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## PERSPECTIVES ON SYMBOLS AND IDEOLOGIES IN ZELEZA'S SMOULDERING CHARCOA

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### Résumé

Dans son œuvre littéraire *Smouldering Charcoal*, Tiyaambe Zeleza dépeint une société postcoloniale dont le misérabilisme est rythmé par les appareils idéologiques. Le fossé entre les réalités de la vie et les rêves suscités par le leadership africain suite au départ du colonisateur marque la désillusion et la déception totale des populations. Les interprétations des symboles utilisés dans le roman sont poignantes pour éveiller les consciences. Toutefois, tout est mis en œuvre pour briser toutes les tentatives de résistances de la part des opprimés. En analysant la typologie des symboles et leurs significations, nous sommes plus imprégnés des tendances idéologiques exprimées. En tant qu'éveilleur de conscience sur les questions de la société, l'écrivain n'en demeure pas moins un acteur catalyseur pour les changements positifs. Il nous invite à la réflexion et la compréhension profonde de nous-mêmes, de notre responsabilité ainsi de notre capacité intrinsèque à renverser les forces dominantes qu'elles soient sociales, culturelles, économiques ou politiques. Le changement est possible aussi longtemps qu'on rejette toute idéologie incompatible à notre liberté. Ainsi, entreprendre des actions collectives est un pas important vers l'accomplissement de nos aspirations les plus légitimes.

**Mots clés :** *Symboles, idéologies, postcolonialisme, misérabilisme, conscience, résistance, changement.*

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### Abstract

In the work entitled *Smouldering Charcoal*, Tiyaambe Zeleza portrays a postcolonial society in which miserabilism rhythmized by the ideological apparatus governing it. The gap between the realities of life and the dreams arouse by the African leadership following the departure of the colonizer indicates disillusionment and absolute disappointment of the populations. The interpretations of the symbols used in the novel are striking to raise consciousness. Yet, all is planned to break any attempt of resistance by the oppressed. In analyzing the typology of the symbols and their meanings, we are more impregnated by the ideological trends expressed. As a conscious awakener of the burning issues of the society, the writer is no more less than a catalyst actor for positive changes. He invites us to reflection and deep insight understanding forces, whether social, cultural, political or economic. Change is possible as long as we reject any incompatible ideology to our freedom. Thus, undertaking collective actions is an important step towards the achievement of our legitimate aspirations.

**Keywords:** *Symbols, ideologies, postcolonialism, miserabilism, consciousness, resistance, change.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Symbols and ideologies are significant items, which portray social burning issues in literary productions. As such, literary criticism is the ideal framework that is capable to unveil the true meanings expressed in the artist's work. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal* is a work of art full of meaningful and expressive symbols that reveal postcolonial leadership practices and the ideological insights of the literary entities in the narrative are what makes its beauty. The discovery and understanding of the hidden aspects of expressive items is a step that only the initiated can undertake. The symbolic referent is characterized by arbitrariness and therefore one should undertake a deep analysis to unveil its meaning. Our approach will be sustained by both sociocriticism and symbolism. In this perspective, Zeleza's work is a microcosm through which we scrutinize the different ideologies and symbols that govern the postcolonial society with both its positive and negative guiding principles. The symbols and their significations, as well as their ideological insights are fundamental to go beyond the symbolic dimension of what is perceived at first sight.

### I. SYMBOLS AND THEIR SIGNIFICATIONS IN THE NARRATIVE

A symbol is the use of a concrete object to represent an abstract idea. In literature, it refers to a figure of style in which a person, an object or a situation represents something in addition to its literal meaning. Either conventional or traditional, literary symbols work much in the way, and because they have a previously agreed upon meanings, they can be used suggest ideas more universal than the physical aspect itself. Most of the time a symbol lends itself to a word, a figure of style, an event, an object, an action or a character. The complexity of the "*symbolic referent*" restrains our analysis to the "term symbol" as "reserved for complex, esoteric relationships such as the meanings implicit in totems (Terrence, w. deacon, 2011, 394).

Symbols can be classified into two major categories, namely the general symbols that convey universal meanings and the specific symbols whose significance exists only within the context created by the author. Determining the symbolic meaning in the literary text requires an active reading sustained by a critical thinking activity. The typology of symbols in Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal* will be woven around both general and specific symbols but stress will be put on the specific ones and isolated categories found in the novel, notably the symbols of good and evil, life and death, eternal and ephemeral. Moreover, isolated categories such as destruction, oppression, innocence or sexuality will be significant input. The novel is sprinkled by both negative and positive symbols connotations, such as the postcolonial miserabilism, the symbolic of power, initiation, alienation and depersonalization, the symbolic of slowness and sexuality, the symbolic of animalism and dehumanism, which refers to the perspective forces and the symbolic of the renewal forces.

The symbolic postcolonial miserabilism is perceived through the architecture and disrespect of urbanism plans in the town of Njala as well as the prevailing moral decay and the extreme poverty of the inhabitants. Indeed, Njala appears as a hellish town owing to his hybrid urbanization, which depicts a lost city between two opposing worlds. The hybrid construction of the village of Njala is described as a "mixed character". Brick-build houses build o mud with thatched roof, and clean bathroom and toilets competed with those constructed of "bamboo and grass." The town is characterized, as a "torpid liveliness" for there is apparent development except its backwardness. The problem of "water", source of life and well-being stands as a great issue in the town. It is a center of interest for the critical science. The description of the atmosphere at the water pipe is unbelievable: «a long queue" there was such a crowd. Whenever



it broke down, which happened quite frequently, the women trekked to well in the nearby villages. The water from the river next to Njala was undrinkable because it was polluted with the industrial waste (Zezeza, 1992, 35)".

Miserabilism is perceived in the postcolonial society in many regards. Chola is lost in the prevailing hellish atmosphere of the city. The concept of miserabilism is well depicted and developed by the writer. In this production, he presents the sordid living under an aspect of disparity and disorganization. "As he drove he gazed at the Stoney-faced men in their overalls hurrying to work. There were also these pushing bicycles loaded with the huge baskets, which were stocked with clucking hens or fruits and vegetables, and boxes filled with bottles of fresh milk or charcoal. Then, there were the preoccupied women; some carrying sacks on their heads and others baskets and children on their backs on their way to the market. In addition, there were hordes of gloomy men, probably unemployed; chattering women, possibly typists and house servants, and coquettish girls and playful boys in bright uniform on their way to school" (Zezeza, 1992, 14).

Miserabilism is denoted from the concept of "Football, Football and mouth ball". Indeed, the writer satirizes when portraying the spectacular scene of the mealtime. It looks like a football completion. By comparison, to a football or handball match, the "football" and "mouth ball" competition is a fight for survival. The scene depicts a state of hunger, which was prevailing in the postcolonial society. N'chere's family is presented as the prototype of the poor families of the postcolonial social stratification. The spectacle we perceive during lunchtime in Nchere's house is edifying at many levels: "Around noon the children trickled back ...till... but they began chocking and the two girls giggled". (Zezeza, 9).

Mchere's family is the prototype of the African one in the postcolonial time. Though he is poor, he has a numerous family with five children, a wife, and a baby in breast feeding stage and his grandmother, all of them living together in a small house. Nambe was however expecting another baby since she was pregnant. The writer shed light on the absurdity of having many responsibilities and the unconsciousness of some Africans like Mchere who continues to dig their own grave in an already advanced stage of extreme misery. The daily scene at Mchere's house is qualified as "ritualistic morning quarrel" (5). Nambe experienced humiliation at its paroxysm when she is disclaimed by Ntolo her stubborn child by telling the truth when the proprietor came to collect his money. Contrary to the mother who assert that the husband didn't sleep at home, Ntolo replied, "I was father ... his mother humiliated." (2) As matter of fact, the mother remained speechless and ashamed.

The author raises the issue of children education through the character of Ntolo, the son of Mchere and Nambe. Ntolo is ill educated and as well resembles his progenitor. He likes stealing, fighting and practices incest, precocious sexuality, a common sin he cannot avoid. His sister Utah denounced his incestuous misbehavior toward her. When her mother questioned her on what "foolish things" Ntolo is doing, she replied. "Like what dogs do" (8). Therefore, the fear of the mother is comprehensible: "it would be tragic if he grew up to be like his father" (7). Children in the village of Njala are qualified as precocious little boys" for when he played mothers and fathers they often went beyond imitation of games that adults play. Many of them had seen the real terrors of the night, and been witness to the inquisitive, shame-face stares of their parents in the mornings." Parents do not preserve their intimacy and therefore expose their children who easily copy what they see at night and even act more perfectly than adults act. The children have incredible spirit of creativity. But, the infrastructure and lack of teachers in

the schools remain real problems in the community. Nevertheless, the children “switched to building mud houses; molding figures of people, cars and buses. The more gifted ones came up with creations, which were quite elaborated and life-like” (8).

The author portrays a discussion scene between Ntolo and Pota. The first son of a cook and baker, and the second son of a supervisor. Both children discuss leadership to control the children gang. This is expressive of the state of decay and the loss of values dear to Africans. The value of traditional ruling system are perverted by the future generations. The children are keen on playing and fighting on the pitch, their favorite place: “Many of them did not attend school... a record for losing teachers” (9). There is as well “low wages” and “poor teaching facilities” and “unruly children” with the interference of politic in the school management. There were now three teachers for a student population of several hundreds. Children cannot even go beyond a fewer year of ruminatory education. A teacher lost his wife reported to the party when he refused to buy for party uniform. This fact shows the deep implication of political leaders in the school management.

The life of Mchere and his family is a mere tragedy. He is the stereotype of the drink ward who is seeking for comfort and relief in drinks. Indeed, without a good work, he is necessitous and therefore he cannot afford for the need of his family. The landlord warned to sack him in case he did not pay his house. The writer describes in which his fight against the rat portrays his state of madness and anger: “it was then that he saw the rat come... to.... For such cruelty, greed and insensitivity it deserved to be killed” (3). The “rat” symbolizes the devil in Christianity. But here it is the argent of darkness and misery. The “fat rat” can be assimilated to the greedy political leaders who used strategies and tactics to dehumanize their society. People are ready to trust the political leaders who finally turn to be their executioner. The rat has a negative connotation.

His tension went up to the extent that he made a cigarette with his child Ntolo’s exercise book. The cigarette is symbolic of a fire, along with its destructive capacity of man up to death. On the contrary, the book is the symbol of knowledge. It is the way, which can lead to a bright future. By destroying the book of his son, Mchere is foretelling the failure to extirpate his family from the hellish circle of bad doom. A life with no apparent future. In his anger, Mchere has a threatening appearance. The household problems destroyed the holy union of family. A Holy Spirit dwells in holy body. Food problems and the lack of money to pay the house rent increase the traumatism situation. Moreover, Ndjala is the city symbol of sexual depravation and moral decay. The lucrative business is notably prostitutions. Relationship are based on mutual contempt. Most of the men are womanizers critiqued for their unfaithfulness, like Ben who abused two women. For their excessive interest in sex, Mama Ban observes: “Men like dogs”. The women are not an exception with growth of prostitution in bars. In particular, the middle class is experimenting such depravation, which consequently brought about ‘failed marriages’. Professionals of sex separate in the bars in the sole goal pf gaining money. Even in marital relationships, the cardinal values of mutual love and confidence are pure fake. The fact is: “Ndjala had more than its fair share of prostitutes and bars. Many marriages in Ndjala were not founded on love, trust, and any such fine sentiments the middle classes often pretentiously cling to, but on mutual contempt; and they survived of sheer necessity.... A bar girl notices: “they think we are born to serve them” (37).

The suffering have reached a critical point and time seemed to be a suspended time. Despite his efforts to adapt himself to the reality, Chola is psychologically affected by the hostile

environment. When driving, he exercises a sort of the city's atmosphere. Indeed, Chola remains impotent in view of the high state of misery he is witnessing. The slowness in whatever he does is part of the process to readapt himself. In fact, western postcolonial society, except monotony. Misery has become a burden and its effects upon characters are perceptible. Chola is disappointed to the extent that even his sexual experience is undefinable.

Marriage principles are questionable in view of the circumstances prevailing. As well as his unfortunate son, Mchere's mother is perplexed for the latter. She feared for him because his favorite places as the bars are full of dangers and likely to breed about tragedy. She deplores the miserable family life of Nambe, his son's wife whose "years of marriage had turned into a caricature of her former self. Her reflection about the principles of marriage brought about a deep regret and her question is meaningful: "was this what marriage was all about? (6)". The golden age promised by the African leaders seems to be a nightmarish dream as portrayed through the lives of the characters such as Mchere, Chola, Dambo and others. How about the ideological insight through the symbolic items?

## II- OF IDEOLOGICAL INSIGHT THROUGH THE SYMBOLIC ITEMS

Zaleza's smouldering Charcoal encompasses many symbols representative of an apologia of ideologies. Indeed, the symbolic items identified are solid background of the predominating ideologies in postcolonial society. We denote that a multiplicity of ideologies at the political, socio-cultural and religious levels. The ideologies are expressive of ideas with meaningful and clear objectives in time and space. This is without ambiguity. It is relevant that "*the ideology is therefore the system of ideas which communicates man's spirit or a social group*" (Althusser, 97). The author uses some natural and cultural items as symbols of power and domination. In African culture, the "cane" is representative of the king's power and authority. At the national scale, the "cane" symbolizes the political power and the prestige of the postcolonial leaders. The cane of the minister for development is the symbol of political and royal power. As a matter of fact, "he waved his cane with a regal touch" (Zeleza, 30). Other symbolic items refer to specific identified elements or persons "the fat python" is used in reference to the bosses. Symbolic of the python snake refers the new African wealthy leaders, the bourgeois. The class is a fervent adept of gabegy. The "Gabegy" or "guest" concepts are negativity perceived by the writer as it refers to a ceremony in luxurious hotels and engages lots of unnecessary expenses by the government. As illustrated the public ceremony ended just at 5.10 pm. A private cocktail party was scheduled to be held later in the evening at Kabulla Hills Hotel for invited guests from industry, business community, and the expectations of the African people. It is a continuous exploitation of the brothers by the brothers with the support of the expatriates, representing the neo-colonizer. Ngugi well-illustrated this fact in *Matigari* through the collaboration between John and Robert Williams who appeared to be the sequel of their respective fathers, John Boy and Settler Williams. *Matigari* is therefore right when he asserts: "our interdependence has been sold back to imperialism by the servants the put in power" (Ngugi, 72). We must conclude that political independence rather theoretical than substantial. Moreover, the social organization categorizes negatively the African tribes. In fact, the author is critical of tribalism, one of the key ideologies, which constitutes a hindrance to African freedom. Indeed, there is an ethno-psychological identify classification of African, which identifies those named "Yao" as lazy workers, "Chewa" as diligent and "Tumbuka" as clever people. This categorization can be detrimental as it is arbitrary and therefore probable source of division and opposition among the tribes. The complex of superiority and inferiority is apparent in the use of some whitening products. Our interpretation puts forth an alienation ideology with its destructive aspects. The

use of “ambilation” by some women in the novel is a microcosmic view of the reality in Africa. The depersonalization of African women is a tragic happening on the continent, and there is a need for a particular attention. Racial complex and alienation were deeply manifested in postcolonial society. The author denounces the question of skin whitening and European dressing style. Through the character of Nambe, the author revealed an alienated spirit in a state of nostalgia. She qualifies the time her husband used to buy her “Ambition to whiten her skin and straight-haired wig” as golden days. She was an object of consideration of people, and attention for the husband who called her darling. However, Nambe’s mother expresses a disdain for the fact she used herself:

Look at your face, her mother said, what is that. You look sickly. One would think that you had smallpox. Allah did not give you that skin to abuse. What do you want to become? A European? Allah gave them pink skins and us darker ones, that is all there is to it. None is better than other in the eye of Allah. We are all his children” (Zaleza, 7). *The writer denounces the prevailing hegemony of postcolonial society through the symbolic items, and as stated, the “ideology is the system of ideas that explains, or makes sense of a society, and according to Marx is the mechanism by which unequal social relations are reproduced. The ruling classes not only rule, they rule as thinkers and producers of ideas so that they determine how society sees itself (hegemony)”*. (Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gereth and Tiffin Helen, *Post-colonial Studies*, Routledge, New York, 2007, 203).

The items in Zaleza’s literary production are meaningful within the different contexts described. The writer makes of ideologies to serve a specific purpose or reveal a critical truth. The symbolic of political State power is seen through symbolic items such as the “party militia”, in “party card”, “women Brigade”, “the physical appearance” and the “positioning” in the party. The items are representative of the repressive forces of postcolonial regimes. The character of Chola, on his way to the offices of Daily Despatch was victim of in a scene of party card control by “party youth militia in their green uniform and caps” (17). Indeed, the party car is a key (césam) to open any door. An item identifies the friends and enemies of the Great Leader. It is the equivalent of an identity card, a paper book or passbook used in South Africa during Apartheid. It identifies your militancy as a blind follower of the Great Leader, a typical and similar figure of George Orwell’s character “Big Brother” in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Besides the militia, which practices gangsterism and mafia is an element of the repressive ideology in postcolonial society, for “organizations are part of the daily lot of the postcolonial decaying society. “Chola always felt uneasy and sometime guilty... the brutal repetitive cycles of unnamed nature”. “Every citizen of the country was supposed to have a party membership card. Anyone who does not possess the magic card is severely repressed: “Violence flowed in their veins, like blood draining them of meaning; purpose and leaving them with the spasm of death... others were beaten to death, their houses burnt, or women raped and children barred from school, if they did not possess the almighty card” (Zezeza, 18). The political leaders rule under tyrannical ideology. The party represents a machine, which is deprived of feeling, pity and humanity: “But how to win when the party is firmly set in its ways like a machine”. (Zaleza, 19).

Mrs. Gonthi, chairman of the local women’s Brigade, the women’s section of the party and her deputy, Mrs. Madimba, sister in-law of the MP for Ndila. Gonthi physical aspect is much expressive of her “political power”. She was not only fat, but “the way she walked and talked” shows his power and authority. As well, Madimba deserved great prestige because of brother in-law relationship with the MP of Njala (Zaleza, 1992, 39). The impressive physical

appearance of Mrs. Gonthi added to her abusive authority over women, is the result of the ideology implemented. Althusser claims that the ideological state apparatuses renew and perpetuate dominance over the oppressed people: "Ideology is perpetuated, according to Althusser, by ideological state apparatuses such as church, education, police, which interrelate subjects, that is, apparatuses that "call people forth" as subjects, and which provide the conditions by which, and the contexts in which, they obtain subjectivity". (Ashcroft, Griffiths, 203). The author is critical of the ideologies implemented by intellectuals who were considered as the great black hope. The disappointment of Chola about his fellow compatriots is deep: "where were all the friends of his who had been students with him as undergraduates and later in America, in those heady sixties when they proclaimed what they would do after finishing their studies and following their return home of the motherland, the continent of the damned? To hell with imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, Dictatorship, they had all shouted with aggressive conviction. Where were they now? (Zaleza, 18).

Through his character, the author analyzes the imperialist ideology as a source of African advanced state of misery. It brought about stratification of the society where the poor's experience terror, violence, death in the slums. As a self-deceptive struggle for him, Chola qualifies the "motherland" as the "continent of the damned" in the logic of the thought of René Dumont who proclaimed that Africa started bad. The intense discussion between Denga, the patriot and nationalist, and his friend Chola on actual issues is significant. Denga thought that everything ought to have been nationalized and by getting rid of expatriates. However, Chola is autocratic in his perception: "throughout the ages notorious Africans who sold their people into slavery, or collaborated with the invaders to subjugate our people. The postcolonial period is worse and brings most intellectual to the living realities. The disillusionment of most "been to" is due to the difficulties they encounter with the ideological systems. Denga thinks he deserves promotion and good salary for he is high-educated 17 years in a high school and 5 years in England, but "Time was beginning to tell on him. Six years had now passed since his return from America, six years of broken hopes". "He had come back full of energy". America symbolizes "wealth, energy, shallowness and decay". Materialist values and capitalism principles have great implications on the post-colonial society as depicted in the novel. His disappointment extends to his career which he sees as "a burn out dream; burnt on the stake of survival. Survival. It was an ugly word. It sounded so raw, basic, and animal-like". There is a total discrepancy between the "reality of living in a world where one's inner visions and values of the outside world are irreconcilable" (Zaleza, 16). The return of the African intellectuals to the soil of their birth turned into nothingness. Concept of "Been to" John a former clerk at the office of Chola a boastful Been to (Zaleza, 22). At the political level, we denote the implementation of despotic and tyrannical ideologies aimed at dividing to dominate and rule at the expense of the population. Indeed, the regime in place is using oppressive machines to govern the country.

The most influential development of Max's notion of "social being" was Louis Althusser's theory of the subject's construction by ideology. Ideology is the system of ideas that explains, or makes sense of a society. In addition, according to Marx, it is the mechanism by which unequal social relations are reproduced. The ruling classes only rule, they as thinkers and producers of ideas so that they determine how the society sees itself (hegemony). This 'misrepresentation' of meaning and social relations is referred to by Marx as 'false consciousness', or a false view of one's 'true' social condition, something that has a coercive power over the subordinate classes.

Ideology is perpetuated, according to Althusser, by ideological state apparatuses such as church, education, police, which interpellate subjects, that is, apparatuses that ‘ call people forth’ as subjects, and which provide the conditions by which, and the contexts in which, they obtain subjectivity. Although ideology serves the interests of the ruling classes, it is not static or unchangeable, and its materiality has certain important consequences. For white ideology is dominant, it is also contradictory, fragmentary and inconscient and does necessarily or inevitably blindfold the interpellated subject to a perception of its operations (Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen, p203). The dominating ideologies are women around the religious, familial, political, syndicate, informative and cultural apparatuses (Althusser, 90). Marxism considers the government, administration, police, court, prisons as state repressive apparatuses. Here, the coercive power is distinguished by violence. (Althusser, 82). Zaleza’s work notably unveils the manipulative process within the information apparatus. In the manipulative process of the people, the political leaders have hold on journalism and communication. The editor advices to Chola to follow the rule of the game because he is not this perspective. In reality, false journalism is practiced. But for the Editor, it is all about “the rules of our game (Zaleza, 20). Rejection emotion is the “cardinal rule number one” p.20 to succeed in journalism. The ethical issues in journalism are not any concerns for political leaders. Such is the case of the Editor, a former influential party executive member who promotes mental intoxication by the media. The state of moral decay of the editor Denga, an old friend of Chola, a womanizer, is perceptible in his delight of love affairs.

Religion displays an ideology that goes in hand with depriving the poor. Tithes and collection from the members are capital without return on investment. The religious leaders are actors of the embezzlement occurring in the churches. The church is a company where managers play on the spirit of its members.

The political discourse is a manipulative as the religious one. This explains the disappointment and the disillusionment of Nambe when in her attempt to save her sick child, the party chairman who promised her help retracted. His wording echoes in her mind. The postcolonial leaders are cheaters and liars only interested in capitalist and materials gains. The virtue of “cooperation” and “selflessness” the beloved leaders promote is a mere slogan “ *the apparently meant having the sole fish-trading license in Njala, and getting eggs, hens, bags of maize as well as money, all in the name of development and loyalty to the party*”. As an active militant, she bitterly analyzes the leader: “politicians! They breathed on greed and lying” (Zaleza, 45).

In the novel, marriage as an institution appears to be a form of capitalism with the sole goal of profit of actors implied. Zaleza by exposing the ideology behind the “forced or arranged marriage” raises the consciousness of some Africans whose selfishness, interest and laziness transformed marriage into a family business, which produces benefits for parents. Nambe’s parents’ marriage “meant one less mouth of feed and a possible new source of income. Indeed, the greedy father is a partisan of polygamy. For him a big family represents an important source of income, for this type of union multiplies income t an increasing rate. As a matter of fact, “her father had a large household, three wives and other dozen children. Baba the polygamist is the prototype of the large African family chief. He holds power and wealth to well control the household. He delights whatever shines like gold, in particular family gift. Baba the African chief is impressed by appearance and like boasting of it. The all father “baba” as children call their father in African tradition approved of Mchere who “worked in the city and looked well-to-do judging from the clothes he wore and the fact that he gave family gifts” (7). However, marriage symbolizes total independence from parents, more a feeling of equality.

The natural items are expressive of cardinal values and principles that men have to appropriate and install in themselves to control a harmonious society. The writer depicts a scene of initiatory trip to the forest. The journey of the group of boys in the forest is symbolic of an initiation, as they will face fear and difficulties. Indeed, the state of spirit of the boys was very low as the forest represents an enigma in their eyes. They expressed their fear of snake. But their great fear was to be branded coward by their sister in the village. The forest incarnates fear and death. However, it contains fruits, food, honey, source of life. Out of the cowardice and the fear of imaginary snake, they were in need of food to survive “under the circumstances nobody thought of, let alone talked about, the fact that they undertook these journeys because they needed the fruit to fill their chronologically half-empty stomachs” (12). They reach the foot of the hills with harshness where they found the mango and guavas trees. The defeat of the boys’ gang against the swarm of bees is much expressive of values and default. Indeed, the group of boys had leadership problem. Ntolo and Pota brought fight a division in the group. The two of them were characterized by selfishness and boastfulness. As a matter of fact, they could not face bees characterized by unity, force, threat. In a state of survival, reasoning has no place. The attack of the hungry bees is an evidence: Then the sky... the bags were dropped, and guavas and mangoes lay scattered everywhere. The screaming, groaning, and humming of hungry bees made a deafening noise” (Zaleza, 13). Through the forest scene, the writer reveals two ideologies: tyranny and communism. On the one hand, leadership problems, fight, division, selfishness and boastfulness characterize the group of boys. On the other hand, the bees, which defeated the boys, were made proof of union and force. This shows man incapacity to rule efficiently without the values of unity, a high sense of discipline and moral principles.

Tiyambe ZALEZA’s novel is the fruit of deep reflection and high sense of duty both as a critic and a writer? Using as background his historical knowledge of postcolonial society, he scans and depicts with zeal and art the lives of his compatriots through the story of two families diametrically opposed in many regards. His writing is a powerful testimony of living realities and events occurring in postcolonial society. The choice of characters: themes of poverty, corruption, tyranny, social classes’ struggles and political ideologies brilliantly illustrate the critical conscience of the author as far as the prevailing tragedy of man in society is concerned. As a matter, although ideology serves the interests of the ruling classes, it is not static or unchangeable, and its materiality has certain important consequences. For while ideology is dominant, it is also contradictory, fragmentary and inconsistent and does not necessarily or inevitably blindfold the ‘interpellated subject to a perception of its operations (Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen, 203).

### **III. BEYOND THE SYMBOLIC DIMENSION OF THE ITEMS**

By exposing the insights of the ideologies, the author examines with particular attention the predicament experienced by the African communities during postcolonial period. In so doing, he demonstrates his high sense humanity, for “the essence of man is indeed the consciousness” ‘De Rabaudys, Christian and Rolland, Béatrice, *Sophia*, 1974, 5). Beyond the exposition of symbolic items describing the burning issues of his society, the author promotes the forces of awakening and renewal for the freedom of his compatriots. Actually, from the state of consciousness to the taking of action there is one-step. The role assigned to his characters is highly significant. Some conscious intellectuals stood up and fought in order to bring a change. The journalist Chola’s writings purpose was to raise the consciousness of the people about the



betrayal of the leaders of the country who turned the dreams and promises into a hellish and nightmarish reality:

*He was going to fight, to continue where Dambo had left off. His proposed book was also now beginning to take shape. The book would be about the raping of a dream, the subversion of the aspiration of the independence. No, it would go further; it would show how those dreams and aspirations had been vested in the wrong people, and how the Dumbo's and Mchere of his world offered a glimmer of hope not only revitalize those dreams and aspirations, but also to realize them. Yes, it would be a book about himself, about Dambo, Mchere, their lives and struggles to break out of the monstrous concentration camp that is independent Africa.*

Chola shares the view of Marx who admitted that the making of their own history requires a struggle involving a complex process. It often has to take many protracted twists and turns across the valleys and deserts, jungles and rivers on the hazardous path to the mountain top of victory." (Zaleza, 106). In the same view, Mandela affirmed that there is no easy walk for freedom anywhere and again before we reach the mountains tops of our desires (Mandela Nelson, *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, 1990, 31). His decision to go to exile did not please Catherine, but as he put it "*One cannot fight from the grave*" (107) and it is necessary to live in order to fight. His inspiration originates from *Che Guevara's* biography, which deals revolution (121). The forces of awakening are less the progressive forces, which intended to fight against the repressive ideologies in order to change the prevailing dramatic situation in postcolonial society. To reach the goal, some strategies and tactics of infiltration and a sense of unity the different catalyzing forces became compulsory: "we have illustrated and will continue to infiltrate and work with all the progressive forces in our society; workers, peasants, students, patriots' elements, radical intellectuals. People must become aware that the system we have at present is evil. It serves the rich and the powerful at the expense of the masses. It is not as if it is the will of God, if you see what I mean; it is the creation in the greedy men, and anything, which men can make, men can also destroy and build something better in its place... Capitalism and all its bastard colonialism, neo-colonialism, you name it should be eradicated for the last time (Zaleza; 77).

Progressivism is a doctrine, which intend to promote social progress and reforms Dambo stands as the figured of the movement for change. He tried to motivate those who are victims of "a kind mental masturbation". For him "thinking or being concerned about something is not enough. One has to act. "He considers his fellow for whom criticism is as good as action as dreamers. He assumes that only action can bring the expected change": the more they talk about changing things the more they assume change will take place by itself and their consciences are laid to rest in the belief that they are concerned. He qualifies this attitude as a mental masturbation. He asserts: "we have been theorizing about these things for too long. It is now time for action" (78). Indeed, theory without practice is powerless for such an undertaking.

The role of the intellectual is capital in the change. Anything that deal with tradition was apparently acceptable whereas writing critically about the present as subversive because it distracted people from all-important task of development. The performance of a play or the portrayal of a scene by literary production cab arouse great interest in the eye of the audience. It is a powerful canal through which truth and realities are revealed. Claudius in Hamlet: prince of Denmark was denounced as the number of Hamlet, Penguin Books, hero's late father, through a performance of actors he had invited: "the play's the thing, wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king" (Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet*, Penguin Books, 1994, 78). As a mirror,

the work of the artist raises the conscience of both the oppressed and the oppressor. In this perspective, Ndatéro was detained simply because of his unorthodox literary view, which is a clear manifestation of living realities (Zaleza, 85). The conscious awakening and the reaction of the oppressed population constitute the submitting block that will end up the repressive ideologies. They have to stand up and fight for freedom and the realization of the dreams of their fathers with independence achievement.

The forces of renewal call for children education based on African traditions and culture. The mythology, legend, fables, and stories are worth teaching to young generations to bring a positive change. Those cultural backgrounds are strongly valuable for the lesson and cardinal values they install in the mind of the children. The story of the greedy chief and the clever are told by the grandmother is full of wisdom and contribute to new generations education: “she told then the story of the greedy chief who snatched food from his people until clever are decided to teach him a lesson . He put poison in the food. When the chief ate, his stomach became like a bloom until it burst. Hare became a hero.” (Zaleza, 132). This parable is a strong foundation of education for the children who are the future generation of leaders. In addition, here in the story, the anti-values are punished. However, there is an invitation to celebrate and promote values of heroism, as the character of Beowulf. His people mourn him and praise him for his notability, generosity, courage, and what is less common in Germanic heroes, kindness to his people (Abrahams, M.H et al. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: Norton, 2006, 90). Mchere is confident when he decided to invest in the education of Ntolo, the son of salvation who will break the hellish circle of misery: “Education was the key to the future... yes; Ntolo’s life would be different; it had to be” (Zaleza, 72). Proverbs and stories from African traditions are pervasive in *Smoldering Charcoal*. The aim of the writer is underscore the validity of African cultural value in the dismantling of all repressive ideologies.

Indeed, Tiyaambe Zaleza’s literary production deals with criticism by laying bare the tare of the postcolonial society. The act of writing has multiple objectives, but or the critic writer, it is a duty, a mission to be accomplished whatever the price. As a man in society, the writer has had conscience, and as such needs to exorcise the evil. He refuses to return away from his duty pf denunciator. He seeks to fight against the horrors of inhuman political ideologies like totalitarianism, capitalism, alienating and all form of repressive ideologies. He raises the conscious of his audience about abusive improvement and draw attention on the daily lot of the majority of people. Here the concept of ‘cannibalism ‘ is perceptible as the new daily African leader are solely concerned in killings and destruction of their people instead of implementing promising policies supposed to free from the dictatorship of the while master, the colonizer. Indeed, the new leader who was supposed to be the messiah turned into despotic and cannibalistic machines destructive to his own people.

Seeking to be in harmony with himself the writer expresses his danger and revolt in his production. Roger Chateaneu affirms “what moves you to write... is mainly a revolt and the sense of passionate expectation. This is the kind of agreement with the world I am looking for in my novels. Actually, the critic is intended to give sad conscience to the reader by describing signifying events and situation in the novel as it is the case in Tiyaambe zeleza’s literary work. He proposes real liberation for himself and his community through his writing. His purpose is hereby stated to awake the consciousness, allow commitment act for change and therefore overcome a certain human condition totally (Bourneuf Roland and Ouellet, Réal 1972, *Univers du roman*, 200). To write is to take position and act. The writer claims his appurtenance to a society and his right to express himself. In doing so, he manifests his love and passion for

human life. The denunciation of the psychological and political realities is a proof of his determination to put an end to the prevailing general crisis of humanity. The novel is an instrument of knowledge, a weapon to fight ignorance and free oppressed ones. Denga is an ant-colonialist and nationalist dislikes the white men. For him, expatriates are no less than uncircumcised boys are. For him, former colonial rulers have profits without responsibility. The political struggle of colonized peoples against the specific ideology and practice of colonialism. In fact, various forms of opposition became articulated as a resistance of the operations of colonialism in political, economic and cultural institution. It emphasizes the need to reject colonial power and restore local control, freedom and independence. Ant colonialism has taken many forms in different colonial situations; it is sometimes associated with an ideology of racial liberation. (Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen, 11). Indeed, post colonialism came along with the disorganization of African cohesion and traditional life. The village life disappeared with the values and norms of the community transmitted from generations to generations by ancestors. In cities, education is a real issue. Ignorance, alienation and depersonalization of Africans worsen their tragic situation. As grandmother states it:

*However, the world has changed; the children now grew up without knowing their grandparents and the land, which had nourished their ancestors. She felt like a stagnant survivor of a bygone age, ignored and unwanted. It was painful. No, she was not afraid that the sun would soon be setting for her. How could she be? She had had a long life with its share of tragedies and happy moments, but it was a life that had been centered on values that were comprehensible. Many things had changed, little was deeply rooted, and everything seemed to be a state of flux. What was threatening was to think that this was the world she would be leaving behind for her children. A world of lepers, maimed in body and soul. What did the departed ones think? What would she herself think and do when her time finally come. Alternatively, had the two worlds grown so far apart that communication between them was now impossible? (Zaleza, 10).*

The culture of values and cardinal traditional principle can bring a positive change in a decaying society. The grandmother is nostalgic of the golden age of Africa: ‘and what sweet children. It was a refreshing to be with them in the evening after supper, telling tales of the clever hare, the foolish hyena, the ferocious lion and the slow-witted elephant. Or stories of how and ugly girl married a rich and handsome young man white her more beautiful sister who despised her lived a miserable life until old age without a husband or children faces imprinted in her mind’s eye. And their shill laughter and echoing in her ears, grandmother would doze off the sleep, amused and content’’. Through the nostalgic remembrance of the golden are by his character. The author draws our attention on an important issue about education. The present and the future generations should be educated on the background of African traditions, which celebrates cardinal principles and values.

The individual cannot win as soon as he fights alone. Dambo tried on his own to fight the system without success. As a deputy Chairman of the students’ Union and after lawyer at the Attorney-General’s Chamber, he became an active militant of the party. As a “principled man” for himself, arrogant and stubborn for the other, he didn’t succeed to overthrow the oppressive system alone though he was courageous and willing. His friend Chola warned him: ‘you can’t transform an oppressive system with the instruments of oppression’ (Zaleza, 19). Union above ethnic origin “All bosses are the same because they exploit us, and we are all the same because we are exploited, whether we like each other or not. You, see we have no choice but to stand up together” (27). During the women’s protest at the prison to free their husbands arrested for

striking at the bakery, Biti appeared as the charismatic leader of the group. She drew the conscious of her fellow women on the principle of unity and togetherness. As a matter of fact, all the housewives, student, prostitutes, gathered to claim the freedom of their men. For her joining, the procession is a way to protect each individual: “We are making this procession because what has happen could happen to any of us “(Zezeza, 140).with no exception of gender or social class she urged for unity in the nonviolent struggle. The exploitation of the working class is portrayed through what was called Nkate Bakery strike Tione, the leader’s speech is significant. Brothers, no more degradation. No more peanut pay! No more miserable condition! No more!... Brothers, united we stand, divided we fall”. Indeed, the strikers were claiming lot of things like good pay, schools for their children and clothes for their wife and consideration on the part of their greedy bosses. Their claim can be summarized in the following lines: “that’s why it’s up to us to see to it that we also some of that milk and honey” (25).

How about the revolt against the inhuman practice of the political leaders?

Chola’s revolt against the inhuman practices of the political leaders is denoted in his reaction and act of resistance. He counteracts the ideology of supremacy of the Great Leader. “He threw the card on the back of the seat. It would be burned in the evening like the others. In his way, he kept alive his faith in his own resistance and struggle against oppression”. The “underground movement” assigned itself the goal to bring about change by fighting against the oppressors. Chola’s consciousness came with a transformation as his convictions and experience after the death of Dambo changed the course of his life. He was affected by the situation. So, he decided to join the movement. He admitted: “at last he would be challenging his vision into collective action. It was the biggest step he has ever undertaken” (123). The struggle for liberation is not linked to the ethnic origin but rather that of the calls for unity out of ethnic and regional differences. He promotes unity in the struggle for the improvement of their conditions. Indeed, the “bread strike was all about the harsh living conditions of workers of the postcolonial period. The workers union was full of traitors among the union’s leaders whose sole interest was preserving their individual interest. The miserabilism and absurdity is seen through the passion characterizing both the mass and politicians during the opening ceremony of the Chasu Brewery. The multitude of people was abused and manipulated by the speakers who would praise the exponential development occurring with the political leaders.

Feminism appears as a force of change. The author is defender of feminism as a driving force for freedom. Through the famous character of Biti, the only female traitor in the whole of Ndjala”, he shows the way to self-determinism by dint of work and sacrifice and courage. Her intelligent and charisma provide the means to free herself from men’s dictatorship and dependence. She experienced the antipathy of the male tailor but she has the great support of all the women. She is the embodiment of a fighting spirit, the prototype of a hard worker and competitor. Her male colleagues found her a tough competitor and did not disguise the fact that they disliked her. They could tolerate competition amongst themselves but not from a woman. Women customers were the backbone of the tailoring trade so that the more the women Biti attracted, the fewer were the number of their own customers. All attempts to destroy her failed. In fact, she grew stronger every day as her reputation for excellence spread. She was admired by other women and many stories were told about her cunning, shrewdness and independent-mindedness” (35).

Through the character of Chola, Zezeza thrashes the irresponsible behavior of his fellow African intellectuals and leaders who failed to keep their vow and promises. In a state of

disillusionment and betrayal of the latter, he is perplexed: “where were all those friends... a full crop of hair” (18). The future generation has been transformed by the ideologies of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and dictatorship. Their “aggressive conviction” which embodied them as “big shot”, “pot-bellied”. Their intoxicating words had now fermented into froth, and their radical aspirations had generated into mere shibboleths from the death past”. Through his two characters Denga and Chola, the writer put forth different political perceptions. The first a nationalist, and the second an autocratic and intellectual. Their encounter centered on hot political debate related to the management of their country.

## CONCLUSION

Zaleza’s narrative depicts the lives of two families in post-colonial Africa as a vivid life experience of hardship and intriguing events experienced by the people in a stratified society. The poor and ill-educated class is seemingly facing the same brutal violence like the educated middle class citizens. The novel portrays a vibrant insight of the events occurring in the postcolonial period. The novel heralded an outburst of interest in symbolism, which is not common. His work remains a significant span in the collective conscience of the postcolonial society. As a critic, the symbols used to describe the predicament of the oppressed by the oppressing forces are vibrant to draw the consciousness in order to operate psychological and societal transformations in African society. Beyond the symbols are hidden truths and realities man must be aware of as to take the step for resistance and fight for justice, equality and freedom for a more human society. In this perspective, some cardinal principles such as unity, probity, love of one another and sacrifice must be observed. Change is possible if African mentalities evolve and reconcile both traditional and modern worlds around universal norms and values.

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