

*Review*

# Epistemological and moral implications of characterization in African literature: A critique of Patrick Chakaipa's 'Rudo Ibofu' (love is blind)

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**This paper examines African epistemology and axiology as expressed in African literature through characterization, and it adopts the Zimbabwean Patrick Chakaipa's novel, Rudo Ibofu as a case study. It provides a preliminary significance of characterization in Zimbabwean literature and by extension African literature before demonstrating how characterization has been 'abused' by some African writers since colonialism in Africa. The consequences are that a subtle misconstrued image of Africa can indirectly or directly be perpetuated within the academic settings. The Zimbabwean novel as one example of African literature that extensively employs characterization, it represents Africa. The mode of this work is reactionary in the sense that it is responding directly to trends identifiable in African literature spheres. The paper therefore is a contribution towards cultural revival and critical thinking in Africa where the wind of colonialism in the recent past has significantly affected the natives' consciousness. In the light of the latter point, the paper provides a corrective to the western gaze that demonized Africa by advancing the view that Africans were without a history, worse still epistemological and moral systems. The paper thus criticizes, dismantles and challenges the inherited colonial legacies which have injured many African scientists and researchers' consciousness; it is not only against the vestiges of colonialism, but of neo-colonialism and western cultural arrogance that have been perpetuated by some African writers through characterization.**

**Key words:** Characterization, Africa, Zimbabwe, literature, epistemology, morality, Chakaipa, 'Rudo Ibofu'.

## INTRODUCTION

There is monumental literature by philosophers like David Hume, George W.F. Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Lucien Levy-Bruhl and Diedrich Westermann that describe Africans as 'tabula rasa', a people with no reason/rationality; hence without a history and worse still philosophy. Westerners considered Africa as a dark continent (Winch, 1970; Churchland, 1984; Ramose, 1999; Mawere, 2010). They despised Africa's traditions, customs, belief systems and indigenous knowledge systems as diabolic, barbaric and primitive. This false and pejorative label had a negative impact to Africa's own socio-economic and political development. Africa's valued traditions, knowledge systems and philosophy of life had to change to fit in with the western scientism and the so-called modernity.

Some creative works by some African writers have however captured the true imagination, epistemology and

axiological systems of Africa. Yet it remains a surprise that using the theme of characterization, some African writers have misrepresented the African values and traditions in their literary works. On the other hand, scholars in the field of Philosophy have not devoted adequate time to analyze philosophical themes that run through African literature. They have left this business for creative writers. It however remains a critical question whether this should be a game for creative writers alone.

As they seek to proffer solutions to postcolonial Africa's problems such as poverty, neocolonialism, cultural decadence and the split-personality crisis, many of the leading writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Okot p'Bitek, Mongo Beti, Patrick Chakaipa, Solomon Mutsaers and others have used the theme of characterization in their engagement with modernity and

Christianity. Using the theme of characterization, these writers have tussled with the following questions in one way or another: 'Why and how was Christianity brought to Africa? What was the impact of Christianity on African culture? Is modernity compatible with tradition?'

Though giving more emphasis to Zimbabwean first generation literature particularly Patrick Chakaipa's 'Rudo Ibofu', this article provides a preliminary analysis of the well thought literary device, 'characterization' as it runs throughout the whole terrain of African literature (both written and oral/orature). The paper presents an effort to open African literature to cross disciplinary work-to share with other disciplines like philosophy. While it acknowledges the fact that some novels by African writers "present accurate and lively pictures (through characterization) of the conflict between traditional African values and those carried to Africa by Europeans and North Americans" (McCarthy, 1991: 152); the paper points the failure of some writers to accurately depict the relationship. They have described the relationship between African traditional values and western ones in a way that is damaging to Africa; a way that jeopardizes and threatens Africa's well being. In Zimbabwean literature, this is more vivid in the first generation creative writers.

The failure by most first generation African creative writers to demonstrate a balanced relationship between western values and the indigenous ones is predicated by the thorough censorship of writers' literary works during the colonial era. It is this observation that motivated the researcher to write on this topic.

In the light of the above stated observation, this paper seeks to provide a corrective to the western gaze that negatively impacted the consciousness of most of the first generation writers and demonized Africa in ways numerous to mention. It clearly reiterates that "Europe's intervention in Africa was the beginning of the most nefarious images, the black labeling of Africans and their 'philosophies'. An African invented for European purposes could no longer serve the interests of its own people" (Asante, 2001, xiv) as Europeans despised all African traditions, customs, philosophies and knowledge systems. Indigenous writers were encouraged to write works that through the literary theme of characterization despised African traditional philosophies and justify the perpetuation of western dominance over Africa.

In view of this, the paper contributes to the rationality debate on African literature; it is a deconstructionist effort reminiscent of the many aspects of the African people's struggles to control their own identity, literature, philosophies, society and destination.

More importantly, the paper examines how critical the literary theme of 'characterization' is in 'African traditional literature', that is, characterization was always used as a vehicle to inculcate moral and epistemological values that oriented the African child to the 'real world'. In fact, since time immemorial, characterization was used in African literature (particularly orature) to carry forward African

values and knowledge systems from one generation to another. Yet, while the African societies have always enjoyed and benefited from characterization in their literature, a plethora of multicultural, axiological and epistemological problems brought forth by colonialism almost outweigh these benefits. With the advent of colonialism, the same literary device-characterization entrusted by the African society as a didactic and moral vehicle was despised, downplayed and in most cases abused or employed to advance the interests of the colonial master. Characterization in the Shona novel, 'Rudo Ibofu' (love is blind) of Patrick Chakaipa is a fine example. In the novel, the author uses characterization to despise his own traditional religion (African traditional religion) in favor of Christianity. The consequences are that a subtle misconstrued image of Africa can indirectly be perpetuated within the academic setting. In light of this observation, this paper quests for an urgency of now; an 'African turn' where indigenous philosophies are instituted into the mainstream philosophy and the Western gaze on Africa is corrected. With this corrective measure effected, it is the author's fervent hope, in the words of Nzewi (2007:5), that:

"After the bombardment of the invading tornados of fanciful knowledge, the indigenous lore of life will yet revive with innately refurbished shoots, and fulfill again the human mission of the musical arts in original Africa, and edify Africa's mental and human posterity".

## CHARACTERIZATION: AN ANALYSIS

[Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/character\\_arts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/character_arts), defines characterization as "the process of conveying information about characters in narrative or dramatic works of art or everyday conversation" which is, it is giving a distinctive expression to characters to represent, interpret or communicate certain values and messages to readers/audiences. The term has its derivation from the word character hence the need to define character. Etymologically, the term character derived from the ancient Greek word 'kharaktêr (χαρακτήρ)', the earliest use in English, in this sense, dates from the restoration, although it became widely used after its appearance in Tom Jones in 1749 (Aston and Savona, 1991 and Harrison, 1998) and in African orature since time immemorial. In literature (African literature included) a character is the representation of a person in a narrative or dramatic work of art such a novel, folktale, play, or film (Baldick, 2001; Childs and Fowler, 2006). It is a mode of communication or vehicle which conveys special messages from the author/narrator to the readers/audiences. This denotes that characters are the basis from which themes of a novel or work of art and intentions of the author are drawn. Since the 19th century, "the art of creating characters, as practiced by

actors or writers, had been called characterization" (Harrison, 1998: 52). Characters may be presented by means of description, through their actions, speech, or thoughts.

Character development is very important in character-driven literature, where stories focus not on events, but on individual personalities. Classic examples in African literature include Solomon Mutswairo's 'Feso' (Devil thorn) (1956); Patrick Chakaipa's 'Karikoga Gumiremiseve' (The lonely one of the ten arrows) (1958) and 'Rudo Ibofu' (Love is blind) (1961); Ndabaningi Sithole's 'Obed Mutezo': The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist (1970); Stanlake Samkange's 'The Mourned One' (1975), and Wilson Katiyo's 'A son of the soil' (1976), among others. This paper adopts Patrick Chakaipa's 'Rudo Ibofu' for the reason that he uses the device of characterization to denigrate (his own) African traditional religion; an error that the author of this work seeks to correct. The author identifies with Meki Nzewi (2007: 4) who strongly feels that:

'Contemporary Africans must strive to rescue, resuscitate and advance our original intellectual legacy, or the onslaught of externally manipulated forces of mental and cultural dissociation now rampaging Africa will obliterate our original intellect and lore of life'.

Also, Chakaipa's use of characterization is vivid throughout his novel. Of interest is the way he eschews the political, hardly questions the socio-economic system and tends to see social and political problems in terms of weaknesses of individual characters hence his being didactic and moralistic.

As said earlier on, historically, stories and plays focusing on characters became common as part of the 19th-century Romantic Movement and character-driven literature rapidly supplanted more plot-driven literature that typically utilizes easily identifiable archetypes rather than proper character development. In African orature before colonialism, characterization served mainly as a didactical mode to perpetuate Africa's indigenous knowledge systems and moral values. Even first generation writers continued to use characterization as a didactical tool; but abusively as a tool to downplay African traditional religion and all traditional systems that belong to Africa.

## **THE CONTEXT OF FIRST GENERATION ZIMBABWEAN AND AFRICAN LITERATURE**

The best way to appreciate characterization in Zimbabwean literature is to locate the latter in its proper context, the African context. Contextually, Zimbabwean literature makes part and parcel of the whole terrain of the African literature, both written and oral (orature).

While a detailed history of the development of

Zimbabwean literature lies outside the purview of this article (Kahari, 1980), a number of issues need to be noted.

To begin with, 'Zimbabwean literature' is a multivalent term. It could refer to publications by white writers during the war (1972 to 1979), creative works in English and vernacular languages by black Zimbabweans (both inside the country and in diaspora) or any other expanded definition. However, the output by white writers has been properly ascribed to the Rhodesian novel (Chennells, 1995). Significant authors like Dorris Lessing and Wilbur Smith, although contributing to the corpus of Zimbabwean literature, have an ambiguous classification since many regard them as British and South African writers (Malaba, 1998). In this article, a restricted notion of 'Zimbabwean literature' is operational. The term Zimbabwean literature shall be used to mean both written and oral works of art in English and vernacular languages by black Zimbabweans (both inside the country and in diaspora). While the emphasis is made on literature written in Shona by Chakaipa, reference to some English novels is also made in an effort to minimize the exaggerated differences between Zimbabwean works in English and Shona. It is also critical to note that the development of literature in Zimbabwe, as indeed elsewhere in Africa, is intertwined with the nation's political and socio-economic history. The artists, especially the first generation writers are products of an education system in which missionary bodies had an important role (Siyakwazi, 1995) though the missionary's major objective was to bolster a rise in conversions. One of the leading African nationalists and a first-generation Zimbabwean writer, Ndabaningi Sithole, celebrates the contribution of missionaries to the advancement of the Africans. Thus, "it was the Christian church that first introduced literacy which was to give birth to the African nationalists, medical doctors, advocates, businessmen, journalists and graduates" (Sithole, 1970: 98). Although nurtured by the missionaries, with the first four novels in Shona and Ndebele being published between 1956 and 1957, a salient aspect of early creative writing was the preoccupation with African cultural pride. These writers employ the device of characterization to have their messages and intentions fulfilled. In his analysis of Samkange's 'On Trial for My Country' (1966) and Solomon Mutswairo's 'Mapondera': 'Soldier of Zimbabwe' (1978), the critic Zhwara identifies the quest for recovering and celebrating Africa's past as a burning issue. 'Inspiring these two writers,' he observes, "is their desire to refute the White man's fraudulent claims that the Black man had no history and no culture to speak of" (Zhwara, 1987: 132). Like colonialism, it would appear the church in Africa had sponsored some of her fiercest critics, as is explicit in Solomon Mutswairo's 'Mapondera': 'Soldier of Zimbabwe'.

However, some first generation writers like Priest-cum-teacher Patrick Chakaipa in his 'Rudo Ibofu' (1961) uses the literary device, characterization to denigrate African

traditional religion. On one hand, this was because he was a staunch believer of the new religion-Christianity. On the other hand, this was because before the attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe in 1980 (like elsewhere in Africa), works that were explicitly critical of colonialism were heavily censored. Many writers were forced to dwell on 'innocent' topics such as love affairs, migration to the city and others that denigrated African traditional religion and practices. What remains interesting, however, is that all these first generation writers used the device of 'characterization' to echo their messages and intentions to the readers who are in most cases young people. Due to its influence and literary powers to convey messages, the literary device of characterization has gained homage even in contemporary Zimbabwean literature; hence the need to briefly look at the 'literary powers' of characterization.

#### **CHARACTERIZATION IN ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND MORAL ASPECTS**

Zimbabwe has 98% Africans of which the Shona constitute one of the largest communal-cultural groups. This group is an aggregate of small ethnic groups who are all classified as Shona because they each speak a dialect of what the linguists call the Shona language (Gelfand, 1973) followed by the Ndebele 16%, other African 11%, white 1% (Bureau of African Affairs, 2010). Since the Shona and Ndebele constitute the largest part of the population and for purposes of this work, Zimbabwean literature shall be confined to these two major ethnic groups. There is so much horizontal similarity across the spectrum of the ethnic groups that are classified as the Shona and Ndebele with those classified as other African ethnic groups, they share a common culture and most of the other ethnic groups also speak Shona. And what is distinctively African in Africa literature today and by extrapolation Zimbabwean literature derives from African traditional thought.

In this light, Zimbabwean literature like literature elsewhere in Africa, particularly oral (orature) and written by first generation writers share a number of features in common. Characterization is one such feature. Before written literature, this literary device featured in orature especially in 'ngano' (folklore). The term 'ngano' is both in the singular and plural forms. The 'ngano' tradition has a very long history in Shona culture. It dates back to the mythical origins of the Shona people. When Shona people speak of 'ngano', they refer to a unique genre of oral literature that is distinguished from other genres such as myths, legends and chronicles on the basis of its narrative structure, content, objective and aesthetic considerations. 'Ngano' thus is a general term for any of the numerous varieties of traditional narratives or any of the above stories that are told orally in a particular community. It is curious to note that 'sarungano' (story

teller/owner of the story) intensively used characterization in order to clearly usher the content, objective and the aesthetic considerations of the 'ngano'. In 'ngano' characterization was not only a subject of aesthetic consideration but had positive epistemological, ontological and moral implications. Basically 'ngano' portrayed the struggle between 'dos and do nots' of a society, good and bad, virtues and vices. The dominant but latent motif in 'ngano' artistic conventions was the quest for African identity through moral values and epistemological systems in her culture. The children and 'sarungano's' traversing through events/plot of the story, besides being titillated by its beauty, was also a search for moral justice. Through characterization, allegorical morality was often used with characters of good deeds always triumphing in the end. The peroration of the story was supposed to usher emotional relief to the audience by providing a suitable and satisfactory resolution to the story's moral struggles. From an Aristotelian persuasion, the ending of tragic 'ngano', for example, releases the audience from an emotional tension that would have resulted from the stormy events of the plot as the forces of evil and good were pitted against each other through characterization. In other words, the ending should provide emotional therapy to the children/audiences through purgation that firmly stamped the African society's moral, ontological and epistemological concerns.

Epistemologically children were equipped with knowledge of the physical environment and animals of the jungle through 'ngano'. They (children) were furnished by the 'sarungano' on what each animal character symbolized. Children were also taught the general behavior of each animal and furnished with information and justifications on what it would mean to be considered 'this animal' in their society. For instance, Hare embodied wit and trickery; Baboon represented stupidity, naivety, artlessness, ugliness or cruelty; Lion stood for courage, aggression and power, he is the king of the jungle; Hyena represented selfishness and greediness, he had an insatiable appetite for meat; Monkey epitomized vigilance, agility and versatility and tortoise symbolized unnecessary slowness although he was also a symbol of unique wit that was normally used to counteract that of Hare. This use of characterization was also meant to embrace and promote intelligence, rational thinking, hard working, courage and vigilance in the young. Because of what they learnt from 'ngano' and the 'sarungano' the young would always attempt to account for their actions in real life. This attempt to provide justifications for their behavior/actions was the beginning and manifestation of epistemological thinking in the African child.

Social life and knowledge on family relations were also taught through characterization in 'ngano'. Hare is called 'Tsuru Magen'a' (Hare, The Cleverest/Trickster). 'Gudo' (Baboon) who in 'ngano' happens to be Hare's uncle (that is, brother of Hare's mother) is always at the mercy of his nephew's cunning behavior. Not only are Baboon's pretty

girls snatched away by Hare, he is always made the public's target of laughter by being lured into and left to be stung by wasps or bees. Thus through Hare's charismatic actions as well as the actions of other animal characters children and adults alike were filled with thrilling excitement, imagining and seeing their real life experiences being simulated by animals.

It is precisely for the teaching role with particular reference to a 'sarungano' (who was usually a grandmother) that she was considered as "an omniscient narrator in Luo culture" (Benedict and Adrain, 1974: 25) and her hut (the siwindhe) an "institute for cultural traditions and social preparation" (Benedict and Adrain, 1974: 25) A 'sarungano' was therefore a philosopher in the African context. She 'sarungano' transmitted the philosophy of her culture to the youthful members of society while simultaneously shaping the same philosophy. Thus at the bottom of 'ngano' and its artistic beauty was the thought system of African culture to which the oral artist oriented the people of her culture. It is therefore surprising that literary discourse on characterization remains a game for creative writers alone; the reason why the author of this work argues for the rehabilitation and restoration of indigenous philosophies into the mainstream philosophy.

When the first generation writers started publishing in the 1950s, characterization remained critical in their literary works. For various epistemological, axiological and moral concerns, first generation writers in Zimbabwe like Thompson Tsodzo, Solomon Mutswairo, Samkange, Patrick Chakaipa, Bernard Chidzero, extensively used the literary device of characterization as shall be seen in the ensuing discussion.

#### **EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHARACTERIZATION IN CHAKAIPA'S 'RUDO IBOFU': PAYING HOMAGE TO CHAKAIPA'S CHARACTERIZATION?**

Here, the author starts by posing a crucial research question: What are the benefits of Patrick Chakaipa's characterization to African literature?

A close look at Chakaipa's characterization will set the tone for a philosophical exposition guided by the above research question. To this end, the article seeks to unravel characterization in African literature, particularly Zimbabwe's first generation novel, 'Rudo Ibofu' by Patrick Chakaipa. As said earlier on the reason for choosing Patrick Chakaipa is that he contrasts the traditional use of characterization in African culture; he uses characterization in a way that stifles, strangles and denigrates traditional African religion and Africa's being of existence. Hence the present work seeks to challenge his position.

The use of characterization by Chakaipa like any African creative writer is not accidental. Characterization has been in use in African literature particularly oral

literature (orature) since time immemorial. As said earlier on characterization was not only a subject of aesthetic consideration but had positive epistemological and moral impact to the audience. Through characterization, characters were used as modes of communication-vehicles which convey special messages from the author/narrator to the readers/audiences who are usually young people who are still to be inculcated with moral principles and epistemological systems. This denotes that characters are the basis from which themes of the novel and intentions of the author are drawn. However, the reverse in terms of the purpose in which characterization was used for in African literature particularly in written literature seems to be the case in many first generation writers (not only in Patrick Chakaipa's 'Rudo Ibofu') of the third world countries where there had been a huge gulf between the anticipated gains of democracy and the reality on ground. This trend is evident in Bernard Chidzero's 'Nzvenga Mutsvairo' (Dodge the Broom) and Chakaipa's 'Dzasukwa Mwana asina hembé' (1967: The Pots have been Cleaned for Beer Brewing) (1967). Those which tend to be more critical of the colonial situation are very few and exemplified by Thompson Tsodzo's 'Pafunge' (1970: Think About It) and Aaron Chiunduramoyo's 'Ziva Kwawakabva' (1976: Know Where You came From) and Solomon Mutswairo's 'Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe' (1978). Obviously, the state-controlled Literature Bureau established in 1953 as well as the influence of missionary teaching affected the nature and orientation of the Shona novel. The manipulation of characterization by some African writers makes it critical to analyze each character featuring in a narrative in relation to his/her name and immediate environment. The author argues along with Kahari (1986) that in order to understand characterization in a novel, it is important to understand the linguistic philosophy of the author and the language she/he uses. As Kahari (1986:221) puts it:

"Characters are to be studied by making a thorough critical analysis on their names, roles, their origins, place and justification for their existence and activities in the society concerned".

In light of the above, Chakaipa in his 'Rudo Ibofu' employs characterization in a way that throw light on and makes readers to determine the message(s) intended. He uses 'mazita emadunhurirwa' (nick names) which clearly identify the characters with reality in the Shona culture and world view- the names have meanings that can be drawn from the Shona people themselves.

However, as a Roman Catholic Priest-cum-teacher, Chakaipa chiefly uses characterization to inculcate in his readers the supremacy of western religion (Christianity) over African traditional religion. This authenticates Kwasi's (1996) observation that using African writers the White colonialists sought, sometimes somewhat

successfully, to transpose or even impose their own fallible conceptions of religion, morality and life in general upon Africans. In fact as a result of some ingrained ethnocentrism, the West had attempted to obliterate everything African and replace it with their conception of knowledge systems and moral values to be used in day-to-day life. The colonialists and early missionaries appointed themselves the haste purveyors of the universal western culture, which for them represented a culture that every civilized society was to live by. And since the African encounter with western modernity, indigenous African culture and everything African earned itself the designation tradition. In the colloquial sense, tradition remains old-fashioned, attached to the past, and unchanging, while modernity claims constant renewal, movement towards the future and continuous change (Brodnicka, 2003). As highlighted by Brodnicka (2003:1):

“The usefulness of tradition to Europe was at least twofold: the first one is that the concept of tradition allowed Africans to appear backward, childlike, and natural as compared to their European counterparts and therefore suitable for domination, and secondly the concept of tradition also created the notion of ethnicities as different and threatening to each other’s traditions”.

For this reason, it was therefore necessary that one tradition particularly that which represented backwardness is buried for the harmonious existence of the seemingly antagonistic ethnicities. This is what generally befell most of the first generation African creative writers and by extrapolation Zimbabwean writers. Chakaipa using the character, ‘Rowesai’ (one who can make her parents bewitched because of her beauty) unapologetically attacks the Shona traditional religion by showing that Christians are always generous and live a blessed life whereas the traditionalists always suffer. The West needed the tradition-modernity dichotomy more than the African for it served the interests of the west more than the African. This explains why the Africans’ and in particular Zimbabwean traditional belief systems and their own worldview have been under threat since the advent of colonialism. A few bad things that were seen being practiced by the Zimbabweans in the name of culture were enough to brand the whole indigenous culture anti-modern and therefore retrogressive. For this reason, White characters and priests in ‘Rudo Ibofu’ are idealized as purely religious and kind. Zingizi, for example, is forgiven by his employer when he fails to prepare a meal for the employer. He is also given a gift of clothes by his White employer. Similarly, Father Avondale (a White priest) in Tsodzo’s ‘Pafunge’ is portrayed as caring and kind. He voluntarily educates and looks after a lonely deserted African girl, ‘Rudo’ (love). This stereotype of giving Whites and priests a favorable disposition is portrayed by several African writers who went through missionary education like Chidzero, Mustwairo and

Zvarevashe, among others. This was one way of downplaying African traditional religion at the expense of Christianity.

As this is not enough, African names are changed to English ones; “a thing that is still commonly practiced in some African countries like Mozambique” (Mawere, 2010: 17). In the latter, children’s traditional names are changed to Portuguese as soon as they start their primary education or at the time they are issued birth certificates. This is the same as what happens in Chakaipa’s ‘Rudo Ibofu’ where Rowsai is renamed Anna soon after baptism. Likewise, Zingizi and ‘Chiramwiwa’ (The dejected) are renamed Joseph and Maria respectively. It is the contention of this work that change of traditional names to Christian ones is not rebirth as the missionaries purported, but cultural dislocation denial of African existence. It is a failure of the Westerners to acknowledge the African thought system. The author therefore identify with Nzewi (2007:4) who believe that:

Irreverent and irresponsible abandonment as well as flippant change started when the human and cultural practices of the invaders from outside began to make insidious intrusions into the African’s human and cultural psyche.

African epistemology, metaphysics and moral philosophy that synthesizes all African experiences in order to achieve a coherent whole which gives a complete picture of African reality is therefore necessary and indispensable. It is because of intrusions by westerners that prominent African writer; Ngugi Wa Thiongo was provoked to write his ‘Decolonising the Mind’: The politics of Language in African Literature’ (1981) suggesting a decolonization process for the African people even after colonialism. Failure to undertake a decolonizing process is likely to yield no development to Africa. The author is therefore quick to concur with Mervyn Caxton’s (Eade, 2002: xii-xiii) view that “[all] models of development are essentially cultural”. Development becomes a cultural construct and the basis for inter-cultural engagement, albeit on generally unequal terms. Caxton (Eade, 2002: xii-xiii) continues:

When a people faces challenges from the environment which require responses and solutions, one of the functions of culture is to provide criteria which would enable a selection to be made between alternative solutions. This essential role of culture is usurped, and its capacity to provide adequate responses to development challenges is impaired, if the criteria used are ones that are external to the culture itself. This is what happens when external development models are exclusively relied upon.

It is in view of this fact that the author argue for cultural revival in Africa. African people have strong memories of their indigenous philosophies and local practices and this

self-conscious knowledge motivates them as they rely heavily upon these concepts. Even their names are pregnant with meaning and a philosophy in itself. Denying them is therefore not only denying African philosophy but African existence. In this light the author share the same sentiments with Father Placide Tempels (1945) who rightly observed that those who refuse to acknowledge the existence of black thought exclude blacks from the group of human beings.

Chakaipa also uses type characters to denigrate African traditional religion and belief systems. A "type character is one who stands as a representative of a particular class, ideology or group of people" (Baldick, 2001: 265). The characters in August Strindberg's 'Miss Julie' (1888) and Henrik Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabber' (1891), for example, are representative of specific positions in the social relations of class and gender, such that the conflicts between the characters reveal ideological conflicts (Aston and Savona, 1991). This trend is evident in 'Rudo Ibofu'. Chakaipa uses the Christian character Rowsai and the African traditionalist Mutandawachingama (A stumbling block) to represent Christian ideology and African ideology respectively. In his characterization, Christians unlike African traditionalists always triumphs in goodness and win victory over vice and calamities. Rowsai survives death from wolves and leopards in the wilderness. On the contrary, her father, Mutandawachingama, a staunch traditionalist who vehemently oppose the rapid spread of Western values and lifestyles fails to lead a happy life. He only achieved a happy life after repenting and become a Christian convert. In the same vein, Matakanure, a traditional healer is depicted as heathen-a trickster and chronic liar. This is further revealed in the description of his stature as a black, ugly thin man with long projecting teeth and a big stomach that resembles a pregnant woman. This description reveals his frivolous character. It is worth noting at this juncture that Chakaipa's use of characterization is detrimental to Africa. This is because African religions and philosophy are inseparably intertwined and its strong bond is supported by Mbiti (1975: 12) who rightly points out that "religion is part and parcel of the African heritage which goes back many thousands of years".

In other subsequent Zimbabwean novels, even some contemporary ones, ;n'angas; (traditional healers/witch doctors) are portrayed the same way as Chakaipa's Matakanure. Zinyimo and Madzumbunure, traditional healers in Father Ribeiro's 'Muchadura' (You shall confess) and Tsodzo's 'Tsano' (Brother-in-law) respectively have their lives in trouble in the end. All these authors have the same intention of painting black, through characterization, the 'n'angas' who are pillars of African traditional religion and epistemological systems. The Africans thus are forced to question and relegate their own traditional religion and thought systems in favor of Christianity; Chakaipa and colleagues' intentions are

therefore achieved through characterization.

Using characterization, Chakaipa is not only preaching western religion to Africa, but western imperialism. Through the characters, Zimunya (one who is fond of eating) and Zingizi (one who is thin as a wasp) who is later known as Joseph, Chakaipa preaches supremacy of the western culture over the indigenous one. Zingizi who represents the western ideology is an embodiment of cultural arrogance and racism, and have no scruples in tossing Zimunya (who represents the African ideology) in public. Besides, labeling him as greedy, Zimunya is portrayed as a vagabond, a chronic liar, heathen, lazy, dirty and bully. Chakaipa (1961: 9) further describes him as "one who thinks with his veins" and whose attire resembles that of a madman. Thus as one who advocates westernization, Chakaipa picks up 'the myth of dirty Africans'. He elevates the hysterical White woman who hates and rebukes Zimunya for dirtiness, laziness and lying as the model of western civilization. Though Chakaipa's sermon on hygienic practices is welcome to Africa and Africans, the way he portrays it is derogatory to Africa. In this light, the paper calls for a 'return of Africa' to value its traditions and knowledge systems. This is what Masolo (1995: 2) calls:

"The call for a 'return to the native land'- one of the many revolutionary expressions of the then rising black militantism, nationalism and Africanism... to counter Westernism's arrogant and aggressive Eurocentric culture".

The call is critical and urgent not only to Zimbabwe, but other African countries. In Zimbabwe; some subsequent creative writers have taken the same direction as Chakaipa; a situation that is resulting in 'identity crisis'. Bernard Chidzero is a fine example of those who follow Chakaipa's footsteps. In his 'Nzvingamustvairo', Chidzero portrays Samere (who like Chakaipa's Zingizi represents western ideology) who unlike Matigimu and Tikana (who both represent African ideology) as one who has been enlightened with modernity. Samere describes the traditional attire of Matigimu and Tikana as 'nakedness'. In fact, the character Samere is used as the mouth-piece of the author (Chidzero) in preaching modernity at the expense of tradition.

Thus one of the dominant motifs in Zimbabwe literature is how missionary education produced alienated individuals. It is charged that they sought to promote an elite class that would despise Shona culture and consider worthless/inferior all those who remained attached to tradition. Ndatshana in Samkange's 'The Mourned One' (1975) represents such a character. Raised at the mission station by the Methodist missionaries, he fails to adjust to the reality of village life in his real home. Having been pampered at Waddilove, with a full breakfast being a daily experience, the coarse mealie-meal porridge of his mother's kitchen is unsettling. It is therefore clear that

missionaries have not prepared Africans to face the world as Africans but to look down upon and despise African systems and values. In fact, they brought an alien system of values. Africa was therefore robbed, raped, abused, exploited, manipulated, and above all, made to feel ashamed of her alleged worthlessness. This is not a light and negligible issue. It raises serious ontological, moral and epistemological questions. Thus, in view of Chakaipa's characterization and that of many other writers discussed in this work, the author argue that such 'conditional and abused characterization' can not find homage in African literature or African philosophy in general. It is a result of some indigenous Africans (that is, people of African descent and those who take Africa to be their home) who have been radically impacted upon by colonialism to the extent that they are confused as to who they are. The author therefore advocates for a paradigm shift from 'conditional characterization' to a 'comprehensive characterization paradigm' that foster objectivity, sensitivity and universality; characterization that does not offend, denigrates, undermines and threaten to swallow the existence of the other (races).

## CONCLUSION

With many internationally accredited African philosophers like Mbiti, Wiredu, Serequeban, Henry Odera Oruka, P.J. Hountondji, and the local [Zimbabwean] philosophers, it is surprising that many of them had little to say on the role of characterization in the African way of life – 'African philosophies'. The discourse on characterization in African literature (oral and written) has been mistakenly considered a game for creative writers alone.

This study has demonstrated how critical characterization was used in African literature as an element of epistemology, morality and African philosophy in general since time immemorial. More importantly, the study has shown how the same literary technique has been abused by those who wrote to please colonialists and missionaries. The mode of this work has been reactionary in the sense that it has been responding directly to trends identifiable in African literature spheres mentioned earlier in this work. It is therefore critical that scholars in philosophy and other disciplines engage in dialogue with some creative writers discussed in this article – 'some' who through characterization have misrepresented Africa.

The paper has further argued that with the tide of colonialism and globalization that has blown across Africa, the work of the African creative writer is becoming more and more complex and challenging yet the African writers should not be left behind by this global tide. African creative writers and experts in the field of philosophy and other disciplines should work (hand in glove) and even harder to ensure that African philosophies through literary devices like characterization, for

example, are not only correctly represented and removed from the backseat position, but are rehabilitated and developed to full bloom. Rehabilitating and developing such epistemological and axiological systems would allow young and emerging African philosophers to restore Africa's humanity, philosophize in context and apply philosophy in analyzing and solving their daily problems more easily.

Finally, the virtue of this paper has been to provide a corrective to the 'western gaze', false and pejorative label that demonized Africa through the 'abuse' of some (African) literary devices (like characterization), and by advancing the view that Africans were without a history, worse still a philosophy. The demonization of Africa has the consequences that a subtle misconstrued image of Africa can indirectly be perpetuated within the academic settings, the world-over. In this light, the paper has criticized, dismantled and challenged the inherited colonial legacies which have injured many African scientists and researchers' consciousness. The paper is not only against the vestiges of colonialism, but of neo-colonialism and cultural arrogance perpetuated through literary works by some scholars. It is a reclaim of rationality and dignity for Africa through the restoration and rehabilitation of 'African indigenous philosophies' into the mainstream education curricula (formal or informal).

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