

# Subversion of Hegemonic Gender Perspectives as a Means to Postcolonial Authenticity in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and Ogbu's *The Moon Also Sets*

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to interrogate Ngugi wa Thiong'o's and Osi Ogbu's subversion of sexism, classism and racism which are elements of patriarchy. Patriarchy is among pervasive hegemonic legacies that characterize postcolonial societies and adversely affects gender relations. Attempts at dismantling patriarchal structures has sparked contestations and controversies among literary artists and scholars in both Western and postcolonial societies. Mainstream feminist approaches have not been embraced in postcolonial contexts since patriarchy to a great extent is associated with colonialism in postcolonial setups. Therefore Western feminists are viewed as accomplices in the colonial project who fail to take into account experiences of women in postcolonies. This paper is pursuant of patriarchy dismantling project but deviates from mainstream perspectives. It focuses on the fiction of two African male postcolonial feminist artists whose humanist and Afro-European approaches seem appropriate in subverting gender disparities. These approaches accord dignity to all human beings regardless of sex. Additionally, they encourage co-operation and complementarity between men and women. Appropriate strands of African Feminism addressed patriarchy while Marxist feminism postulations addressed class and exploitation. The literature review focused on critical works of authors and literary critics who have analyzed the two texts and other works on gender and capitalism. One of the findings of this paper is that Afro-European approaches to gender are viable in subverting sexism, racism and classism. Secondly, equitable opportunities can be accorded to males and females depending on ability and endowment and not on sex.

**Key Words:** Gender, subversion, sexism, racism, classism, emancipation, afrocentricism, afro-European

*"I know enough women who are totally patriarchal, who are totally anti-women; who do nasty things to other women, and I have known men who have worked for women's rights their whole life. Feminism is not biological: feminism is an ideology"*

*Kamla Bhasin*

## ABBREVIATIONS

POB-Petals of Blood

TMAS-The Moon Also Sets

## I. INTRODUCTION

Colonial history makes experiences of its victims unique. Imperial legacy of capitalism and patriarchy which people in postcolonies are subjected to is compounded by

some African cultures which are replete with patriarchal practices, which according to Shigali (2017), are erroneously misrepresented as African traditional values. According to Shigali (2017), patriarchy is a socially constructed ideology based on a belief in male superiority versus female subjugation. It is presumed to be biologically determined. This means once you are born male, you wield all the power and vice versa. The need to emancipate postcolonial subjects from these hegemonic legacies has precipitated immense interest and controversy. To unsettle gender disparity, orthodox mainstream perspectives of most scholars and artists agitate for gender equality. According to Cliff (1984), feminism sees the basic division in the world as between men and women. For feminists, the cause of women's oppression is men's urge to dominate and control them. For feminists, the only way to abolish these structures is for women of whatever social class to unite against men of whatever class. In this case, the males are portrayed as culprits whereas the females as victims. Being postcolonial writers, Ngugi and Osi also pursue the question of gender but uncharacteristically exhibit gender sensitivity. To deconstruct patriarchy, they deviate from divisive Western mainstream perspectives and instead embrace Afrocentric socialist emancipatory ideologies which, apart from being objective and humanistic, advocate for co-operation and complementarity between men and women. This paper seeks to examine these authorial strategies in subversion of patriarchy in postcolonial societies of the selected fiction.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Postcolonial discourse largely entails 'writing back' to the West. It is a way of disapproving hegemonic introductions. Tyagi (2014) posits that postcolonial as a term suggests resistance to "colonial" power and its discourses that continue to shape various cultures, including those whose revolutions have overthrown formal ties to their colonial rulers. Ashcroft (2002) avers that postcolonial analysis increasingly makes clear the nature and impact of inherited power relations, and their continuing effects on modern global culture and politics. For Ashcroft, political questions usually approached from the standpoints of nation-state relations, race, class, economics and gender are made clear when we consider them in the context of their relation with the colonialist past. This is

because the structures of power established by the colonizing process remain pervasive, though often hidden in cultural relations throughout the world.

Among pervasive hegemonic legacies that women in postcolonies have had to grapple with is disenfranchisement. Dismantling colonial gender hierarchies which are aggravated by indigene patriarchal structures in some postcolonial societies has precipitated contestations and controversies from postcolonial literary scholars and artists. According to Beuku-Betts (2008), over the past two decades, the discipline of feminism and gender studies has changed rapidly as issues of differences, power, knowledge production and representation are contested, negotiated, and analysed from multiple and shifting sites of feminist identities. For her, while previously a homogenized notion of “women” was taken as given, emphasizing commonalities over differences, reconceptualizations of feminism have shifted the focus to issues of race, class, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, nationality and globalization, stressing the interconnectedness as well as differences of these experiences. She posits that in the field of feminism and gender studies, it is now clearly understood that theorizing women’s experiences from these multiple angles of vision generates new questions, issues and interpretations. Therefore this broadens and complicates analysis of the historical, political, economic and cultural forces that shape women’s differentiated lives and produce particular forms of individual and collective action.

Lugones (2007) concurs with Beuku-Betts in relation to disparity between experiences of women in Western societies and those in postcolonies. For her, Western feminists are accomplices in colonization and debasement of women in postcolonial societies. She argues that gender itself is a colonial introduction, a violent introduction consistently and temporarily used to destroy peoples, cosmologies and communities as building the building ground of the civilized West. Gender fuses with race in the colonial power. Colonialism did not impose precolonial, European gender arrangements on the colonized. It imposed a new gender system that created very different arrangements for colonial males and females which did not apply to the white bourgeois colonizers. Thus it introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing. Lugones posits that in the development of twentieth century feminisms, the connection between gender, class, heterosexuality as racialized was not made explicit. Feminism centred its struggles and its ways of knowing and theorizing against a characterization of women as fragile, weak in body and mind, secluded in the private and sexually passive. But it did not bring to that consciousness that these characteristics only created white bourgeois womanhood. For her, beginning from characterization, white bourgeois feminists theorized white womanhood as if all women were white. She argues that it is part of their history that only white bourgeois women have consistently counted as women so described in the West.

Females excluded from that description were not just their subordinates. They were understood to be animals in a sense that went further than the identification of non-white women with nature, infants and small animals. They were understood as animals in the deep sense of “without gender,” sexually marked as female, but without characteristics of femininity. Women racialized as inferior were turned from animals into various modified versions of “women” as it fit the process of Eurocentred global capitalism. Thus heterosexual rape of Indian women, African slave women co-existed with concubinage, as well as with the imposition of the heterosexual understanding of gender relations among the colonized- when and as it suited Eurocentred global capitalism and heterosexual domination of white women. Lugones refers to Oyewumi and Allen who posit that there was no extension of the status of white women to colonized women even when they were turned into similes of bourgeois white women. Colonized women got the inferior status of gendering as women, without the privileges accompanying status for bourgeois white women.

According to Said, cited in Ashcroft (1995), the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of dominion of varying degrees of a complex hegemony. He believes that Orientalism is a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient. For him, Orientalism depends for its strategy on flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand. This was possible especially during the period of extraordinary European ascendancy from the late Renaissance to the present. The scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, or the soldier was in, or thought about the Orient because he could be there, or could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient’s part.

Tiffin (1987), in Ashcroft (1995), quotes George Lamming as once having remarked that over three quarters of the contemporary world has been directly and profoundly affected by imperialism. Processes of artistic and literary decolonization have involved a radical dismantling of European codes and a postcolonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses. This has been frequently accompanied by the demand for an entirely new or wholly recovered ‘reality’, free of all colonial taint. Given the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, with its pandemic brutalities and its cultural denigration, such a demand is desirable and inevitable. Since it is not possible to create or recreate regional formations wholly independent of their historical implications in the European colonial enterprise, it has been the project of post-colonial writing to interrogate European discourses and discursive strategies from a privileged position within (and between) two worlds; to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in the colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world.

According to Ashcroft (1995), in both conquest and colonization, texts and textuality played a major part. European texts-anthologies, histories, fiction, captured the non-European subject within European frameworks which read his or her alterity as terror or lack. Within the complex relations of colonization, these representations were re-projected to the colonized –through formal education or through general colonialist cultural relations-as authoritative pictures of themselves. Such texts-the representation of Europe to itself, and the representation of others to Europe-were not accounts of different peoples and societies, but a projection of European fears and desires masquerading as scientific or ‘objective’ knowledges.

Yohannes (2012) posits that although postcolonial theory emerged in the form it exists today only in the late 1970s, the condition it studies (postcoloniality and marginality) began in the BC times. Parameters were set by different European civilizations on who would qualify for statesmanship or being a human being. Enlightenment notion of reason became the only salvager of the immaturity of “unreasonable” ways (or the childhood in the child versus adult bipolar). This tendency to homogenize all of humanity with European reason as its single savior made its argument defenceless in the interrogation by the *Other*. The *Other* questioned, what about knowledges acquired outside European reason? What about other ways of coming to know? What about other ways of being mature; human? As the postcolonial other came to answer the question for himself, he came to know that in the face of European humanism, by the parameters set by European civilization, he is not human. This paper interrogates deconstruction of this colonial knowledge by the selected postcolonial writers who resort to historicity and romanticization of their cultures in a bid to assert their indigenous knowledges.

Spivak (1985) comments about the inferior position of third world women and uses the word “subaltern” to refer to the colonized. She focuses on mainly colonized women who are double-colonized in terms of economy and gender. She argues that there are two basic categorizations of people and nations as the colonizer and the colonized. The exception is the category of the colonized women oppressed by both the colonizer and the colonized. Ogunyemi (2019) echoes Spivak’s argument about double colonization of women in postcolonial societies. For Ogunyemi, Black women are disadvantaged in several ways: as blacks, with their men are victims of a white patriarchal culture; as women, they are victimized by their Black men and as black women, they are victimized on racial, sexual and class grounds by white men. For her, while the white woman writer protests against sexism, the black woman writer must deal with it as one among many evils; she battles also with dehumanization resulting from racism and poverty. In this study, the researcher interrogates subversion of racism, sexism and classism which are different forms of dehumanization prevalent in the societies of the selected texts.

The foregoing scholars attest to prevalence of sexism, classism and racism in postcolonies which are attributable to hegemonic structures. To demarginalize women from these oppressive colonial legacies, some postcolonial feminists have resorted to Afrocentric perspectives since for them, hegemonic resonances characterize mainstream feminism. Mishra (2013) observes that postcolonial feminism or third world feminism emerged in response to Western mainstream feminism which has never been heedful to the differences pertaining to class, race, feelings, and settings of women of once colonized territories. Some of these proponents of postcolonial feminism are Gayatri Spivak, Bell Hooks, Uma Narayan and Chandra Talpade. Postcolonial feminism rejects Western feminism on the ground of its utter eurocentricism. For her, it’s therefore fallacious to hope postcolonial females to be valued, appreciated and justified by the Western hands. She observes that it is a hopeful discourse which seeks peaceful solutions for all world marginalized women. Postcolonial feminists imagine a world in which differences between men and women are celebrated and enjoyed. They work for social, cultural, economic and religious freedoms for women. This paper seeks to interrogate Ngugi’s and Osi’s appropriation of Afrocentric approaches in deconstruction of racism, classism and sexism in the postcolonial societies of their selected fiction. Focus is laid on male writers who uncharacteristically exhibit objectivity and gender sensitivity.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Analysis of Ngugi’s and Osi’s perspectives on gender in this paper is guided by the African feminist theory which entails Afrocentric emancipatory ideologies such as humanism and egalitarianism. In addition, Marxist feminism and postcolonial ideology are seminal to this study given that the selected texts are postcolonial.

African Feminist theory recognizes the multiple forms of oppression which both African men and women are subjected to. Its fundamental tenet is complementarity and interdependence of men and women. Although this theory has a variety of strands, only Molaria Ogunyemi-Leslie’s Stiwaniism (acronym of: Social Transformations Including Women in Africa) and Obioma Nnaemeka’s negofeminism-feminism of negotiation are applied.

According to Arndt (2018), African feminism brings to the forefront indigenous feminism that has also existed in Africa, for instance, egalitarianism and humanism. Egalitarianism is characterized by social equality and equal rights for all people. People are enabled and given roles depending on how they are endowed regardless of the sex. Humanism accords dignity to all people regardless of sex. “African humanism is the philosophy which naturally enables the co-existence of all humans, irrespective of their creed, culture, tribe, nation or race” ( Edeh, 2015: 1). Edeh acknowledges Achebe’s perspective on humanism, also known as *Ubuntu* in South African. It is an African philosophy that has placed human race as the first thing in line of all importance. African culture

and traditions are shown as deeply rooted in humanism. *Ubuntu* is seen as an ethical philosophy which is centered on the people's allegiances and relation with one another. In this paper, humanism therefore seeks to interrogate human relations. This paper also borrows from Marxist ideology which advocates for solidarity in order to achieve socialism and liberation of the masses, women included. Unity between men and women forms a strong force that contends with exploitation of women.

Lastly, since this paper seeks to deconstruct colonial classism, sexism and racism, it borrows from postcolonial ideology. Tyagi (2014) posits that Postcolonial theory focuses on subverting the colonizer's discourse that attempts to distort the experiences and realities, and inscribe inferiority on the colonized subject in order to exercise total control. It is also concerned with the production of literature by colonized peoples that articulates their identity and reclaims their past in the face of the otherness of that past. For Tyagi, postcolonial theory is primarily concerned with the representation of women in once colonized and in Western locations. It concentrates on constructing gender differences in colonial and anti-colonial discourses, representation of women in anti-colonial and postcolonial discourses with particular reference to the work of female writers. This paper is relatively unique since it refers to the work of male writers in this context. Postcolonialism reverts to historicity and embraces indigenous African solutions in the fight for social justice and equity.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design through which the researcher obtained information from the close reading and analysis of primary texts was used. The research used secondary sources to collect data thus this research was library based.

Data analysis was based on the conceptualization of gender perspectives in relation to the social contexts in the texts. Therefore through content analysis, a comprehensive synthesis and interpretation of data gathered from the reading of the primary texts and secondary sources was undertaken. These findings were then analyzed in relation to the postulations of African feminism and Marxist feminism. Conclusions and recommendations were finally drawn.

#### V. FINDINGS

##### 5.1 Introduction

This paper interrogates subversion of hegemonic gender perspectives as a means to postcolonial authenticity in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *POB* and Osi Ogbu's *TMAS*. It focuses on patriarchy, which is one of the pervasive hegemonic legacies as well as a cultural aspect of most postcolonies that has subjugated and othered women. Most modern Western perspectives such as feminism, especially due to its claim to universalism equally seek to dominate other divergent perspectives, thus colonial in nature. The postcolonial authors of the selected fiction seek to deconstruct patriarchy which

occurs in the form of sexism, racism and classism in a bid to achieve social equity. In the selected fiction, authors resort to afro-euro-pean emancipatory approaches to subvert patriarchy and then provide alternatives.

##### 5.2 Subversion of Sexism

Becker et al (2014) define sexism as individuals, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, and organizational, institutional and cultural practices that either reflect negative assessments of individuals based upon their gender or support unequal status of women and men. It is worth noting that both men and women are victims of neo-colonial oppression and exploitation. However, victimization of women is severer. According to Mishra (2013), postcolonial feminists disapprove postcolonial tendencies to construct a single category of the colonized ignoring differences. They argue that colonial oppression undoubtedly hurt sentiments of both men and women but the intensity of suffering for women was worse. For them, women suffered double colonization, first as a colonized subject and second as simply being a woman by patriarchy. For this reason, this paper interrogates these male authors' disposition in voicing women's concerns.

Millett (1970) is a mainstream feminist who observes that whereas groups that ruled by birthright are fast disappearing, yet there remains one ancient and universal scheme for domination of one birth group by another- the scheme that prevails in the area of sex. For her, the male sex dominates the female one. Weber (1967) echoes Millett's argument. For Weber, the situation between sexes now and throughout history is a relation of dominance and subordination. For him, dominance is the possibility of imposing one's will upon the behavior of other persons and it can emerge in two forms: control through social authority (patriarchy, magisterial, princely) and control through economic force. In the postcolonial societies of the selected texts, dominance emerges in the form of patriarchy and economic force. This is mainly a colonial legacy. Weber argues that in patriarchy as well as other forms of domination, the control over economic goods, that is, economic power is a frequent, often purposively willed, consequence of domination as well as its most important instrument. To attain social equity, Ngugi and Osi adopt African egalitarianism to deconstruct sexism in the societies of the selected texts.

Sexism is inherent in the society of Ngugi's *POB* since the economy is controlled by men. Only men feature in prominent political and government positions and major business ventures. This arrangement is a legacy of colonial history. Mama (1998) cited in Wane (2002) observes that Africa was colonized and subjected to nineteenth century European racial hierarchy and gender politics and indoctrinated into all-male European administrative systems. The hierarchy placed the white man at the top, followed by the white woman, the black man and the black woman at the bottom of the rung. This has affected social, cultural, political and economic life of these groups. Millett (1970) argues that birthright priority whereby

men rule over women has been institutionalized in our societies. For Millett, through this system, a most ingenious form of 'interior colonization' has taken place. She argues that it is sturdier and more rigorous than any other form of segregation. For her, sexual domination is the most pervasive ideology of culture and provides its fundamental concept of power. She observes that because most societies are patriarchies, their military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, finance and the police force are entirely in male hands. In Ngugi's microcosm, for instance, the education Officer, Mzigo; the Member of Parliament, Nderi wa Riera; and Reverend Jerrod are all men. They hold key positions and have big business ventures and buildings in New Ilmorog. On the contrary, most of the females in Ngugi's society are involved in menial tasks such as farming. Others indulge in prostitution for lack of respectable jobs. No females are found or mentioned in government leadership positions.

Dispossessing women of their business ideas and ventures by male investors is another indicator of sexism on Ngugi's society. In most instances, these males are backed by the colonial multinationals who take advantage of their economic and political power. Weber (1967) cited in Millett (1970) avers that in patriarchy as well as in other forms of domination, control over economic goods, that is, economic power is a frequent, often purposively willed, consequence of domination as well as one of its most important instruments. Economic empowerment of male investors in *POB* gives them advantage over poor illiterate women, Wanja and her grandmother, Nyakinyua. These women's brewing businesses are usurped by an Anglo-American international combine with African directors and shareholders. Three of the four leading local personalities are Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria. All these are economically endowed males who have access to key government jobs and favours. The business later metamorphoses into Theng'eta Breweries, starting on the premises owned by Mzigo, the Education Officer. It grows into a huge factory employing six hundred workers, research scientists and chemical engineers. The fact that this business ends up profiting economically powerful male compradors at the expense of the poor female founder owners is sexist.

Ngugi subverts sexism in the postcolonial society of *POB* by portraying female characters as diligent, assertive and resilient in the face of capitalist challenges that characterize their neo-colonial society. This is in consonance with Mohanty (1991) who is against portrayal of postcolonial women primarily as ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domesticated, family-oriented and victimized. Ngugi's female characters have great influence and ingenuity during crises. One of the protagonists whose resilience Ngugi foregrounds in his deconstruction agenda is Wanja. After losing her Theng'eta bar business, plot and the shop she co-owns with Abdulla, she does not succumb to despair like her business partner, Abdulla, who is so disillusioned that he resorts to alcoholism. Capitalist exploitation perpetrated against her and her lot gives her greater resolve to work extra hard in order to counter

the injustices. Wanja is portrayed as having business ingenuity, therefore attributing the success of the business she co-owns with Abdulla to her involvement. After losing her businesses to capitalist investors, she defies capitalist exploitation by putting up a house where she establishes Sunshine Lodge and sets up a prostitution business. She is unapologetic of this venture due to the betrayal she has suffered as a woman in this society. Her philosophy becomes, "you eat or you are eaten". In this Lodge, she executes her vengeance against Kimeria, the man who had sexually exploited and ruined her life. For Alazzawi, Wanja's act of violence is an act of personal liberation-a kind of cleansing and revitalization. By killing Kimeria who is an epitome of sexism, she deconstructs sexism. This study however does not justify prostitution in that it goes against the precepts of humanism in that it strips the women involved of their dignity. The study does not also justify murder since humanism according to Tutu (1999) advocates for preservation of human life for live's sake. Ngugi further highlights Wanja's resilience by making her a heroine in Ilmorog after she saves her grandmother's land from being auctioned by the bank. This is a feat almost all villagers fail to accomplish. Moreover, he brings out Wanja's successful ending. She is economically empowered and therefore no longer a victim of sexism, "She is the most powerful woman in all Ilmorog. She owns houses between here and Nairobi. She owns a fleet of matatus. She owns a fleet of big transport lorries" (Ngugi, 1977: 281).

Ngugi deconstructs sexism inherent in the society of *POB* in the form of sexual exploitation. Millett (1970) observes that sexual exploitation is one of the vagaries and barbarities of patriarchy. Ngugi's society is sexist and nurtures boys to be ambitious as opposed to girls who become victims of sexual exploitation. At a very tender age, Wanja notices the difference between the dreams of boys and girls. One of her childhood boy friends talks of how he was going to work very hard, go to secondary school, then to the university to pursue engineering. Wanja says that boys were always more confident about the future but for the girls, they knew however hard they tried, their road led to the kitchen and the bedroom. The idea of the road for girls leading to the bedroom is confirmed in her life shortly after. Wanja becomes a victim of sexual exploitation from a tender age. This heinous act is first perpetrated by her class seven Mathematics teacher and then by Kimeria, a man who buys land in their neighborhood and dupes her father by buying gifts for the family with an intention of accessing the innocent girl. The man impregnates her later and rejects her. She flees from home harboring immense bitterness against the man and vows to revenge. Since there are no better prospects, she ventures into the world of prostitution. Later, desperation on the way to the city by Ilmorog delegates leads this group inadvertently to Blue Hills estate where Kimeria lives. For a second time, Kimeria forcefully exploits Wanja sexually after holding some members of the delegation hostage. Wanja's lack of financial independence and need to save the sick young boy, Joseph,

makes her vulnerable to this advance despite her hatred for him. She however vows to kill him after the coercion. Eventual killing of Kimeria by Wanja symbolizes victory over sexism. This study however does not advocate for killing of people because it embraces humanism which according to Tutu (1999) recognizes the essence and sacredness of life for life's sake.

Ngugi's subversion of sexism is evident in positioning women of Ilmorog at the centre of fighting against social injustice. This is in tune with Nayar (2008) about postcolonial feminism. Nayar posits that postcolonial feminism argues for social justice, emancipation and democracy in order to oppose oppressive structures of racism, discrimination and exploitation. Placing some of his female characters in Kenya's liberation struggles is a strategy by Ngugi of deconstructing sexism. Wanja's aunt, for instance plays a commendable role in supporting Mau mau fighters by carrying guns and bullets to the forest hidden in baskets full of unga. Ngugi's protagonists, Nyakinyua and her granddaughter, Wanja, are very instrumental in salvaging Ilmorog village from the ravages of drought and starvation which are repercussions of capitalist exploitation. They play a pertinent role in leading the village delegation to the city to seek help and public attention. Moreover, Ngugi foregrounds old Nyakinyua's role in agitation against exploitation. She attempts to mobilize villagers to contend against auctioning of their lands by the bank but most are apathetic. This role in activism places Nyakinyua in a political position which is mainly associated with men in patriarchal societies. Despite lacking support, she is determined to fight. She says, "I'll go alone...I'll struggle against the black oppressors...alone...alone" (Ngugi, 1977: 276). Additionally, Ilmorog women are foregrounded in resisting exploitation by their Member of Parliament. This is in consonance with Alazzawi (2018) who observes that with regard to gender positioning, Ngugi presents female characters as powerful women who rather than being sexually and psychologically flattened by the African culture choose to redefine their roles in supportive and mutual relations with African men and with their families. In this paper, it is evident that females in *POB* deconstruct sexism.

Osi similarly deconstructs sexism in *TMAS*. Women are foregrounded in the fight against capitalism in Isiakpu society. They are conscious and ready to confront prevailing social injustices. A capitalist self-imposed chief of Isiakpu village grabs land on which there is a sacred forest by bribing and manipulating most influential members of society. Only one group of women stands their ground—the daughters of Ndu Nwa Agu. In this patriarchal society, Osi subverts sexism by highlighting the virtue of integrity among this group of women, who are not as susceptible to bribery as the menfolk: "The daughters of Ndu Nwa Agu were not amused... in any case, they were not likely to be as susceptible to bribery as the menfolk. (Osi, 2002: 161). However, the capitalist chief succeeds by using his economic power to disunite the villagers. Osi satirizes the vulnerability of men in this society

as he elevates the integrity of women. Being a patriarchal society, despite the resistance on the part of women, they lose the battle because the forces playing against them are too strong for them. This is in line with Arendt (1969) cited in Millett (1970) who observes that government is upheld by power supported either through consent or imposed through violence. For Arndt, conditioning to an ideology amounts to the former. Sexual politics obtains consent through "socialization" of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role and status. As to role, a pervasive assent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female. Temperament involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category (masculine and feminine), based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates. In this study, the men in this society who rule women's lives by virtue of having a superior status and belonging to a dominant group get bribed and compromised and cannot therefore support women in fighting capitalism. This war would have been won, may be, if in this patriarchal society men had not been compromised. Stefano (2014) observes that according to Marxist feminism, class struggle is the driving force of history. In the above context, there is a tussle between the bourgeoisie, represented by the chief and the proletariat, represented by the villagers over forest land. Osi deconstructs capitalism and sexism simultaneously both of which are imperial tools by foregrounding women in the resistance. Mama (1998) cited in Wane (2002) accounts for women's subjugation. This is a consequence of colonial racial hierarchy which placed the colonized black women at bottom after, the black men, followed by white women and finally white men at the helm.

By elevating Mama Oby and depicting her as an effective head of the family after her husband's demise, Osi deconstructs sexism and proves his gender sensitivity. This portrayal contravenes the dictates of patriarchy which places men at the helm. Millett (1970) observes that in patriarchal societies, female heads of families tend to be regarded as undesirable and associated with poverty or misfortune. Isiakpu society is characteristic of sexism inherent in patriarchy. Mama Oby prepares her daughter psychologically to be ready for the challenges the society presents to women just because they were born female. Oyeronke (1995) explains the state of subjugation of formerly colonized African women. For her, African females were not only oppressed in terms of being colonized, they were equally oppressed in their own traditional society. Oyeronke argues that African females were colonized by Europeans as Africans and as African women. They were dominated, exploited, and inferiorized as Africans together with their men and then separately inferiorized and marginalized as African women. As a family head, Mama Oby forewarns her daughter about the nature of their society, "For us women in Isiakpu, these challenges are compounded by society. What you are going through now may be nothing compared to what you may face in the future"

(Osi, 2002: 3). Additionally, she determinedly enhances education of her children after her husband's demise. She understands that she has to be both mother and father to her daughter. For her, education for women is the only way of liberation from patriarchal bondage. Mama Oby acknowledges that only education can get women out of subjugation: "...education especially for one's daughter was the only way out" (Osi, 2002: 6). Osi ousts male patriarchs by proving that Mama Oby, as a family head is able to provide for her children, educate them, grant them spiritual and social guidance, and above all challenge patriarchy.

Osi highlights sexism in the form of sexual exploitation in the larger society and in higher institutions of learning. It is apparent that most men have a casual mentality with regard to their female sex partners at the university. Oby learns that female students are taken advantage of by their male counterparts and even lecturers. She is pressurized by Professor Akpanu who intends to have sex with her as a prerequisite for passing his course. She however manages to come out of this trap unscathed. On the other hand, male university students like Chris and Okoro refer to girlfriends from the nursing college nearby derogatively as 'bush-meat'. This title has a negative connotation and reveals lack of commitment to the girls. These girls are sexually exploited and dumped as the young men acquire fresh ones without much ado. Oby suffers this fate when she indulges in a relationship with Chike. Because Chike intends to exploit her sexually, he drugs her. Later, her disclosure that she is expecting his child brings out his egocentricism. For him, abortion is the solution. He jeopardizes Oby's life by tricking her into taking a drink mixed with a potent concoction meant to cause abortion. He therefore goes against the precepts of humanism, according to Tutu (1999), when he fails to recognize the sacredness of human life. Chike's eventual arrest indicates the author's negation of sexism. Millet (1970) expounds the above scenario. For her, both the primitive and the civilized worlds are male worlds. She argues that the ideas which shaped culture in regard to the female were also of male design and the image of women is one created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. This paper seeks to subvert this sexism which objectifies women. It encourages giving dignity to everybody regardless of sex.

Osi subverts negative cultural practices that demean, objectify and victimize women in the society of *TMAS*. Such practices are mistreatment and inheritance of widows, female genital mutilation and arranged marriage. Mishra (2013) comments about the a fore mentioned scenario prevalent in postcolonies. She argues that postcolonial men re-colonized the bodies and minds of their women in the name of preserving their cultural values. For Mishra, women since long have been supposed to carry the burden of cultural values. Osi epitomizes Mama Oby to highlight the plight of widows in his society. Mama Oby is for instance, compelled to accept being inherited by an irresponsible in-law, Ben, when her husband dies against her will in the pretext of preserving culture. Another unnerving

cultural demand to Mama Oby emanates from her eldest brother-in-law, Pa Okolo, in conspiracy with the village chief, Ugwueze. They intend to objectify her daughter, Oby by marrying her off to the chief's son against her will for their own selfish gain. They aggravate the situation by insisting that Oby must undergo circumcision to make her eligible for marriage. Her refusal to succumb to their mean demands causes them to raze down her shop. Against the backdrop of these patriarchal demands, Osi portrays these female characters as assertive and bold. In fact, he foregrounds these women's extra-ordinary achievements in this patriarchal society. Mama Oby runs a shop, owns lands and successfully takes care of the family after her husband's demise. Oby on the other hand is the first girl in this family to join university. This paper concurs with Shigali (2017) who observes that emancipation emanates from breaking free from patriarchy and other forms of social oppression and stepping into spaces once forbidden. The eventual defeat of the antagonists implies that women are able to stand up to sexism. Osi therefore subverts sexism and voices women's concerns in his society.

### 5.3 Subversion of Racism

According to Lorde (1984), racism is the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance manifest or implied. In this study, the colonizers who believe their white race is superior impose their dominance on the colonized whose African race they consider inferior. Memmi (1965) observes that racism is a tool of imperialism. This observation is in consonance with Ngugi (1993) who posits that racism is one of the most devastating weapons wielded by imperialism and it is meant to safeguard the entire system of exploitation of many by the few in one nation and among nations.

Oyewumi (1997) explores and analyses Yoruba colonial history, and her suppositions about this history may be applicable to other postcolonial societies since imperial practice in colonies had a lot in common as pertains strategy. She argues that central to British colonial domination in Yoruba society was the imposition of two separate but interrelated sets of hierarchical dichotomies, first, that of settler against native and second, that of man against woman. She shows how colonial practices in Nigeria not only posited a superiority of settler over the native but also of masculine over the feminine or man over woman. African women were at the bottom most rung of this hierarchy. She writes:

We can discern two vital and intertwined processes inherent to European colonization of Africa. The first and more thoroughly documented of these processes was the racializing and the attendant inferiorization of Africans as the colonized, the natives. The second process...was inferiorization of females. These processes were inseparable and both were embedded in the colonial situation (Oyewumi, 1997: 152).

Oyewumi's exposition of the origin of racism in colonies justifies deviation from Western approaches to gender

disparity in former colonies because it is apparent that the oppression of women in postcolonial societies is attributed to imperialism. Morton (2003) acknowledges Gayatri Spivak's questioning of the 'lie' of a global sisterhood between 'First World' and 'Third World' women pointing instead to a complicity of Western feminism and imperialism. For Oyewumi, the systematic oppression of women was integral in the processes of dehumanization of the colonized on the basis of race. Therefore the process of inferiorization of the colonized was bound up with the process of enthroning male hegemony. Consequently, male privilege is naturalized and universalized as the order of things in the culture and "male dominance and Western dominance in Yoruba society are entwined" (Oyewumi, 2016: 17).

Postcolonial African feminists therefore seek to negate the above male and Western dominance by applying Afrocentric approaches. Mama (1998) cited in Wane (2002) makes meaning of the many African feminists who are interrogating and re-conceptualizing gender relations by situating the discussion in a historical and social setting. She also emphasizes that we should not lose sight of the fact that Africa is a collective:

Being conquered by the colonizing powers, being culturally and materially subjected to a nineteenth-century European racial hierarchy and its gender politics; being indoctrinated into all-male European administrative systems, and the insidious paternalism of the new religious and educational systems...has persistently affected all aspects of social, cultural, political and economic life in postcolonial African states (Mama, 1998: 47).

Ngugi and Osi are some of the postcolonial African feminists who resort to the Afrocentric feminist ideology of humanism to counter colonial racism in postcolonial societies. Achebe cited in Edeh (2015) observes that humanism is a philosophy that has placed the human race first thing in line of all importance. As an ethical stance, it lays an emphasis on human dignity, concerns and capabilities with particular regard to human rationality. Under humanism therefore, there is no bias or discrimination basing on sex, skin color, physical or structural features but every member of society is accorded dignity and honor by virtue of being a human being. In this paper, focus is laid on the relationship between the colonizer's white and the African colonized races. It is worth noting that women's suffering from racial discrimination is compounded by other forms of discrimination. Ogunyemi (2019) observes that black women are disadvantaged in several ways: as blacks, they with their men are victims of a white patriarchal culture, as women, they are also victimized on racial, sexual and class grounds by white men.

Ngugi (1977) describes how racism is engendered in the minds of the subalterns making them victims:

In their racist books and in their colonial and bourgeois schools were the poetic and intellectual exultation of our humiliation and degradation. The best minds of Europe,

Hume, Carlyle, Gustav Lebon, Froude, Hegel abetted in these cultural falsehoods. They sang of us as a people without history, and without meaningful values. This was drummed into our heads through their racist literatures and colonial schools: Europe was the centre; the universe revolved around Europe, the fountain head of universal values and civilization...they destroyed our dances, our songs, our poetry...it was calculated...They all knew that a slave was not a slave until he accepted that he was a slave...This made a few of our Westernized bourgeoisie cry in the words of Okot p'Bitek in his *Song of Ocol*: 'Mother, mother. Why was I born black?' (Ngugi, 1977: 103).

Enslavement of the mind as evidenced above is a colonial strategy aimed at making Africans feel inferior, reject themselves and even their culture. By regretting their being born black, they feel the white race is the ideal. It is therefore no wonder that some Africans have become mimic men, rejecting everything native and embracing everything European. In the selected texts, Ngugi and Osi set out to correct this racist anomaly which is a component of gender oppression by highlighting the beauty of their African cultures and castigating racist practices.

Ngugi's orientation towards African humanism makes him satirize racist inhuman treatment of blacks by whites in his text, *POB*. According to Ngugi (1993), oppression is one of the features of racism. He argues that one of the worst effects of racism is the way it numbs human sensibility. For him, horrendous things can be done to a section of the population without other sections registering the horror because their feelings have been numbed to a point where they are unable to see, or hear what is in front of their eyes or ears (Ngugi, 1993: 13). He tells the story of a white man, Peter Pooles who shoots an African just because he had thrown a stone at his dogs. The man is condemned to death. However, the racist white Headteacher, Fraudsham argues about the need to be sensitive to animals, giving an impression that he valued the lives of animals over those of Africans. He goes ahead to write a letter to the Governor appealing for clemency for the culprit, since he is a fellow white man.

Ngugi (1993) observes that institutional racism permeating many educational, social and political structures of the West has ended up affecting the general consciousness in society, personal relationships, feelings, attitudes, values, outlook, self-perception and perception of others, even in the everyday acts of daily living, become affected by racism. Racist values become the norm innocently passed on in the family and in other formative social circles (Ngugi, 1993: 13). This scenario is captured by the lawyer's account of Siriana School where he studied. The lawyer criticizes the education the Africans were receiving in this school which was meant to obscure racism and other forms of oppression: "It was meant to make us accept our inferiority so as to accept their superiority and their rule over us" (Ngugi, 1977: 165). The racist type of education adversely affects the psyches of the African students making them vulnerable to subjugation.



Additionally, the lawyer narrates a racist experience he witnessed while a student in America:

Then I went to America... a place where they believed in the equality and freedom of man. While I was at a black college in Baton, rouge, Louisiana, I saw with my own eyes a black man hanging from a tree outside a church. His crime? He had earlier fought a white man who had manhandled his sister (Ngugi, 1977: 165).

Mere fighting over a minor disagreement does not warrant death by hanging. The kind of judgement the black man receives is driven by racism and not justice. There is obvious racist bias which Ngugi ridicules in this idolized land. Ngugi (1993) explains the origin of racism during slavery period. He posits that the African had to be dehumanized in the mind of whites to explain away the necessity of treating him like a brute in the flesh (Ngugi, 1993: 141). Racist countries automatically have racist judicial systems that are biased against blacks. It is no wonder that the black man is treated like a brute. The sister to the hanged man suffers gender related and racial related oppression- as a woman in the hands of a man and also as a black in the hands of a white man.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o satirizes racist objectification and dehumanization of African women and girls in *POB*. Tourism industry in which some political elites are interested is held responsible for this injustice. A report in the foreign newspaper, for instance, is made, of some tourist resorts which are 'special places where even an ageing European could buy an authentic African girl of fourteen to fifteen for the price of a ticket to a cheap cinema show' (Ngugi, 1977: 175). Ngugi brings out capitalist moral decadence that has commoditized women in this postcolonial society. He juxtaposes a pair of incompatibles to highlight the extent to which racism and capitalism can drive humanity. African humanism values human dignity and cannot condone sexual liaisons between minors of fourteen and ageing old men with money in the bargain. The ageing Europeans in this context are exploiting such young girls to spite their African race. On the other hand, these young girls are involved with these elderly men due to the pressure of the capitalist economy in which women are at the lowest economic cadre. Stefano (2014) observes that according to Marxist feminism, capitalist social system nurtures and sustains women's oppression and gives rise to inequality.

Ngugi subverts racist dehumanization of women in his fiction. His protagonist, Wanja, for instance, becomes a victim. While working as a prostitute, she gets a nightmarish encounter in her occupation when she suddenly develops an ambition of getting rich quickly. She makes a liaison with a German racist tourist man who almost indulges her in bestiality with his dog. The German is motivated by racism to dehumanize her to the level of a dog. This is contrary African humanism which places human race as the first thing in line of all importance. Ngugi counters the Eurocentric racist superiority stance by painting white men negatively through the words of Wanja

when a friend of hers later suggests to her to befriend a white man in order to get rich fast: "I could not tell her that I thought of Europeans as naked bodies like the skin of pigs...or that of frogs that had lain buried in the ground for a long time" (Ngugi, 1977: 131).

Ngugi is also deconstructs racism by objectively castigating capitalistic tendencies of racist African women who take advantage of white men to exploit them materially. Avarice drives some women to engage in evil. It is questionable, for instance, that a woman who earns a salary in a decent profession like teaching should indulge in prostitution in a bid to get rich quickly. This particular woman is so materialistic to an extent that she acts treacherously. She had married a very old European man whom she had made to make a will in her favor. Eventually, she threw him down the stairs in the house killing him. She ended up getting all his wealth. To this woman, European men are synonymous with money. She does not see human beings in them. Her racist inclination causes her to exploit and even mercilessly kill them. This study embraces humanism which recognizes the essence and sacredness of human life. It therefore castigates such racist tendencies.

Ngugi negates Eurocentrism in the society of *POB* by satirizing the tendency of Africans associating European race and mannerisms with supremacy and aping everything without giving a second thought to it. He satirizes the Africans for their lack of pride in their race, culture and names and instead giving themselves meaningless European names imagining they are superior to those of their own race. He says:

For what could be a more ridiculous caricature of self than those of our African brothers and sisters proudly calling themselves James Phillipson, Rispia, Hottensiah, Ron Rodgerson, Richard Glucose, Charity, Honey Moonsnow, Ezekiel, Shiprah, Winterbottomson- all the collections of names and non-names from the Western World. What more evidence of self-hate than throwing a tea party for family and friends to bribe them never to call them by their African name (Ngugi, 1977: 125).

Ngugi subverts racism by reasserting pride in African culture that was denigrated by Western hegemonies. These hegemonies aimed at creating subalterns void of pride in themselves and their culture and painted their own as the axiom. This was enhanced by negation and interference with the cultures of their subjects. The imperial cultures were idealized. Consequently, this wreaked havoc on identities of the subjects making them vulnerable to manipulation. In Siriana School for instance, the school curriculum is limited and irrelevant to the African context. The impact of Siriana education is evident in Munira's inhibition during romance with Wanja. This is attributed to his religious upbringing and Siriana missionary education: "But even with Wanja, he found that he was still a prisoner of his own upbringing and Siriana missionary education" (Ngugi, 1977: 72). For Ngugi,

education should liberate individuals from ignorance and enable them see beyond the horizons. According to Ngugi (1993), “children are the future of any society...if you want to maim the future of any society, you simply maim the children. Thus the struggle for the survival of our children is the struggle for the survival of our future” (Ngugi, 1993: 94). He ennobles Karega to bear this dream of giving children emancipatory education. As a teacher of young children in Ilmorog, Karega yearns to impart pride in African identity in the children. He hopes to mold a people proud of their African heritage as opposed to the impotent curriculum being offered. He desired to enlarge his pupils’ consciousness so that they could see themselves as part of a larger whole, containing the history of African people and their struggles.

To deconstruct racism, Ngugi romanticizes African culture. This is intended to make Africans appreciate their own culture and decolonize their minds from Eurocentricism. Ngugi (1993) argues that eurocentrism is most dangerous to the self-confidence of Third world peoples when it becomes internalized in their intellectual conception of the universe. Ngugi highlights the beauty of the traditional circumcision ceremony. He further presents Munira who didn’t undergo it feeling incomplete and regretful. Munira tells Abdulla about how he had always felt a little incomplete because he had been circumcised in hospital under a pain killer, so that he never really felt that he truly belonged to his age group. Additionally, Ngugi’s presentation of “Theng’eta”, a special indigenous plant used in concocting traditional beer idolizes it. No wonder, he writes the word starting with a capital ‘T’. It is apparent that he is attempting to prove African supremacy and negate hegemonic othering of African culture. He refers to this drink adoringly as ‘Millet power of God’, “the spirit” (Ngugi, 1977: 224); “Theng’eta ...the spirit...millet power of God...millet fingers of God” (Ngugi, 1977: 231); “Theng’eta was soon rumored to possess all qualities from giving fertility to barren women to restoring potency to ageing men” (Ngugi, 1977: 257). Nyakinyua, an elderly woman, describes it thus: “Theng’eta. It is a dream. It is a wish. It gives you sight, and for those favored by God it can make them cross the river of time and talk with their ancestors. It has given seers their tongues; poets and Gichandi players their words; and it has made barren women mothers of many children. Only you must take it with faith and purity in your hearts” (Ngugi, 1977: 210).

Furthermore, African religious sanctity is implied during Theng’eta drinking ceremony:

Under the mood of the frank atmosphere of the circumcision ceremony, they all felt together- a community sharing a secret. They sat in a circle according to their ages...They all removed their ties, their shoes, anything which might prevent their bodies from being loose and at ease. She commanded them to remove all the money in the pockets, the metal bug that split up homes and drove men to the city...She poured a few drops on the floor and chanted: for those that went before us and those coming after us, tene na tene,tene wa tene... ‘And now,

my children’, she intoned, holding the tiny horn in her hands, ‘You must always drink from a common measure. Always the correct measure, starting with eldest amongst you. You may them dream your wishes and wish your dreams’ (Ngugi, 1977: 211).

Honor is accorded to the elderly according to African tradition. It is apparent that Nyakinyua is opposed to eurocentricism when she orders those in attendance to remove money and other forms of attire attributed to the West from their pockets before they partake of the drink.

Similarly, it is apparent that Osi subverts racism by reverting to history and romanticizing African traditions. He asserts the beauty and worth of African cultural practices. He exhibits pomp in traditional *Ndu Nwa Agu* dances held in the village square. Women are invited from their matrimonial homes to chant and sing praises to their forefathers and their protector, *Agu* and to do a special Igbo dance, the *igbu Owo*. The drummers would beat on the special *Okanga*, and the flutist pipe on the *oja*, as the men sang the praises of their daughters, the elderly women present: “These are our mothers, the link between us and the future. They are the link between us and our past, our pride and our glory” (Osi, 2002: 156). This causes Osi to bemoan the contamination of the beautiful African culture due to greed and capitalism of the chief. After the chief had bribed opinion makers in the society, he goes ahead and destroys the sacred forest that contained the mystical powers. With his powerful influence, the daughters of *Ndu Nwa Agu* can only watch the destruction nostalgically.

Additionally, Osi’s *TMAS* subverts Western racial supremacy by portraying White girls negatively. Chief Ugwueze regards them as being no wife material for his son, Ndubisi who is in the US. Because of this, he goes to see Pa Okolo, Oby’s uncle very early in the morning to seek for Oby’s hand in marriage to his son. He says: “Do you remember my son who went to America about eight years ago?... I don’t want him to marry an Oyibo girl. Never! I will not live to have a daughter-in-law who does not appreciate our culture or is unable to speak our language” (Osi, 2002: 103).

Osi also subverts racism by satirizing apemanship of Africans who associate Western culture with supremacy and their own culture with inferiority. There is for instance a crisis in *Isiakpu* church when a hypocritical man, Obeta poisons a nephew and because he knows tradition is bound to banish him from the society, he joins the church and is christened Michael. The man embraces the Christian name so much that when a boy calls him by the name ‘Obeta’, he almost beats him to death. Ngugi (1993) summarizes this scenario: “Western bourgeoisie have brought up from among the colonies, semi-colonies and neo-colonies, a native imbued with an almost pathological self-hatred and contempt through years of racist cultural engineering. Racism has thus produced an elite endowed with what Frantz Fanon once described as an incurable wish for the permanent identification with the west” (Ngugi, 1993: 138). By satirizing Apemanship, Osi deconstructs racism.

#### 5.4 Subversion of Classism

This section discusses classism which is a component of patriarchy prevalent in postcolonies. According to Oyekun (2014) socialist feminism sees women's oppression from the Marxist perspective of exploitation, oppression and labor. They see women as being held down as a result of their unequal standing in both the work place and the house hold. Oppression is seen as a part of a larger pattern that affects everyone involved in the capitalist system. In postcolonial societies, classism is a product of capitalism which is a colonial legacy. Therefore subversion of class oppression is expected to terminate gender oppression.

According to Hossain (2016), it is apparent that Ngugi acknowledges class system prevalent in the postcolonial society of *POB* as a result of the capitalistic mode of production. For him, the capitalist mode of production is responsible for women's oppression and secondary category status in society. Schwertz (1994) echoes Hossain's observation that one of the central issues in *POB* is the discrepancy between the poor and the wealth of the entrepreneurs, businessmen and land owners of independent Kenya. Stefano (2014) observes that according to Marxist feminism, private property gives rise to economic inequality, dependence, political and domestic struggle between the sexes and is the root of women's oppression in the current social context. In Ngugi's *POB*, women are depicted as being at the lowest economic echelon due to privatization of property. This is contrasted with the comprador males who are at the epicenter of neocolonial exploitation, "it seemed as if every prominent person in the country now owned a bit of Ilmorog: from the big factory to the shanty dwellings" (Ngugi, 1977: 282). Women in new Ilmorog can only afford to rent kiosks in which they do petty businesses and in the poor part of the Village called New Jerusalem, women deal in prostitution. Wanja also sets up Sunshine Lodge where prostitution takes place. Alazzawi (2018) argues that Ngugi presents Wanja as an epitome of sexual exploitation engendered by neocolonial exploitation. For Alazzawi, Wanja is a strong and loving woman but society drives her into prostitution. This therefore also applies to the rest of the women in this society involved in prostitution and treated as sex objects by men. Millett (1970) avers that prostitution is one of the varieties of cruelties and barbarities under patriarchy.

Ngugi seeks to counter capitalism and refers to it derogatively as a monster and a molten god. In the words of the lawyer, he castigates it

But we, the leaders, choose to flirt with the molten god, a blind, deaf monster who has plagued us for hundreds of years. We reasoned: what is wrong is the skin color of the people who ministered to this god; under our own tutelage, we shall tame the monster-god and make it do our will...so we go on building the monster and it grows, and now we are all slaves to it and waits for more...Now see the dwellers in Blue Hills, those who have taken on themselves the priesthood of the

ministry to the blind god...a thousand acres of land...a million acres in the two hands of a priest, while the congregation moans for an acre! And they are told: it is only a collection from your sweat...let us be honest slaves to the monster god (Ngugi, 1977: 163).

He criticizes African leaders who after fighting against colonialism take over the country but ape the capitalist greed of former hegemonies. The leaders amass wealth and render the masses poor. Leaders in this society contravene humanist standards. According to Tutu (1999), a king owes his power to the people he leads. Therefore he is not expected to exploit his subjects the way postcolonial leaders do.

This reality of disparity between the rich and the poor in Ngugi's *POB* vividly displayed during the trek to the city by Ilmorog Villagers. At the time they get very desperate due the boy Joseph's illness, none of inhabitants of Blue Hills, who belong to the rich class is ready to open the gate to this group and offer help to this poor class of people. Worse still, Kimeria, one of these Blue Hills inhabitants notices Wanja, a girl he had earlier on sexually abused and dumped and forcefully takes advantage of her sexually before he releases members of the delegation. Arndt (2000) argues that gender oppression of African women is interwoven with other political, economic, cultural and social forms of oppression. In this context, Wanja's sexual abuser takes advantage of her because of her economic incapacitation and robs her of her dignity as a human being. This study negates this dehumanization and in tune with humanism, accords dignity to all people regardless of sex.

Classism is evident in the society of Ngugi's *POB* as manifested when Wanja at a tender age is beaten up by both parents when they discover that she had an affair with a boy who came from a poorer background than theirs. Wanja rebels against her parents and looks for an opportunity to revenge against them. Using Wanja as his mouthpiece to negate classism, Ngugi questions, "Was it a sin to be born poor?" (Ngugi, 1977: 38).

In addition, Ngugi triggers our sympathy at the image of Muriuki's very old mother who pushes a wheel barrow full of stones in order to earn a living. This happens after demarcation and fencing off of land and denying herders and tillers rights in Ilmorog. This captures the inhuman and individualistic nature of capitalism. According to Tutu (1999), in Africa, authority flows from the old to the young and respect for the elderly is a guiding principle. Thus an older person is automatically expected to hold a certain level of superiority regardless of his or her rank, title or education. By virtue of her age therefore, the old woman should not be subjected to the kind of labor she does.

Stefano (2014) also observes that about comparative worth, Marxist feminists have focused their attention on the inequitable manner in which division of labor operates within society in capitalist world where men and women are differently paid for doing the comparable work. Jobs where

concentrations of women are more attract lesser remuneration in comparison to the jobs dominated by men. Ngugi captures this situation in one of the factories Karega works in. He notices the instead of the exploited workers uniting to fight against this injustice, they are divided along tribal, religious and even gender lines. Women in this factory doing the same job as men are paid lower wages. Men comment that the role of women is to lie on their backs and allow men access to pleasure kingdoms. Men therefore wield economic power and take advantage of it to disrespect women. This study, in consonance with humanism, castigates this disrespectful attitude. According to Tutu (1999), respect and love amongst community members play an important role in an African framework.

Similarly, Osi castigate class discrimination prevalent in his society. There is sexual division of labor in the society of *TMAS*: “Weeding was typically women’s work in Isiakpu. There was clear division of farm labor. If you had a large farm, you would ask your women neighbors to help you weed. No money changed hands but those who came to help were given food and drink” (Osi, 2002: 3). It is evident that economic worth is not attached to the kind of work that women in this society do yet it provides food for families.

In this society, “a lot depends on who you know and your standing in society. She remembered the words of a popular Nigerian musician who said there were those who owned society and those who were messengers for society” (Osi, 2002: 5). This reality hits mother and daughter when the daughter, Oby fails to get admission to the university for two years even after passing her exams because she has no powerful person to help her. The irony is that some of her contemporaries who performed dismally have already gained entry and are pursuing their second year. The author seeks to negate capitalist injustice prevalent in this society since it is contrary to the precepts of African humanism which according to Tutu (1999) lays emphasis on human dignity, concerns and capabilities. We expect Oby to be enabled to reach her peak.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to interrogate gender in relation to postcolonial discourse in Ngugi’s *POB* and Osi’s *TMAS*. It followed a heterogeneous model in which several theoretical approaches are used. African Feminist theory which acknowledges Afrocentric emancipatory ideologies such as humanism and egalitarianism which are seminal to this paper was applied. African Feminism is closely linked to African thought that views relationships of mutual interconnection, interdependence and interrelation as fundamental to existence. Additionally, Marxist Feminist theory which is a variant of Marxism based on the influential works of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels was applied. Marxist Feminist theory has been used to address postcolonial issues such as class, sex and race.

The paper was basically on contextual information and analysis Of Ngugi’s *POB* and Osi’s *TMAS*. Other works of art relevant to the paper are used. The research required that the researcher does critical reading and analysis of the selected texts and other relevant scholarly works in a bid to come up with findings.

This paper has established that Ngugi and Osi are averse to hegemonic introductions and oppressive African practices such as patriarchy in their postcolonial societies. It has emerged that sexism, racism and classism are the major components of social inequality. In their selected fiction, they deconstruct racism, sexism and classism by resorting to afrocentric humanist approaches and romanticizing African indigenous cultures. Secondly, by embracing Afrocentric and socialist emancipatory ideologies such as humanism, postcolonialism, Marxism and egalitarianism, the authors have managed to subvert classism, sexism and racism that have dehumanized and oppressed postcolonial women. Therefore it may be concluded that men and women should be treated and enabled equitably since people are endowed with different potentials which are not dependent on their sex. Additionally, it can also be concluded that Afrocentric emancipatory approaches to gender such as humanism and egalitarianism are viable in resolving social and gender conflicts. To conclude, this paper advocates for Afrocentric emancipatory perspectives which foreground gender equity as opposed to mainstream gender perspectives which vouch for gender equality.

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