



Weaponization of the Bible: Economic Exploitation and Cultural Alienation in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o And Ngugi Wa Mirii's *I Will Marry When I Want*

Abdullahi Haruna

Department of Languages, Nigerian Army University Biu, Borno State, Nigeria.

harunaabdullahi481@gmail.com

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v8i1.2380>

APA Citation: Haruna, A. (2026). Weaponization of the Bible: Economic Exploitation and Cultural Alienation in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o And Ngugi Wa Mirii's *I Will Marry When I Want*. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 8(1).211-225. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v8i1.2380>

Received:

07/10/2025

Accepted:

05/12/2025

Keywords:

Weaponization,
Bible, Economic
exploitation,
Cultural
alienation,
Dispossession,
Marxist theory,
Fanonian ideology

Abstract

*This study examines the weaponization of the Bible in Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii's *I Will Marry When I Want* through the lenses of Marxism and Fanonian theory. The research explores how the bible is used as a tool for economic exploitation and cultural alienation, perpetuating colonial and imperialist ideologies. By analyzing the play's themes of neocolonialism, capitalism, and cultural identity, the study reveals the complex relationships among religion, power, and oppression. The study finds that the bible is used in *I Will Marry When I Want* as a tool for economic exploitation, perpetuating colonial and imperialist ideologies that maintain economic inequality through the dispossession of the proletariat. The play also depicts the bible as a symbol of cultural alienation, as characters struggle to reconcile their traditional values with the imposed Western values of colonialism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of literature in Africa is intrinsically related to the continent's historical engagement with colonialism and its current struggle with the insidious reality of neocolonialism. In this lineage, Ngūgī wa Thiong'o's work, particularly his collaboration drama *I Will Marry When I Want* (1982), created with Ngūgī wa Mīrii, demonstrates a significant and purposeful move towards employing art as a weapon of conscientization. The play, staged by the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre, was not merely a performance; it was a political act that directly led to Ngūgī's detention by the Kenyan government (Killam, 1984). This context highlights the play's powerful critique of the social and economic systems that persisted after independence. In this period, the foreign dominance that had previously existed was frequently replaced by the tyranny of a homegrown bourgeoisie that was in league with international capital.

The focal point of this critique is a penetrating analysis of the function that religion plays. The core premise of this article is that the play *I Will Marry When I Want* provides a methodical dramatization of the ways in which the Bible, an image of colonial imposition, is weaponized by the neocolonial elite to economically exploit the proletariat, alienate them from their indigenous culture, and maintain political dominance. The play goes beyond making a simple criticism of Christianity to conducting a comprehensive investigation of the ways in which religious ideology is used as a weapon in class struggle. The planned activities of Ahab Kioi, a wealthy factory owner, and his wife, Jezebel, are a vivid representation of this weaponization. They twist Christian dogma in order to advance their own goals. Their most severe act of exploitation - the seduction of Kiguunda into mortgaging his family land in order to fund a purification ritual for a marriage that never occurs - serves as the play's fundamental metaphor for the brutal combination of religious pretense and capitalist greed.

The intersection of postcolonial and Marxist ideologies forms the foundation of this approach. Marxists consider religion as a sort of ideology that engenders false awareness, thereby obscuring the true nature of the relationships that exist between different classes (Bressler, 1999). The workers' demands for fair salaries and the significant wealth discrepancy between the Kiois and the Kiguundas are both addressed in the play by means of religion, which is famously referred to by Karl Marx as the opium of the people. At the same time, Frantz Fanon's postcolonial insights into the violence of cultural assimilation and the need for a national culture inform the analysis of how the Bible is used to systematically erase and demonize Gikuyu spirituality and history, creating a sense of inferiority and disconnection among the people.

In order to provide support for the primary argument of this article, it will be presented in four segments. The initial segment, under "Historical and Theoretical Foundations," will create the groundwork for the critical lens through which the play will be examined. It will examine the historical function of the Bible as an instrument of colonialism in Kenya. It will expound on the major Marxist and Fanonian notions that provide the analytical framework for understanding the weaponization of religion as an ideological state apparatus.

The second segment, "Economic Exploitation and the Weaponization of Faith," will offer an in-depth analysis of the methods by which Ahab Kioi uses Christian theology to rationalize and reinforce class privilege. This section will involve a close reading of the discussions in which lines from the Bible are used in an effort to put an end to the dissatisfaction of workers. Most importantly, it will provide a thorough examination of the principal plot involving the confiscation of land belonging to Kiguunda and his family. The

deed, which was portrayed as a religious obligation for the union of their children, is revealed to be a cruel economic ploy. This revelation shows that the material interests of the elite were the driving force behind their religious performance.

The third segment, "Cultural Alienation and the Loss of Gikuyu Identity," will shift the focus to the cultural sphere. The analysis will examine the ways in which the vibrancy of Gikuyu songs, dances and rituals are contrasted with the imposed Christian practices that demonize them as pagan or satanic. A major area of emphasis will be the reworking of the biblical tale of the Prodigal Son, which the Kiois employ in order to overwrite the Gikuyu narrative of the Iregi, which is a generation that revolted against parental authority. In doing so, they cut the connection to a history of indigenous resistance.

The fourth segment, "From False Consciousness to Class Solidarity," will follow the path that the heroes take as they strive to achieve emancipation. It will chronicle the journey of Kiguunda and Gathoni as they progress from their naïve belief in the deceitful allure of religious promises to a clear-eyed realization of their position in the class hierarchy. The play's conclusion, which is the culmination of this trajectory, rejects religious solace in favor of a common, secular battle. The finale will draw these points together, reiterating the play's compelling message that in order to accomplish genuine economic and cultural decolonization, it is necessary to dismantle ideological weapons. This article argues that *I Will Marry When I Want* continues to be an essential piece of literature for gaining an understanding of the dynamics of power and resistance in the neocolonial world.

2. PART 1: HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

It is necessary to place *I Will Marry When I Want* in the context of the complex and brutal history of Christianity's relationship with colonial power in Eastern Africa in order to adequately understand the searing critique that is presented in the play. The Bible did not arrive in Kenya as a neutral document of spiritual solace; rather, it was a crucial weapon of the imperial enterprise, an ideological state apparatus that operated in tandem with the sword and the ledger (Althusser, 1971). This section provides an explanation of the dual theoretical framework - Marxist and Postcolonial - that sheds light on the way in which Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii dramatize the Bible's continuous weaponization in the neocolonial era. It also defines the important historical backdrop that is needed to understand this framework.

2.1. The Bible as a Precursor to Colonialism

According to Sanneh (1989), during the scramble for Africa, which took place in the late nineteenth century, European nations divided up the continent among themselves. Britain

established control over the area that would later become the Kenya Colony. This political and military conquest was both preceded and complemented by a cultural and spiritual offensive that was spearheaded by missionary institutions such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Holy Ghost Fathers, and the Africa Inland Mission. They had two goals in their mission: the first was to convert souls, and the second was to "civilize" what they thought was a barbaric population. Serving as a church, school, and clinic, the mission station became a significant institution in this process and performed a variety of functions.

Education in these mission schools was intentionally planned to develop a class of intermediaries who would serve as a link between the colonial authorities and the African masses. The curriculum placed a strong emphasis on the English language and the Bible, while at the same time systematically belittling and forbidding indigenous languages, cultures, and religious beliefs (Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, 1981). Female circumcision (*irua*) and other Gikuyu ceremonies were regarded as pagan abominations, which created significant fractures in society. This cultural degradation served a clear economic purpose: by separating people from their identities based on land and communal values, the colonial regime attempted to create a pliant work force for the plantations and businesses that were owned by white people. The African was instructed to associate advancement with the relinquishment of his cultural heritage and the adoption of European standards, which served as a psychological preparation for his job as a laborer who worked for a wage in a capitalist system. According to academics such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1981) and Sanneh (1989), the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages was a complicated process; nonetheless, when used inside the colonial framework, it frequently functioned to erode the very cultural structures that it had previously employed. Ngugi's play takes place in Kenya following the country's independence. However, it provides a compelling demonstration that the ideological mechanisms of colonialism remained in place and were simply adopted by a new African comprador bourgeoisie like Ahab Kioi, who were skillful in their use.

2.2. Theoretical Framework: A Marxist Perspective on Ideology and Its Critique of Religion

The Marxist critique of religion is the most powerful weapon for the study of this economic exploitation. Feuerbach's (1841) research served as the foundation for Karl Marx's assertion that religion is a projection of the human mind that serves as a reflection of the material reality. In this conceptualization, humanity's genuine suffering and ambitions are expressed in the form of an inverted fantasy. His foundational notion, which states that "religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of

soulless conditions," The statement "It is the opium of the people" (Marx, 1845) is essential to gaining an understanding of the dynamics in the play by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii.

Marx held the belief that religion serves as a type of opiate, numbing the agony of material oppression by offering the prospect of rewards in the afterlife, thereby detracting from the current goal of reforming exploitative social conditions. For the ruling class, often known as the bourgeoisie, it serves as a formidable instrument of ideological control that promotes religious ideas that serve to legitimize the current state of affairs. The proletariat's suffering is transformed into a test of faith or a divine design, whilst the bourgeoisie's acquisition of wealth is depicted as a blessing bestowed by God. False consciousness, which is a misinterpretation of the true nature of social connections that hinders the oppressed from seeing their own exploitation and their collective power as a class, is created by this process.

Ahab Kioi is the embodiment of this Marxist critique in the play *I Will Marry When I Want*. He makes selective use of scripture to provide a rationale for his wealth as well as for the impoverished state of his employees. The reality of his exploitation, which is based on paying starvation wages and taking the surplus value generated by the labor of his people, is masked by the use of religious ideology. Kiguunda, who is a member of the working class, is used as a representative in the play to demonstrate how this "opium" is delivered in order to keep the working class docile and accepting of their circumstances.

2.3. Theoretical Framework: A Fanonian Perspective on the Critique of Cultural Violence

Frantz Fanon's profound investigation of the psychological and cultural components of colonialism serve as a complement to the Marxist focus on economic structures. In his classic, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon discusses how colonialism is a comprehensive enterprise that not only aims to subjugate the colonized physically and economically but also aims to systematically destroy the colonized person's cultural identity and sense of self.

This process encompasses what might be described as cultural violence. The culture of the colonizer, which encompasses his language, religion, and morals, is imposed as the global standard of civilization and mankind. On the other hand, the culture of the indigenous people is disregarded, demonized, and made obsolete. According to Fanon, the colonized individual absorbs this racism, resulting in the development of an inferiority complex and the desire to imitate the colonizer. This cultural alienation is an important method of control because it disconnects individuals from their past, their society, and their traditional forms of resistance, making them more susceptible to dominance.

Ngūgī Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii's project is heavily influenced by the theories of Fanon. The continued impacts of this cultural assault are dramatized in the neocolonial context by the play. The ardent Christianity of the Kiois is an example of their absorption into the value system of the former colonizer. They utilize this performance as a means of legitimizing their elite status and distancing themselves from the "backward" people. Meanwhile, characters like Kiguunda and Wangeci are made to feel ashamed of their Gīkūyū activities, which are characterized as witchcraft or sin. The conflict that is shown in the play is not a simple dispute over legitimate material entitlements; it is a battle to regain the violated identity and history of the people.

2.4.Synthesis: The Coming Together of the Theories of Marx and Fanon in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngūgī Wa Mirii's Critique

Marxism and Fanonian theory are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they give lenses that complement one another. Marxism provides a systematic examination of the economic base, which consists of the class relations and forms of production that form the foundation of society. Postcolonial theory, as developed by Fanon, is essential to providing an explanation of the superstructure, which consists of the cultural, psychological, and ideological domains, as well as its particular manifestations in the contexts of both colonialism and neocolonialism.

I Will Marry When I Want is an excellent synthesis of these criticisms. It is a demonstration of the fact that two aspects of the same neocolonial coin are economic exploitation and cultural estrangement. You cannot own one while simultaneously lacking the other. Within this synthesis, the Bible is the ideal ideological instrument. Its Marxist role is to create a false consciousness that pacifies the fury of the working class, while its Fanonian function is to carry out the cultural violence that separates the people from their empowering heritage. The land mortgage plan, which we shall examine in greater detail in the next section, is the ultimate example of this combination. It is an economically ruinous conduct that is literally damaging, and it is made possible by an ideological deceit that is culturally disastrous. It is my intention to base my study on this solid theoretical framework so that I may highlight all of the complicated ways in which Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii reveal that the Bible is a weapon of neocolonial oppression.

3. PART 2: ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND THE WEAPONIZATION OF FAITH

After laying out the theoretical and historical foundation for comprehending religion as a tool of power, we go on to the main thrust of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii's striking criticism: the use of the Bible as a weapon for direct economic exploitation. In this exploitative process, where spiritual deception becomes the direct handmaiden of economic thievery, the main plot point - the mortgaging of Kiguunda's land - is more than just a plot device.

3.1. Ahab Kioi: The False Prophet of the Bourgeoisie

The new African elite that has assiduously embraced the oppressive methods of the old colonizer is symbolized by the character of Ahab Kioi, who was named with purposeful reference to the notorious biblical monarch who led Israel into idolatry. His main deity is his fortune, which comes from a manufacturing that uses African labor. But he presents himself as a cornerstone of the Christian society while disguising his pecuniary interests in terms of piety. His power lies in this duality. He employs the Bible as a rhetorical device to support his viewpoint and crush any opposition to it.

This tension is evident in the play's first scene. Kiguunda represents the oppressed worker as he struggles to make ends meet on the pitiful salary from Kioi's factory. Kioi, on the other hand, performs his religious beliefs. He plans Bible studies and prayer gatherings as theatrical demonstrations of his moral and social supremacy rather than as genuine expressions of faith. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things which are God's" (Matthew 22:21) is a biblical command that Kioi uses to sidestep the topic of poor salaries in one telling discussion. According to his understanding, "Caesar" stands for the economic realities of the market - a divinely approved system in which the worker's obligation is to accept his lot without protest and the employer's right to profit is unassailable. This misinterpretation of the Bible aims to convert exploitation, a blatant economic injustice, into submission, a moral obligation. The Bible is used as the "opium" to numb the agony of exploitation and stop the formation of class solidarity in this classic fabrication of false consciousness.

3.2. The Land Mortgage Scheme: The Perversion of Baptism

The plan by which Kioi and his wife, Jezebel, persuade Kiguunda to mortgage his family land is the most powerful and tragic illustration of this weaponization. The play's economic critique revolves around this narrative, which demands careful examination. Each deliberate step of the manipulation is cloaked in religious hypocrisy.

Kioi first creates a fictitious Christian sense of belonging. He views Kiguunda as more than just a servant but as a "brother in Christ" as well. With the prospect of higher social

standing through the proposed marriage of their daughter, Gathoni, to Kioi's son, this strategic alliance disarms Kiguunda and his wife, Wangeci, breaking down conventional class barriers.

Secondly, a fictitious religious barrier is introduced by Kioi and Jezebel. They maintain that a thorough "purification" is required for the marriage to receive God's blessing. They contend that God does not approve of Kiguunda and Wangeci's marriage, which was performed in accordance with Gĩkũyũ custom. They describe it as "sinful" and "unclean." Kiguunda and Wangeci must go through a Christian marriage ceremony and a purification ritual afterward in order to atone for their sin and enable their offspring to be together.

The Christian idea of baptism - a process of spiritual purification and rebirth - is masterfully perverted in this story. It is repurposed here as a gatekeeping system that requires a monetary sacrifice in addition to a spiritual one. There is a substantial charge associated with the ritual, which Kiguunda, in his poverty, is unable to pay.

Thirdly, and perhaps most pernicious, Kioi positions himself as the answer to the issue he caused. He "helpfully" recommends that Kiguunda finance the purification by using his one valued asset - his plot of land - as security for a bank loan. He presents this as a vital act of faith rather than a risky financial transaction. "Have faith in God... I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:22-24) is the passage he cites to support this jump. The verse is used as a weapon in this context to link religious zeal with financial irresponsibility. Kiguunda is driven into his own demise by his desire to give his daughter a better future through this marriage.

The horrible conclusion is inevitable. The promised marriage is unexpectedly called off when Kiguunda mortgages his land and the purifying process is completed. The Kiois withdraw behind their classroom's walls, exposing their previous Christian camaraderie as a vicious front. Kiguunda suffers the ultimate material loss - the foreclosure of his land - in addition to severe social embarrassment. The final relic of his lineage, his link to his forebears, and his family's source of income, this land is more than simply property. The colonial mission of dispossession, which is currently being carried out by a native bourgeoisie with the Bible as its main weapon, is complete with its loss.

3.3. The Bible as a Dispossession-Based Accumulation Tool

The land mortgage program is a prime example of what Harvey, (2004) refers to as accumulation by dispossession. Capital continues to grow under neoliberalism by stealing assets and common property from the general public or, in this example, the weaker members of society, in addition to exploiting workers in the production process. As a capital agent, Kioi orchestrates a crisis - the "sinful" marriage - that compels Kiguunda to turn his fixed asset

(land) into liquid capital (a loan), which is subsequently given to the bourgeois class through the bank and the ceremony's expenses. The ideological shroud provided by the Bible gives the impression that this act of dispossession is acceptable, even moral.

To sum up, Part 2 of the present paper has shown how deeply theological the economic exploitation in *I Will Marry When I Want* is. By manipulating scripture, Ahab Kioi is able to keep labor costs down and aggressively deprive the proletariat of their last remaining financial stability in the crucial land plot. The Bible is turned into a debt ledger and a theft act rather than a book of spiritual promise. This material exploitation is closely related to a cultural one that will be discussed in the next section: the systematic alienation of the Kenyan people from their Gĩkũyũ identity, which is also made possible by the weaponized word.

4. PART 3: CULTURAL ALIENATION AND THE LOSS OF GĨKŨYŨ IDENTITY

A parallel process of cultural and psychological violence is closely related to the economic exploitation described in the previous section. In *I Will Marry When I Want*, the Bible is weaponized not only for financial gain but also for the total subjugation of the African spirit by separating it from its cultural and historical foundations. This section contends that the play illustrates the systematic use of Christian ideology to erase histories of resistance, denigrate indigenous Gĩkũyũ customs, and instill a sense of inferiority and humiliation in order to enable a subtler and pervasive type of control. This exemplifies the Fanonian aspect of the conflict, in which the people's identity is the battleground.

4.1.Demonization of Gikuyu Practice and Spirituality

I Will Marry When I Want demonstrates a sharp contrast between the austere, personal performance of Christianity as practiced by the Kiois and the lively, communal life of Gĩkũyũ culture. The neocolonial Christian discourse intentionally frames indigenous traditions as wicked and demonic, rather than just offering them as alternatives. This is a clear extension of the colonial mission's approach. The approach is geared towards creating a docile and submissive people that make a clean break with their cultural past. Some of the main targets of the demonization process are the songs and dances that are the foundation of Gĩkũyũ collective expression. The music of the people, their rituals, marriages and celebrations are vibrant and full of vitality throughout the play. Their songs also reflect their strong ties to the land and their past. The Kiois' hymns, on the other hand, are frequently solemn, alien, and unrelated to Kenyan culture. More significantly, Gĩkũyũ music is specifically described by the Kiois in the play as "primitive" and "devilish." This is an ideological assault rather than just a matter of taste. The elite's demonization of these cultural expressions invalidates the community's values, bonding mechanisms and worldview. The colonizer's enforced values,

which are now repackaged by the neocolonial bourgeoisie, fill the cultural vacuum that is created.

Fundamental Gĩkũyũ rites and beliefs are also under attack. The Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi creation myths, the respect for ancestor spirits (*Ngoma*), and the value of customs like making traditional beer (*Njohi*) for social cohesiveness are all highlighted in the play. The Kiois reject these as "witchcraft" and "paganism." The final manifestation of this cultural genocide is the requirement that Kiguunda and Wangeci participate in a Christian purification ceremony to sanctify their marriage. It deems their entire existence, which they have lived in accordance with their forefathers' traditions, to be void and impure. This causes a severe psychological injury, compelling people to reject their history and the knowledge of their ancestors in order to fit in with the new "sanctified" social structure established by the bourgeoisie.

4.2.The Erasure of Resistance: The *Iregi* and the "Prodigal Son"

The deployment of the biblical story of the Prodigal Son as contained in Luke 15:11 – 32 in the African context is arguably the most advanced instance of ideological weaponization. In order to promote a theology of passive forgiveness and deference to patriarchal (and thus class) power, the Kiois adopt this narrative. The biblical story of the son who wastes his inheritance, suffers and is accepted by his forgiving father is used to support a behavioral model in which defiance is always stupid and the only appropriate course of action is to obediently rejoin the ranks of authority. This is countered by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii's Gĩkũyũ narrative of the *Iregi*, which is a fundamental tale of resistance. According to Gĩkũyũ history, the *Iregi* were a generation of young men who rebelled against their fathers' unjust and tyrannical leadership. They battled for a more equitable system because they could not tolerate an inequitable society. This narrative embodies a cultural memory that supports resistance to oppression and a treasured history of righteous disobedience.

The Kiois make an effort to appropriate and obliterate this past in a pivotal scene. Through the Prodigal Son's perspective, they retell the *Iregi*'s story, contending that the disobedient young people were actually "prodigals" who erred and left behind a legacy of humiliation rather than glory. This is an effective ideological attack. By overlaying the Gĩkũyũ story with the biblical parable, the Kiois aim to:

- (a) Discredit Resistance: They portray a valiant fight for justice as a wicked act of defiance.
- (b) Encourage Passivity: They contend that long-term suffering and eventual reconciliation with the oppressor - the "loving father" figure, which in a neocolonial

context refers to the ruling class - rather than resistance are the proper responses to tyranny.

- (c) Severe Historical Continuity: They make it more difficult for modern workers to imagine themselves as change makers by separating them from a legacy of resistance.

This conflict over story is a conflict over identity and memory. As depicted in the play, the working class needs to recover its own narratives from the colonizer's distorted text if it is to become aware of its power. Individuals like the Kiois, the play implies, who have wasted their cultural heritage by adopting a foreign ideology of exploitation, are the real "prodigals" - not the *Iregi*.

4.3. Language as a Battleground

The problem of language, which is at the heart of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii's whole body of work, lies at the heart of this cultural estrangement. Gĩkũyũ language in which the play was originally written and performed as *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, is a radical act of cultural reclamation in and of itself. The Kiois regularly use codeswitching to indicate their superiority and education, and the conversation frequently alternates between Gĩkũyũ and English. The Bible's standing as an exterior elite source is further reinforced by the fact that it is frequently cited in English.

The cultural hierarchy is reflected in this linguistic hierarchy. English, the language of the office and the church, is linked to power and advancement, whereas Gĩkũyũ, the language of the house and the farm, is linked to backwardness. Therefore, the weaponization of a linguistic system that favors the colonial tongue is likewise a weaponization of the Bible. The Gĩkũyũ language's epistemic universe is further marginalized by the elite's insistence on the supremacy of the Christian worldview represented in English.

Part 3 of this study has shown that *I Will Marry When I Want*'s cultural alienation is a purposeful and methodical endeavor. The neocolonial elite uses the Bible to undermine the people's spiritual foundation by enforcing a language hierarchy, denying histories of resistance like the *Iregi*, and denouncing Gĩkũyũ traditions. By guaranteeing that the workers view their own background as worthless and the culture of their oppressors as intrinsically superior, this cultural violence enables economic exploitation. But the play doesn't end on a depressing note. As we will examine in the last analytical section of the present analysis, it lays forth a route to emancipation, a journey from this false consciousness to one of class solidarity.

5. PART 4: FROM FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS TO CLASS SOLIDARITY

The hegemonic strength of the neocolonial regime is exemplified by the persistent cultural alienation and economic exploitation described in the preceding sections. But *I Will Marry When I Want* is a drama of awakening rather than a tragedy of failure. The play

painstakingly traces the protagonists' journey from a state of religious and ideological false consciousness to a clear-eyed understanding of their class position, ultimately leading to a rejection of spiritual consolation and an embrace of collective, secular struggle. The illusion is shattered by the treachery of the land mortgage scheme, which makes Kiguunda and his daughter Gathoni view the Kiois as class foes rather than kind Christians.

5.1.The Breaking of Dreams: The Awakening of Kiguunda

Kiguunda's character journey serves as the main disillusionment story. Because he has some stake in the Kiois' system, he is initially vulnerable to their manipulation. His desires for a better life within the current social structure are satiated by the possibility that his daughter would marry into a wealthy family and the flattering acknowledgement from his superiors. He absorbs the guilt of his Gikuyu marriage and lets himself be persuaded that Christian purification is an essential step in the right direction.

This illusory consciousness is punctured by a traumatic, material event - the foreclosure on his land. The loss is irreparable and total. It is a tangible economic disaster that jeopardizes his family's existence rather than an intangible spiritual failure. A harsh reevaluation of reality is compelled by this loss. Now that they are revealed as instruments of a vicious deception, the Bible passages Kioi used to entice him - about faith and prayer - sound hollow. Religion's "opiate" impact quickly wears off and is replaced by the stinging anguish of monetary loss. Kiguunda had a sudden epiphany and understands that his faith has been turned against him. His transformation from a confused but hopeful aspirant to a dispossessed and angry proletarian personifies the harsh process of class consciousness. He realizes that his shared Christianity with Kioi was a myth and that their social divide is an insurmountable divide of interest and power.

5.2.The Rebellion of Gathoni: Opposition to Commodification

Gathoni's defiance of her own commodification runs parallel to her father's economic awareness. She serves as a pawn in both families' social aspirations for a large portion of the play. In addition to being bound to the patriarchal rules of her own family, she is seduced by the material comforts that Kioi's son's marriage promises. She experiences her own disenchantment, though. She sees firsthand the duplicity of the Kioi family and understands that the proposed marriage would only make her a decorative item in a bourgeois home, moving her from being her father's property to her husband's property.

One significant act of rebellion is her refusal to consummate the marriage following the purification ceremony. It is a political statement as much as a personal decision. The neocolonial patriarchy, which aims to utilize women's bodies as symbols to strengthen class

ties, assigns her this role, which she refuses. Her awakening is a counterpart to her father's, as she recognizes the social and patriarchal aspects of the same system, while the father recognizes the economic treachery. Her uprising represents the repressive system's failure to completely ensnare the spirit of the younger generation, which starts to see through its deceptions.

5.3. The Conclusion: Secular Unity and Spiritual Deference

These individual awakenings reach a collective crescendo at the play's climax. The conclusion does not advocate for a more genuine, pure form of Christianity. Rather, it is a clear shift toward materialist, secular conduct. When the enemy is a physical oppressor with a physical address and a factory paycheck rather than a spiritual demon, the protagonists come to the realization that praying for deliverance is pointless.

Kiguunda and the other workers are seen in the closing scenes changing their discourse from pleading with God to organizing opposition; from prayer to tactics. The play's closing songs are not hymns; rather, they are protest and solidarity songs, frequently originating from the same Gĩkũyũ customs that were earlier vilified. In so doing, the colonizer's culture is completely rejected and the people's own cultural resources are reclaimed for the sake of emancipation. The exploited class realizes that their strength comes from their class unity rather than from supernatural intervention. They transform from a group of dispersed individuals looking for salvation to a unified front of laborers fighting for their rights.

This change represents the final blow against the weaponization of the Bible. The "opium" is no longer effective. The play's message is clear: the ideological frameworks that permit exploitation must be destroyed in order to achieve true decolonization. It promotes a materialistic philosophy in which heaven is a just society established via group effort on earth rather than a reward in the afterlife.

5.4. Conclusion: The Play as a Liberation Road Map

More than a critique, *I Will Marry When I Want* provides a blueprint for liberation by charting this path from false consciousness to class solidarity. It proves that the tangible experience of oppression - the loss of a homeland, the humiliation of a people, the breach of a promise - is where awareness starts. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii offer a comprehensive perspective on resistance by fusing the Fanonian necessity of cultural reclamation with the Marxist emphasis on economic struggle. The play makes the claim that the masses must first take control of their own interpretation in order to rewrite their own story of freedom and free their history, stories, and identities from the oppressor's Bible. Only then can they take control of the means of production.

6. CONCLUSION

I Will Marry When I Want remains a masterpiece of political theatre because of its profound diagnostic power as well as its scathing condemnation. According to this study, the play by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ Wa Mĩriĩ methodically reveals the Bible as a multifaceted tool in the neocolonial arsenal, used to uphold the exploitative systems put in place during colonialism. We have explored the complex ways in which religious ideology is used to accomplish political pacification, cultural genocide, and economic dominance through a fusion of Marxist and Fanonian theoretical frameworks.

Kiguunda's tragic journey serves as an example of the play's main theme. The play's most powerful illustration of this weaponization is the plot that Ahab Kioi and Jezebel devised to trick Kiguunda into mortgaging his property under the guise of a Christian purifying ceremony. The Bible serves as the moral justification for a traditional act of what Harvey (2004) refers to as "accumulation by dispossession". It deprives the proletariat of their last remaining material item and their cultural ties to the land. This act exemplifies the intersection of economic exploitation and ideological manipulation. Concurrently, the play painstakingly chronicles the process of cultural alienation, demonstrating how native Gĩkũyũ beliefs, customs, and founding stories such as the *Iregi* are methodically vilified and eradicated in favor of a theology of submission, best represented by the appropriated Prodigal Son story.

But in the end, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii's play is a story of optimism that lays out a clear route to freedom. Kiguunda and Gathoni's path from false awareness to class consciousness serves as an example of how the harsh, enlightening light of tangible treachery can conquer the narcotic of religion. The play's culmination is a forceful defense of a secular, materialist fight rather than a call for religious reform. It contends that reclaiming cultural identity as a basis for political resistance and rejecting spiritual solace in favor of group action are necessary for true decolonization.

I Will Marry When I Want's ageless analysis of power dynamics is what gives it its enduring relevance. The drama acts as a vital cautionary tale and a manual in a time when the combination of religious fundamentalism, capitalist exploitation, and cultural hegemony continues to influence both local and international politics. It serves as a reminder that freedom depends on recognizing the ideological smokescreens that justify oppression and fearlessly taking back control of one's own political, cultural, and economic future. The last takeaway from the play is that the conflict can start after the weapon has been located and dismantled.

REFERENCES

Althusser, L. (1971) *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. Monthly Review Press.

- Bible. (1611). King James Version. Oxford University Press.
- Bressler, C.E. (1999) *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. Prentice Hall.
- Fanon, F. (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press.
- Feuerbach, L. (1841) *The Essence of Christianity*. Trans. Marian Evans. Evans Publishers.
- Harvey, D. (2004) “The New Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession.” shs.cairn.info/journal-actuel-marx.
- Killam, G.D. Ed. (1984) *The Writing of East and Central Africa*. Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Marx, K. (1845) “Theses on Feuerbach”. *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, Vol. 1. Progress Publishers, Moscow.
- Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, (1981) *Writers in Politics*. Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Ngugi Wa Mirii, (1982) *I Will Marry When I Want*. Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Sanneh, L. (1989) *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Orbis Books.

AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Abdullahi Haruna holds a Ph.D. in English (African Literature) from the prestigious University of Maiduguri – Nigeria. With numerous publications in reputable journals and books to his credit, he has established himself as a leading expert in his field. His research interests include Literary Criticism, Oral African Literature and Cultural Studies. He is known for his insightful analysis and critical thinking. Dr. Haruna held the position of Head, Department of Languages and is currently the Director, Directorate of General Studies in the Nigerian Army University Biu, Borno state – Nigeria. .