

Marxist Humanism and Gender Equity in Ngugi WA Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Osi Ogbu's *The Moon Also Sets*

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Abstract:The purpose of this paper is to explore Ngugi wa Thiong'o's and Osi Ogbu's stance on gender. Against the backdrop of patriarchy in both Western and African societies, there has been an intense debate with regards to resolving gender inequality without reaching consensus since most of the existing feminist views have proved controversial and divisive. This paper is a continuation of this debate and specifically focuses on two African male postcolonial feminist artists whose humanist and afro-euro-pean approaches seem to tackle more wholesomely the issue of social justice and equity in their selected fiction. These approaches embrace co-operation and complementarity between men and women. Apart from gender inequality, the paper is cognizant of the fact that postcolonies grapple with hegemonic capitalism and its resultant exploitation and social oppression. To attain social emancipation, Ngugi and Osi, envision alternative agents in their fictional universes into which the present paper seeks to delve. The humanist element contained in African feminism addressed patriarchy whereas Marxist feminist postulations addressed capitalistic hegemonies. The literature review focused on the works of authors and literary critics who have analyzed works on gender and capitalism. This paper concludes that men and women can have a peaceful co-existence. Secondly African humanist approaches to gender are viable in resolving social and gender conflicts. Finally, men and women should be treated equitably because people are endowed with different potentials which are not dependent on sex.

Key Words: postcolonial, Afro-euro-pean, emancipation, gender inequality.

Abbreviations

POB-Petals of Blood

TMAS-The Moon Also Sets

"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

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender is a topic of interest and controversy to many artists, scholars and critics throughout the world. This has engendered various conflicts and contestations around gender analysis. Approach to gender in this paper deviates from orthodox perspectives held by scholars and critics and

uncharacteristically focuses on male writers. It follows an approach which is balanced, objective and humanistic in dealing with gender discrepancies. It is underpinned by afro-centric ideologies which embrace co-operation and complementarity between men and women. This is a contradiction to mainstream feminism which is often divisive. 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. History, for feminists is the story of the unchanging patriarchal structures through which men have subjugated women. 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 scenario, women see men as enemies responsible for their plight and can therefore not work together towards a common goal of emancipation.

There is a paradigm shift from this unidirectional approach since gender is multifaceted. 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.

Beuku-Betts' argument affects many feminists who originate from postcolonial societies necessitating their rejection of mainstream feminism. In rejection of mainstream feminism, the feminist scholars highlight contextual determiners that require considering in analysis of gender question in postcolonial societies. Additionally, they foreground aesthetics and ideals that Africans esteem in their societies. In

the course of deciphering gender issues therefore, it is crucial that these ideals are not interfered with. This calls for afrocentric approaches which offer pragmatic solutions to gender relations as well as enhance continuity of social values. In this paper therefore, the most appropriate afrocentric emancipatory ideologies applied are humanism and egalitarianism. The paper seeks to investigate how Ngugi and Osi apply these ideologies to depict gender issues, subvert colonial legacies and enhance social emancipation in the societies of the selected works of art. Both ideologies dignify human beings regardless of gender.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Western feminist scholars have had different perspectives as regards emancipation of women from gender discrepancy. One such feminist scholar is Elaine Showalter. In an online publication (<https://www.Enote.com/homework>), Showalter has come up with gynocriticism which concerns itself with developing a specifically female criticism that critiques works written by women with the aim of identifying uniqueness between women's and men's writing in order to forge a path toward the next generation of women writers who do not rely upon male templates and models because the women writers are free to know and develop their own female literary greatness. For her therefore, men cannot be trusted to address women's concerns. This paper does not agree with Showalter in that this kind of approach to gender is divisive.

According to Arndt (2000), Western feminism is rejected by postcolonial artists since it actively takes part in oppression of Third World women in as far as the conceptual paradigm in which they operate is informed by racism and cultural imperialism. For Arndt, gender oppression of African women is interwoven with other political, economic, cultural and social forms of oppression that are not taken into account in Western feminism such as racism, neocolonialism, capitalism, religious fundamentalism and dictatorial and corrupt political leadership.

There are feminists in postcolonial societies who adopt Western divisive approach to gender. For Kabira (1992), the relationship between men and women is viewed in binary opposition. Gender is termed "those differences between men and women that are socially constructed. These differences include such stereotypical beliefs such as: men are strong-women are weak; men are politicians-women are artists; men assist each other-women fight each other; men are outgoing-women are inward looking" (Kabira,1992: 59-60). The relationship between men and women is therefore characterized by polarity.

In this paper, approach to gender deviates from mainstream Western feminist approach and instead embraces afrocentric emancipatory ideologies that encourage complementarity and co-operation between men and women. This paper focuses on the artistic works of male writers to interrogate their stance on gender in that male writers have been silent on this topic. This is a relatively new crop of male writers who write on gender, a

topic associated with female writers and scholars. Shigali (2017) posits that gender sensitivity and feminist perspective in fiction is stereotypically associated with female writers based on stereotypical dichotomies that define patriarchy categorizing humanity into aggressive male oppressor versus passive female oppressed.

Shigali (2017) similarly studies the artistic work of a male author, Sembene Ousmane (1960). She argues that Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood* portrays gender sensitivity underpinned by the African philosophy of African gender sensitivity which views male and female as two complementary parts of a whole defined as human. Basing on Ousmane's treatment of gender, Shigali acknowledges that he is a "macho feminist", a title Ousmane accorded by his personal friend and biographer, Samba Gadjigo. For Shigali, Ousmane probably earns the broader title from his friend because he captures essences of gender discrimination as archetype of other discriminations that delimit human relations. For her, Ousmane may indeed be a "feminist macho" even in a Western sense because he addresses all oppressions of humanity and yet succeeds in foregrounding oppression of women. He criticizes definitive assumptions and basic features of patriarchal ideology and practice notably gendered division of labor, space and resultant stereotypes. He ennobles deconstruction-cum reconstruction project by contextualizing it in his historical novel, *God's Bits of Wood*.

The researcher follows in Shigali's footsteps in this paper and also focuses on male writers, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Osi Ogbu, with keen interest on the authors' depiction of gender and treatment of hegemonic capitalism in their selected works of art, *POB* and *TMAS* respectively. This study however goes a step further to explore solutions offered by the authors for social emancipation. This is in order to add knowledge to the canon of male writers on gender.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Analysis of Ngugi's and Osi's perspectives on gender issues in this paper is guided by the African feminist theory which also acknowledges afrocentric emancipatory ideologies such as humanism and egalitarianism. It is also guided by Marxist feminism. African Feminism theory recognizes the multiple forms of oppression which both African men and women are subjected to. Its fundamental tenet is complementarity and inter-dependence of men and women. African Feminism has a variety of strands but focus is specifically laid upon those seminal to this study- Molarara Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwanism (acronym of: Social Transformations Including Women in Africa) and Obioma Nnaemeka's negofeminism-feminism of negotiation.

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 given roles depending on how they are endowed regardless of the sex. Humanism accords dignity to

all people regardless of sex. These ideologies are seminal in gauging gender relationships in the societies of the selected texts.

In seeking emancipation from capitalist exploitation suffered in postcolonial societies of the selected works of art, this paper 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.

III. 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.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This paper interrogates Ngugi's and Osi's stance on gender. In their approach to gender, they deviate from mainstream feminist perspectives which have precipitated a perpetual debate, albeit without achieving social emancipation. These male postcolonial artists instead embrace emancipatory ideologies such as Marxism, African humanism and egalitarianism which are humanistic and objective. In their approach, they address all oppressions of humanity and exhibit gender sensitivity. They deconstruct gendered division of labor, space and resultant stereotypes. The alternative agents of social emancipation according to Ngugi and Osi in their selected fiction are complementarity and interdependence, economic empowerment, sacrifice and martyrdom and consciousness raising.

4.2 Complementarity and Interdependence as an Agent Social Emancipation

Egoistic capitalism that characterises postcolonial societies has engendered egocentricism which impedes working together and drawing on one another's strength for the common good. Ngugi and Osi, however, by resorting to afrocentric emancipatory perspectives, which are aspects of African feminist theory, prove in their fiction the pivotal role complementarity and interdependence play in social emancipation. Complementarity in relation to Shigali (2009) is the idea that males and females can co-exist and support one another to achieve a common goal. In the context of this

paper, the term is used to imply gender inclusivity. Both Ngugi and Osi embrace complementarity in combating hegemonic legacies prevalent in their post-colonial societies. The writers are keen on involving both male and female characters of different age brackets with different potentials working in solidarity to achieve common goals. These two authors also adhere to the precepts of African humanism which according to Tutu (1999) believes in group solidarity which is central to the survival of African communities.

For Ngugi, complementarity enhances emancipation. The essence of complementarity is witnessed among the villagers of Ilmorog who take up the enormous task of trekking to the city in solidarity to find solutions to drought and famine. They derive optimism and confidence in their interdependence. Before they set out, villagers share roles and responsibilities in preparation for the journey. Some remain in the village to carry out sacrifices on behalf of the travelers to the city. They are propelled by communal spirit. "The trek to the city had attracted many people carried on the waves of hope and promises, and had awoken a feeling that the crisis was a communal crisis needing a communal response. Nyakinyua was the spirit that guided and held them together" (Ngugi, 1977:123). In accordance to African egalitarianism, the author dignifies Nyakinyua, a woman, by placing her at the helm of this delegation. This is unlike colonial gender hierarchy which places black women at the bottom of hierarchical rung. Along the way, Wanja and Karega ponder about the enormity of the risk the men, women and children have undertaken under their influence considering the cruelty of the city. Karega's response however reveals his confidence in communalism and interdependence. He responds, "...why should we fail though? We are now going as a community. The voice of the people is truly the voice of God" (Ngugi, 1977: 126). This delegation entails males and females of varied ages working together in planning and executing the journey. Amidst the many challenges they encounter, they reach the city and gain publicity which attracts help. Their liberation from starvation is a consequence of complementarity and embracing humanism that advocates for group solidarity, which is central to the survival of African communities.

Both artists embrace interdependence between men and women in fighting injustices in society. Ngugi exhibits complementarity among men and women in fighting for Kenya's freedom. Wanja, one of his protagonists talks proudly of her aunt whose husband was a hard core Mau Mau and the aunt used to carry guns and bullets to the forest hidden in baskets full of unga. The Mau Mau soldiers could therefore rely and depend on the likes of Wanja's aunt for their survival. Ngugi therefore highlights the Ubuntu philosophy, which according to Tutu (1999) expresses the interconnectedness and the responsibility of individuals to each other.

Another incident of complementarity worth mentioning is in the working together of Munira, Wanja and Abdulla. Together, they enroll the boy, Joseph in school, thus

influencing his destiny. This boy was a destitute adopted by Abdulla and whom, out of frustration, Abdulla treats like a slave. Later on when Abdulla fails because of closure of his business in Ilmorog, Wanja goes on sponsoring the boy's education. The three are gratified when later on they observe intellectual growth. Joseph begins to talk like Karega, the activist. Apart from influencing the boy's destiny, closeness and working together of Wanja and Abdulla makes the bar business thrive and Abdulla lively. Even villagers notice his positive change of attitude towards Joseph and his own work. They noticed that Abdulla's curses were over: the scowl on his face was gone: instead of terrorizing Joseph with curses he had sent him to school and had become cheerful. Villagers noticed that the store had a more orderly look that attracted more customers

Like Ngugi, Osi advocates for complementarity and interdependence between men and women. Oby finds herself at wits end when the professor makes sexual advances at her. She knows the Sociology professor's reputation yet it is very important for her to pass his course. She is just on the verge of giving in when Chris comes onto the scene and with his ideas, Oby and Chris work to save Oby from being exploited sexually by Professor Akpanu. Professor Akpanu is used to failing female students who do not give in to his sexual advances. He also gives undeserved quality grades to female students who give in. Complementarity between Oby and Chris does not save Oby alone from sexual exploitation but also other female students who come from different backgrounds. This is in consonance with humanism which according to Tutu (1999), optimizes the African philosophy of respect and human dignity that is fundamental to being able to transcend ethnic divisions by working together and respecting each other.

4.3 Sacrifice and martyrdom as Agents of Social Emancipation

For the sake of the common good of society, both Ngugi and Osi advocate for laying down one's personal interests and comfort. This may be compared to playing a messianic role. This is in consonance with African humanism. According to Tutu (1999), humanism can be described as the capacity in an African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring. Ngugi exemplifies this in *POB* in his portrayal of male and female fighters who risk their lives for Kenya's liberation from colonial rule. Ngugi contrasts this virtue of sacrifice with selfish capitalist greed. The painful and sacrificial experiences of freedom fighters are recounted by Abdulla who took part in the struggle. They had scarce ammunition and food, went about in tattered clothes, risked being bitten by poisonous snakes and their skins were torn by wild thorns. It is for the sake of freedom of their country that they sacrificed thus. Ngugi also highlights the sacrifice of Nyakinyua's husband in saving his society from colonialism. He risks his life by singlehandedly pointing a gun at a white. It costs him his life

but his sacrifice saves Ilmorog village. He takes it upon himself to save the entire village. This paper supports this selflessness which is in line with African humanism which expresses interconnectedness and responsibility of individuals to each other.

Ngugi's other character who exhibits sacrifice is Ole Masai, a man born of an Indian father and African mother. He detests racial discrimination Africans are exposed to and sacrifices his privileges. He chooses to identify with the underprivileged Africans, rejects what his father stood for and takes to the bush to fight against colonialism. He sacrifices because of being humane. According to Tutu (1999) humanism, personhood rejects the notion that a person can be identified in terms of physical and psychological features. Ole Masai's sacrifice implies deconstruction of racism.

Ngugi highlights the sacrifice of his protagonist, Wanja, in saving her grandmother's piece of land from being auctioned by the bank. This happens after Nyakinyua, like other Ilmorog peasants and herdsman are lured into loans which they fail to pay back. Because this land meant so much to Nyakinyua, she tries to mobilize villagers to fight against this exploitation without success. Wanja understands the importance her grandmother attached to the piece of land and therefore sacrifices her shares in the building she co-owns with Abdulla and redeems her grandmother's land. Although this huge sacrifice costs everything she has and takes her back to her beginnings, her sacrifice conquers exploitation.

Osi uses the desperate situation of widowhood in a patriarchal society to illustrate the importance of sacrifice as highlighted in *TMAS*. He focuses on the strength of a widowed woman, Ma Oby, in a society that takes advantage of widows. In this society, usually in-laws set in to dispossess a widow immediately her husband passes on. Ma Oby finds herself in this predicament when her husband dies. In-laws are concerned about their late brother's property and not the welfare of the bereaved. Because Ma Oby is faced with the responsibility of educating her children and taking care of them, she sacrifices her comfort and rejects re-marriage. Her brother, Amechi's sacrifice in supporting his sister also comes in handy. Later when the shop suffers arson, Amechi speedily steps in and re-establishes the business and pays fees for Oby. For Osi, Ma Oby's success in the long run shows the importance of women's resilience and sacrifice in any society. Her brother's sacrificial intervention implies greater strength when men and women work together.

Osi castigates relationships in which people involved are not willing to sacrifice for one another. A case in question is the relationship between Chike and Oby. All along, Oby is convinced that Chike loves her and is ready to do anything for her. However, when she gets pregnant, Chike is unwilling to sacrifice for her. She had thought he would be willing to marry her so that they raise their baby together. Chike is uncompromising and doesn't want to sacrifice his priorities for her sake. To Chike, his education and plans must proceed

uninterrupted despite the challenge of parenthood that has now cropped up. To him, the only solution is to procure an abortion. She discovers that Chike never loved her. Oby's harangue brings out Chike's selfishness and betrayal. It is evident that he cannot sacrifice for her because he never loved the lady but was merely out to exploit her sexually. Osi's representation of Chike as a male character is objective and he sets out to negate it by bringing out the emotional pain the victim of this exploitation experiences. Chike goes against the precepts of humanism which dignifies all people.

4.4 Economic Empowerment as an agent of Social Emancipation

An online publication (www.enotes.com/homework-help/whats-definition-economic) defines economic empowerment as the development of the ability of the historically disadvantaged to engage in economic activity that benefits both the individuals in question and the broader society. Economic empowerment is often applied to women who have been subject to discrimination in education and professional opportunities. These women are not economically disadvantaged but have been denied opportunities to become self-sufficient due to cultural or religious obstacles. In most instances, they do fall on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum. This research focuses on how economic empowerment emancipates women from patriarchy.

For Osi, economic empowerment is an arsenal against patriarchy. Economic empowerment is in terms of owning money, businesses, property like land and buildings. Osi begins his story with portrayal of the protagonist, Mama Oby as economically empowered since we first find her counting money for her stock. Against a challenging patriarchal background where widows lose all rights, Mama Oby's economic empowerment gives her a foothold to educate her children after her husband's demise. Talking to her daughter Oby at the time they are planning for her university admission, she visualizes how life would be easier if her husband were alive. She acknowledges that she could not expect help from her late husband's relatives. Her ability to sail through patriarchal challenges in this society can only be attributed to the stable financial base her late husband laid for her and her hard work. She survives on proceeds from the houses her late husband put up in Kano and Nsukka which are rented out. However, after the civil war, the house in Kano was declared abandoned property and confiscated by Kano state. It was only through the intercession of their friends in Kano that Mama Oby was paid some compensation for the building, the money which she spent on performing befitting funeral rites for her husband, school fees for her children and the balance provided the initial capital for her business. This business becomes her livelihood. The chauvinistic brothers-in-law and the chief know that this property is her strength. Thus, when she rejects their proposals of her remarriage and her daughter's planned marriage, they conspire and set the shop on fire to incapacitate her so that she succumbs to their

patriarchal pressure. Mama Oby however triumphs over patriarchy after seeking help from the police and the culprits are apprehended. The story ends when the shop is flourishing. Mama Oby is able to challenge patriarchy because she is economically empowered. This paper supports economic empowerment since it is a bulwark against patriarchy.

Ngugi's *POB* similarly advocates for economic independence for women's liberation from patriarchal shackles. Being a symbol of womanhood in both postcolonial and patriarchal societies, Wanja explains the predicament she finds herself in as a woman without a steady and decent source of income. Together with other women, they have no other livelihood because they dropped out of school. The only option they have is prostitution. Many have attempted quitting the lifestyle without success, in that they have no alternative, as Wanja confesses, "I have tried my hands at various jobs, but work in bars seems to be the one readily available to us girls-dropouts from school and CAPE failures and even some dropouts from high schools" (Ngugi, 1977: 41). According to Alazzawi (2018), Wanja is an epitome of sexual exploitation engendered by neocolonial exploitation. For him, Ngugi shows that Wanja is a strong and loving woman but society drives her into prostitution. It's quite apparent from Wanja's negative attitude towards sex that she is a victim of circumstance and prostitution for her is not a choice but a compulsion as stated, "Her affairs were always accompanied by anxiety, bitterness, an overriding need for a palliative, a temporary victory, a tormenting need for blood and vengeance, for gain" (Ngugi, 1977: 231). Therefore she would quit prostitution, a very dehumanizing occupation, if she had a better financial option. This situation can be blamed on the colonial process which according to Oyewumi (1997) inferiorized females placing them at the bottom most rung of racial hierarchy and giving professional occupations to males only.

Wanja's tenacity for economic independence is strengthened by the incessant exploitation in Ilmorog society. Economic independence keeps Wanja afloat during these turbulent times when Ilmorog is being scrambled over and shared out by capitalist investors. When the bank threatens to come and sell her grandmother Nyakinyua's land owing to failure to remit loan money, Wanja comes in speedily and redeems the land, becoming Ilmorog's heroine. This is after a major sacrifice of selling the building she co-owned with Abdulla. What remained of the sale is used in putting up a personal house on her grandmother's land, which she brands, Sunshine Lodge. After losing her Theng'eta business to these capitalist investors and seeing injustice and greed being perpetrated in her society, she refuses being a victim. Wanja starts operating by the slogan, "Eat or you are eaten". Therefore she establishes a prostitution business where she personally indulges in prostitution to get money and also hires young girls and trades on their bodies. For Wanja, in a capitalist society where the labor of the masses is exploited, there is no difference whether you are sweating it out on a plantation, in a

factory or lying on your back. She ends up a rich woman, said to be the most powerful woman in all Ilmorog who owns houses and fleets of lorries. It is in this lodge that she executes her vengeance on all those that have hurt her like Chui, Mzigo, and Kimeria. Her killing of Kimeria, a man who has repeatedly sexually harassed her symbolizes victory over patriarchy. Although Wanja ends up economically powerful, this study disapproves the means she uses in that she promotes sexism which this study deconstructs. Additionally, she dehumanizes herself and the women whom she engages in prostitution. This study embraces humanism which dignifies all men and women.

4.5 *Consciousness as an Agent of Social Emancipation in Petals of Blood and the Moon Also Sets*

Olufunwa (1999) defines consciousness as an introduction of a new mental outlook in an individual or group which leads to alteration of established perceptions of reality in some significant way or which compels the examination of some aspects of the human condition from hitherto- unconsidered perspectives. For Olufunwa, there are three ways of acquisition of consciousness. It may be acquired in the course of normal human development; as a consequence of some traumatic or otherwise profoundly significant experience; or by deliberate and systematic instruction designed to instill new perspectives in those so instructed. A new consciousness may be acquired through a combination of all the three methods. Consciousness in the societies of the selected texts is a product of the two latter methods. Apart from being patriarchal, the societies in question have gone through traumatic colonial and postcolonial experiences which compel masses to awaken and look at the nature of their existence in a new light.

Ngugi advocates for consciousness rising against injustices in the society of *POB*. There is consciousness raising against capitalism, which is the main cause of exploitation and oppression. Consciousness raising perspective is underpinned by Marxist feminist theory. According to Stefano (2014), Marxist feminism sees women's oppression in terms of exploitation and labor. Women's oppression is seen by Marxist feminists as a part of a larger pattern that affects everyone involved in the capitalist system. Ngugi's *POB* presents Ilmorog village as a microcosm of the larger capitalist society which is characterized by economic stratification and exploitation. The majority of villagers live in abject poverty due to exploitation by the bourgeoisie. Economic exploitation escalates as capitalist investors develop interest in the village after it gains publicity after the villagers' trek to the city. Investors alienate land from the villagers by demarcating and fencing off land depriving a lot of tillers and herdsmen of their hitherto unquestioned rights of use and cultivation. Deprivation compels villagers to hire themselves out to any who needed their labor for a wage. Although both male and female villagers are facing the challenge, Ngugi foregrounds the predicament of women by epitomizing a very old woman, Wambui, who is a victim of

labor exploitation. She has to push a wheelbarrow piled high with stones. By virtue of her age, the oppressive labor she does to eke a living is an eye opener to the audience about capitalist injustices. We therefore sympathize with her lot and vilify the capital system, justifying revolution in this society.

Oyekun (2014) argues that Marxist feminists see women as being held down as a result of their unequal standing in both the work place and the household. As an exemplar of this scenario, Ngugi in his *POB* highlights the plight of a woman, Mariamu, representative of women whose labor is exploited at home by her husband and by her colonial employer without compensation. Mariamu exemplifies women's predicament of double colonization. She is exploited by both the European land lord and her husband. Ngugi uses rebellion to depict the magnitude of consciousness this woman has attained. She breaks free from bondage. Mariamu radically chooses to defy the exploitative authority of the colonizer and the chauvinistic husband. By quitting, she demonstrates the fact that as a laborer, she is aware of her entitlement to the fruits of her labor. She therefore rebels against the capitalist system which this study deconstructs.

Similarly, Osi in his *TMAS* depicts Isiakpu society highlights economic exploitation of women. Osi is in consonance with Stefano (2014), who posits that Marxist Feminism supports liberation of women. Osi enables them to transcend economic exploitation. He captures a patriarchal society in which a widow is disadvantaged and is bound to suffer and lose all property to her in-laws. Here, a dead man's uncles and brothers had first claim to a man's assets whether or not he had a wife and children. This happened as the wife mourned trapped in destitute cloth. His main character, Mama Oby is a widow faced with these challenges. She is however portrayed as a conscious woman who does not succumb to pressure from her in-laws. Ma Oby's assertiveness saves her house in Nsukka after her husband's death. She also puts up a spirited fight against her in-laws to get the land on which she lives with her children whom she shields from infuriating experiences of widowhood. Osi foregrounds the resilience of Ma Oby portraying her as conscious of her right to property ownership. Ngugi (1993) argues that human beings make history by their actions on nature and themselves. For him, history is therefore about human struggle: first with nature as the material source of the wealth they create, food, clothing and shelter; and secondly, struggle with each other over the control of that wealth. In her struggle over the control of family wealth, Mama Oby triumphs over her bothers-in-law and retains her economic power therefore challenging patriarchy. This study supports the protagonist's resolute stance in agitating for her rights since it advocates for gender equity and economic empowerment of women.

An African feminist, Aina (1998) argues for retention of traditional structures that are supportive of women, while at the same time fighting oppressive traditions like child marriage and widowhood taboos. In Osi's *TMAS* a widow, Mama Oby faces pressure to oblige to oppressive traditional

structures such as being inherited, her daughter, Oby undergoing female genital mutilation and forced marriage between her daughter and the chief's son. Failure to comply causes her in-laws and chief to set her shop on fire in order to make her succumb to their demands. Consciousness enables her to sue the perpetrators of the heinous act. Uncle Ben who executes the arson is arrested. Because of fear of confronting the law, Pa Okolo is so scared that he commits suicide and Chief Ugwueze flees from the village. The eventual defeat of these antagonists is a pointer that women are able to stand up to economic injustice. Osi therefore voices women's concerns in this society

Ngugi advocates for consciousness of masses as an agent of social emancipation in *POB*. Wane (2002) avers that African socialism appreciates the power of collective responsibility to tackle social issues, what Ngugi too subscribes to. In a postcolonial society characteristic of capitalist class stratification, Ngugi mobilises masses to fight against injustices. Stefano (2014) posits that according to Marxist feminism, the disappearance of class oppression is expected to terminate gender oppression. Being a committed writer with a Marxist orientation, Ngugi advocates for social reform and sensitizes the disadvantaged groups to unite and revolutionize the society by overthrowing capitalist systems and seizing means of production. Ngugi's wake up call to the proletariat is summed up with the words, "the magic is in our hands" (Ngugi, 1977: 114). For him, people's power to influence their destiny is within their reach of the masses. Consciousness against economic exploitation is manifested in Ngugi's *POB* when Nderi wa Riera, the Ilmorog MP, sends his messengers to exploit villagers. The villagers' consciousness triumphs over exploitation. This paper supports villagers' resistance since the MP's behaviour contravenes what is expected of him as a leader. Tutu (1999) observes that according to humanism, the king owed his status including all the powers associated with it to the will of the people under him. Therefore a political leader who abuses and fails to acknowledge the source of his power has no business being a leader. Consciousness peaks in Ngugi's *POB* when the Ilmorog villagers trek to the city to confront their MP and other capitalist investors who are responsible for their plight. Stefano (2014) observes that according to Marxist feminism, class struggle is the driving force of history. This entails a confrontation between the bourgeoisie class and proletariat. The villagers are motivated to fight and revolutionize their society. According to Ngugi (1993), it is labor, with all the instruments and accumulated skills that make wealth out of nature. Villagers are conscious of how their labor is exploited to enrich the bourgeoisie at the expense of the laborers. Despite the hazardous journey, they reach the city and get attention from the media and their MP. Momentary aid comes in and people are salvaged from starvation. This paper justifies mass action in confronting capitalism since the voice of the masses attracts public attention thus compelling capitalists to act responsibly.

There is consciousness at religious level in Isiakpu village in *TMAS*. Osi castigates religious leaders who take advantage of their social standing to commit folly and sexually exploit women. Aduyoye (1988) argues that Christianity in Africa began by confusing Christianity with European culture. In her perspective, this confusion has led not just to propagation of Western norms as Christian norms but also leads to collusion between West African patriarchies and Christian patriarchies whereby Christianity reinforces the cultural conditioning of compliance and submission and leads to the depersonalization of women. Osi presents one case of a sexist Catholic priest, Father Damian, whose morality is contemptible. He has illicit sexual liaisons with women like Ma Ijeoma, and wants to forcefully exploit some. He is also erratic in his judgement and splits the church, favoring criminals at the expense of the rest of the congregation. He favors an evil man who is accused of poisoning a nephew at the expense of the congregation. The Christians petition the Bishop over the issue and Father Damian is eventually transferred from the village. Consciousness of the villagers strengthens their resolve to resist and overcome sexual exploitation of women and wrong religious leadership. This study therefore supports consciousness as a perspective of social emancipation in that it encourages solidarity of the society towards achieving justice.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing discussion, it may have been clear that in the selected fiction, authors acknowledge prevalence of social oppression in their postcolonial societies. They attribute this oppression to hegemonic capitalism and patriarchy. To emancipate their postcolonial societies from social oppression, the authors shift their focus from mainstream feminist approaches and espouse humanist afro-european emancipatory perspectives.

The comparative analysis of Ngugi's *POB* and Osi Ogbu's *TMAS* has established alternative agents of social emancipation from postcolonial hegemonies such as patriarchy and capitalist exploitation and oppression. Having Marxist inclination, the artists advocate for consciousness. For them, the oppressed should unite and confront and resist the oppressor. This paper has also established that complementarity and interdependence can emancipate society as individuals draw strength from one another and together, they accomplish more. Ngugi and Osi, advocate for African humanist approaches which dignify all people regardless of their sex for quality existence. In this case, no person suffers discrimination based on class, race or sex. This paper acknowledges sacrifice and martyrdom for emancipation. This entails laying down one's interests and comfort for the sake of others in society. It has emerged that economic empowerment is a bulwark against patriarchy. If women are economically empowered, patriarchal structures cannot impede their growth and oppress them.

From the contextual information gathered from the works of the two artists, it has been established that the authors embrace egalitarianism which ensures that all members of society are treated fairly and enabled equally to meet their potential. Their male and female characters are portrayed objectively and equitably.

Basing on comparative analysis of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's and Osi Ogbu's fiction, It has emerged in this paper that men and women can peacefully co-exist and be productive in society. Secondly, Afro-European emancipatory approaches are viable in resolving social and gender conflicts. Finally, men and women should be treated equitably because people are endowed with different potentials which are not dependent on sex. These will go a long way in unsettling the vicious circle that has punctuated provision of opportunities to the girl child vis-a-vis the boy child in the contemporary society.

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