the husband or the wife or anyone else in the extended family does not deviate from the norm (Meekers, 1993). They are the judges of the adequacy of behavior and in a sense the unpaid psychotherapists, if to describe.

Meekers (1993) argues that, in contrast to the marriage ceremony as a discrete event in Western societies, African marriage is a complex institution that generally proceeds by stages, most of which are characterised by the performance of prescribed rites. He further expresses that the transfer of some form of bride wealth, from the lineage of the husband to the lineage of the wife, is typical. A payment of this bride wealth, in part or in full, guarantees the husband rights to the sexual and economic services of his wife. Marriage as an institution is a process composed of several stages

between the preliminary rites and full acceptance of the couple as a social unit. Traditional values associated with African marriages refer to interest, pleasure, likes, preference, duties, moral, obligations, desires, wants, needs, aversions and attractions and many other modalities of selective orientation. Megasa (1998) adds that the communities involved share their very existence in that reality and they become one people, one thing, as Africans themselves would put it that through their marriage, their families and clans are also united so that what is done to one of their members is done to all. By this gesture, marriage also means that the partners' responsibilities are not limited to them alone but have a much wider application. This means that the depiction of marriage institution in *Wenera diamonds* is measured against such an understanding of the institution in African societies.

According to Mbiti (1969) in all African societies everything possible is done to prepare people for marriage and to make them think in terms of marriage. A further understanding of marriage amongst Africans suggest that there are at least three defining aspects; first marriage is a transfer of legal rights to a woman from her kin to her husband. Not only does the husband gain rights to the wife's labour, sexuality and offspring's, but also the

rights to receive compensation for the harm done to her by others. In some societies the husband receives rights to offspring if he pays the full bride price but can receive more limited rights if he makes a small payment. Second marriage modifies and to some degree ruptures, the relations between the bride and her immediate kin. In many societies the wife moves out of her parents' home and they lose a family member. Where the husband joins the wife's parent's household there is less disruption. Third marriage is an affiance, an agreement or contract between two families or groups of kin's, because our African societies see marriage not only as a relationship between two individual people but also as a structural link between groups (Hendrix, 1998)

In some parts of Africa, parents choose marriage partners for their children even before they are born. This is to make it absolutely sure that they do get someone to marry. Other parts the choice is made for the young people by their relatives, while another custom is to let the young people themselves find the person they wish to marry and then inform their parents or other relatives. The opportunities for them to do this are provided by social gatherings, dance and communal work and by their knowing other people in the neighbourhood, (Mbiti, 1969).

The obligation to get married is therefore the only means of human survival as far as the views of African people are concerned. For that reason, it is a religious obligation. It is as old as human society, through marriage and childbearing, human is preserved, propagated and perpetuated. Through them life is also deepened vertically and spread horizontally. Therefore, marriage and childbearing are the focus of life; they are at the very center of human existence, just as men are at the very center of the universe, (Mbiti, 1969). Even when these forms are situated within certain social economic context that is social prestige or the assurance of hands to work the fields (which motivations are always present, given the unity of life) they all serve to preserve and prolong life, to provide for ritual fecundity and physical procreation, (Magesa, 1998).

Another attracting value, which is upheld by most in African marriages, is creatively, depicted in Kgatla proverb 'a pretty girl either steals or wets her bed'. By this, they mean that physical beauty alone is not the most important thing to look for in a wife. Industry in physical work, a respectful demeanour towards elders and a generally good reputation as defined by the ethnic group are the most significant characteristic for both partners. These characteristics are assessed by the qualities

of the parent themselves. (Magesa, 1998) argues that wealth on the part of the boy's parents is of course a factor in his favour but that is less important than personal character. On the other hand (Goody, 1997) avers that girls were as important as boys and there is no evidence of any fertility 'stopping rule' or indeed of any tendency to prefer children of one sex. Similarly, an aspect that is equally of significant value in African marriages is the communal value of marriage. In marriage the family is the person's channel of integration into the clan and the wider society. Consequently, in marrying his wife the man accepted the responsibilities towards another family and her likewise. This social and communitarian character of African marriage means that the two communities are bound so closely together through a marriage that certain condition such as a rift between the two communities can actually nullify a marriage between two persons. Enmity between the clans notwithstanding any amount of cordiality and love between the two individuals can not only nullify a marriage but also make it impossible in the first place. The value of marriage is communal and the couple's consent has validity only in this communal social context (Magesa, 1998). Marriage is not just an individual or the couple concerned business as noticed today it concerns all and is affected by all. For

instance the traditional system in Africa required a high degree of cooperation between members of the same household (family) and lineage (or other wider grouping of kin or community).

The most important social institution among the Shona people is the marriage institutions. The importance of marriage institutions among the Shona is expressed by the Shona proverb that, "*musha mukadzi*" interpreted as home is made of a woman and in Ndebele signified by the idiom that "*umuzingumama*". Despite these proverbs expressing Shona and Ndebele marriage institutions as matriarchal, Tatira (2010) argues that, the marriage institution in Shona culture is as old as the Shona people themselves. Furthermore, he argues that marriage is a highly celebrated social phenomenon among the Shona people. In other cultures, for example, Western cultures who believed in Christianity, they also value marriage as expressed in their religious book, the Bible that a man finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord (Proverbs 18 verses 22). This means marriage is important in all cultures as expressed by Mawere and Mawere (2010) that marriage is valued because of its important role in human race progress and continuation.

In Shona culture, the progression of each human life is expected to culminate into marriage. Kylo and Selvan (2004) argue that every Shona child is expected to get married and begot off springs. Thus marriage is a source of spiritual convenience among Shona people. Marital relationships secure the regeneration of the society and its continued existence. However, what differs in marriage institutions across cultures are marriage rites, customs, beliefs and values as they are defined in socialisation process where language remain central in the dissemination of knowledge and wisdom regarding marriage. Raisings (2010) argues that because of modern, western based education and soap operas which have influenced young people, most traditional teachings about marriage are being rejected. As a result marriage institutions evolved over the years and new forms of marriage institutions have emerged in Zimbabwe as a result of neo colonialism mechanisms such as globalisation and the creation of the global village platforms such as What's up, You tube, Face book, Instagram, among others with globalisation crime of hyper sexuality and sexualisation of communities through Hollywood romantic scene and globalisation enculturation through films and music on global village platforms. Thus, it is against the understanding of

Shona marriage institution that the researchers in the paper interrogate the depiction of marriage institution in *Wenera diamonds*.

2.0 Materials, Methodology and theoretical exposition.

The article's primary source of data is the television drama, *Wenera Diamonds* which was screened every Monday at 7.30pm in the evening. *Wenera Diamonds* is a local Zimbabwe television drama that focuses on the business world that revolves around *Wenera Diamond*, run by one family that ends up mixing business and personal affairs. As a work of art, the drama captures the socio-political issues of the day, family disputes and marriage issues included. It is against this understanding that the drama reflects some of the burning issues in marriage unions in neo-colonial Zimbabwe hence a critical reflection of marriage institution depiction in the drama series.

Content analysis

On the methodological path, the research uses qualitative method specifically content analysis to derive various depictions in the drama under study. Content analysis is defined as the systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not

necessarily from an author's or user's perspective (Krippendorff, 2004). It is a research technique for studying documents and communication artefacts, which might be texts of various formats such as pictures, audio or video. One major advantage is that, it does not require the collection of data from people since is the study of recorded information or information which has been recorded in texts, media, or physical items. This research uses this technique to make replicable and valid inferences in *Wenera diamonds* drama by interpreting and coding textual material specifically oral communication from these drama plays. In this study, the material from the selected drama is to be analysed step by step following rules of procedure, devising the material into content analytical units.

2.1.Theoretical exposition

This article hinges on Africana womanist theoretical framework which is useful in expressing the reality of the Africana woman within the context of the Africana community. This theory is designed for all women and men of the black race and intended to inform the educational and political philosophies of black students in gender issues. Hudson Weems (1993) argues that the solutions for African people cannot be found or resolved within the context of an alien ideology. Given the fact

that rapid urbanisation and globalisation as neo colonial mechanisms are alien mechanisms among the Shona people, one is left wondering the extent to which its values and teachings can successfully construct Shona marriage institutions. The assumption that Africana Womanist is rooted in African traditional culture expresses that it is a position to address the challenges of Shona women and men without conflicting with their values, beliefs, customs and tradition in the marriage institutions.

As Hudson Weems (2004) argues, as a race, the most powerful part of our experience with the Western world is the “dewomanisation” of women of African descent, it is true that to successfully destroy a people its female component must be first destroyed. She argued further that, the female gender is the center of life, the magnet that holds the social cosmos intact and alive; destroying her is destroying life itself. Thus on the gender question, Africana Womanist is fresh air in the stuffy closet of Eurocentric verbiage. Amongst the eighteen descriptors posed by this theory, the study is going to use only six descriptors which are, family centered, male compatible, strong, mothering and nurturing, genuine in sisterhood and whole. These descriptors are important attributes of African woman. They reflect

on some of the important attributes and qualities which a typical African woman must possess and practice in this neo colonial age to preserve and understand marriage institution in their context.

2.2. *Existentialism*

It is important to bring to light existentialism theory since part of the analysis in the paper is guided by the philosophy. Existentialism is the brainchild of Kierkgaard a religious philosopher, Nietzsche an anti-Christian, Sarte and Camus who are both atheists. Their ideas came as a result of the Great Depression and World war 11. It is a 20th century theory that is concerned with finding self and the meaning of life through free will, choice and personal responsibility. Existentialism believes that a person should not be forced to choose and be responsible without the help of laws, ethnic rules or traditions. Thus, the depiction of marriage institution in *Wenera diamonds* are somehow influenced by the theory considering the environment in which the play is done. The philosophy takes into consideration that there are things that are not rational, human nature is chosen through life choices and society is unnatural and its traditional religious and secular rules are arbitrary. This therefore means that the society cannot impose or demand that an individual

should follow their beliefs, values or rules as that dehumanises them and reduce them to objects. Rather existentialism stresses that a person's judgement is the determinant factor for what is to be believed rather than by uninformed or secular world values. Against this understanding, some of the ideas that come out of the depiction reflects on the playwright's dependence on the theory.

3.0. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion section are discussed concurrently for avoidance of repetition as the researchers discuss the depiction after identifying how marriage is portrayed in the drama.

3.1. Marriage as union of convenience

In *Wenera Diamonds* (2017) marriage is depicted as a union of convenience. Marriage of convenience is contracted for reasons other than union out of love. Instead, such a marriage is entered into for personal gain or some other sort of strategic purpose. In *Wenera Diamonds* (2017), marriage is hinged on the fact that marital hope or marital setup remains as a survival option in Shona tradition today as depicted in female and male characters such as Gugu, Donna, Tsosti, Bheki, Simbi, Madhiga, Boss T One, Kedah and Trevor. Sometimes driven by poverty and the desire for a better life, many women

and men find themselves using marriage as a commodity in exchange for materialistic goods, money, accommodation or other basic necessities. Gugu chooses to get married to Boss T One for money and accommodation, the same with Trevor who is sexually interconnected to Chioniso (*Chichi*) and Tanya in order to survive. Donna is married to Bongani then later moved to T One. Donna moves to T. One where there is financial stability and high class residence. Maria a maid to Donna finds an opportunity of the space created and gets married to Bongani because of the need of luxurious life. Turning to the blue house, Tsotsi is engaged to landlord's daughter and ready for marriage in order to secure a residence. On the other hand, Kedah is getting married to Tanya, their relationship is not mature enough for marriage but Kedah quickly makes an arrangement to pay lobola. All these marriages and marriage arrangements in this drama show that between the two partners one is pushing for marriage or entering into marriage for personal gains or some other sort of strategic purposes.

This depiction implies that, the conditions of modernisation, globalisation, rapid urbanisation and use of the United States dollar, life due to neo colonialism is less stable, more uncertain than in the traditional past. This alone makes

responsibilities of marriage especially heavy for the young men and women. Neo colonialism brought a number of diplomatic economics with its former colonies the most notable being the introduction of United States dollar which has caused severe economic hardships among the Shona people. As a result easy strategies for survival emerge to the point of viewing marriage itself as a survival tool. Young women are now gunning for established men while the young men are also in search of established women for survival hence the social institutions particularly the marriage institutions became vulnerable as above. Most characters in this line of marriage face a stunted future of domestic violence, single parented children, and marriage breakups. By fleeing their traditional culture, the most characters in the drama have become human rights victims with no parental protection or legal rights.

The era of neo colonialism brought in new mechanisms of interaction with former colonisers through the use of modern technology such as smart phones, social media plat forms such as Face book, What`s up, Skype among others. Such platforms have become platforms of hyper sexuality and cultural domination by the former colonisers. This article argues that, the Shona people`s interaction and

integration into global system at this period has played a role in what the Shona marriage institutions is today. On a balance of probability, there is the temptation to conclude that the consequences of globalisation on the Shona people in particular have rather been negative as observed in the depiction above.

In defining and explaining globalisation, Nsibambi (2001), incorporated five concepts. He defined globalisation as a process of advancement and increase in interaction among the world`s countries and people facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills, as well as interfacing of cultural values, systems and practices. From a critical analysis of the above definition Nsibambi (2001) is of the view that globalisation is not a value free, innocent, self-determining process. It is an international socio-economic and cultural permeation process facilitated by policies of government, private corporations, international agencies and civil society organisations. It essentially seeks to enhance and deploy economic, political, technological, ideological and military power and influence for competitive domination in the world. According to Jeremy (2004), globalisation is a

declaration of war upon all other cultures, and in cultural wars, there is no exemption for civilians; there are no innocent bystanders. It can be described in this article as a confrontation between global civilisation and local cultures as the case in *Wenera Diamonds* (2017).

However, choosing marriage as a safe haven to escape life's challenges does not always translate to happily ever after as observed in marriage break ups, violence, unfaithfulness, crime and arrest in the drama. When marriage is perceived as convenience then the traditional purpose of marriage is distorted. Marriage institutions among the Shona people are governed by cultural values, beliefs, norms, rites, rituals and traditions. This means marriage has cultural aspects that there are certain things one should do before pronounced married. Western neo colonial mechanisms have caused human problems in Shona societies hence social institutions like marriage has turned into *njake njake* (Everyone does his own). Kedha wants to revenge T-one because the conveniences that he thought he would enjoy are no longer there.

3.2. Marriage as nuclear family

Another depiction from *Wenera Diamonds* (2017) is that marriage is perceived based on nuclear family. Tatira (2010) argues that the institutions of marriage is union

with assigned roles that are defined by the individual's culture; it is mutual union and a rite of passage which unites two people, two families and even two societies and enshrines obligations and values. The family structures are established on collective relationships with members of extended family. Houston (1979) complements with the view that the family is at the core of a social structure in a community it is that family which continues to define the gender roles as they are perceived by the society. The extended family was built on collective material co-operation and was the responsibility of all members within to maintain such a coordinated relationship. This collective action brings about positive reciprocity which is important in maintain equilibrium in the marriage institutions (Chirozva, 2001). In Shona culture, family is the basic unit of society. It is not confined to the husband, his wife and their children but it is extended to encompass other people of the clan. Mbiti (1996) resolves that, for African people the family has a much wider circle of members than the word suggest in Europe or North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives in traditional life, individual does not and cannot exist alone except

corporately. Man owns his existence to other people and only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people.

As everywhere in African continent the social transformation of the marriage institutions still remain an ongoing process in this period of neo colonialism. Neo colonialism has certainly transformed the Shona marriage institutions into a fractured state. *Wenera Diamonds (2017)* has factiously presented the centrality of the nuclear family among the Shona people today. In other words the drama fulfils Achebe`s notion that there is no art for art`s sake (Achebe, 1988). However, rapid urbanisation, have created a trend towards nuclear families, and individualism in the cities as between T One and his brother Bongani. Bongani moves out of family home and the two are rivals, when Tanya is getting married by Kedah; people involved are Murehwa, *Tete* who was never married, Tanya, and Prophet Sticks who also loves Tanya. There is no coordination with Bongani and other members from the extended family. That is life in the urban, it has no relatives, brother or sister.

Tete`s role is very central in the family in Shona culture. In addition, her roles in the

Shona traditional marriage customs is to coordinate marriage proceedings and to make sure that there is unity among families. In *Wenera Diamonds (2017)* *Tete* fails to represent her traditional roles in putting the family together, she is not even concerned with Bongani or visiting him, she is failing to unite the family everything is upside down. She is denying her traditional roles, as Bongani feels unwanted, frustrated and out casted by other family members. She goes to the extent of taking sides. Where she thinks she can benefit economically, that is where she goes which could be the result of cash economy in the era in which the play is done.

Africana womanism is perceived as self namer, self-definer and authentic. Self-naming is one of the prominent attributes of Africana womanism. Weems (2004) postulates that naming holds a significant role in African culture since the proper naming of a thing gives its existence. herefore, the appropriate naming in Africana womanism is a prerequisite for the survival of Africana woman. *Tete* a name in *Wenera Diamonds (2017)* is expressive of her identity, role and cultural reality and indicate respect and status in familial relationships. The way *Tete* behaves and her failure to execute her duties show that she has fall a victim of

neo colonial mechanisms in this case urbanisation, a victim of calculated deception. Her name fails to reflect her authentic personality as expressed by Weems (1993) that, African woman should have a name that reflects her authentic personality and identity related to her cultural background. *Tete* is a female character exposed to Western culture through urbanisation and modernity and led the family to suffer destructive impact of urbanisation.

Tete fails to provide love, care and attention to the family. There is no connection between male and female as equal rights are at the centre of progress which results in conflicts and disagreements. In Musodza family structures, that make people sit down under per review is vanishing and the taboos of shame and dignity are also evaporating so a man or a woman can conduct themselves immorally without worry of the society's shame. Due to nuclear families established today disputes which once could easily be fixed by intercession are now reasons for irreconcilable squabbles as observed between Bongani and T One. However, Weems (2004) explicates that, the African womanist perceives as the companion to the African man and works diligently towards continuing their established union.

Rapid urbanisation and modernisation are notable circumstances connected to the emerging of family nuclearisation in the Shona marriage institutions. Rapid urbanisation and modernisation have created changes in the marriage structures. Goode (1964) observed a situation that, for the first cultural contact in human history the social history the social systems are evolving fast with the traditional family usually extended breaking down. African literature has long before argues that before urbanisation and modernisation the extended family type was the majority and was a practice highly observed with honour and responsibilities. Such a tradition makes the Africans one people, and promotes sisterhood and family centeredness. Hudson Weems (1993) defines this attribute as a reciprocal one, one in which each gives and receives equally, in this community of women all reach out in support of each other, demonstrating a tremendous sense of responsibility for each other by looking out for one another's shared experiences.

The movement of people from rural to urban life was accompanied by the rise of the state and both the idea of capitalism and Protestantism which resulted in nuclear families and the result was the weakening of kinship relations. Such human transitional movement affected the

basic unit of social institutions such as marriage to contra-cultural obligations among individuals, (Berry, 1981). A simple basic type of a society was made more complex composed of less blood relations and promoted personal types of relationships in the marriage institution. When marriage institution became nuclear challenges are faced which resulted in marriage break ups and domestic violence. This article argues that, the effects of urbanisation and modernity on the Shona traditional marriage institution is much on the change from extended family to nuclear family structure as it is on a shift in the values, attitudes, and habits of the individual in relation to the family. The family became free from its traditional attachments despite remaining a social structure as seen in the drama. Bongani and his wife detach themselves from the extended family and as a result the values and attitudes that they put on the family is different. They no longer care for anyone and their way of living is influenced by the urban environment they are exposed to.

The other exacerbating factors to the growth of nuclear family marriages is the conflict between Christianity and African tradition. The relationship between Christianity and African culture has been construed in many ways, resulting in an exclusivist affirming of one over against

the other. This means that African traditions and culture are rejected as 'un-Christian. Christianity as a religion is set apart from African culture and traditions. Both are valid in their proper place, but should never be allowed one to interfere with the other. Integration of the two has brought severe challenges in Shona marriage institution. Although culture is dynamic, shared and learned, this article argues that any culture which seeks to dominate and override another culture is aggressive. Christian doctrine has made the Shona people to believe that their marriage practices are evil to the extent that most women and men in *Wenera Diamonds* (2017) are transformed to observe life as based on individual entity not a collective entity. The effects of Christianity are brought in the drama by Prophet Sticks who stand at the centre of Musodza family. The prophet failed to solve the challenges being currently faced by the family, something which indicates that it is not foreign culture that settles African problems. The only solution is in the indigenous culture. The prophet instead of uniting the family he is even showcasing the wrong doings of Bongani to intensify anger and hate between brothers. As this play is the replica of the Shona world view today, the results obtained from the drama shows that Christianity has brought much confusion

and destruction in Shona traditional families and communities at large as expressed in a letter by King Leopold II of Belgium to colonial missionaries in 1883. Prophet Sticks goes further to show his interests on Tanya when he really knows that Kedha is in the process of wanting to marry her. Failure to respect Tanya as someone else's wife is a clear indication that Christianity is misplaced given his status as a Christian Prophet.

3.3. Marriage of despair

Most marriages in the drama are marriages of despair. Despair is defined as a condition when characters are exposed fighting in their social institutions, in this case marriage institutions. However, the conflict is a result of frustrations, impediments and lost hope in both female and male characters as they embrace neo colonial mechanisms. Bheki's hope was to finish her nursing course which she cuts short because she is married to Humba who denied her access to pursue her studies. All Bheki had been aiming does not come true and there is friction between Bheki and Humba. Humba lies on traditional custom that a woman's responsibilities are child bearing, nurturer and mothering while Bheki is within the modern society of gender equality. Bheki views Humba as deeply rooted and more assigned in the tradition. All problems in

their marriage are observed as being caused by Humba who is vehemently remained a staunch cultural disciple. This article posits that, the strong correlation among Africana womanist attributes is family centeredness, compatibility with her man and mothering. Weems (2008) elucidates that, the Africana womanist insisted on identifying herself as mother and companion, is family centred, as she is more concerned with her entire family rather than with just herself and her sisters. Distinguished from white women who, as Weems (2008) announces, as seek to replicate the individualism of White patriarchal capitalism. In Musodza family conflict is witnessed between T One and his wife Gugu. For T One his marriage to Gugu is an impediment to personal gratifications as they are always in quarrels on who should do what. While Bongani's marriage to Donna is dominated with violence and squabbles because Donna is searching his lost hope of getting married to T One an ambition she later fulfils despite having fuelled hostility between brothers. This article argues that instead of marriage to act as the haven for devastated people, the despair is being nurtured in the crumbling marriage institution.

Characters in marriage are failing to design and create a proper social progress due to cultural conflicts. The continuous change

and different perception of life has resulted in continuous frustrations, hopelessness, and fear of the unknown between these characters hence marriage of despair. There is no male and female compatibility women deny their roles also as nurtures, the mothering features which the Shona culture values is shrouded in the mist of antiquity. The coordination in gender roles as reflected in the traditional marriage institution is analysed in this drama as dismantled and disconnected. The institution is just but a circuit without a switch. In fighting against this despair there is marriage break ups, domestic violence, frustrations and revenge as witnessed between T One and Gugu, Bongani and T One, Humba and Madhiga, Bongani and Donna, Trevor and Tanya, Trevor and Chichi, and between Simbi and Tanya. Characters are deciding the future and efforts that create an atmosphere which saves personal interest. Thus, there is no single direction these characters are heading towards as they are pulling in different directions. According to Hudson Weems, (2008) Africana woman is perceived as male compatible, they are not in conflict with their male counterpart but join together in fighting against any form of dominance or oppression. Such attribute is missing in all marriages in the drama as observed above.

The period of neo colonialism is marked by new waves of literary theories. There is no way this article analyses this drama without penetrating into the playwrighter`s mindset. It is then discovered in this article that the playwright is also a victim of neo colonial literary ideology. The circumstance surrounding the depiction is influenced by existentialism a literary phenomenon which advocates that self-meaning of life is obtained through free choices and individuals` capabilities (Mapako and Mareva, 2013). From Mapako and Mareva, (2013) understanding of existentialism means that the drama`s underlying concepts of existentialism are human free choice which expresses that human nature is selected and influenced by life choices, believe in fighting struggling for life, decisions are subject of stress and consequences, not all features of life are rational, society is unnatural and its traditional religious and secular rules are arbitrary. Thus existentialism as portrayed by the playwright is not on the support of social values and social control of the individuals. This theory is against the traditional roles assigned to individual by his/her society. The ideology of existentialism assign that individuals are brought into existence first without a predetermined nature and only later individuals construct their own nature or

essence through personal actions (Mapako and Mareva, 2013).

However, this theory failed to enlighten the playwright that culture is the first contact feature with an individual before brought out in her mother's uterus, he is nurtured by it through socialisation hence foreign imported cultures will never have any solution to an individual who was never nurtured by that culture. Existentialism mission is to transform the general public's perception of marriage institution so as to facilitate the Western neo colonial agenda by placing the Shona race in a sleeping mode believing that life is absurd, it is full of frustrations, unfair and oppressive. This literary theory argues that human beings are trying to find out whom and what they are in life as they formulate and make choices based on their experiences, beliefs and outlook. Hence, when culture fails there come frustrations, anger, and revenge as witnessed in the drama. Existentialism is behind the characters in drama that reject the imprisonment imposed by society through social customs, values and traditions. The characters assert their own independent philosophies and approaches to life but are left vulnerable to the absurd world hence disintegration in marriage as a result of despair. This article argues that a literary theory should be a tool which shall provide

the needs of the people as Weems, (2004) expressed that, the Africana womanist....perceives herself as the companion to the Africana man and works diligently towards continuing their established union.

As mentioned before that one major symptoms of existentialism are conflicts and fighting with life. Fighting with life clearly mean conflict with other human who fail to comply with the victim's personal wishes as in the drama T One discovered that he had been deceived by Gugu after the truth that was never to be uncovered has been while Bongani discovered also that she has been deceived by Donna who later turns to his brother T One. The young man's soul was disappointed and destroyed. Tanya and Chichi on the other hand have been deceived by Trevor. In the blue house Madhiga is deceived by Humba, both the two are rejecting the profound traditional honour which align with age. In this play all generational both male and female are in marriage of despair. In addition, such characters are victims of circumstances, for example, Bheki is a victim of failed education and being dumped by Humba all such dead logs brings anger, frustration, loss of hope, and violence. *Wenera Diamonds (2017)* is presenting a fractured

marriage institution full of despair as a result of neo colonialism.

In addition, existentialism has affected the marriage institution to the point of living all generation vulnerable to despair due to new created philosophies and popular way of thinking and reasoning, that is, freedom to choose one`s preferred moral beliefs systems and lifestyle. Thus, the rise of existentialism literature in the 19th century influenced the playwright`s perception towards the Shona traditional marriage institution. It is in such circumstances and interior monologues that individuals` true desires, yearnings, ambitions, impediments, anger and frustrations are reflected. In existentialist philosophy, man is always lamenting and this sense of despair seems apparent.

The despair is not a temporary mark but a permanent feature which makes all characters to fold their arms awaiting a final blow as viewed in marriage break ups, violence and attempted murder in the drama. Wa Thiongo (1972) literary expressed that, literature should indicate not only where the rain began to beat us and how severely but also how to save ourselves from perpetual exposure and our house from flood. Contrary to that the existentialist believes that there is no solution to life struggles. Yet the Shona

traditional marriage values male and female compatibility to overcome problems and oppression. This article informs the existentialist that in Shona traditional culture people do not let the house flooded and the flood expected norm of life. The Shona communities believe in collective entity in problem solving.

3.4. Marriage as an oppressive institution

Marriage is perceived as oppressive by both male and female characters in the drama undermining the contours of freedom and personal gratification. This is clearly viewed in the character *Tete* (aunty) as she remained unmarried the whole of her life. She is caught in between Shona traditional culture and western culture. *Tete`s* character is described in this article as reaction in sabotaging and challenging the Shona marriage customs. According to Shona traditional customs an individual is expected to get married and have a family. Nicol et al., (2006) express that, the bond between black men and women is important to perpetuating the race, every black woman wants a man, a special somebody to fill a void in her life, one who makes her complete. The stance which *Tete* took is feministic, she advocated for woman`s liberation and freedom out of the traditional shells of culture perpetrated by men. The neo colonial period is marked by bilateral

agreements with western countries on gender equality which marked women's movements as described by Banks (1986) who observed that the aim for the women's awareness raising have autonomy which reflects to the revolt against the traditional customs about marriage roles, values and regulations.

The major objective of the movement is to obtain personal freedom and self-assertion a circumstance *Tete* answers on behalf of the general public in the drama. Here *Tete* indicated direct conflict on gender roles as she suggests direction on how the society should be run. Thus another problem brought in by feminism wave in the Shona marriage institution soon after independence to redefine cultural ground that provides their wishes and feelings. Feminists' penetration into marriage social institution as a political discourse against patriarchy and sexism has ruined the Shona perception on marriage as a whole patriarchy and sexism. Women want to be recognised in their own right and they are calling for a revolution against traditional rites of passage in this case marriage.

In Shona traditional marriage institution there is strong disapproval of people who wish not to marry or bear children. The Shona people's most critical part in their experiences and contact with European gender philosophy is the

“dewomanisation” of women of African descent, it is therefore a true notion that to completely destroy a people's race, its female component must be first destroyed (Weems, 2008). This shows that gender in the Shona marriage institution is becoming primarily a women's struggle and this shows the extent Western gender philosophies has continued ruining the Shona marriage institution at large. Hudson Weems claims that African womanist should be a self-definer conscious enough to create her identity in accordance with her cultural reality (Weems, 1993). According to Weems a woman is considered whole when with a male counterpart, thus the characteristic of wholeness and genuine sisterhood is factiously misrepresented throughout the drama.

4.0. Conclusion

The article comes to conclusion that having battalions of graduates with bachelor's, master's degrees and PhDs will not help any nation in Africa win the neo colonial agenda, the knowledge becomes a bane if it is only used to pamper egos without changing mind sets. The neo colonialism mechanisms established by former colonisers' remain the extended project of imperialism indicating that colonisation is an ongoing process as depicted in the marriage institutions in the

drama analysed in the paper. The drama shows that there is a continuous progress of moral and social decay due to rapid urbanisation, modernity and globalisation to present and also indicating the failure of Shona communities to practically contest western philosophies and worldview.

5.0. Primary Source

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