

## The Contribution of Patriarchy to the Concept of Manhood in African Societies: A Marxist Reading of Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty*

Confidence Gbolo Sanka  
Department of English  
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana  
Email: [fikoff75@gmail.com](mailto:fikoff75@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This paper explores the concept of patriarchy as an undesirable ideology that promotes the oppression of the weak and vulnerable in society by the strong and powerful in Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty*. It is widely held that patriarchy promotes the domination of men over women and promotes an artificial hierarchy of class in which women become subordinates to their male gender. Yet, patriarchy does not only make subjugates of women. Depending on the dictates and expectations of a culture, men, like women, can equally be made subjugates of patriarchy if they are deemed unworthy of the title of a man. This usually happens when they do not measure up to the standard of societal expectations, particularly, within African cultural setting. Using the theory of Marxism, this paper argues that patriarchy not only succeeds in creating a society that operates on classism in which women are the subordinates; men too become victims. In addition, patriarchy inflicts deep psychological trauma on men and women who suffer its tenets. The conclusion is that men and women collectively fight patriarchy in order to achieve an egalitarian society where synergy can be harnessed for the betterment of all.

**Key words:** Capitalism, Marxism, Patriarchy, Psychological trauma, Egalitarianism, Nigeria,

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of patriarchy as an undesirable ideology promotes the oppression of the weak and vulnerable in society by the strong and powerful in Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty*. It is widely held that patriarchy promotes the domination of men over women and promotes an artificial hierarchy of class in which women become subordinates to the male gender. Yet, patriarchy does not only make subjugates of women. Depending on the dictates and expectations of a culture, men, like women, can equally be made subjugates of patriarchy if they are deemed unworthy of the title of a man. This usually happens when they do not measure up to the standard of societal

expectations, particularly, within the African cultural setting.

By using the theory of Marxism, authors of this paper argue that patriarchy not only succeeds in creating a society that operates on classism in which women are objectified; men too become victims. In addition, patriarchy inflicts deep psychological trauma on men and women who suffer its tenets. The conclusion is that men and women collectively fight patriarchy in order to achieve an egalitarian society where synergy can be harnessed for the betterment of all.

A qualitative method of research has been used to gather data through literature review

and to analyze the data. The paper proceeds by focusing on the literature review, the synopsis of the novel, a close reading and analysis of the novel and finally, the conclusion of the paper. Narrative techniques such as characterization, the saturation technique, stream of consciousness, humour and symbolism have also been discussed since they are means through which the concept of patriarchy and its contribution to the concept of manhood have been presented in the African context.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Karl Max, examining society from the varied angles of economics, sociology and politics observed the disparity that existed between humans and described the relationships as contingent upon the economic levels of people which resulted in a society built on class. According to Bowens et al (2013), "The Communist Manifesto (propounded by Karl Max and Friedrich Engels- 1829- 1895) describes the process by which society developed over time so that today it is divided into roughly two great classes." Marxists normally refer to the upper ruling class who own the means of production as the bourgeoisies while the working class is referred to as the proletariat. Marx observes that the ruling class employs crude ways and means of constantly keeping the working class in a position of subordination since they overly exploit the labor of the working class. The working class makes all the profits and provides the goods and services enjoyed by the ruling class; however, their own benefits are nothing compared to the gains of the bourgeoisies. As Mclellan states, "the proletariats are the poor laborers in the capitalist society being down-trodden by the bourgeois capitalists" (cited in Odeh, 2010) ) It is Marx's belief that the exploitation and oppression of the proletariat shall not forever persist; they will become conscious of the exploitative and oppressive ways of the ruling

class and revolt to create a bourgeoning egalitarian society.

Tyson (2006) commenting on Marxist ideology stipulates that to the Marxist critic, "differences in socio-economic class divides people in ways that are much more significant than differences in religion, race, ethnicity or gender." Yet the proletariats are often the last to observe this and allow their petty differences exemplified in race, religion, ethnicity or gender to separate and pitch them against one another instead of uniting them against the common threat of the ruling class.

Not only does Tyson (2006) identify factors such as race and religion as some elements that militate against the synergy of the proletariat, she expatiates on ideological principles that help the continual perpetration of oppression and exploitation of the proletariat by the ruling class. She observes that "for Marxism, an ideology is a belief system, and all belief systems are products of cultural conditioning." To her, ideologies such as capitalism, religion, patriotism and so on are all products of cultural conditioning created to make people behave in ways societies deem acceptable. To the Marxist critic, however, not all ideologies are required or useful. For instance, Tyson (2006) observes that:

Patriotism is an ideology that keeps poor people fighting wars against poor people from other countries (one way or another, sufficient money can generally, keep one out of the armed forces during war time or, at least, out of the combat units) while the rich on both sides rake in the profits of war-time economy.

In another instance, she cites religion as "an ideology that helps to keep the faithful poor satisfied with their lot in life, or at least tolerant of it, much as tranquilizer might do" (Tyson, 2006). If all these examples are anything to go by, then one can conclude that patriarchy is also an undesirable ideology meant to favor

men as the ruling and domineering class while women, like the proletariat, become the oppressed, the subordinated and the down-trodden as typified in many African societies.

Indeed, several literatures exist on the economic relationship between men and women that places men at the helm of affairs while situating women at the receiving end of instructions. In an article entitled "The Role of Patriarchy in Family Settings and its Implications to Girls and Women in South Africa," Mudau and Obidare defined patriarchy as:

Patriarchy is a system of society or government in which the father or the eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male, hence the system promotes male privilege. The attitude and expectations organized on this basis rank men above women, providing a social structure that gives men uncontested authority. It is an obsession with control as a core value around which social life is organized. (2017)

Patriarchy in the typical African setting therefore gives undue advantage and total control of power to the male gender while denying the female of all of these privileges.

One of the writings which support the above view is propounded by Delphy (1984), a feminist critic who analyses the relationship between husbands and wife in the home environment that is the family as an economic unit, from the Marxist point of view indicates that:

[a]ll contemporary "developed" societies... depend on the unpaid labor of women for domestic services and child-rearing. These services are furnished within the framework of a particular relationship to an individual (the

husband). They are excluded from the realm of exchange ...labor power.

There is a clear indication from the above that within the home environment where the tenets of patriarchy are practiced, the man becomes the authority who wields power and controls the resources of the home while the woman becomes the cheap source of labor whose labor power is maintained through the gifts she receives from the husband. Her labor is cheap because she is not given the proper equivalence of exchange for her services unlike what she might be paid for doing the same or similar kinds of work outside the home environment. In all these, it is necessary to note that it is not that women's contribution to the family is not recognized as important; it is rather due to the fact that patriarchy, as Tyson (2006) asserts, "defines women in their domestic roles as non-workers." It is based on this reality that Delphy further asserts that the relationship that exists between men and women is, to a large extent, contingent on power: "patriarchal men want to keep all of it; non patriarchal women want power to be equally distributed" (Tyson, 2006).

Eisenstein (1999) shares a similar view with Delphy on patriarchy. As a socialist feminist, she analyses power in relation to class origins and patriarchy. Viewing capitalism and patriarchy as mutually dependent ideologies that work together to militate against the independence of the woman she states:

...my argument here is that oppression and exploitation are not equivalent concepts as they were used by Marx and Engels. Exploitation speaks to the economic reality of capitalist class relations whereas oppression refers to power as it is defined within patriarchal and capitalist relations. Exploitation ... capitalism.

In this, Eisenstein identifies the combined evils of capitalism and patriarchy as the cause

of the oppression of women. She, however, links the oppression of women to patriarchal roots of power control that segregates women and men into classes; women, regardless of their social position or standing become subordinates to men while men become the lords and wielders of power. She believes that in addition to the economic class of Marxist criticisms, women also form a sexual class, because they establish the basic and necessary activities of society such as reproduction, child rearing and nurturing, domestic laboring and wage-earning. Women in patriarchal societies perform all responsibilities that relate to reproduction and wage earning, yet they have little or no ownership to the very things they produce or reproduce because patriarchy puts them in a position of subordination and oppression in relation to another sexual class—the male. She, however, does not lose sight of the fact there are class divisions even among women and therefore recommends that a vocabulary and conceptual tools as a whole are developed to deal with the question of differential power among women in terms of their relation to men and the class structure (Eisenstein, 1984).

In addition, Hartmann contends that patriarchy is “a set of social relations between men which have material basis, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create independence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women”(cited in Tong 2009) Hartmann’s materialist account situates the material base as originating from “men’s control over women’s labor power”; this control is constituted by restricting women’s access to important economic resources and by disallowing any women control over female sexuality and especially female reproductive capacities. This position, definitely reflects in the urgent need of a woman to satisfy the needs of her husband or lover for the material reciprocity he provides by not deserting her and her wards or in the relationship of

reciprocity in which a woman has to please her boss in order to maintain her job. Hartman concludes that men’s urge to control women is as strong as the bourgeoisies would want to control and manipulate the proletariat: capitalism and patriarchy are not two heads of the same beast. They are two dissimilar fiends, and they must be battled with different arms.

In considering the relationship that exists between patriarchy and capitalism from a review of literature, one is quick to realize that the definitions of patriarchy are consciously applied to the subjugation of women by men. It appears that many feminist and socialist feminist critics do not observe that men equally suffer the tenets of patriarchy just as women do as this is especially the case when, in the eyes of society, the men in question do not measure up to the standards of societal expectations. Situating this paper within the framework of Zillah Eisenstein views on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism which she argues from the Marxist point of view above, the authors of the paper argue that when the African cultural perspective of manhood (which is defined not only in the physical sense of the word but in metaphorical terms too to include wealth, sexual potency, physical and emotional strength) is taken into consideration, women alone would not be victims of patriarchy; men who are not considered “men” in the connotative sense of the word are partners with women together in the subordinate class commonly ruled by wealthy and powerful capitalist bourgeoisie men of authority. The contributions of patriarchy to the experiences those not regarded as “men” are normally negatively drastic with respect to their psyche. Consequently, there is a need for the sexes to fundamentally do away with patriarchy which may subsequently help in eroding the capitalist hold thereby creating an egalitarian society for both men and women.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

*The Last Duty* by Isidore Okpewho is a historical novel. The story is a recast of the historical accounts of the Nigerian Civil war in a fictional manner. At the beginning of the novel, the federal troops liberate the border town of Urukpe where the Igabo people dwell together with the Simbas from the rebel occupation of the Simba. Aku, a Simba woman, married to Oshivere an Igabo man, has to hide herself and her baby at the back of her home to escape a possible lynching by the townspeople because she belongs to the rebel tribe. Chief Toje, a rubber magnate, sensing immense competition from Oshevire takes advantage of the mayhem of war to accuse Oshivere of aiding rebel activities and suborns another citizen to indict him at a tribunal at Iddu. Meanwhile, Chief Toje, having lost his manhood and under the guise of being a supportive benefactor against the rebels, decides to use Oshivere's wife, Aku, to regain his manhood. He is, however, unsuccessful, and in his stead, his disabled nephew, Odibo rather indulges in an illicit affair with Aku. The knowledge of this provokes a deadly machete fight in which both Odibo and Toje wound each other and fall into coma.

## ANALYSIS

Taking into accounts the fact that *The Last Duty* is a historical novel that recounts the happenings in Nigeria during the outbreak of the civil war between the Federal State and the secessionist State of Biafra, it is clear that the case of Nigeria is one significant example of how economic conditions become the defining elements or motive behind all social, political and cultural activities. According to history, there is every reason to believe that the conflict was the outcome of economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among the different ethnic groups of Nigeria. Iweriebor opines that European imperialist occupation of Africa, and

for that matter the British occupation of Nigeria "developed in the nineteenth century following the collapse of the profitability of the slave trade, its abolition and suppression, as well as the expansion of the European Capitalist Industrial Revolution" (2018). The rise of industrialization in Europe meant the need for the acquisition of raw materials and larger offshore markets for European goods and services. Therefore, the economy of the colonized nations of Africa was structured by the colonialist to serve their own economic needs. As Shokpeka et al (2009) observe:

The colonial economy in most of Africa was structured to improve the economies of the colonizing or metropolitan powers. In the scheme of things, what mattered was how the colonial economy could benefit the colonizers. Very little, if in any regard, was paid to the indigenous population. When the African population was taken into consideration, ...power.

Surprisingly, the case of exploitation by the powerful colonialist was just a microcosm of the entire picture. Featuring in the core relationships among the people was another severe case of exploitation, corruption and manipulation: the stronger and powerful within Nigeria also used the civil war as a means of exploiting the weak and vulnerable economically, physically and psychologically. It is said that there is always another side to the truth; it is the other untold aspects of the Nigerian civil war from the perspective of the civilians that Isidore Okpewho decides to tell his story

Adopting the stylistic approach of stream of consciousness also known as dramatic monologue, the author takes readers through the minds of his characters revealing the extent to which the rich and powerful will go to exploit the weak and downtrodden. Isidore Okpewho also succeeds in revealing the severe physical and psychological damage the

weak and vulnerable experience in the hands of the powerful in war situations.

Using symbolism, Isidore Okpewho constructs a patriarchal capitalist character by name Toje Onovwakpo who, due to his capitalist and patriarchal mentality, abuses and exploits not only women but men also. He is a rich and powerful rubber magnate. He is extremely egoistic, arrogant, manipulative, domineering and cunning. As a patriarchal man, his patriarchal sentiments are revealed in his metaphorical thoughts of what manhood is. To him, a man is one who is wealthy, potent and expedient. If a man is a foremost citizen with a level of distinction and his name alone is capable of ensuring that his town is showered with endowments, then he deserves to be called a man in the truest sense of the word. In his own words:

Every town must have a few people whose names lend respect to the community. They should be the town's foremost citizens, men of some distinction. It isn't that these are the first men to be called to arms when a fight ensues between their town and another – no that's a thing of the past. There are ...again. (Okpewho, 2003)

In applying the theory of class consciousness as stipulated by Karl Marx, one appreciates that Toje's mindset is a revelation of the classism existent within the African society which views the concept of manhood based on not only the denotative meaning of the word but on its metaphorical functioning as pertains to name, wealth, and influence. There are different classes of men. Therefore, a man is not a man in the full sense of the word if he lacks any of the societal qualifications that qualify him as such. To Toje, the days when manhood was defined based upon the basis of strength and valour alone belongs to the past; all other metaphorical definitions of the word must apply. By implication, then, Toje believes

that men who do not belong to his class of wealth and prestige must be more than willing to offer themselves as sacrificial lambs to protect and satiate the upper class to which he belongs. If Eisenstein thoughts on classism as it relates to patriarchy is adopted, then readers can assume that on the hierarchy of power, Toje considers himself one of the most powerful in Urukpe because of his wealth and social status. Any other category of people (women or men) who are not at par with him on the socio-economic ladder must be his subjugates and must be open to his exploitative tendencies. As such, he categorically uses derogatory descriptive words such as "small man," "lame-brained," and "fool" to describe such men as Odibo and Emuakpor who do not belong to his class (Okpewho, 2003). The situation is worse for a woman like Aku who patriarchy already defines as a subjugate of men. Toje therefore relates to her in terms of her sexual class. Yes, she is a subordinate because patriarchal tenets place her there, and she becomes open to exploitation because the capitalist mentality in Toje sees a means of using her sexuality to regain his manhood.

This is a deep revelation because readers begin to understand that patriarchal sentiments much as they affect women also affect men, but the implications for women are worst. Patriarchy determines the worth and importance of men in relation to women, yet it does not allow every man to regard himself as a "real man" if he does not satisfy the criteria determined by society. The traditional definition of manhood especially as it pertains to many African cultures goes beyond biological traits or physiological features to include, wealth class and status. A man who therefore has only his biological traits to boast of may as well consider himself, at best, less of a man and must be willing to sacrifice and place himself at the mercies of the rich and powerful. This is Toje's belief, and to confirm it he categorically states:

This town has people like me to thank for whatever notice it has achieved today. If therefore anything happens to people like me that might detract from the position in which we are held, no sacrifice should be great from anybody in this town to ensure that we keep our place, that we maintain our position. (Okpewho, 2003)

Toje's capitalist and patriarchal sentiments are always at work. In order to maintain and exert his power and influence, Toje has to cut the ladder that will lead others to the top hierarchy where he is. As such, he recommends another enterprising, young man, Mukoro Oshivere, who is well beneath Toje in terms of wealth, status and class for detention on false accusations of aiding the rebel occupations because Toje sees him as a threat to his rubber business. The dynamics of classism and patriarchy are at work: Toje is symbolic of the powerful capitalist bourgeoisie who will use diabolic ways and means of keeping Mukoro Oshivere, the hard working and enterprising proletariat, at bay so he does not climb up the ladder of wealth to become powerful and influential like him. Again, Toje's suborning of another citizen, Rukeme, to spew lies against Oshivere at the tribunal is symbolic of the divisive strategies employed by those on the top hierarchy of the social ladder to constantly separate and confuse the proletariat so they lose focus of the real threat that stares them in the face. Through these, readers are informed of the economic greed and patriarchal tendencies that fuel and dictate the actions of the rich and powerful towards the poor, weak, and vulnerable in many African societies.

Another key factor the novel reveals about the hand in hand workings of patriarchy and the capitalist motives evident in the seemingly harmless actions of the rich and powerful towards the poor is observed in the commodification of the weak and vulnerable. This is revealed in Toje's commodification of Aku, Oshivere's wife and Odibo his own

crippled nephew. Toje is a man of complexity. He knows that wealth alone does not define manhood; a man is a man not only because he is wealthy but because he is sexually potent too. Therefore, sensing his weakness and the possibility of losing his revered position, he allows expediency to dictate his moves, and anyone or anything he must use to achieve his manhood becomes a tool. He underestimates and disregards the physical, psychological and emotional damage he causes to others provided his tool succeeds in fulfilling his desires. Toje's brutish and backbiting attitude is revealed through the following:

That is why I have not hesitated to recommend a citizen here for detention on charges of collaboration with the rebels, and then suborned another citizen to draw up the details of the indictment. For I felt that Mukoro Oshivere stood in my way. And ...here. (Okpewho, 2003)

The metaphorical descriptions and rhetorical question employed above reveal that Toje's patriarchal thoughts of manhood is that which drives him to use vindictive and unorthodox ways of regaining his sexual potency. Toje considers himself an eminent man because he is wealthy and influential and his name equates credence and respect in his community. If therefore there lies within him a despicable problem that questions his manhood and potency thereby bringing upon him disgrace, then he demands his problem should be the society's problem. If his glory is the glory of the society, then his shame must also be its shame. Yet, he is not bold enough to seek the right help through the right means. Toje's crude and exploitative ways of obtaining whatever he wants is a criticism of the ideals of rugged individualism espoused by capitalist motive. Because rugged individualism centers on the self, it naturally breeds greed and individualism which subsequently foster breeding grounds for exploitative tendencies. Toje's hatred for Aku's husband, Oshivere, stems

from his desire to eliminate him from the rubber business in order to maintain a comfortable lead. His desire to exploit Aku sexually is only to spite another subordinate in order to reassert his manhood. Aku therefore becomes the victim of a sexual prowler who mars her integrity as a mother and a chaste wife because the circumstances of war force her into further subordination by becoming Toje's sexual commodity. Their relationship is however, to some extent, symbiotic: in exchange for food, clothing and protection for herself and her son, she in turn grudgingly offers to fulfill Toje's sexual needs. Aku metaphorically describes Toje and his kindness as "a new kind of danger" (Okpewho, 2003). Yet, the irony is that, he is a danger she dares not escape because her survival and that of her child within the community of Urukpe depends on the good will of Toje who chooses to help her in a community where she faces constant threat of death and ostracism:

And now I see a new danger, a new kind of danger. For several months now Toje has shown us kindness. He has continued to buy clothes, food and other necessities for us, and to give me money from time to time. I feel very certain that.... I know what it is all about. (Okpewho, 2003)

The bare truth that such a chaste and faithful woman would have to succumb to the wiles of a sexual pervert like Toje, who, is outwardly eminent but inwardly debased is heart wrenching.

The extent of Aku's psychological pain and trauma shows in the series of rhetorical questions she engages herself in and which depicts the turbulence in her psychological makeup:

Where can I run, what can I do? If it weren't for the goodness of the federal army commander here, who has warned that nobody should take the law into his hands, where would I be today? If I can

no longer go to the market to buy foodstuffs for my child and myself then how can we survive? And my people? (Okpewho, 2003)

How long can I survive in this town if I stay isolated from the entire community except for a few soldiers who happen to stray to my stall? (Okpewho, 2003)

Indeed, that she must either succumb to Toje or face the wrath of the people is a choice that is difficult to make. These expressions of Aku show the turmoil she is in. To use Robert's (2014) words "These expressions indicate desperate cry caused by hopelessness; the questions reveal her emotional state which[is] plagued by feelings of uncertainty about the future." The questions also reveal her loneliness and isolation from the society that she is supposed to fully belong by marriage.

Aku is not the only victim of Toje's capitalist and patriarchal manipulations. His own nephew Odibo suffers a similar fate because he is disabled, poor and a dependent on him. To reassure himself of his own manhood, power and authority, Toje employs mental and psychological abuse as a way of exploiting another man. Toje's use of vituperative language on Odibo makes him even doubt himself worthy of being human not to talk of being a man. He is one who has lost self-confidence and is full of feelings of inferiority all because Toje ensures he drums into Odibo's ears constantly that he Odibo is worthless. In the opening phase of his monologue, Odibo is seen uttering statements littered with repetition and rhetorical questions: "I know I am nothing. I know I have nothing. But why does he keep making me feel bad?" (Okpewho, 2003).

These words of Odibo seem innocent on the surface; however, they are pregnant with meaning. Odibo is a subordinate who has come to accept the negative identity and status impinged on him by his superior. The "I know I

am nothing. I know I have nothing" he utters indicates that he knows he obviously does not belong to the class and status of Toje, and certainly not to any class at all. He knows he does not have and will never have the wealth, power and influence Toje has. He therefore resigns himself to fate and has no hope of overturning his fortunes because his mind which is representative of his will power is in the hands of another being he, Odibo, sees as superior to him. To maintain his hold, Toje also does enough to ensure that Odibo never gets any form of mental emancipation, so he constantly hammers on Odibo's weaknesses in order to maintain him in his position of servitude:

I think you are too dumb to realize that. You are just a dumb mass of body ambling about without any sense in your head. So stupid that even though you realize that a woman is afraid for herself and her child you do not see that if she has to go anywhere for any ... (Okpewho, 2003)

In several other instances, Toje does not relent in making Odibo realise his worthlessness. In addition to the insults he constantly rains on Odibo, Toje has no qualms about issuing Odibo with threats of taking away Odibo's job and his allowances if he ever senses that Odibo has intentions of charting his own course and his independence:

If you ever conceive that you can do whatever you like I shall have no regrets about taking your job and your allowances away from you and giving them to someone else who would gladly listen to my word. You can then go and fend for yourself – and God help your one hand! (Okpewho, 2003)

Not only does Toje try to manipulate and control those who he considers beneath his wealth and status, but also, owing to his wealth and influence, he tries to penetrate the

military, the apparatus of the state, by covertly making utterances that indict and undermines the works of Major Ali, yet the major continues to entertain him because Toje has the power, influence and the good will he Major Ali needs to make his command at the federal military post at Urukpe successful. Though he becomes wary of the seemingly good intentions of Toje towards Aku and his hatred for her husband, Major Ali refuses to act swiftly to rescue the woman from the clutches of Toje all because he trusts that the man would do nothing of the sort to ruin his hard earned integrity. Consequently, he stations a military man to oversee to the safety of the woman. Yet, the irony is that the military man poses more threat to Aku and her child because of the hatred he harbors for the Simbian tribe Aku hails from and his suspicions of the amorous relationship between Aku, Odibo and Toje. To register his silent protest of his designated job Okumagba says:

Only the consequences of such an action deter me from sticking the barrel of my gun through the window and blasting the brains clean out of that woman and her child. For that is what they deserve, like all rebels... But the trouble with this Major ...the day? (Okpewho, 2003)

But one of these days my patience would be spent. One of these days I'll find I can no longer contain this anger. ...myself once and for all from this hateful detail. (Okpewho, 2003)

From Okumagba's reiterations, one realizes that Ali's harmless protection of Aku ironically rather exposes her to more danger, and his overly trust in Toje's integrity and his seemingly good will towards her blinds him, making it impossible to see beyond Toje's intentions. The implication of the author's use of irony is to expose the reality that in war times and in general situations of immense complexities, no human intentions can be

overly trusted because even the most innocent of suggestions or intentions could be a recipe that spells disaster.

Yet in the midst of all the actions or the deeds of the wealthy and powerful bourgeoisies symbolized by Toje and perpetrated against the proletariat to ensure the perpetual subjugation of the lower class represented by Aku, Oshivire, Odibo Rukeme and Major Ali, the author gives a clear indication that there will be a revolt that overthrows the powerful as predicted by Karl Marx. To demonstrate this possibility, Isidore Okpewho relies on his character Agbeyegbe who is symbolic of the intense tumultuous anger boiling up in all oppressed people and waiting to explode in the face of the powerful capitalist oppressors. In the prison at Iddu is Agbeyegbe, a youth full of strength and zeal and well educated. Agbeyegbe appears to know and understand the real cause of the struggles of the people more than the other prisoners do, and in a series of rhetorical questions in his address to his fellow inmates, Agbeyegbe carefully points out the very elements that form the crust of mankind's struggles:

You've got to try to understand, all of you. I do not think you fully appreciate this world-wide struggle that some of us are carrying out for the benefit of humanity. You see this military thing that is happening in our country today? It is only wasting our time. It can only succeed in retarding the cause of the destined confrontation, but it cannot stop it. Never! ... And what is the struggle that I am talking about? ... it is ...on in the world today. (2003)

In his rhetoric, Agbeyegbe reveals the exploitation of the poor, weak and powerless by the strong and powerful. By making his fellow prisoners aware that the poverty they experience is not due to any divine cause, but the machinations and orchestrations of the

powerful minority, he tries to enlighten and incite them into purposeful action that will lead to a possibility of changing their lives. Even though his fellow prisoners comprehend his message, they become suspicious of his intentions because he easily offers himself to be the first to escape since he assumes he understands the problem of humanity better than they all do. With humor and biting sarcasm, the prisoners ridicule Agbeyegbe. For instance, in response to Agbeyegbe's question to Emeni as to why he never received promotion in more than thirty years of his work in the civil service, Emeni responds:

Oh, I was just thinking... You see, I was in court every single day of my life, and every single day of my life I was bitten by at least one jigger, because I had no shoes on, so I was always worrying about jiggers. And now that I think of it, I think the reason I never got promotion after all was because I always had jiggers either in my mind or in my feet. (2003)

Indeed, the humor the author uses in the speech of Emeni is not in any way to demean the seriousness of his message he tries to communicate; sarcasm is used to reveal that even those who claim to offer help of liberation could be as exploitative as the powerful, and therefore could not be fully trusted. Yet, within Agbeyegbe's message is a foreshadowing of what is to come: the revolt that will displace the rich and powerful to a level of equality with the subjugates. Again, Agbeyegbe's harsh words to Oshivire concerning the possibility of Aku's infidelity while he is in prison also becomes another foreshadowing of the pain Oshivire is to experience upon his release from prison. Relating this foreshadowing of the overthrow of the bourgeoisies to a possible overthrow of the mutual works of patriarchy and capitalism, it is observed that Okpewho employs allusion, humor and irony. By mocking Toje's loss of sexual potency, Okpewho succeeds in dislodging Toje from the table of men to the

table of boys. In this way, Toje does not even belong to the class of "small men" he set for men beneath his status like Emuakpor. In Toje's heated exchange with Emuakpor concerning the failed treatment of Toje's venereal disease, Emuakpor states:

Save your tongue, my boy... Let's put it in more direct and proper language. A few months ago, you came up to me with a venereal disease. You complained of a terrible pain, of pus, of malignancies here and tumours there. I took a look at you and knew you were in a bad way. You were honest enough to tell me, on enquiry ...yet again... (2003)

Emuakpor's reference to Toje as "boy" and his reckless use of abusive words on Toje in the above extract only proves the triumph Emuakpor enjoys over Toje knowing very well Toje's weakness. He teases out information until he finally gets the exact knowledge of Toje's flawed manhood after which he exclaims: "O-ho! You mean to say, your shaft has gone limp?" (Okpewo, 2003). The humor with which he makes his exclamation shows he celebrates in the knowledge that Toje is no longer a man. It is a moment of triumph because in the character of Emuakpor, Okpewo succeeds in using the same patriarchal mentality card Toje uses to denigrate men who do not belong to his class to reduce him to a level far worse than that which he Toje places others. Emuakpor, again, seizes the opportunity to exploit Toje by asking him to pay twice the amount of money for his second treatment. In effect, he pays Toje back in his own coin to make him swallow the bitter pill he Toje has all along been forcing men beneath his status to swallow. Toje bitterly says: "I knew you would come to that...and I warn you that if this is the way you exploit people who come up to you like this, you are not going to have a good future with this trade" (Okpewo, 2003). Emuakpor, reflecting much later on his dealings with Toje exclaims once again in

another series of rhetorical questions mixed with humorous statements concerning how he plans to further reduce Toje to nothingness:

Was this the omnipotent giant? I feel sorry for him...But he has himself to blame for whatever happened to him. I have always said that money makes a fool of a wise man... Yet at his age he should know that it was all in his mind and try to relax. But he is ...hungry days. (Okpewo, 2003)

Thankfully, Toje falls for Emuakpor deception, and in referring to Emuakpor as a lame-brained man, he ironically refers to himself because with his age, wealth and wisdom he allows himself to be exploited and deceived. Toje's suffering in the hands of Emuakpor is not the only defeat he experiences. His second defeat occurs when both Aku and Odibo unite as subjugates in suffering to take consolation in each other's arms against the common lord, Toje, who visits suffering and shame upon their lives. When wild insatiable passion is awoken in Aku by Toje, she gives in to Odibo who she senses also has sexual needs such as her own:

For a long time, I had been witness to the look of a defeated man that he walked about with. But events since yesterday evening seem to have thrown a light on another side of him, or perhaps an aspect that had since lain concealed under what ...tug of desire? (Okpewo, 2003)

In a mixture of metaphorical statements and rhetorical questions, Aku speaks of the hidden desires and passion she senses in Odibo and rationalizes why her subjugation and pent up emotions become the reason that draws her into an unwholesome affair with him. Odibo, on the other hand, after his encounter with Aku's womanhood shakes off his cloak of defeat and despair upon the realization that he is a man after all so long as he is capable of satisfying a woman sexually in spite of his handicap:

How much does it take to be a man, besides knowing that someone takes good and healthy notice of your manhood, and you can come out and receive the fresh, beautiful morning air full in your face without fearing that some other man would take you to task for it?... any other man. (Okpewho, 2003)

Upon this realization, Toje's hold on Odibo's mind is broken. Odibo begins to see himself as equal to Toje, even better than him now that Toje's manhood is flawed. The manhood in Odibo emboldens him to defy Toje. Even when Toje finally catches Odibo and Aku in an affair, Odibo pulls up a quick defense for Aku not so much because he wants to prevent Toje from visiting any form of harm on Aku but because he wants to spite Toje and prove to him that he is no less of a man like him in spite of Odibo's deformity. Odibo engages in a violent machete fight with Toje over Aku which nearly ends their lives, and in her narration of the incident to Major Ali, Aku uses graphic imagery to depict the unwholesome fight that ensued between the men:

I only went there to take something. But Toje interpreted my presence there otherwise, calling me a harlot and everything. He tried to hit me, but Odibo held his hand...Toje got angry and slapped Odibo...Odibo himself got angry and they started to... So I ran - ran - (Okpewho, 2003)

The graphic imagery of violence as expressed in Aku's descriptions is an indication

of the naked anger and the violent revolt the oppressed may vent on the oppressor to redeem their freedom and image. By fighting and wounding Toje, Odibo resists the oppressive rule of Toje giving a clear indication that he, Toje, is not an invincible or untouchable person as he claims. Oshevire's release from prison after his insistence on maintaining his integrity and truthfulness to the end in the face of lies and his ability to have swallowed the bitter pill of truth concerning the atrocities his wife had been subjected to indicates his stoicism. Yet his death at the end is symbolic; it is a silent reminder and an indication that exploitation, if not dealt with will continue to plague us in our various societies.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is realized that the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and patriarchy militate to denigrate women as stipulated by Zillah Eisenstein. Yet, the effect of both on men too cannot also be underestimated; it attacks the very core of their character and unleashes potent psychological damage in its wake. Since this research concentrates on the negative emotional and psychological experiences of both men and women affected by the workings of patriarchy and capitalist exploitation, it is better for society in general to fight against the two devils. It is also recommended that further research is done to deal with how differential power among men in relation to classism affects them in other ways.

## REFERENCES

- Bowens, T. et al (2013). *What is marxism all about?* Edited by Andy Katz, New York: World View Forum.
- Delphy C. (1984). *Close to home: a materialist analysis of women's oppression*. Transl. Diana Leonard, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Eisenstein Z. (1999). Constructing a theory of capitalist patriarchy and socialist feminism. *Critical Sociology*, 25(2/3), 196-217.

- Eisenstein Z. (1984). *Feminism and sexual equality: crises in liberal America*, New York: Monthly Review Press
- Iweriebor, E.E.G. (2018). The colonisation of Africa, New York: Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, exhibitions.nypl.org, accessed 02/11/18.
- Mudau, T. J., & Obidare, O. S. (2017). The role of patriarchy in family settings and its implications to girls and women in South Africa., *Journal of Human Ecology*, 58(1-2), 67-72.
- Odeh, D. (2010). A stylistic analysis of Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*. (<file:///E:/ODEH%20DEAN'S%20M.A%20ENGLISH%20THESIS,%20UNN.2010.pdf>) 02/04/2018.
- Okpewho. I. (2003). *The Last Duty*, Nigeria: Drumbeat.
- Robert E. (2014). Syntactic features in Okpewho's *The Last Duty* and Nwapa's *Never Again*. *British Journal of Education*, 2(2), 81-94.
- Shokpeka, S. A., & Nwaokocha, O. A. (2009). British colonial economic policy in Nigeria, the example of Benin province (1914-1954). *Journal of Human Ecology*, 28(1), 57-66.
- Tong R. (2009). *Feminist thought: a more comprehensive introduction*, Charlotte: Western View Press.
- Tyson L. (2006). *Critical theory today*, London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

