
Pragmatism, Prostitution and Morality in the Haunted Trail Philip Chidavaenzi (2012) and Highway Queen Virginia Phiri (2010)

Theresia Mdlongwa

ABSTRACT

The moral principle is premised on the notion that, when human beings behave altruistically they distinguish themselves from animals and order and peace prevail in society. It is applauded for bringing societies into a homogenous fold. Morality is therefore essential to the existence of human beings as it creates a civilised society. In this essay, I argue that morals fall away in the adverse of poverty and hunger. In instances where human beings have to choose between morality and survival, the former prevails. Using the Marxist feminist theoretical framework, I envisage that in capitalist environments the poor disregard moral values for purpose of self -sustenance. Controlling women's access to resources and their sexuality in turn allows men to control womens' labour power and their sexuality. Crimes like prostitution, corruption and murder take a different meaning when committed by the subjugated proletariat as opposed to the bourgeoisie who always has a choice between good and bad. Pragmatist ethics is broadly humanist because it is the ultimate test of morality beyond whatever matters for as humans good values are those for which we have good reason (Dewey,1999). On the other hand, the African philosophy of Ubuntu believes that a persons' behaviour determines their personhood and immorality reduces the personhood of a human being. In the face of adversity, the poor find good reason to be amoral.

INTRODUCTION

Human nature is prone to judgement of what is good and bad. Emmanuel Kant cited in Leitch (2001:504) avers that judgement is generally the ability to think the particular as contained under the Universal. If the universal rule, principle or law is given then the judgement, which subsumes the particular through its role as determinative even though in its roles transcendental judgement it states apriori the conditions that must be met before subsumption for that universal to be possible. Patriarchal societies set up moralistic principles, which act as measures to check the appropriateness of human behaviour. These measures premised on the androgenic standard of what is good or bad are then applied to both man and women. The androgenic society decides that prostitution is immoral as far as the woman is the one selling sex. It neglects to define what the buyer of the sex who is a man is doing. The woman is the one who is monitored for social reprehensible behaviour. This is evidenced by a lack of a synonymy that aptly describes a man who buys sex from women. Words used to describe men who have several sexual partners do not have the same negative connotations. While a man can proudly call himself, a casanova, libertine, gigolo, ladies' man or philanderer a prostitute may not do the same. Spivak therefore argues that, "The subaltern enters official and intellectual discourse only rarely and usually through the mediating commentary of someone more at home in those discourses" (Leitch 2001:2195). From Hudson-Weems' (2001) point of view, definitions belong to the definers not to the defined, historically. It is up to women to define themselves if they do not someone else will and they would do it miserably. For women and the proletariat what is considered good for them is decided in their absence therefore prostitution can only be immoral and no situation can warrant it to be regarded differently.

From an African philosophical point of view, morality embraces the Kantian principles as expounded by the Ten Commandments. Similarly, judgement is made on individuals depending on the relationship of ones behaviour and how it relates to the community African traditional concept of morality is humanistic or anthropocentric in nature. The central moral norm was to maintain

**Address for correspondence:*

ntemndlo@yahoo.com

harmonious relationships within the community (Wiredu, 1998, Bujo, 1990, Majola, 1988 and Motlhabi 1986). As such, women in African society are socialised to respect the community and follow the androgenic principles that are regarded as the norm. The women who are idealised and respected are those who are obedient to their husbands even if the husbands are wrong and unreasonable (Gaidzanwa, 1985). African maxims are specific about the formation of character. Character is acquired. Every person is responsible for the state of his or her character as it is a result of habitual action that is approved by the patriarchy. The conduct of human beings ought to conform to certain fundamental norms and values, which translate to moral virtue. A human being not capable of displaying the expected characteristics falls short or lacks personhood (*Ubuntu*). Eckensberger, (2004) argues that morality is not only a central aspect of culture but it is unique to humans. From an African perspective, morality forms character and character forms personhood. One who lacks personhood is judged, as lacking character therefore does not qualify to be human hence the use of the Zulu proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Broodryk, 2002).

In an ideal world (utopic society) both man and women would have an equal share to economic resources, women would therefore have no need to sell themselves for money. On the other hand, for one to be able to sell there should be a buyer. In situations where oppression prevails and in an unjust society where systematically and over long periods one group denies another access to resources of society immorality is bound to prevail (Collins, 2000). Sexual double standards and male control of access to the means of production and reproduction control women just as surplus labour is controlled by low wages. Men exercise their control in receiving personal service work from women, in not having to do house work or rear children in having access to women's bodies for sex and in feeling powerful and being powerful (Hartmann, 1979). Until recently in Zimbabwe police would, arrest women for soliciting but the solicited were never arrested. “The patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean traditional culture has for ages relegated women to second class citizens. Activists say this resulted in women struggling to assert equality even where it is enshrined in the constitution” (The Zimbabwean 3 June 2015).

Women and girls are not born into prostitution but rather a society that is based on the availability of economic resources forces women to prostitute themselves. Prostitution represents the fusion of exploitation for an economic purpose namely the commodification of women's sexuality (Collins, 2000). Similarly, men are not born thieves and murderers but in capitalist societies, men are forced to make money or they become emasculated. The choice given to them is limited, they can either sink or swim. Sanyinka Shakur in Walsh (2008) argues that, when one is born into the “lumpenproletariat” they become self-centred and egoistic as they are at the fringes of society. The “Lumpenproletariat” engages in acts of violence and crime as an outlet for frustration with the class struggle. In Zimbabwe, this group of people has come to be known as “Majagger” meaning to balance. Unfortunately in the balancing act there is no stability hence morals are easily discarded. Marx and Engel in Walsh (2008:94) have proffered that crime is the product of an unjust and alienating social condition, “the struggle of an isolated individual against the prevailing condition”. Both Phiri and Chidavaenzi in their novels narrate the struggles of men and women who are aspiring for a better life in the face of a decaying economy.

Colonisation in Zimbabwe brought with it Capitalism and subsequent urbanisation. Since the resources generated from the urban industry were swiftly transported to the mother country (Fanon, 1997) the native country did not have enough resources to develop industry and create employment for all its citizens. The lack of resources coupled with rampant mismanagement of the economy left the country in distress. The majority of the citizens in urban areas live in poverty. Yifi Tuan (1984) in Collins (2004:144) suggests that “power as domination involves reducing humans to animate nature in order to exploit them economically and to treat them condescendingly as pets”. This is true of all colonised states where the native was always treated as inferior and of women in relation to men. Marx has articulated that a person's beliefs and values are a reflection of that person's economic interests (Leitch, 2001). For the coloniser the main interest was to make much profit, however for the marginalised native person one had to do whatever it took to survive. The protagonists in both novels are not averse to throwing caution to the wind. They show that consciousness is over ridden by circumstances. In instances where one is faced with adversities consciousness is subjugated by the survival instinct.

FALLIBILITY, VULNERABILITY AND RATIONAL HUMANS IN A DECAYING ECONOMY

Very often human beings judge others based on what society defines as right or wrong behaviour. Humanity has created organizations and units of existence. It is within these organizations, such as the family, religion, political party or work place that rules and standards of behaviour are defined. These units set up yardsticks to measure the morality or immorality of one's behaviour. The concept of morality and goodness (this varies according to persons and is contingent to ethics) is linked to the well-being and dignity of other fellow human beings (Boss 2008:378). What humans consider morally upright is that which is ultimately good to all humanity and not to an individual. One's ideology or proposition is only true if it works satisfactory for all involved. For pragmatist there is no fundamental difference between practical and theoretical reason or any ontological difference between facts and values (Dewey, 1999). Gelfund, (1987:65-88) argues that the vices that were rejected by traditional society were abuse, lying, deceit, stealing, adultery, drinking, violent quarrelling, pride, jealousy, covetousness, hatred, ingratitude, anger, negligence, weakness, assault, provocation and selfishness. Both Chidavaenzi and Phiri seem to pick on these avarices and show how the individual characters are forced to forget their personhood.

Chidavaenzi and Phiri seem to bring to the reader's attention that human action cannot be viewed from the prism of one's orientation. They bring to the fore the old adage (that) 'don't judge a book by its cover.' Both authors discuss the decade of crisis that was characterized by an economic meltdown that resulted in the closure of banks, factories, industry, excessive unemployment and ultimately poverty. The job losses increased the plight of Zimbabwean citizens whose situation was further worsened by the scourge of HIV and AIDS. Olen et al, (2008) point out that, it is the moral duty of the government to promote the general welfare, the common good or public interest. However, for Zimbabwe the country became inhabitable as it was bogged down by corruption, political unrest, mismanagement of the economy and resultant lack of funds to take care of public interest. Many citizens discarded their morality and pursued any avenues that would put food on the table. The effects of the crisis are examined by Phiri (2010) in *Highway Queen* when she traces the life of a prostitute who just wants to feed her family. Muwati, Gambaya and Chabata (2003) highlight that; citizens became very vulnerable to this decade of fatally deficient government policies that reduce the ordinary citizens to abject poverty.

In both narratives, the authors evince conceptual thrust that debunks the tendency to homogenize the human experience. More often such homogenization undercuts the objective impact assessments (Muwati, Gambaya and Chabata 2003:126). For Chidavaenzi, the protagonist Michael is driven by an insatiable lust for wealth and power as he makes determined effort to escape from the poverty and squalor of Mbare. Michael who is raised by a single mother, a shebeen queen and prostitute is selfish whose only concern from an early age is to do what gives him pleasure. Wiredu (1998) affirm that, at all stages ... morality is grounded in conceptual and empirical consideration about human wellbeing. Michael's egoism is a trait nourished by a capitalist society where the subjugation of the proletariat is a means of reducing labour cost and maximising profits. Marginalisation of women and their function as secondary labour forces is an essential and fundamental characteristic of Capitalism (Selden, 1989; Kristeva 1982). Michael's mother as part of the marginalised is incapacitated to give him a life different from what he has. His tragic flaw becomes like that of Okwonkwo in his attempt to transcend the weakness of his father, and like that of Macbeth with his vaulting ambition. Ultimately, the characters' flaws lead to their demise.

Similarly, Phiri's protagonist Sophie turns to prostitution in order to feed, clothe, and send her children to school. Her husband, the breadwinner is incapacitated and emasculated by unemployment and alcoholism (Muponde, 2007). Sophie tries to find a solution to her predicament, which in itself is a result of immoral leaders failing to govern the country and therefore driving it to decadence. She makes a rational and pragmatic decision to sell sex. "While the practice is morally reprehensible, it is a crisis management strategy that on the other hand enables her to retain her dignity," (Muwati, Gambaya and Chabata 2003:126). In the circumstances, she is in a catch 22 situation where inaction results in starvation, homelessness, failure to put the children to school and inviting the judgemental scorn of society for selling her body. In the end, her pragmatic and innovative impulses prevail.

Michael's upbringing is a very shameful experience, which develops in him selfish character. His mother, who is abandoned by her gangster lover, is poor and the only source of her income is the she

been and prostitution. She changes lovers and eventually is infected with HIV and dies of AIDS alone and is given a pauper's burial. Michael, like Sayinka Shakur emerges from the lumpenproletariat background as a paranoid control freak, a sexual sado-masochist with a repressed inferiority complex (Muponde, 2007:12). His violent behaviour is a reaction against the feeling of class subjugation and poverty, which he adversely tries to escape. He uses the despicable traits to gain success in the banking sector. Driven and motivated by fear of poverty Michael becomes a misanthropic, ruthless workaholic “all his life he had been escaping the squalor, overcrowding, and degrading poverty of his youth”(p. 9). Michael lives in the shadows of his fear that when he eventually encounters the light it fails to penetrate the darkness in him. Chiedza, his girlfriend is the direct opposite of him, brought up in a secure home, by a widowed mother who is a lawyer. Chiedza has a wonderful childhood, Christian upbringing and philanthropic nature.

Chidavaenzi creates a complete contrast of the Jacha and Denga family. The Jacha family is driven by conservative values while the Denga family has no moral value system. While both women lose their life partners in different circumstances, for Fungai, a middle class working woman, life is not difficult because she is empowered with an education and a lucrative career and manages to raise her daughters in a pleasant environment. Hungwe, no date: 47) attests that, “While education is regarded as vital in fighting poverty it is not seen as fundamental in the development of the girl child among the marginalised populace”. For Michael's mother, the options before her are limited. Without an education and no means of taking care of her child, the only option is prostitution. It is however ironic that in spite of their different backgrounds both Michael and Chiedza are not spared from the HIV and AIDS virus. Chidavaenzi seems to articulate that HIV has no class boundaries.

From the beginning of the novel, we meet Michael, a self-aggrandizing, corrupt and uncultured boy who matures into a decadent adult. Michael leads a reckless childhood. He sleeps with different women some older than him from an early age. His family background does not give him any moral or ethical values. His lust for sex is equated with his lust for power and control. His failure to control his lust results in him losing Pentagon Bank, his empire. In spite of his success, the bank having opened branches in major cities in Zimbabwe, Michael's lust is voracious as he moves to buy Manrow Bank. The same lust is exhibited by the truck drivers in Highway queen who are all keen to have sex with Sophie and without protection. Michael orchestrates the illegal take-over of struggling banks and fraudulently amasses funds to finance his schemes. He is pragmatic in his approach as he argues that, “We are registered as a Financial Services Provider but owing to the economic crisis we are facing at the moment. It is advisable to divert a little if we are to remain above water” (p.7). One of the clearest influences from the west is the growing materialism in Africa (Mwikamba, 1992 in William, Moses and Awolowo, 2008). Money and material wealth has become a semi-god that has led to the decay of morals, as economic activity and success have become ends in themselves. African community has moved away from the communal way of life to a Eurocentric individualism that makes it difficult to apply principles that worked in traditional society. While in traditional societies the success of an individual translated to the success of a community in modern day success is individualistic a gaining it is a competition.

Chidavaenzi brings forth a fallacious argument that the greater impulse to do whatever is necessary to attain which ever roles are given high status is a function of male physiology (Boss 2008:488). Michael and his directors who are all male will stop at nothing to amass wealth at the expense of the ordinary people. Chidavaenzi seems to argue that even the most egocentric of the human lot share their egocentrism with those of their kind. Michael and his directors act altruistically at least with regards to those within their group, which to them is a moral standard regardless of the effects it has on the people with accounts in their bank. Both Chidavaenzi and Phiri seem to argue that, morality falls away when the poor are faced with an opportunity to escape their poverty. Sophie is threatened by hunger and poverty, prostitution seems to be a gallant means of survival. Similarly, for Michael buccaneering is the only way he can make enough money to keep him safe from poverty.

Michael although, narcissistic is well aware that his actions are against the law as much as Sophie is aware that prostitution is immoral. However, for both characters to survive and not go back to the squalor and poverty of the squatter camp and Mbare they have to do that which is not good for the whole. Michael becomes a ruthless shark who is “only contented when an enemy was bleeding helplessly on the floor” (p.8). Poverty has taught both Michael and Sophie that they live in a dog eats dog society and their survival is dependent solely on them and them alone. Michael advises his

colleagues that they should open offshore foreign accounts to protect their earnings. Bonge (1965) cited in (Walsh, 2008) avers that, Capitalism generates egoism and blunts altruism because it relies on competition of valuable resources setting person against society.

The Darwinism tendency exhibited by Michael leaves him in a precarious position in a world of economics where it is the survival of the fittest. For Michael and his cronies, “everyman is alone in the world and fights alone to survive. That’s the way of the world” (p. 31). The devastating effects of this ethical egoism are closure of the bank. Chidavaenzi seems to be equating human behaviour to that of animals. Laws, rules, and regulations are only useful to rational beings for as long as all things are equal. Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2006) affirm that *Ubuntu* ethics is anti-egoistic as it discourages people from seeking their own good without regard for or the detriment of other persons in the community.

Michael and Jackie are indifferent to the standards of morality set by a society whose premise is of a privileged position. Jackie and Michael are two individuals from a impoverished background who are non-conformist and have a prurient tendency to engage in sex. Both characters are caught up in what Bohms (2001:115) refers to as “the primitive rebellion hypothesis”. Poverty stricken individuals are prone to crime as a means of survival. Crime is a rational response to their situation and morality falls away. Chiedza can easily judge Jackie’s behaviour as a “decadent and carefree woman of the city” (p.1). Chiedza is looking at Jackie from a privileged middle class position where she makes assumptions about the expected behaviour of a proper and decent woman. Ironically, in her naivety it is not Jackie who becomes HIV positive but her. Chidavaenzi seems to heighten the irony in that, it is normally the poor who are associated with disease and promiscuity.

The background of poverty moulds and shapes Michael into a reckless adult. When he gets Pentagon Bank, he is consumed by the love of wealth that he does not know when to stop his misogyny. As a child, he did not get the grooming that Chiedza had. Chiedza controls her passion but Michael does not know any better. Michael has not been taught to love. His home was not a haven of love and happiness as such he does not know what love really is. He wants to possess Chiedza because of her beauty and good character. To him Chiedza fits the role of perfect wife for a business tycoon. He does not share her passion for a family. Michael is portrayed as a panjandrum as he believes that he managed to escape the squalor of Mbare therefore he is above anything else that includes even HIV and AIDS.

THE MORAL WOMAN IN THE WAKE OF POVERTY AND AIDS

Emmanuel Kant has stated that moral judgments are binding to all human beings no matter what kind of society they live in (Stanford Encyclopaedia, 2002). Chidavaenzi and Phiri seem to argue against this view as they bring to light that a person’s behaviour is controlled by their circumstances more than what society expects of them. Human beings are generally egocentric and more often than not the golden rule, do unto others as you want done unto you, is put aside for self-fulfilment and survival imperatives.

Chiedza and Jackie are two graduates with diverse backgrounds who meet at University. While Chiedza sits in her dorm room reading Jackie parties until morning. In traditional African society, a shared morality was cement to the society (Kingongo, 1991). While the ultimate goal of traditional education was morality, the behaviour of both characters is indicative that modern education unlike traditional education does not place emphasis on ethical behaviour. Chiedza is a determined, hard-working, goal oriented and moralistic woman. She is highly religious and believes that sex before marriage and “having a child outside wedlock was a sin against God” (p. 95). Orphaned at a young age, Jackie is the exact opposite. She has street shrewdness and is very independent. In spite of having multifarious boyfriends, Jackie takes exceptional care to protect herself and becomes selfish. As a female gigolo, she dates man of her own choosing and whim. She calls herself the ‘men’s lady’ taking away the Casanova masculine role to apply to her love for sex with different partners. Like Sophie in *Highway Queen*, she assumes a new identity as a self-namer and self-definer (Muwati, Gambaya and Chabata 2013:121). Jackie is liberated from patriarchal control and learns from an early age to take care of herself. She has no remorse or regret of her decision even that of sleeping with her best friend’s betrothed. She exhibits quality that is masculine in nature and uses it to protect herself from patriarchal dominance. She uses men as objects for her own pleasure and knowingly engages in adulterous affairs with married man. In this way, she adopts a process that Bell describes as dis identification in which she challenges patriarchally ascribed gender roles of what a woman should be.

Simons argues that as females increasingly adopt male roles they will increasingly masculinise their attitudes and behaviour and thus become crime prone. Jacques Lacan in his seminar *encreux* (1972-3) suggests that *jouissance* by which he means sexual pleasure and enjoyment is fundamentally phallic and thus does not relate to the female Other as such (Matatu 41, 2013:98). Jackie however, takes back her sexuality and enjoys sex as much as her numerous male partners.

Chiedza on the other hand comes from a sheltered background and courts danger by escaping the protected small town environment, refusing to register at Africa University an institute that is guided by moralistic values and forms an embryonic protection for its students. The Africa University is opposed to the University of Zimbabwe, which is highly liberal in its approach. Chiedza is attracted to danger. In Michael, she sees an enigma, which she is curious to explore. She takes the role of the light, as her name seems to suggest, in the relationship. The two are of opposite orientation. While Chiedza's childhood is very cultured, nurtured, and cosseted, Michael is amoral and has no family values to talk of. Michael's life has a lot of dark alleys, secrets and shady dealings. Chidavaenzi is bringing forth the theme of beauty and the beast. Michael holds on to Chiedza in the hope that she would bring light to his dark life and restore him to a better person. Unfortunately, he is not aware that the pursuit of his pleasure has ramifications, which have a negative impact on others and those he cares about the most.

Chiedza's mollycoddled childhood has not exposed her to the debauchery that is found in the big city of Harare. She genuinely believes that if she is good nothing bad will happen to her. She fails at self-preservation because of her naïve belief that being good would protect her. Although she suspects that Michael is an adulterer, she continues with the relationship. Even after they are engaged, she does not take precaution to protect herself or insist on an HIV test before their sexual encounter. She prophetically exclaims that, “you know what scares me HIV and AIDS, Jackie.” (p20) Chiedza seems to fulfil Kant's upshot assumption that a man has autonomy while the woman lacks the autonomous capacity to reason for herself (Anderson2003). She inevitably authors her own tragedy by failing to reason.

For Jackie, Chiedza should not be fearful as she does not sleep around but she quickly cautions her naïve friend and warns that, “a condom can make a difference between life and death” (p21) Chiedza only realizes the importance and difference a condom would have made after she is tested HIV positive. Chidavaenzi is suggesting that HIV is not always a result of loose behaviour or prostitution therefore; people should not judge those that are HIV positive in a totalising and homogenising manner. Chiedza's status is different from Sophie in that she is innocent. Chiedza's only one sexual encounter with her fiancé, which leaves her HIV positive and therefore exposed to the stigma, associated with the virus. Her tenacious hold on Michael is motivated by his success in business. She seems to be substituting him for her father whom she lost as a child. She fails to act on her instinct that warns her that Michael is not what she needs; she fails to make an ethical decision. Michael's obscurantism is a fascination that she enjoys to her own detriment.

Jackie and Michael coming from marginalized backgrounds have a proclivity to engage in sex with different people. For Chiedza sex is sacred and a preserve for the married. Precocious sex for both Michael and Jackie is inevitable as they are exposed to it both at home and in their neighbourhood. Precocious sex for both characters ruins their view of love and the purpose of sex. Jackie's first sexual encounter is at fifteen. The early exposure to sex sets her apart from her best friend as she becomes aware of what it entails. Chidavaenzi seems to be arguing that there is preponderance in poor families to engage in sex from an early age and to use sex as an economic means.

“Jackie then an innocent naïve young girl did not know what that meant. She later learnt that a girl had something, a priceless possession that any man would do whatever it took to have, including parting with his hard-earned salary only for a few minutes of pleasure with a woman” (pp35-36).

Jackie emerges as an ethical egoist ready to take on the world but on her own terms. This realization is also an awakening for Sophie when after three episodes of unprotected sex with men she realizes she has a commodity that man cannot resist. “To achieve this I would sell my body. That was the only commodity that no one had control over except myself” (Phiri, 2010:88). Selling sex is the best employment available; her body is hers to control just as an athlete decides whether to run or not. Tate (1983) cited in Collins (2000:4) avers that, “this type of change ...occurs because the heroine recognises and more importantly respects her inability to change her situation. This is not to say that

she is completely circumscribed by her limitations. On the contrary she learns to exceed former boundaries.” What is ironic about Sophie is that she is married, a mother and a prostitute. Gaidzanwa (1985) attest that, motherhood is respectable and held in high esteem as long as it goes with socially approved wifedom. For as long as she is married, the community and society respect Sophie. Her trips to the boarder are approved as she is working to support the family. Gaidzanwa (1985) further states that, a wife is judged by how she behaves towards her husband and how she looks after him the household and the children. Sophie makes sure that the family is provided for and when she can she fulfils her conjugal rights once her obligations are fulfilled she is idealised and her morality is not questioned.

Characters in both texts seem to justify their choices reverently, however, morality should never be overridden, that is no one should violate a moral prohibition or requirement for non-moral consideration (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2002). Hammar (2008) argues that, Prostitution evinces the decline of the economy and of social and ideological systems within which such matters can be regulated coherently. It neither indexes the moral decline of people nor is it rooted in natural promiscuity. Sophie is not a prostitute under normal circumstances she is a housewife. For Sophie however, no level morality can justify her family going hungry and uneducated.

Boss (2008:373) avers that, premarital chastity is the best way to guarantee marital commitment and faithfulness. Chiedza strongly believes in fidelity and chastity before marriage. Chiedza’s undoing is her respectable home; she is not taught how to handle men, alcohol and sex. Michael who attempts a romantic date, which eventually leads to their premarital encounter, easily traps her. She agonizes over the adulterous act, which seemingly violates the principle of fidelity (Boss, 2008). Fungai is closer to the centre of the moral community and has shielded her (*pre-eminent*) daughters and watched over them like a mother hen (p13). While this might have been good for their welfare, it does not prepare Chiedza to face the darker side of love. She is too trusting and believes that Michael will do the right thing. She is so innocent that her friend flirts with her fiancé and she does not see it as a threat. Fungai in some way lets her daughter down by not following through on her instincts. She is driven by the nature of a patriarchal society that demands that all ‘good’ daughters should be married. Hungwe, (no date) attest that, women would garner respect through marriage and bearing children within wedlock and earning money for the patriarchal family. At the mention of an engagement, Fungai lets her guard down. She feels her work is done. While she has been perturbed by Michael’s character from the onset, the prospect of marrying her daughter off to a successful businessperson overrides her scepticism. She welcomes Michael into her home.

Michael is scarred and does not have any standard to determine what is moral or immoral. It does not bother him to sleep with other women while engaged to Chiedza. Life in the shebeen taught him that women are sexual objects that are used for pleasure and the benefit of men. He adheres to the chauvinistic belief that women are there for the gratification of men (Muponde, 2007:13) Women especially in cases where they would ordinarily be inaccessible to the psychopath are regarded as chattels of sexual gratification and objects of humiliation (Muponde, 2007:14). Beauvoir argues that throughout history women have been reduced into objects for men because men have imagined women as the other. Women, in patriarchal cultures are regarded as the other while men are the norm (Leitch, 2001:1404). Mrs Kanda, like Sophie falls prey to Michael’s demands. Imperceptibly threatened with the loss of her job and a looming disciplinary hearing, she had no choice but to comply even when she knew what the dinner date entailed (p.11). Michael’s masochistic nature is unveiled in the fact that he is not even attracted to her but he sleeps with her to show his dominance and machismo. Similarly, Dhuri abuses Sophie when she tries to purchase goods for sale to feed her family. Muwati, Gambaya and Chabata (2003:126) attest that,

Through these heinous acts by unscrupulous masculinities, the author depicts how in a crisis women become exposed to multiple risks and crises. Sophie finds it difficult to protect herself from such powerful men who have access to scarce resources and commodities. She becomes a victim of the excruciating decade long economic, political and social crisis in Zimbabwe.

Women fail to protect themselves from masculine autonomy, as they do not have the means to preserve themselves from exploitation. Patriarchy is centred upon the conservation of patrimony, which implies that those who transmit and own the wealth control the existence of property and its circulation (Beauvoir in Leitch, 2001).

Michael is a sociopath who fails to empathize with an ailing parent. He is a coward who fears responsibility and does not want to associate with a diseased female. Instead, he neglects his mother and relocates to his friend's house. Attree (2007:62) argues that, “The failure to associate compassion with those suffering from AIDS and the resulting distancing from the obstruction of those who are ill as enemies to be defeated leads to the misunderstanding and miscommunication of the dangers and risk associated with HIV infection”. He does not learn anything from his mother's illness because he chooses to shut it out of his life. When his girlfriend Lina is pregnant, he immediately threatens and chases her away. When Chiedza becomes HIV positive and pregnant, he is not penitent but instead, he dismisses her and takes away his ring. Broodryk (2002) believes that, caring for oneself and for others members of the community through human labour is a moral imperative in Ubuntu. Michael lacks the ability to share in someone else's pain and has no sense of moral duty. His scapegoating strategy is indicative of anachronistic masculinity that pathologises the female body as the one that carries diseases. His mother, unlike Sophie who hides her activities, does not attempt to hide her immorality hence he adopts the same strategy.

Michael like Stephen is bludgeoned by crisis and embraces a typically nihilist attitude to his HIV status and the loss of his company. Both losses are metaphors of castration and emasculation as he has always regarded himself as a bull powerful enough not to be scathed by anything. Michael is in the same trap that resists the acknowledgement that ‘the strong healthy man’ is vulnerable to infection and disease (Attree, 2007). While Chiedza is devastated by her HIV status, she goes into a depression, cries and fails to eat. Michael is resolute and conjures up some bluster and bravado, as he believes, “he is still on top of the world. HIV and AIDS- whatever they called it would not touch him” (p. 101).

Chidavenzi and Phiri both seem to lament the lack of change in behaviour for most Zimbabweans. Sophie like Nora in Ibsen's *In a Doll's House* discovers her own power to act in certain sense, autonomously. She is aware of HIV and AIDS and makes a determined effort to use a condom but she realises that most of her clients prefer not to. A reading of *Highway Queen* illustrates how this conception of the ideal autonomy misrepresents the reality of individuals lived experiences and imposes a gendered identity, which subordinates women to a masculine narcissism. For most men, for example a whore cannot be raped –they want it, and if indeed, they were raped the injury would be smaller (Svanstrom, 2005). Historically women have been reduced to be sexual objects for men as virgins, prostitutes, wives or mothers (Showalter, 1996). Men claim right to women's bodies and claim right of command over the use of women's bodies because patriarchal norms concerning sexuality still dominate the judicial system and public opinion (Paterman, 1988: 17 in Svanstrom, 2005). Most men like Michael think they are untouchable because they have money therefore they are immune to the disease. Michael does not take into consideration that he has been indiscriminately sleeping with different women.

Michael is too ashamed to accept his status because he has violated all moral principles in his quest to enrich himself at the expense of fellow human beings. He has violated the principle of fairness to satisfy his ultra-ego. He foresees a bleak future, as he fears that once it is known that he is HIV positive the golden rule will apply. All those he has treated harshly before will also treat him the same. He has been treating people badly therefore, he cannot expect to be treated differently. He realises very late that the man who is afraid of nothing at all, but marches up to every danger becomes foolhardy (Olen et al, 2008). It is a truism that courage is not necessarily the absence of fear but the ability to do the right thing at the right time and in his wilful narcissism, he ignores this. He has habituated himself to have what he wants and is predisposed to seek gratification. Because of his indulgence in every pleasure without refraining from a single one, he becomes incontinent. One may then conclude that the biblical warning of life being a Newtonian experience aptly applies to Michael; that what goes around comes around.

CONCLUSION

The economic differences between the rich and the poor define the standards of measure that can be used to determine the morality of a person. While the bar can be set high for those in privileged positions, the same measure cannot be used for the poor who in most instances are forced to commit crimes to survive. Capitalism has not cooperated women into the labour force the same way it has accommodated men. Women are marginalised in terms of employment hence they look for alternative ways to earning a living. Capital has created a distinction between man and women with women being

relegated to the home and family life where there is no source of income. Morality is an ideal that every human being should strive to uphold however, society is not balanced on a fair scale of existence for everyone. While prostitution may, under normal circumstances, be regarded as reprehensible in some extraordinary instances it may be a morally upright form of employment. Morality cannot be regarded universally, in an umbrella term, to judge all humans, as some may not be privileged enough to stay away from crime and corruption. While in an ideal world an immoral person is judged as lacking personhood and therefore not qualified to be considered human the nature of modern day society calls upon humanity to consider the standards set as measurement for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

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AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY

Theresia Mdlongwa, has been employed as a lecturer and administrator for the past ten years at Great Zimbabwe university. She lectures in Literature and in Communication Studies to undergraduate students at Great Zimbabwe University. Her research interests are in Zimbabwean Literature and Gender. She is currently pursuing PhD studies.