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Rethinking the Effects of Capitalism on Individual's Identity and
the Moulding of Values in Teju Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief*

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By: Dacine DIAF

Board of Examiners:

Mrs. NOUIOUA Amira Hiba	University of Laghouat, Chairperson.
Dr. MOUISSA Fattoum	University of Laghouat, Supervisor.
Dr. GUELLIL Assia	University of Laghouat, Examiner.

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Dedication

To my mother, who never stopped believing in me, and always encouraged me in every endeavour. Without her tremendous efforts in raising me and educating me I would not be where I am today.

To my father who is always there for me.

To my sister who encouraged me to continue my efforts to succeed even through the hard times.

To my younger brother.

To my family who is waiting with bated breath for my viva to attend it despite the long distance.

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Abstract

Exploring capitalism and its undesirable effects on people's psyches have caught the interest of many sociologists, economists, and psychologists, like Karl Marx, Frederick Engel and Melvin Seeman, to name a few. Accordingly, many works of literature have portrayed the social effects of capitalism on society, like the novel *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell. Teju Cole, in this context, plighted his novella *Every Day is for the Thief* (2014) with the damaging bearings of capitalism on people. Although the novel does not overtly discuss capitalism; nonetheless, its depiction of characters and their values provides a strong connection to the underlying capitalist system. The author of this novel depicts identity through the protagonist, who is both a local and an outsider, as he goes on a journey of rediscovery in Lagos. The objective of this research is to put focus on the connection between capitalism, human values, and personal identity formation in post-colonial Nigeria. This dissertation, as a result, analyses the effects that a capitalist economy has on the values held by the characters and the effect of a consequently destabilised society on identity formation. In accordance with the themes discussed, an interdisciplinary approach was used, comprising the psychoanalytical, the humanistic, and the historical approaches. The Psycho-analytical approach is used in order to extract the effects of capitalism on the psyche of the characters. Similarly, the humanistic approach is embraced to examine how values can be affected by such a system and to understand the ever-changing nature of beings. The analysed novel has evidently expounded that capitalism does indeed affect both human values and identities, as it is revealed through the protagonist and the characters he encountered in the novella.

Key words: Capitalism, Identity Shaping, Human Psyche, Values, Society.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Society is a complex multifaceted institution comprising individuals cooperating and interacting with each other as a community and as individuals. Due to the fact that people are social beings, they naturally gravitate towards each other and eventually create societies. The cooperation between individuals and communities can be observed through many practices, of which the oldest and most prominent is trade. Trade saw the establishment of contact with other communities, the enrichment of societies and the rise of civilisation. For as long as people have interacted, trade has existed. It has allowed for the exchange of goods and services, depending on the needs and available products to cover necessities and luxuries. The system of economy we know today developed over the centuries from that ancient practice of trade. Despite the many shapes and structures, it has taken and the countless changes and advancements it underwent, trade remains as the foundation. With this understanding and the many studies done, it is only logical to infer that economy and society are interwoven and inseparable. The power economy holds over society can be determined from the relationship between the formation of society and trade.

As evidenced from the Industrial Revolution's effects on society, from the creation of a new social class, the growth of cities and the new focus on industry instead of agriculture has led to changing the values of society and individuals. One example of this is how land ownership no longer held the importance it did in an agricultural economy and society. There are many literary works and social studies that delved into the changing of values and beliefs, like *Things Fall Apart*, *Westernization-Features and Impact on Indian Society*, *The Politics of Selfhood, Bodies and Identities* and many more but none of them focus on the direct economic influence on such changes and the power economy holds over the shaping of individual and social values. The lack of focus

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on the economy's impact on social values and principles which limits our understanding and awareness of the different aspects affecting change in society and individuals thus disregarding the power of economy. This research will expand on this aspect and provide more insight on the power of economy, particularly capitalism, over shaping values and morals via analysing a particular literary work and deriving the values held in this novel that were shaped by the socio-economic structure of society.

This research addresses the challenges of elaborating on how capitalism, beyond its structural effects on society and class relations, manifest in the individual psychology of individuals as depicted in Teju Cole's *Every Day is for The Thief*. This study seeks to investigate the explicit psychological ramifications of capitalism on characters within the novel, exploring themes such as alienation, and disillusionment. The research aims to answer the following questions:

- To what extent does economy, namely capitalism, effects people's identities and their beings?
- What are the values affected by capitalism in the novel?
- What capitalist principles shaped the identity of the characters?
- How has the identity of the characters manifested under capitalism? And what effect does capitalism have on Nigerian values?

This study proceeds under the hypotheses that *Every Day is for The Thief* portrays the negative capitalist influence on Nigerian values and identity. And the hypothesis that the effects of capitalism on individuals can be determined from the novel. Teju Cole's novel provides a clear socioeconomic

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portrayal through the narrator's social commentary on the different characters he meets and the different experiences he goes through while travelling in his country Nigeria.

The significance of this research lies in its particular focus on the connection between identity, values and capitalism, which can be found in the characters of the novel. And the fact that the individuals being analysed are characters who live in an African country. It provides an understanding about the effect of capitalism on African values and identities in particular. And presents a literary reading on capitalism and psyche.

The objective of this research is to give a special focus on the relationship capitalism has with human values and identity formation. In addition, it seeks to identify and psychologically analyse the values and the identity of individuals in a literary setting. And in order to warn against the perils of capitalism.

There are many works covering this topic. The book titled *Marxism and Literature: Marxist Analysis of 'The Garden Party' (2020)* by Tayyaba, Shahid and Arshad, reveals the effects of economy on society manifesting as class conflicts, economic disparities and societal power structures as a result of the capitalist economic structure and its ideologies. We can see the tensions among people created as a result of this economy and how it has not only shaped class and societal division of power and privilege but caused conflicts, that's revealing the power of economy over society. Although this study has not focused on the values that were formed among individuals as a direct result of the social structure imposed by the capitalist economy. The research paper

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published by Abiogu, G. C and Ezegebe, B. N and Eskay, M and Anyanwu, J. I. in The Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka under the title of Collapse of African Values: Implications for the Education of African Child With/Without Exceptionalities published in 2014, shows the changing values held by African society as a result of a capitalist economy more focused on individualism and materialism than the wellbeing of the members of society, mainly the old and infirm. This work also exposes the growing obsession with acquiring material goods and setting them as the determiners of an individual's worth. This article sheds light on the changing of values as a result of a capitalist economy. However, it has not examined this change very deeply and has not sought its representation in literature produced by this changing society to give it more definition and dimension.

Another work that discusses the same problematic of the changing African values titled: *African Value Systems and The Impact of Westernization: A Critical Analysis* by Chinyere Isaac Madukwe and H. N. Madukwe (2010). This work especially focuses on the loss of community, spirituality and interconnectedness as a result of westernisation and globalism, although it does not directly reference economy it nonetheless reveals the changing values as result of contact with the culture of the west, a culture that is well known for its economy's considerable effect on its society. Another work that discusses economy in relation to people's identities is the book titled *The Politics of Selfhood, Bodies and Identities* published by the University of Minnesota Press. This work discusses how economy and the media reproduces the values, ideologies and beliefs that will perpetuate the economy, in other words, economy shapes the values and identities of people in a way that justifies the present economic system and its practices to preserve its existence. All of

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these works mention changing values and all are connected to economy, but non delve into finding these changes in the literature produced by African society and that is the aim of this research.

In this dissertation an interdisciplinary approach was used with multiple methods. Starting with the historical approach, in order to provide a background on capitalism and Nigeria. The humanistic approach to understand the formation of values, and the psychological approach. Structurally, this research is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to the historical background of capitalism and the theoretical context of identity and values. The second chapter provides a psychological analysis of the values of the novel's characters in relation to capitalism. The third chapter elaborates on the identities of the different character of the novel while linking their formation to capitalism.

Chapter One

Critical Perceptions on Capitalism

Introduction

Capitalism went through many phases and stages in order to become what is today. The transition from feudalism to capitalism is one such phase. This transformation, encompassing both the agrarian and industrial revolutions, will serve as a foundation for understanding the origins, development, and societal implications of capitalism. In this chapter one major economic change will be briefly discussed to give context, and that shall be the change from a feudalist economy to a capitalist economy. It will cover the origins of capitalism, its development through the agrarian and industrial revolution and introduce human values and identity theories. Likewise, the Industrial Revolution and its impacts on the economy will be covered in order to provide a clear image on how that directly affects the people's general environment, lifestyles, their social values, their perception and their principles. This chapter will emphasise how economy does not only affect the system and laws of a country but the psychology of its people as well.

I. The Commencement of Capitalism

Economy according to Oxford languages dictionary is “the state of a country or region in terms of the production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money.”. Economy exists in every region and country at a small scale in provinces and cities and at a larger scale in countries and regions. In essence it is a system that manages available resources to manufacture goods and services and distribute and consume them, or to trade them in order to generate profit. The decisions made about how and where these resources

are to be employed affects how society develops. One clear example of this is how primarily agrarian societies had an economy reliant on agriculture, and naturally invested most labour and money into farming, land was very important as a result. At the time of such societies most people did not live in cities, but rather in the rural areas that offered employment in the agricultural field and had ample lands for it.

Britain had a feudalist economy and society prior to the Agrarian and Industrial revolutions. Its economy's profits were generated through mostly extra economic means where profit was appropriated by landowners and lords directly from the producers through taxation and force. Some workers owned the lands they cultivated, they owned the means of production, which allowed them some freedom from the feudal lords. Although that quickly changed when enclosures began in the early seventeenth century and later became the standard, in which previously communal lands used for grazing and minor crop cultivation by small land owners and even those without land were closed off by lords and land owners.

Consequently, enclosures became prevalent and allowed for improved cultivation, selective cattle breeding and created larger lands for a few, enabling greater agrarian production, however that resulted in loss of land and means of production that created multitudes of newly landless peasants who no longer owned their means of production and means of subsistence (the ability to meet basic living needs) thus forcing them to become wage labourers, creating a large labour force. The competitive large land owners had to then improve production as they shifted from appropriating the surplus from productions of farmers who now no longer had lands into economic coercion that rendered peasants reliant on wages. The new way of making profit for lords and land owners became dependant on profit made from the agricultural production. This necessitated making improvements to

agricultural production to increase profit. Thus, leading to innovations of mechanical tools, selective cattle breeding and the introduction of new crops and crop rotation that brought about the agrarian revolution. The first vestiges of capitalism appeared with the agricultural revolution and became more defined after the Industrial Revolution. (Woods)

The loss of lands and improvement of means of production and tools like the plough and seed drill and the enclosure of land caused many peasants to lose jobs and lands rendering them dependent on capitalists to receive wages which forced them to leave the countryside for the city looking for opportunities for work which led to urbanisation and provided a large labour force which increased the pressure for improving labour productivity to create cheap consumer goods for a new type of market and that was the beginning of English industrial capitalism

II. Capitalism Today

Capitalist market principles marked major changes in Britain and its economy, changing it from a feudalist one to a capitalist one, beginning with enclosures and a shift in social property relations. The agrarian revolution laid down the base for the industrial revolution through the change in market, property relations and ways of surplus appropriation by capitalists. The market went from being regulated by customary and cultural rules and simple buying and selling. The ability to meet basic living needs ceased to be a priority as the maximisation of profit became the objective, which freed the market from any regulation other than supply and demand.

Supply and demand were the only regulation that controlled producers, the few landowners left had to maximize their profits by improving production, means of production,

in order to guarantee access to means of subsistence and to the land. As a result of this competition, less productive farmers lost their land as many were tenants and as rent increased and if their production was not sufficient, they eventually could not pay and were evicted. Soon after, society became divided into two groups of people, the few who were large landowners and the most propertyless. In modern Capitalism the trade and production of goods and services in a free market regulated only by supply and demand with a focus on privatisation, where the means of production or privately owned by a select few.

III. The Difference between Capitalism and other Commercial Models

There is a common belief among economists that capitalism is found in every commercial society from all time periods. Ellen Meikins Wood argues that that is not the case and clarifies what distinguishes capitalism from other forms of commercial societies in the following passage: “The critical factor of the divergence of capitalism from other commercial societies was the development of certain social property relations that generated market imperatives and capitalist laws of motion which imposed themselves on production . . . competitive production and profit maximisation.” (Wood 76). She explains that capitalism is a very distinct commercial system from others because of its unique principle of having a free market. Capitalism differs from other commercial models in the way that property relations changed into a property-owning minority controlling the wage of the propertyless majority. In addition, the appearance of the free market forced competition among those who own the means of production, property, in order to maintain their access to the means of production. The only way to compete is by making the maximum amount of production to generate the maximum profit.

IV. The Power of The Free Market

The emergence of a market society and the necessity to compete by maximising profit was made apparent by those whose interests were supported in the new economy over the interests of those who values the right to meet one's living needs. The imperative quest for profit led to the normalisation of illegitimate and immoral market practices to increase profit. The same practices rationalised from the perspective of capitalism today that went against the right of access to the means of life.

Trade is both the direct exchange of products within a single community or with another and the exchange of commodities in circulation for money and on its own, it does not generate to maximise profit or produce competitively. Free capitalist market on the other hand does, one example of this is in rent of land being decided not by rules or laws but the market based on demand leading to rising rents, these rising rents force producers to not only maximise profit to compete in a market for consumers but also to keep their means of production otherwise they lose their lands and profits and becoming wage labourers unable to even provide their means of living. The market fosters competition and controls the circulation of products, the prices and decides which producers survive and who retains access to the means of production.

V. Social Consequences of Industrialisation

The British government repealed laws regulating domestic market in the late eighteenth century and the idea of a self - regulating market gained currency. Furthermore, the economic means of the appropriation of surplus replaced the feudal extra economic ones. Workers and

capitalists became dependent on the market, and as capital accumulated, capitalists gained influence over laws and policies.

The wage labourers who migrated to cities accelerated urbanisation and promoted industrialization. It made the exploitation of workers even worse, with many having wages too low to support living needs. As a result, the labourers' working conditions became miserable, with masses living in squalor and several families sharing one room and living in cellars and slums. (Engels 14). All family members worked in the factories including women and children in dangerous conditions. The capitalists sought to lower costs of production and so resisted any attempts by workers to organise and protest the terrible conditions, using force and law and. The few Parliamentary legislations regulating the conditions put in place were struck down by the wealthy and influential capitalists. There was very little legislation protecting workers due to the laissez-fair approach of minimal government interference.

The loss of property and the consequent migration to industrial centres for work, in addition to the Insecurity of personal labour market and loss of jobs to the more efficient machines created despondency. And as a result of the workers not being able to depend on their own resources without owning the means of production, the labourers lost their sense of support. And in turn, the workers began to feel alienated from the world they lived in. The traditional sense of responsibility to kin and community was undermined, and emphasis was placed on contractual relationships. Mutual assistance and support broke down. The disregard for others and ruthless competition grew out of the necessity to find employment and the struggle for higher more secure positions. The wealth gap became wider than ever between the upper classes and lower classes. Most importantly, the creation of wage workers and the

poor wages labourers received resulted in poor living conditions. Most families had to push their children to work in order to supplement their meagre income.

Capitalism went through many phases of development and only matured after feudal obstacles and regulations on the market were removed. This quote clarifies this. “As a consequence of these Revolutions, existing class relations and the super structure of society were transformed so as to clear the way for the blossoming of a fully mature capitalism” (Heller105). The industrial revolution marked the zenith of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The very structure of society and the shape of class relations changed as a result.

VI. Engrossing Capitalism into Nigeria

After the industrial revolution swept through Europe and capitalism fully emerged as an economic system, the limited markets and raw materials available posed an obstacle to production. Since capitalism is an economic model based on constant growth, the materials available to many European nations could not sustain the mass production needed for profit surplus. The industrial revolution led to an increase in production and the progress of the industrial sector far surpassed the agricultural sector. As a result, it became increasingly difficult for the agrarian sector to produce enough to satisfy industry requirements for raw material. In addition, the focus on industry over agriculture caused a decline in its productions, the result of which was an inability to provide enough food for the fast-growing urban population. The technological advancements ushered in by the industrial revolution resulted in faster production of new products, which overwhelmed the markets available.

The insufficient raw materials for industrial production and the need for more markets led many European nations to look for more elsewhere, thus colonisation began. And Africa

with its large population and raw materials was one among the many targets of colonisation. The colonisation of Africa first began by slavery, as way to gain free labour to extract the raw materials and work the agricultural plantations in the American colonies to satisfy the rapidly rising demands for more raw materials to keep up with the large industrial productions. Later on the focus shifted to the raw materials of Africa. The colonial powers, especially Britain, started to invest heavily in infrastructure and organising African labourers to facilitate the cultivation, extraction and transportation of raw materials. Eventually, the European colonial powers began looking to create more markets in Africa to sell their manufactured products.

By the mid-20th century, following years of African protests and rebellions, several African colonies gained independence from their colonial rulers. And many of the newly independent colonies inherited a capitalist model from their former colonisers.

Several factors other than colonisation also contributed to instating capitalism in former colonies:

VI.1 Imperialism

Imperialism comes from the Latin word *impero* which means to rule or command. Imperialism followed colonisation, as market imperatives were imposed on other countries and markets were created by destroying and production not beneficial to the colonising countries and taking raw materials from colonies while selling manufactured goods to them as in the case of Britain and Nigeria and India, Britain imported raw materials from Nigeria like cocoa and halted many food crops cultivated by Nigerians causing famines. Britain also had the hands of Indian weavers cut in order to kill textile production in India and export British made textiles and garments to India, to create a market for British products.

VI.2 Globalisation

Globalisation encompasses economic, cultural and political values of the west and imposes them on the world and it can be noted through the globalisation of capitalism and its principles. Due to capitalism's inherent need for continuous growth, it requires new markets, which it has established through colonisation, globalisation and imperialism by violent territorial control, creating global markets and economic domination, respectively.

The resulting Nigerian economy from all of these factors is as follows:

The current Nigerian economy is mostly reliant on the petroleum industry, since the 1960s. The boom in oil price from 1973 produced rapid economic growth many sectors and government services. However, the overreliance on oil and the influx of rural people to cities caused neglect of agriculture, leading to a stagnation in food production and increased imports. This decrease in production forced the government to import basic food items for domestic consumption. This system based on petroleum worked well as long as revenues from petroleum remained constant. However, since the late 1970s the agricultural sector has been in continuing crisis. In the late 1990s the government began to privatize many state-run enterprises in order to enhance the quality of service and reduce dependence on the government. Most of the enterprises had been successfully privatized by the beginning of the 21st century, Nigeria operates on a mixed economic system, of socialist and government dependency, and to a smaller but no less significant extent a capitalist and market dependency. The strongest enterprises in Nigeria are private banks, private telecommunication companies, private stores, private fast-food companies, private cement companies, private oil companies, and private manufacturing companies. The Nigerian Economy merges corporate and individual enterprise with a comfortable government and

civil service sector into a mixed economy. In the last 35 years under both military and democratic rule, important sectors such as banking, broadcasting, telecommunication, entertainment, and cement, have undergone an economic liberalization from the government's control.

VII. How Capitalism underdeveloped some Economic Sectors

The choices of where governments and businesses invest their resources impacts the different sectors of society, and as a result of economic decisions and social values held by the state, the sectors receiving the most resources invested into them becoming the most developed by following the capitalist objective of generating the most wealth. In contrast, the sectors that produce the least profit receive minimal investment from the government, thus leading to the declining quality of education and the underpaying of educational staff. Attempting to profit with minimal spending led to exorbitant tuition fees for pursuing higher education. One example of this is the US government; it invests more in areas that generate great profit than it does in areas that do not, like social programs covering, education, healthcare and transportation. These sectors do not generate profit but require government expenditure, resulting in high costs and negligible profit which opposes capitalist principles that follow maximum profit and minimal expense.

The economy can significantly influence societal values and individual behaviours. This can be seen in the increasing emphasis on financial gain, with people prioritizing profit-making activities and minimizing unnecessary expenses. This trend is evident in the growing popularity of trades and professions that require minimal monetary investment but offer potential for high returns. Instead of relying solely on formal education, individuals may

choose to invest their labour as capital and leverage their work experience to achieve financial success.

Workplace roles that bring in the most profit to a business or to the government are the most well paid and valued, caretaking roles of medical staff and educational institution's staff are the least paid and the least appreciated by the government and society, the value of hard work is solely assigned to work done for businesses rather than individuals and communities because of the lack of corporation and government profit, monetary compensation is not based on hard work or value to society but on the workers ability to generate money, minimum wages are another result of the capitalist principle of maximum profit and minimum spending, cheap labour is preferred thus, the need for immigration, the lack of social security and retirement pension are the government's way of applying this principle. To illustrate, the absence of robust social programs in the United States can be attributed to a capitalist perspective that prioritizes profit over public welfare. From this viewpoint, social programs are seen as unnecessary expenses that do not generate a direct return on investment. This economic philosophy also impacts the housing market, leading to a decline in housing quality as builders seek to minimize costs and maximize profits. As a result, affordable housing becomes increasingly difficult to obtain for many Americans. The concept of free social housing is generally not considered by the state, as it is viewed as an unnecessary expenditure that does not align with the profit-driven goals of capitalism. The very principle influences the people's moral attitudes and becomes the metric by which decisions are made, so aid is withheld from those struggling and in need. Capitalism influences people's values and how they interact with each other. In a capitalist system, communities often become focused on profit rather than cooperation, and acts of kindness become unnecessary expenses.

VIII. Towards Defining Identity: Critical Perceptions

Identity is a phenomenological sense of oneself as a separate person with a personality distinct from others. (Oxford Dictionary). It covers various aspects that influence personality development over the course of someone's life. "[It] encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create one's sense of self." (Psychology Today). economic system of capitalism and its impact on social relations and class structures, which in turn shape individual identities. Identity is as multifaceted as the factors that shape it. There are several theories about identity, the most relevant for this research are the following:

VIII.1. Insights on identity: A Freudian Perception

Sigmund Freud's theory of personality divided the psyche into three distinct parts; the id, the ego, and the superego, which develop at different stages of a person's cognitive stages. These parts are not physical, rather they are hypothetical conceptualisations of the different major mental functions. They interact to form a whole, each contributes to the behaviour of individuals. The id is the unconscious and impulsive part of the psyche which responds directly and instantly to instinctive needs, and desires. These primal urges are not based on logic or reality. Hence, the Id relies on selfish instincts with no regard to consequences as it never grows or develops throughout a person's life and does not change with time or experience, because it is unconscious and does not interact with the external world.

On the other hand, the ego is part of the conscious, it is responsible for managing the id's primal instincts. It seeks to satisfy the id through realistic rational ways to avoid harm to itself from the negative consequences of the external world. It follows the norms and rules

of society to satisfy the impulses of the id in socially acceptable ways. The superego internalises the values and morals of society, which are learned from a person's parents and the environment. It operates on morality and seeks to behave in a socially acceptable way. The superego is responsible for feelings of pride and guilt, it is the conscience that distinguishes between right and wrong, and the source of self-criticism. It incorporates society's morals and values and issues unconscious commands to follow the internalised ethics from society.

V.III.2. The Looking-Glass Self Theory

This theory by American sociologist Cooley describes the process where individuals rely on how others view them to form their sense of self. Social interaction is how they determine other people's judgement and perception of them to measure their self-worth. Individuals may judge themselves based on how others perceive their material possessions and lifestyle, which are often influenced by capitalist norms. This can create a cycle of self-evaluation tied to external markers of success. Therefore, since capitalist systems often emphasize competition and individual achievement. It can lead to social comparison, where individuals evaluate themselves relative to others. Consequently, individuals may compare themselves to others based on their perceived social status, wealth, or achievements. And this can impact self-esteem and identity formation.

V.III.3. Steph Lawler's Identity: Sociological Perspective

This theory holds the view that identity is socially shaped by many factors, like gender, social class, race and ethnicity. Lawler argues that identity is not a static individual attribute, but rather a dynamic constantly changing depending on social context. This work of hers draws on several theories, such as feminist theory and postmodernism.

Steph Lawler's approach to identity emphasizes the social construction of self. This means that our identities are not fixed, innate qualities but are shaped by various social factors such as social class, economic status and social position. These factors can significantly impact our identities and opportunities. Identity is constantly evolving and changing in response to different social contexts. This means that identities are not static attributes but are influenced by the situations individuals themselves in.

IX. Identity Within Capitalism

Capitalism has played a crucial role in shaping not only identity, but our understanding of identity itself. Raymon Williams has studied capitalism and identity, and he argues that the idea of identity, particularly in its modern sense of personal and social identity, is a relatively recent development in Western thought. He contends that the rise of capitalism, with its emphasis on individualism and consumerism, has played a crucial role in shaping our understanding of identity. The concept of identity evolved from its earlier, more fluid meanings to its current, more fixed and essentialized forms.

Capitalism has contributed to a commodification of identity, where individuals are encouraged to define themselves through their consumption choices and possessions. This, in turn, can lead to fragmentation and alienation.

X. An Overview on Human Values

Human values are the core values that form personality and guides the way individuals make decisions and behave with others. Values determine how the self develops and interacts with the world around it. They give an insight into who people want to become and what they give importance to. It is important to note that values are not fixed, they are ever changing and can differ from culture to culture or person to person. Some values are universally shared while other are more localised and distinct.

X.I. Impacts of Capitalism on Values and Identity

Capitalism had and has major effects on Britain in particular, since Britain introduced capitalism to Nigeria, and the world affecting economic, social and psychological aspects of life and some of those psychological consequences are as follows:

Alienation: according to Marx's theory of alienation the structure of the capitalist productions also alienates workers from themselves and each other as under capitalism workers can never work with freedom or cooperate with others for self-expression and self-fulfilment or even to meet living

needs as they are bound by contracts that they cannot control to work for others who control their wages and exploit them, and so workers become cogs in a machine, powerless and isolated from their society and even self.

Additionally, Seeman has identified several psychological effects:

- Powerlessness as individuals lack the belief that their actions can produce the outcomes they want; they lose faith in their ability and efforts and control over their lives.
- Normlessness as a result of the collapse of established social norms and their guiding and behaviour regulating effect. Isolation as a consequence of lacking any meaningful connections with other workers and members of their community and society.
- Self-estrangement which is the lack or loss of intrinsic meaning in one's work especially as workers never see the finish product of their hand or possess full knowledge and understanding of what they create or do.

Conclusion

The power economy holds over society and the state and individuals is enormous, as demonstrated by some of the effects of capitalism, briefly covered in this chapter. It is very important to be aware of the effects of economy on not only the economic sectors and tangible aspects of society but on cultural aspects and psychological effects as well. Knowing its effects on the individual and community, especially in the profit driven capitalist economies is crucial. The devastating effects of unregulated markets as well as the limitation of access to the means of production and means of subsistence must be known.

Chapter Two

The Repercussions of Capitalism on Human Values in

Tejo's Every Day is for The Thief

Introduction

Every Day is for The Thief is a novel that follows an unnamed protagonist who is a Nigerian writer living in New York as he visits his birth country Nigeria after more than a decade long absence, it delves into his personal experiences formed by both his life in the USA and his early life in Nigeria and draws contrast between the state of development and society of the USA and Nigeria, comparing establishments, education, ways of living and governments. The writing style and story employs both non-fiction and fictional elements as the protagonist's narration and description mingles with the author's own voice.

Within this novel, the main character shares his judgement as we delve into his unspoken thoughts about various facets of his home country. His narration interspersed with memory and nostalgia that touches on society, economy and psyche, as well as history enables the novel to connect them together and emphasise the role of economy on his people's morals and values. This chapter will delve into the different values affected by capitalism within the characters of the novel and shed light on the interconnection between society, economy and individual values.

I. Widespread Corruption and lack of integrity

Corruption in the upper and lower echelons of society is very prevalent in the society the narrator describes. It is a symptom of a greater insidious problem stemming from the capitalist economy and the governing system based on said economy. From the beginning of the novel, as

we follow the protagonist through Nigeria, we vicariously experience this corruption as he goes to the consulate to renew his passport where he finds that in order to do that in the expected timely manner, he had to bribe the staff just for them to follow procedure as a man sitting next to him explained: “-It should normally. But it doesn't. Or I should say, it does, but only if you pay the fee for expediting it. That's a fifty-five-dollar money order . . . of course, the expediting fee is unofficial. They're crooks you see.” (08)

Again, on the protagonist's way home he sees two police officers fighting and his aunt Folake explains that the two policemen to allow them through and cannot do so on the same road as it would create angry drivers and loss of bribes. This corruption is further emphasised with the narrator's remark in this passage: “And how much of the government's money, I wonder, was siphoned off by the contractor who landed the contract for those billboards?” (13). This passage was followed by the description of another scene of corruption, where drivers commonly bribe officers with half the required payment just to bypass getting a ticket from a toll gate. “I encounter three clear instances of official corruption within forty-five minutes of leaving the airport.” This comment made after those encounters highlights the immediate and numerous experiences of corruption and really show the narrator's incredulity and exposes the helplessness of the situation. And with the glaring contrast between the protagonist's experiences in New York and Lagos, the corruption is even more shocking to him. It puts into perspective the gravity of it and how emotionally invested he is in contrast to the nonchalance of his aunt.

The stark difference in reactions between his own aunt and himself marks the divide in view between those living in Nigeria and those living outside of it. The fact that the narrator is an immigrant and almost a stranger after the long years away from his country is made apparent by

his culture shock. The culture he experienced in New York reshaped or perhaps allowed his own morals to emerge in opposition to the one he left in Nigeria. His aunt represents the moral views and cultural values in Nigeria that rendered corruption a normal facet of life, while he represents opposite views to it as evidenced by his continuous shock and incredulity in contrast to his aunt's apathy. This falls in line with the psycho-analytical concept of the super ego, the unconscious part of our mind that contains morals and values. It is shaped by the culture and society of an individual, and is otherwise known as a conscience. The narrator's long years away removed any familiarity with such blatant and widespread corruption and prevented the normalisation of it within his super ego unlike his aunt and the countless other Nigerians who did not have the benefit of that distance and exposure to another way of being.

This has come about as a result of the highly capitalist economic system adopted by Nigeria and the consequent severe economic disparities that forced many to rely on theft or bribery. The crimes of the poor class combined with the lazy wealth of the upper classes who endorse bribery by paying without argument for the sake of convenience. The capitalist principle of making profit through any means necessary and the society's acceptance of it creates a disregard to integrity and morals. And as society is the entity that shapes the social values that form the superego, our conscience and moral compass, its acceptance of immoral practices has catastrophic results.

II. The Normalization of Greed in Tejo's Work

The author portrays the unchecked greed among the populace as a result of economic pressure on the poor and the corruption of the rich and powerful, he narrates a scene in which the protagonist is accosted by an official on his way out of the airport to ask him for money simply because he guessed he was a student in the USA and as a result rich in dollars "What have you brought me for Christmas? Because you know, they spend dollars in New York." (11). The moment the official learned the main character was American, his first thought was immediately about the money he could get from him.

As the protagonist moves through Nigeria, several examples of greed are revealed through his encounters and commentary: "Tafa Balogun's stolen billions deprived many policemen of their livelihood, and this is part, though not all, of the reason they in their turn extort drivers." (15). He reveals the greed of a high-ranking government official and connects it to the corruption of policemen as well. The greed in Nigeria is so rampant that it has become an accepted fact of life.

"Yet, the complaint that most people have is not that Balogun stole money. That a high-ranking government official would embezzle public funds is a given. What annoys people is that he stole so much so quickly." (15). What is really worth noting here is the nature of the people's outrage not being over the theft itself but the extreme amount stolen in a short time, we see here the erosion of morality and integrity whereby even theft can be forgiven if done in moderation.

The products most popular with the masses say a lot about what their consumers value. And as the protagonist enters a bookshop, he notes that the most common books available were ones connected

to making money. "The titles of the books are reiterations of a few themes: how to make money quickly..." (82).

The books are symbolic of the very common interest of the readers, the common demand. This example is not unreasonable as many Nigerians are in need of money with very limited avenues for making it under their economy, but the fact that this is the focus of the readers does not just reflect the rampant poverty but the constant pursuit of money above other things, leading to greed. The shop owner capitalises on the readers need for money and chooses greed as a means of attracting buyers. Following in the traditions of capitalism and fostering greed for the quickest and easiest profit.

Any quick illegal means of acquiring money are used so often they become acceptable and unnoticeable as clearly stated: "For many Nigerians, the giving and receiving of bribes, tips, extortion money, or alms—the categories are fluid—is not thought of in moral terms. It is seen either as a mild irritant or as an opportunity. It is a way of getting things done, neither more nor less than what money is there for." This passage is evidence of the common immoral ways used to gain wealth and how normal greed has become and how a societal blight and immoral practice became acceptable part of society.

Under Capitalism, the focus is on making the maximum profit from institutions, therefore most efforts for development are poured into money making institutions. Consequently, some sectors end up better developed than others. "We have good banks and bad hospitals." (89). This passage is a simple observation with a world of meaning. The banks where money is stored and profit is gained, through its various lending services and interests, in comparison to hospitals whose primary function is not to make maximum profit. The sector whose main purpose is to

make profit is well appointed while the sector meant for social services is poorly maintained because of its lower profits. Money is always the priority and greed is at the centre of this.

Another stark example of putting funding and care into profit generating establishments, while neglecting those that do not generate profit, is noted by the main character: "The museum sits in a less choked section of Onikan . . . across street from the vibrant headquarters of the Musical Society of Nigeria . . . The museum has no share in the glamour of these buildings." (50). It is as this quote directly explains, it is like there is awareness that a museum is important, but not enough incentive to actually care for it. "It is as though there is the idea that a national museum is a good thing to have, but no one has the interest or ability to present it properly." (56).

The contrast of the glamour of the Musical society headquarters against the museum's lack of it and the additional remark on the state of the museum and its presentation, from its appearance to its contents, and the limited selection and the quality of the staff show how little care is put into the public institutions and establishments whose focus is not making money.

What this reflects is the societal neglect of cultural heritage and the focus on the pursuit of pleasure in the musical sector. While neglecting the pursuit for the fulfilment of the societal and individual need for the representation of the historical and cultural story of a nation. The pursuit of money making and entertainment is another way of pursuing pleasure in accordance to Sigmund Freud's pleasure principle: "The programme of becoming happy, which the pleasure principle imposes on us, cannot be fulfilled; yet we must not -- indeed, we cannot -- give up our efforts to bring it nearer to fulfilment by some means or other." (83). It is in a way a rejection of unpleasant reality through means of enjoying the arts.

III. Nigeria as Patronage of Hierarchical Society and Inequality

The rampant corruption and disconnection of the wealthy classes from the rest of the populace rendered the Nigerian society almost entirely dependent on bribes to function, as legal procedures are ignored for convenience's sake. In addition, the apathy of the middle and upper classes to the bribery and corruption present everywhere simply because they can and have the money to pay worsens the problem. The fact that money is required for every legal procedure and everyday need does not just spread corruption and destroy the systems governing the country, but widens the chasm between classes as well.

The biggest examples of the illegal monetisation of everything are articulated by the main character himself. Ranging from paying for the unofficial parking agent, paying policemen that stop drivers at night for no legal reason and paying the customs agent for bringing in imported goods: "Fifty naira for the man who helps you back out from a parking spot, two hundred naira for the police officer who stops you for no good reason in the dead of night, ten thousand for the clearing agent who helps bring your imported crate through customs." (14). This makes the system unusable without money, creating barriers for the poorer classes who do not have the money needed to make the system run. The narrator's commentary provides more insight on these issues "Money, dished out in quantities fitting the context, is a social lubricant here. It eases passage even as it maintains hierarchies." (14). It is important to note that the way it maintains hierarchies is that the Nigerian life has become so dependent on this endless need for money in every situation including simple parking can only be used by those with abundant money. Anyone without the wealth to do so is barred from participation in society and will remain perpetually poor under these

circumstances. And adding to that, the cost of living, education, transportation and subpar free medical care or unaffordable private medical healthcare, further intensifies economic disparities.

The result of the economic disparities is seen in the case of the woman who could not even afford transportation and had to ask the main character for money in order to afford it. "a thin woman in buba and iro approaches us and says she wants some money for transportation to get home... she is a part of what lies behind the gleaming merchant banks, the posh eateries, the luxury cars. (13).

Additional signs of extreme poverty are the children standing in line to get water as the government did not provide water where they lived, instead, they had to pay for it. The poor classes without access to abundant money must rely on a system that does not function without. They are forced to pay for a very basic resource, the water they require to live is under the control of a corrupt government whose absence forced them to rely on a patron from the wealthy class who is only after his own profit.

Another aspect of hierarchisation after the monetisation of basic needs is unsurprisingly the restriction of higher artistic needs illustrated by the fact that the Institute for music being so expensive, creating even more of barrier to fostering artistic expression and promoting culture among common Nigerians. In chapter twenty-three, the narrator reveals that several plane crashes occurred in Nigeria in different cities, he explains that the reason behind it is lack of proper maintenance and lack of respect for proper procedures and safety laws, simply because it costs money to do so and so not investing any money in safety was the result, and so it is another indirect form of patronage, greed and corruption stemming from the lack of development and the influence of capitalism on morality and values as it encourages profit and greed above morality.

What this hierarchisation also creates is not only the inequality of access to basic necessities and higher artistic needs or other. It also creates inequality in perception, since the part of us that sees the world and the people around us is shaped by the external world, our ego, is exposed to one class of people and disconnected from another. The result of that is the creation of a divide among the population, it breaks down community. In addition, this hierarchisation reduces the other into an inferior alien entity and exacerbates the already existing classism and inequality.

IV. Poverty and Rampant Crime

The society the author Teju Coles portrays in this novel is one of numerous systemic and social problems. The image he creates of this country is one based on reality and paints a grim landscape of economic disparities, extreme poverty and loss of ethics. The desperation derived from the poverty and the economic disparities inevitably resulted in the spread of crime as survival became harder and harder with lack of job opportunities and liveable wages. This systemic issue quickly becomes apparent when we learn that even the narrator's friend who is a doctor in a private hospital does not make enough to live alone, as their conversation indicates here:

Well paid?

—Not really. I mean, I live with my parents, so I can manage. But it's not great.

—What are we talking, a hundred?

—More like seventy.

I whistle. Seventy thousand naira a month, for a doctor in a private hospital. I hadn't expected it to be so little. That comes to five hundred dollars a month, a pittance. (64) A symptom of these poor wages among many is the Yahoo boys, as shown in this passage: "The words I see him type,

“transfer,” “dear friend,” “deposited into your account forthwith,” present incontrovertible evidence: he is composing a 419 letter. I have stumbled onto the origin of the world-famous digital flotsam.” (20). The 419 is the section of the Nigerian criminal code it breaks.

The low wages and high living costs impact many, especially police officers, leading even agents of the law into breaking it and committing the crime of taking and asking for bribes as shown by this passage:

Tafa Balogun's stolen billions deprived many policemen of their livelihood, and this is part, though not all, of the reason they in their turn extort drivers... most police officers earn between ten and fifteen thousand naira a month. They cannot quite survive on such salaries, which amount to less than one hundred dollars. A friend of my uncle's, an immigration officer, was once transferred out of state and to a remote area of the country. His refusal to take bribes was affecting his colleagues' earnings and, by extension, their ability to provide for their families. (15)

The narrator shares his apt observation. When an individual is forced into a constant state of survival, they eventually use any means necessary to survive. As the salaries of most police officers are already insufficient, the loss of salaries because of corruption pushes the affected over the limit and leads to committing crimes as a means to survive.

One of the aspects of society that resulted from a failing economy and failing ethics is the rapid spread of internet-based crime, in other words, internet scams or as they are introduced by the protagonist, the 419. Whereby unemployed Nigerians would pose as representatives of important establishments to request access to sensitive personal information involving bank accounts to steal

money from desperate gullible people. All of this is a consequence of the underdeveloped economic sectors and lack of opportunities.

As Freud's psychoanalytic theory explains, the id contains the instinctive needs and desires of our unconscious and the ego is responsible for satisfying the id by using the reality principle, that is satisfying the id while meeting the demands of the external world. When it becomes no longer possible for the ego to meet the needs of the id for life, in this case for money to live, while giving regard to what is acceptable in reality, it starts to ignore it. The ego which directs the id will no longer be able to ground itself in reality and rein in the instincts for blind satisfaction. What is not acceptable in the external world no longer has the restrictive effect on the id via the ego. The ego starts to go against what is acceptable by most. And in this regard, individuals violate both the law and the morals of society by engaging in criminal activities in order to satisfy the primal needs of the id.

V. The Lack of justice and Violence

Economic disparities are one of the causes of moral decline (Alvi, et al 48). Capitalism as an economic system is based on profit maximisation and lowering expenses. Moreover, the lack of access to means of production for most and mass employee layoffs to save expenses creates a highly competitive environment not conducive to cooperation. Which inevitably destroys empathy towards each other. The rampant inequality between classes, with a wealthy powerful few and a poor and powerless majority leads lack of justice for the crimes of the powerful, as portrayed by the corrupt inspector general of police receiving only six months of

imprisonment for stealing an estimated fourteen billion naira leads to a helplessness and rage at the failed system.

In this regard, Sigmund Freud states that when the reality is not satisfying to a person, it results in aggression and violence. This reality principle as he calls it, explains the violent reaction of the many characters of *Everyday Is for The Thief*. The reality of Nigerian life is one of a bleak lawless existence, fraught with social issues and economic failure. Repression in the face of injustice and lack of consequences for the wealthy and powerful creates explosive emotions expressed through violence towards those without the power and wealth. When a system consistently fails to deliver justice, especially against the powerful, resentment builds and eventually explodes into violence, and this passage demonstrates that.

The tire is flung around the boy. He is losing consciousness but revives with sudden panic when he is doused with petrol. From the distance, two traffic officers, the ones they call Yellow Fever, watch. The splashing liquid is lighter than water, it is fragrant, it drips off him, beads in his woolly hair. He glistens. The begging stops. He stops begging and he is not yet lit. The whites of his eyes are bright as lamps. And then only the last thing, which is soon supplied. The fire catches with a loud gust, and the crowd gasps and inches back. The boy dances furiously but, hemmed down by the tire, quickly goes prone, and still. (43)

With how horrific the punishment meted out was, it is clear that the violent act that took place in that passage was not truly a response to the boy's theft, but a reaction to the overall lack of justice. The passage where the narrator speaks of the mere six months of prison for the theft of billions betrays a trend of barely applied legal punishments to the wealthy's grave crimes.

The disproportionate severity of the punishment compared to the crime is a one symptom of a failure of the justice system to apprehend the criminals in power. The boy in question was a mere scapegoat, and the violence was the outlet for the rage of the masse. This quote is one more example of the violence resulting from built resentment in Nigeria. “Home invasions were extremely common in Lagos in the 1990s, and they still happen, though less frequently. My own family had two encounters with armed robbers.” (34)

The pent-up anger of the people manifests as violence at a moment's notice even in minor circumstances even when there is no true anger: “I witness a collision between two cars. Immediately, both drivers shut off their engines, jump out of their vehicles, and start beating each other up. They fight fiercely but without malice,” (46). These additional quoted passages above testify to the common violence in Nigerian life, and not as a response to the situations in which they take place, but rather it is a symptom of a much bigger problem. There is a major instability in Nigeria that introduces its own problems: “...considering the thousand natural shocks to which the average Nigerian is subject—the police, the armed robbers, the public officials, the government, the total absence of social services, the poor distribution of amenities—the environment is anything but tranquil.” (47)

As testified by this passage, the plethora of problems in Nigeria are not conducive to a stable Environment. The many problems, unsatisfied survival needs and lack of justice creates frustration and anger. As a result of the powerlessness of the populace to confront these issues, all the suppressed frustrations eventually explode into rage and violence at petty things, the only things the people have some power over.

VI. The Death of Empathy

The part of our mind responsible for conscience according to Freud is the superego, an unconscious part of our mind formed by internalising parental and social values, it is thus directly affected by the society and its values. The official inquiries into the Nigeria crashes reveal that many of the private airlines use old planes. Some of these aircraft have been in service for over thirty years. They are *tokunbo* planes, bought after they had been discarded by European carriers. This is a recipe for disaster in Nigeria's poor-maintenance culture.

Another serious part of this problem is corruption. The aviation authority failed to enforce a recommendation that all planes older than twenty-two years be removed from service. Had the recommendation been followed, the recent disasters might have been averted. As it stands, there is little doubt that substantial bribes have changed hands to keep the old planes flying. (98)

Although the primary cause of the plane crashes is corruption and mismanagement, another important contributing factor is the absence of empathy. The lack of care for the human lives that had been or will be lost, the lack of consideration for the pain of loss and the little value given for people's lives is a result of this lack of empathy. Money is given precedence over human life, something that all those involved with the Nigerian airlines is guilty of. "I see Aunty Arinola, Uncle Tunde's older sister, whose husband collapsed at a market in Benin City, his corpse ignored by the public for hours" (36)

Another instance of absence of empathy in the novel is the passersby's complete disregard for even the corpse of a man. The people's hearts have been hardened by individual struggles and collective societal woes. A classist hierarchical individualist society combined with the lack of social systems and economic stagnation and a capitalist mode of production that enriches the few wealthy at the expense of the already poor majority. Such a reality can only worsen the hyper individualism and disconnection from others and lead to the death of empathy.

When the needs and instincts of the id remain unsatisfied for so long, especially when those neglected needs must be fulfilled to survive, the ego becomes overwhelmed by the id. And as result of the difficulty of using the acceptable means of satisfaction in the external world, the ego no longer controls the id in accordance to the reality principle, and self-interest takes precedence and eventually the empathy inherent in humans is weakened and forgotten.

Conclusion

This chapter shows how the economy of Nigeria and its capitalist nature inevitably affects the government, investment of money and effort, the decrepit state of cultural and social establishments in contrasts to those that generate money, the theft of generals and government officials, the lack of water in certain areas accessed only via payment, the rampant bribery as a result of corruption of the higher ups depriving policemen of salaries leading them to get bribes, the wealthier classes using money to facilitate life immorally and illegally without care for integrity, and it shows the apathy and cruelty of people in delivering savage justice by burning a child alive, the neglected museum, the lack on intellectual pursuits and widespread ignorance.

Chapter Three

*capitalism and Identity Moulding in Every
Day is for The Thief*

Chapter Three Capitalism and Identity Moulding in *Every Day is for The Thief*

Introduction

Capitalism can affect people's perception of themselves and the way they view the world around them. Teju Cole is among the writers to give a focus on economy in their novels, as he the events of his novel take place in a real country, Nigeria, in *Every Day is for The Thief*. His novel shows the effect Capitalism has on the structure of society and value of the individuals comprising it. Through his descriptions and narration, the author Teju Cole reveals how the identity of the novel's characters came to be formed. His descriptions also implicitly show the different factors that contributed to its development, from the environment, family, society, and socioeconomic status.

In the novel we see the different ways in which the identities of the characters are affected by the economic structure and the values of the Nigerian capitalist society. By using Sigmund Freud's theory of personality and the literary Psychoanalytical theory based on it, the effects of capitalism on the novel's characters' identity can be derived.

I. The General Definition of Identity

Identity encompasses the many relationships people grow and experience, such as their identity as a child, as a friend, as a partner, and as a parent. It also includes external characteristics over which a person has little or no control, like height, race, or socioeconomic

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class. Identity also includes political opinions, moral attitudes, and religious beliefs, all of which guide the choices people make every day.

People who give great importance to the impression they make, or who feel a core aspect of themselves, such as gender or cultural identity, is prevented from being expressed, can struggle acutely with their identity. Reflecting on the disconnection between whom a person is and whom someone wants to be can be a very powerful instigator of change. Identity encompasses the values people hold, which dictate the choices individuals make on a daily basis. An identity can contain several roles in society such as a parent, worker and citizen. And each of these role holds meaning to a person and carries expectations that are internalized into an individual's own identity. Identity never stops evolving and continues to change and develop over the course of one's life. The formation of identity involves three crucial aspects: uncovering and developing one's potential, deciding on one's purpose in life, and searching for opportunities to exercise apply and fulfil that potential and purpose. Identity is also shaped by parents' morals, societal values and peers from childhood to adulthood and beyond.

II. Economic disparities and Social Class's Effect on The Identity of Nigerian Labourers

Capitalism as an economic system does not distribute wealth equally. As a result, wage disparities are have become the rule not the exception. Consequently, the resulting

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wealth gap creates social classes. Social class is a factor among many that affects the way a person sees himself and shapes a part of identity.

At the end of the novel, the narrator describes a scene where implicit signs of the existence of a social divide between the poor working-class people and the upper classes can be seen. Social class impacts the way individuals perceive themselves and others around them. And since the way individuals perceive themselves contributes to their identity formation, social class, which shapes people's perception of themselves, impacts identity.

There are no cars parked on the narrow street, just one or two motorbikes. But there is a lot of activity. Men, bare-chested or in white singlets, work wood... There is a dignity about this little street, with its open sewers and rusted roofs. Nothing is preached here. Its inhabitants simply serve life by securing good passage for the dead, their intricate work seen for a moment and then hidden for all time. It is an uncanny place, this dockyard of Charon's, but it also has an enlivening purity. Enlivening, but not joyful exactly. (117) . The language used to describe such a scene gives a clear image of how the protagonist sees himself, his country and his people. There is a sense of wonder and surprise in the description.

The lack of cars contrasts with the rest of Nigeria and denotes the poverty of the place and its inhabitants. The mention of the sewers and rust lends an image of disrepair and lack of maintenance and care. The dignity given to this street by the narrator is connected to the residents and their state of being. We can glean their temperament and identity from the work they do. The poor state of their street is the sign of their low social class. The work they do shapes who they are, the activity and dignity perceived by the narrator emanates from them.

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The activeness of the workers is the opposite to the idleness found in the rest of the country; the work is intense physical labour. The state of the place is the opposite of the rest of Nigeria. There is no preaching only action. These qualities that identify the residents are a contrast to what the narrator observed in the rest of Nigeria. The identity of this lower social class is so visible in the passage, especially in the presence of the residents. This additional quote clarifies the existence of the social divide. It also acknowledges the difference between the Nigeria the main character is accustomed to and the Nigeria he saw in that street. “This is the street to which the people of old Lagos, right across the social classes, come when someone dies.” (117). This place is almost disconnected from the rest of Nigeria. The social divide is so stark; it must be crossed in order to reach the street and only in dire occasions.

In the street where the narrator saw the labourers, there can be seen a clear distinction from the rest of the Nigeria the protagonist is familiar with. The activity he describes and the humble appearance of everything alone can create a different micro society. The superego that internalises morality from its environment is as result shaped by this micro society created away from old Nigeria. The ego that relies on the external reality to satisfy the mind’s impulses is also governed by a different set of acceptable behaviours in this street, thus creating a distinct identity from the rest of the wealthier populace of Nigeria.

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III. Materialism and Peer Respect in The Yahoo Boys

Materialism is one consequence of most capitalist societies. The focus on profit and moneymaking inevitably requires excessive production and consumption. This abundance of products lead to over consumption and materialism. Materialism in this context is the placing of value on the acquisition of material possessions. In many societies, particularly the capitalist ones, the material objects owned by people are given much importance. People pass judgements and make assumptions on others based on appearance and material possessions. Material objects affect the perceptions of individuals, both the ones making assumptions and the ones being perceived and judged. In addition, the selection of which possessions to show is deeply rooted in the values of an individual and the identity they wish to project. The obsession with appearing wealthy and sophisticated through the objects owned is a key feature of materialism. As a consequence, the materialism becomes part of one's identity.

In *Every Day is for The Thief*, materialism is clearly demonstrated by some of the characters in the novel. "For most of the boys, the goal is to get cash so they can live large and impress their mates on campus." (21). This short quote explains how some of the boys scam foreigners online to get money. Yet they do not do so for their livelihoods, rather for materialist reasons. They want to appear wealthy and boast in front of their peers. They have a desire to gain the admiration of their peers in a bid to gain a place of respect among them, to belong.

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The boys' identities are fragile and still developing leading them to seek the easiest and most satisfying ways to fit in due to their insecurity about themselves and their place in society. They have yet to find a group in which they could truly belong. The weak identities of these characters are hidden by their material possessions. And despite their efforts to project a false façade of confidence and financial security, their very materialism betrays them. The materialistic need to live large and appear well off among these Yahoo Boys is rooted in the fragility of their identity and need to be seen and admired. The parts of their mind, the id, the ego and the super ego have all internalised this materialism from the society they live in.

The id driven by impulses seeks immediate satisfaction and, in this case, acquiring material possessions is what the id desires. And in so doing it leads to prioritising material possession over almost anything else to the point of committing a crime. In a materialistic culture, the ego while operating on the reality principle of satisfying the id's impulses within the constraints of the external reality will prioritise material possessions as a means of achieving respect and security.

The Superego or the conscience, takes part in identifying with materialistic desires by internalising the morals and values of the society it is surrounded by. Which means that if the society is materialistic and equates material wealth with happiness the superego will also equate it with happiness and as consequence will focus on possessions.

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IV. Pursuing Success and Status in The Case of the Law Clerk

In a capitalist economy whose focus is profit, success become tied to it. Therefore, the identity of the individuals residing within this environment becomes intertwined with the accumulation of wealth and the pursuit of its advantages. Status holds significant value among these benefits, making anything associated with it crucial. In this specific scenario, success is directly linked to wealth and merit. Consequently, the aspiration for social advancement and the longing to bridge the class divide are connected to the perception of success. The yearning for status stems from a hierarchical society dominated by wealthy and prominent individuals. Therefore, one's class status plays a vital role in their identity, as the attainment of status facilitates life and aids in earning the society's esteem and recognition. An illustrative instance of this pursuit and ambition for social elevation is the young man aiming to establish a connection with the protagonist. He pauses and searches my face, still smiling. Then he goes on:

—Actually I want to know you. I mean, actually, to have us know each other, you know. Maybe one day, by knowing you, I can have a chance to go to America. To know each other, actually, just as friends. He reminds me of Leonard Bast in *Howards End*. The acute awareness of a social gap and the hope, yet, that the gap can be bridged by enthusiasm and application. (110)

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The law clerk as the he calls himself is eager and almost desperate to climb the social ladder, to improve his position, He hopes to accomplish that by establishing contacts with someone in the position he desires. There is admiration that transcends the pages in the way of his nervous speech and almost babbling. Furthermore, the comparison to Leonard Bast in *Howards End* gives further insight into who he is as a character. As the character Leonard Bast from the novel *Howards End* was a hopeful low paid clerk too, with a desire to improve his life. The hints that can be seen from his identity in the novel, paint an idealist exploited man who wishes to better his position in life and cross the distance between classes.

A Freudian analysis of the reasons behind seeking success and status shows that since personality and identity are formed by parents and society, it stands to reason that a society shaped by classism and wage inequality will influence individuals into centring their identity on their class. The upper classes are more inclined to take pride and define themselves in relation to their high status. The value placed on a higher status by the wealthy eventually makes its way to the other classes and society as a whole. Adding to that the structure of the government and the economy built on exchanging bribes for convenience makes it nearly impossible for anyone without wealth to live in it. As a result, any who are born into lower classes without the advantage of abundant money to seek to climb the social ladder and be seen as one of people with status to gain respect. All of these external factors are thus internalised and in turn shape identity and thus link it to social class, and any wishing for respect will desire to identify with the higher classes.

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V. Alienation and Disconnection in *Every Day is for The Thief*

Alienation is a state of separation from the environment. Within a capitalist economy, the structure of labour and production forces the labourer to work for survival and not his essential being. The worker does not work for himself, so he does not belong to himself and he does not develop his body and mind freely. As a result, the labourer does not feel himself in his work, creating unhappiness and a loss of self. The alienation of the working individual does not stop here, it alienates the individual from others and the environment he lives in. These alienated individuals do not find the space to expend energy on personal life. And as all activity centres around his labour, he eventually becomes estranged from himself. The resulting estrangement from the self negatively impacts identity and belonging. Alienation from self and others affects a person's sense of belonging to society, it creates a disconnection and an identity crisis. When belonging ceases, the sense of self is destabilised as being part of a group shapes how one views himself.

The alienation and disconnection from an environment are embodied by one of the characters in the novel *Every Day is for The Thief* in this particular passage:

I take out my camera and capture an image.

—Is not allowed!

—Excuse me?

—Is not allowed. Forbidden. No photo.

She points at the offending contraption, flaps a hand at it, and fixes me with a withering stare.

Her tone is acidic. But the voice changes back immediately as she picks up the verse where

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she left off and resumes sweetly singing the glories of her Lord. Her disconnection from the environment is absolute. A victorious Christian among the idols. (52)

In this passage, the protagonist is visiting a museum and as he takes a picture with his camera, the employee who was singing suddenly warns him not to do so and immediately goes back to singing her verses. This employee's level of disconnection from her surroundings is apparent from her immediate return to her song, she rejects her reality in a way. Although she does perform her job by warning the narrator about the rules, she does it brusquely and immediately returns to her song. She retreats into her singing to avoid the world around her; she is not herself at her place of work and the many capitalist problems in her society referenced by the author contribute to it.

Her abrupt change in tone and intensity of her devotion to her faith in the wrong place and time suggests an inner conflict and disconnect from herself. The isolation this character faces is self-imposed and is a symptom of her disconnection from the broader society as the use of the word 'idols' suggests a religious clash with others.

The explanation for how such a desire for disconnection is formed, can be attained through the Reality Principle of the Freudian Psychoanalysis. The Reality principle states that the ego always attempts to satisfy the impulses and unregulated instincts of the id with respect to the external reality, in order to avoid harm to others and to itself. The ego typically manages the id within what is realistic and accepted in the external world. Yet, when the reality is unsatisfying to the individual and it is no longer possible to satisfy the id within reason, the ego loses control over impulses and the id goes against reality leading to atypical

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and unacceptable behaviours. The severity of the behaviours varies. And in the case of the museum employee here, the atypical behaviour is her disconnection from the world around her and her unprofessional acts just to distance herself from her unpleasant reality.

VI. The Retrospections of Globalisation and its Ramifications on Identity Formation

Globalisation encompasses a variety of economic, cultural, social and political changes that shaped the world over the past five decades. As a result of the revolution in information and technology and the shrinkage of geographical and political borders in a constantly growing international exchange of goods and services, cultures and identities are becoming less distinct. Globalisation homogenises and consolidates the different consumer tastes and regional productions into one big global capitalist market. In addition to the advancement in communication technologies, colonisation is another factor in the expansion of globalisation (Guttal 525).

The quest for resources and markets for the growth of capitalist colonial powers introduced capitalism as a common economic system to colonised nations and created a global market. Furthermore, the principle of constant economic growth and profit maximisation in capitalism has and will lead to impacting what cultural elements are to be incorporated into the global market on the basis of selecting only the most profitable. This selectiveness has a great impact on regional and cultural identities around the world.

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In *Every Day is for The Thief*, though the referencing of globalisation is implicit, its presence is noted through the internal commentary of the main character. Two examples of selective cultural globalisation on the basis of profit can be seen in two passages. This quote exemplifies the selective globalisation of culture. “The creative energies so sorely lacking in the National Museum seem to have been vested here. And clearly, wealthy people are interested in what happens at MUSON [a musical institute]” (58). The fact that MUSON which generates profit is so well appointed, unlike the museum which is not profit based, is further proof of the profit-based selectiveness. “The proliferation of new eateries designed on the American fast-food model surprises me. When I left in the early nineties there was just one, Mr. Bigg’s. Now there are several, many of them operating on the franchise system...” (106). In the second quote, the same profit-based selectiveness is applied. It can be seen in the fact that the profit generating eateries are well appointed and not only that, but the American based model is a sign of globalisation.

In this passage below, the effect globalisation can have on an individual, his desires and by extension his identity, can be seen through the thoughts of the protagonist:

And it is vital, at the same time, to have a meaningful forum for interacting with the world. So that Molière’s work can appear onstage in Lagos, as Soyinka’s appears in London. So that what people in one part of the world think of as uniquely theirs takes its rightful place as a part of universal culture.” (62)

The main character expresses his desire to connect with the world an exchange cultures, productions and talents and create a universal heritage. He wishes for a global identity shared

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across the world. The narrator wants to identify with the world, to no longer be disconnected. The narrator does not see himself as a part of one culture and one nation, he sees himself as worldly, as a cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitanism according to Ulrich Becker is the proliferation and exchange of multiple cultures around the world, including literary, political and philosophical productions. When analysing the protagonist of the novel according to Beck's writings about cosmopolitanism, the protagonist's cosmopolitanism becomes clear from his global cultural references in this passage: "I see music by Ali Farka Touré, by Salif Keïta. There are books by Philip Roth, Penelope Fitzgerald, and, as I had hoped, Michael Ondaatje." All of the books, the music and the narrator's thoughts on universal culture in the aforementioned quote from page 62 show a clear cosmopolitan spirit. It is an aspect of his identity that is very much not confined to one place, it is instead, global.

As all humans the identity of the protagonist was shaped by the internalised moral teachings of his parents, the social values of the society he has lived in and his personal experiences. Although the narrator grew up in Nigeria and was shaped by its social values away from the effect of globalisation, the formation of his identity did not stop there. In the novel we learn that he moved to the USA for a decade before going back to Nigeria, during that time he was exposed to the globalised and western culture of the US. This can be seen in his own inner musings in this passage: "...as familiar as my own breath. But other things, less visible, have changed. I have taken into myself some of the assumptions of life in a Western democracy—certain ideas about legality, for instance, certain expectations of due process—and in that sense I have returned a stranger." This, in addition to his various literary

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and cultural references and capitalist economic explanations in the novel found in this quote further who the effect the USA had on him, “One goes to the market to participate in the world.” (40). This market is a reference to the capitalist market and the participation in the world is connected to globalisation.

Conclusion

The brief comparisons drawn by the narrator between his American life and Nigerian born identity and life experiences show the effect capitalism on the protagonist has had in his thinking and expectations. How the protagonist reexamines what he knows of Nigeria and his attitude towards it reveals the changes on his view of Nigeria and the different ways it has shaped his identity. The different characters examined in this chapter reveal the different aspects of identity shaped by their capitalist country and the impact of economy on society and individuals. Identity is complex and is subject to constant changes caused by the environment one lives in. Different people react differently to various external influences and eventually internalise the values of people around them.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

It is well known that economy has an effect on society, and so it is often that the topic of capitalism and its effects on individuals is discussed. However, the effects of capitalism on the psyche, in particular, is not a common subject. It is complex and multifaceted, it has been discussed by many theoreticians, from economists to psychologists. First, capitalism, as an economic system, underwent many changes and developments due to historical and social changes. The economic theories on capitalism are abundant, and sometimes contradictory, if not to say, subject to constant criticisms due to the adverse standpoints regarding this economical system per se and its effects on the nature of human beings, in particular. Though a lot of pioneering figures such as Karl Marx and the followers of Marxism provided critical and in-depth analyses vis-à-vis capitalism, yet studying its bearings on individuals rests tricky. It is interesting to note that the concentration on the effects of capitalism on the human's psyche came to the forefront due to the complicated and not fully understood nature of the psyche itself. The latter, however, has been extensively discussed and studied, mainly identity.

Identity itself is complex and has been studied by several psychologists, sociologists and philosophers. The theories vary among each discipline and even within one discipline; therefore, there is no accurate definition of identity. Albeit, identity is challenging and difficult to define, yet it can encompass the different sets of beliefs, experiences, memories and values that form an individual's sense of self and worth. Most importantly, the values that make part of identity refer to the human values held by an individual and society, both universal and local.

General Conclusion

The effects of capitalism on values and identities in particular are not typically tracked in literary works, especially in African literary works. Accordingly, this research sought to scrutinize the repercussions that capitalism might have people's values and the way it intersected with identity formation. The work inclined to show what an African capitalist society looks like, in the context of a Nigerian novel. *Every Day is for The Thief* by Teju Cole narrates the travels of an unnamed protagonist, as he navigates his birth city Nigeria after then years away. As this protagonist experiences Nigeria through personal observations and encounters of different characters, he provides vivid descriptions and social commentary on the state of his country and society. His narration and descriptions of the people he meets provides a fertile ground for a social and psychological analysis. It allows for a detailed analysis of individual characters; their clearly described behaviours and narrated conversations offer an accessible case study. Besides, their words reveal the values they hold and their behaviours provide a clear glimpse to their identities.

Henceforth, this research paper has found that it is possible to identify capitalist effects on the characters of a novel, and revealed the direct impact of one economic model on both value and identity. It has also shown what a capitalist African society looks like through a novel.

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Appendix

Appendix A

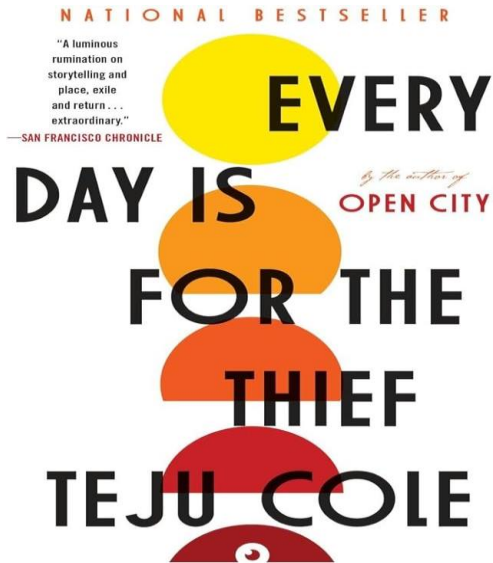
The Biography of Teju Cole



The author Teju Cole was born in the United States on the 27th of June 1975 and raised in Nigeria. He is a Nigerian-American essayist, photographer and novelist, he wrote two novels, *Tremor* and *Open City*, as well as the novella, *Every Day is for The Thief*. He studied in Kalamazoo College, the University of London, and Columbia University. Teju Cole won the PEN Hemingway Award in 2012, The Windham-Cambell Prize and many more.

Appendix B

Synopsis of *Everyday is for the Thief*



The novel's protagonist and unnamed narrator, returns to his hometown Lagos after a long absence and finds that he has as a foreigner and a local. As a young writer grappling with his voice, he navigates the dynamic city's diverse scenes. He observes the youth engaging diligently in online scams, listens to John Coltrane in the evening and admires a woman engrossed in reading Michael Ondaatje on a bus and explores the neglected National Museum and the well-appointed Musica Institute. He reconnects with old friends and families and encounters strangers in Lagos. The narrator confronts deep rooted questions about personal and national histories, reflecting on the changing landscape of Lagos and the changes within himself.

Résumé

Les sujets liés au capitalisme et à ses effets indésirables sur la psyché des individus ont été explorés par de nombreux sociologues, économistes et psychologues. De nombreuses œuvres littéraires ont dépeint les conséquences sociales du capitalisme. Dans ce contexte, Teju Cole ancre son roman *Every Day is for The Thief* dans les répercussions néfastes du capitalisme sur les individus. Bien que le roman n'aborde pas directement le capitalisme, la représentation des personnages et de leurs valeurs offre un lien fort avec le système capitaliste sous-jacent. L'auteur explore l'identité à travers le protagoniste qui est à la fois un local et un étranger, alors qu'il entreprend un voyage de redécouverte à Lagos. L'objectif de cette recherche est de mettre en lumière sur la connexion entre le capitalisme, les valeurs humaines et la formation de l'identité. Cette dissertation analyse ainsi les effets d'une économie capitaliste sur les valeurs des personnages et l'impact d'une société déstabilisée sur la construction identitaire. Pour ce faire, plusieurs approches ont été employées : l'approche psychanalytique, pour extraire les effets du capitalisme sur la psychologie des personnages. L'approche humaniste pour examiner les valeurs affectées par le capitalisme, et, l'approche historique pour contextualiser les variables du sujet. Les effets exacts du capitalisme sur les valeurs et les identités des personnages ont été révélés et clarifiés, établissant un lien entre le capitalisme, la société et la psychologie des individus. Ce travail démontre que le capitalisme influence effectivement tant les valeurs humaines que les identités, tout en révélant comment il les façonne.

Mots-clés : Capitalisme, formation de l'identité, psyché, valeurs, société.

ملخص

تمت التطرق لموضوع الرأسمالية وآثارها السلبية على نفسية الأفراد من قبل العديد من علماء الاجتماع والاقتصاد وعلماء النفس. وبناءً على ذلك، تناولت العديد من الأعمال الأدبية التأثيرات الاجتماعية للرأسمالية على المجتمع. في هذا السياق، ارتبطت رواية تيجو كول كل يوم للصوم الآثار الضارة للرأسمالية على الأفراد. وعلى الرغم من أن الرواية لا تناقش الرأسمالية بشكل صريح، إلا أن تصوير الشخصيات وقيمها يعكس ارتباطاً قوياً بالنظام الرأسمالي الكامن. يصور الكاتب مشكلة الهوية من خلال رحلة البطل في إعادة اكتشاف هويته. الهدف من هذا البحث هو التركيز على العلاقة بين الرأسمالية والقيم الإنسانية وتكوين الهوية. وبالتالي، يحلل هذا البحث التأثيرات التي يتركها اقتصاد الرأسمالية على قيم الشخصيات وتأثير المجتمع المترعز على تشكيل الهوية. من هذا المنطلق، تم استخدام عدة مناهج: المنهج التحليلي النفسي، المنهج الإنساني والمنهج التاريخي. تم استخدام المنهج التحليلي النفسي لاستخلاص تأثيرات الرأسمالية على نفسية الشخصيات، بينما تم استخدام المنهج الإنساني لمعالجة القيم التي تأثرت بالرأسمالية، وتم تبني المنهج التاريخي لإضافة خلفية وسياق للمتغيرات المتعلقة بالموضوع. لقد تم الكشف عن الآثار الدقيقة التي تركتها الرأسمالية على قيم وهويات الشخصيات وتم توضيحها بشكل أكبر، كما تم تحديد العلاقة بين الرأسمالية والمجتمع وكذا نفسية الأفراد. وفي الأخير تم التوصل الى أن الرأسمالية تؤثر بالفعل على القيم الإنسانية والهويات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرأسمالية، تشكيل الهوية، النفسية، القيم، المجتمع.