

POSITION OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN FATE OF THE BANISHED AND
FOOTPRINTS OF THE OUTSIDER BY JULIUS OCWINYO

Daniel Macharia and Dr Peter Muhoro Mwangi

Student Department of Languages and Humanities, Mount Kenya University, Kenya and Lecturer
Department of Languages and Humanities

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Abstract: This study sought to investigate the position of women characters in *Fate of the Banished* and *Footprints of the Outsider*. The prejudices in favour of the males against the females form the gender bias in the societies of the developing nations. The weaker sex is associated with the menial roles at homes and the society. The objective of the study was to reveal the position of the female as portrayed by a Ugandan male author in the two texts. The assumption of the study is that women have been liberated and have a position in the society. The study used Social Transformation Including Women in Africa feminism theory (STIWANISM). The study used qualitative research with a descriptive approach since it involved a contextual analysis by collecting the data via reading the two texts. The target population of the study narrowed down to two gender and feminist texts from East Africa and specifically Uganda. It was found out that the position of women had improved and liberation was taking place though in a gradual process.

Keywords: Feminist, feminism, liberation,

Introduction

Theoretical Review

This study was informed by Social Transformation in Women in Africa (STIWANISM) feminism theory. It also embraced African Feminism. Feminism refers to justification of women rights based on social economic and political relations. It emerges as a way that deconstructs imperialistic images based on a range of literature. Feminism as a theory safe guards the rights of women in the male dominated world (Wafula and Njogu, 2007). Social discrimination against women propagates the theory. Free and social feminism unlike social feminism advocates for capitalism and equality of all at all social levels. Social feminism looks at the validity of traditional virtues of socialism which enact gender inequalities in the way role-plays are given to gender divides. African feminism emphasizes the female autonomy and cooperation; nature over culture; the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinships (Steady 1981). African feminism is where there is an all-inclusive concept of men women and children. It's in African feminism that we find STIWANISM. Ogundipe-Leslie(2007), asserts that feminist theory advocates to analyse the African context without imitating or confining to the recitation of other feminism and in particular 'white Euro-American feminism'. Stiwanism seeks development for the African woman rather that empowerment. Its relevancy seeks to check on the development of the third world woman using the social transformation that affect the position of the woman.

Methodology

This study employed qualitative research approach to gear the work towards an analytical dispensation. In using qualitative research approach the working infers contextual analysis as it emerges from language structure derived from the two texts ear marked African novels. Descriptive design helps in looking at the phenomena's that is presented through character and characterization.

Findings and Discussion

Unlike in cases where women have been regarded in retrogressive aspects, *Fate of the Banished* and *Footprints of the Outsider* have seen women improve in their fight for equality and strides made towards gradual betterment of their

position in the society. This is seen through how the society relates to them, how they relate with fellow women and their male counter parts, and how they indulge in the day today activities.

Relationship with male characters

Relationships between male and women in the texts is seen at various levels that include, the males being, sons, fathers, uncles, and other social associations that include customers to their businesses, religious leaders, and wealth creators. Liberation of the women folk is revealed in both texts as seen by the women folk trying to woo the male. This is unlike in the customary norms. They are further found in comprising situations by the husbands or sons or friends which in some cases is not ashaming like before. In *Fate of the Banished* the returned friar, Father Santos Dila develops a full blown relationship with Flo is married to Apire. Coincidentally Flo's husband Apire is also wooed by the bosses' wife and receives gifts in the form of suits and shoes. Flo initiates the conversation by confessing of her love to the friar. Alicinora, the mother to Abdu in *Footprints of the Outsider* is said to have been treated eleven times for syphilis and had got the first infection when she was just thirteen years of age. The son challenges her to be morally upright after he finds a man on top of her after being sent home for school fess. These acts show that women have come of age to take the challenge to the men.

Relationship with fellow female characters

Women in the texts are seen to be confidantes of one another. Bitoroci and Alicinora are confidants. The former advises the latter in matters life and how the latter should avoid archaic habits that are shaming for instance when she over drinks and pisses on herself. Bitoroci and Alicinora also plan on the marriage of their children even when the latter's son is arrested and is imprisoned. This is a sign of peace and ease of the women with each other. The unity between the women emphasizes that with unity and reasoning the women can move far with themselves. The daughter and mother relationship viewed in both texts brings mixed feelings. In *Fate of the Banished* Maria and Betty the daughter are the sole bread winners in the home. Betty remains the sober one and gives hope to many girls faced with difficulties. She invites the church to her mother's home to pray for the mother who needed change and redemption. The occurrence of the medicine woman in *Footprints of the Outsider* brings another perspective which has remained in the African society. The essence of the woman in the African society is to give birth to as many children as possible. Problems erupt when she can't give bear children and she becomes a laughing stock to the society when can only give birth to girls. The medicine woman healed infertility giving hope to those that wore the blunt of shame.

The role the author assigns women

The woman through the author brings out the major characters, societal values and how they have changed. The concerns of love, violence, change, liberalization, matriarchy, marriage, infidelity and immoral values are all seen through the women.

Change is crucial as seen in both texts. Flo stands out to represent the women whom society has not given lee way to do things that they so wish desire and deserve. She brings out the woman who has been neglected by the husband and the society at large. Flo confessing to the priest in the confession box is an initiation for the women folk to start talking and initiative to do as pleases them and makes them happy. *Fate of the Banished* introduces us to the female lot that goes against the grain and does not hinder what the parents, the societal and customary values say. Elizabeth in *Footprints of the Outsider* marries a man that the mother thinks is not the best choice. The mother chooses careers from which she should choose a man from. She goes against this and choose a man whom is below their social status. The catechist wife in the same text tries to woo a young man whether to avenge on what the husband does or for her own happiness. This shows that the women folk have started outdoing the cultural norms.

Bitoroci though materialistic suggest that women should not get married to poverty. She suggests that a woman should get married to a wealthy family with troubles rather than to a poor man where the necessities are hard to find. Through women, we see that religion has been tainted as Father Dila and the priest that precedes him (nicknamed legend for his mischief with women and peoples wives) have relationships outside their line of duty and against the oaths administered to them. The immorality and negation of social values is further amplified by Alicinora having many lovers and to an extent of failing to identify the father to the son (*Fate of the Banished*).

Marriage

The society highly advocated the union of a man and a woman in society. The wealth of a man determined the number of women he would have as wives. Unlike Erabu in *Fate of the Banished* who dies trying to create wealth for the bride price- women came at a cost, Olwit in *Footprints of the Outsider* after attaining a good job is required to marry a woman whom the mother has chosen for. This is after the mother thinks he has a problem as compared to the men his age whom had married even at earlier age. The society coerces one to get a spouse. A woman should get a husband who is able to provide and cater for her and provide for her family. A woman makes a home; families make societies with the backbone of the woman.

Violence

Women are said to have no say in and out of their homes whether as a mother or as a wife.

Violence against women in some societies is perceived as a symbol of love and in others and the current trends a symbol of cruelties. Women still face violence. *Fate of the Banished* introduces as to acts of violence which are described as 'astonishing'. Apire opens fire to murder his wife Flo and his accomplice and lover, the man of the cassock, Father Dila. The physical violence subjected to her has not been compared to the emotional and psychological violence she has persevered for long.

Women are still vulnerable to violence due to politics and its spill offs. In the process, death, rape/sexual abuse, disillusionment, emotional and physical tortures are evident. Both texts have acts of violence due to politics. In *Fate of the Banished*, Apire's mother and sister face the wrath of the soldiers as they look for his father whom is wanted for political reasons. In the process of raping the mother and the sister, the father lands from the ceiling saving them from the shaming act which was to happen in front of the other siblings. Political melee causes the death and convulsion of another in *Footprints of the Outsider*. The mother to the Member of Parliament, Adoli-Awal, dies due to a broken neck caused by the supporters to his political opponent (Olwit) in retaliation to an assumption that Olwit's wife had died after being hit with a stone that had been thrown by Adoli-Awal's supporters. Luckily she had fainted due to the shock. Violence is accorded to women who cannot help themselves in the process.

Matriachy

Mothers are said to influence and control their children even after they are in old age. Matriarchy is seen in both texts when women try to control the men in the society and especially their sons. Alicinora in *Footprints of the Outsider* wants a helper and in the process coerces the son to get a wife whom the he later abandons. Later in life she influences him to marry a handpicked girl. Alicinora and Bitoroci converge and make arrangements for their children to get married and even go ahead to organize a wedding. This process can be interpreted to one where a society can be driven and influenced by women.

Conclusion

Julius Ocwinyo expedites that women have had a chance to liberate themselves. Although the liberation continues to take place in a gradual process as the society changes with new norms. Women still face acts of violence from physical to psychological. This happens when in the process of liberating the selves, others or with no apparent reason.

Recommendation

The findings of this study mirror negative aspects in the society as the women still try seek a footing in the society. Male authors should be encouraged and further put into consideration women characters as the protagonists. Apart from discouraging stereotyping in society, they should use positive traits to describe and portray women.

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