



POVERTY AND SLUM: SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION IN MEJA MWANGI'S *GOING DOWN RIVER ROAD*

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ABSTRACT

The social order experienced some difficult, unpleasant, and harmful situations in Africa. This standing of the poor relative to that of the rich, with regard to conditions and circumstances brought about inadequate housing, corrupted officials, lack of waste and garbage management to mention few but one. In this framework, Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* reflects human conflict that is centered on social immorality met in urban settings wherein some characters not only have backstreets, slums as habitat, but also live in depravity. This state of affairs affects human life and the ecosystem. This work purports to uncover the socio-economic image of postcolonial Kenya. It also denounces poverty as source of social iniquities and socio-ecological insecurity. The criticism on Ecocriticism makes explicit the environmental concerns and examines the various ways in which the social questions are related to ecology. Through the use of Marxist analysis of Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road*, it is established that there is power relationship between the rulers and the workers on the one hand and the conflict generated on the other hand. This paper results in reconsidering the status of people subsisting in poverty and reducing this social disaster. Considering that social perversion and the ecosystem corrosion are not favorable to human's welfare, it arrives at the answer to socio-ecological burden.

Key words: Ecosystem corrosion, poverty, slums, moral debasement, social perversion.

RESUME

L'ordre social a connu des situations désagréables, difficiles et néfastes en Afrique. Cette position des pauvres par rapport à celle des riches, en ce qui concerne les conditions et les circonstances, a entraîné la naissance des logements inadéquats, des fonctionnaires corrompus, un manque de gestion des déchets et des ordures, pour n'en citer qu'un. Dans ce contexte, *Going Down River Road* reflète un conflit humain centré sur la perversion sociale rencontrée en milieu urbain où certains personnages ont non seulement des ruelles, des bidonvilles comme habitat mais vivent également dans la dépravation. Cet état de fait affecte la vie humaine et les écosystèmes. Ce travail vise à découvrir l'image du Kenya postcolonial sur le plan socio-economic. Il dénonce également la pauvreté comme source d'iniquité sociales et d'insécurité socio-écologique. La critique de l'écocriticisme rend explicites les préoccupations environnementales et examine les différentes manières dont les questions sociales sont liées à l'écologie. En utilisant l'analyse marxiste de l'œuvre il est établi qu'il existe une relation de pouvoir entre les dirigeants qui vivent dans un luxe et la classe des dépossédés générant un conflit. Cet article conduit à reconsidérer le statut des indigents et à réduire de ce fléau. Considérant que la perversion sociale et la corrosion des écosystèmes ne sont pas favorables au bien-être humain, on peut déduire que ce travail sera une réponse au fardeau socio-écologique.

Mots clés : corrosion des écosystèmes, la pauvreté, bidonvilles, avilissement moral, perversion sociale.

INTRODUCTION

Social motivations of conduct involve some common realities in the new urban agglomeration. Poverty, squalor and slums are inner-city enquiries that influence

the society and its environment. Many works have dealt with the effects of slum socio-ecology and poverty in urban context. T. Alcatraz-Stevens (2015) deals with the role the environment and climate change play in disaster risk by assessing how social and ecological factors can interact. Concerning the perception of poverty and its influences on the downtrodden, Ticha Ignatius Khan (2013) focuses on fictional representations of poverty. In his work, he explores the multi-dimensional faces of poverty and its implications. He also demonstrates the important contribution of literature to help society understand and reduce this social issue. It is clear that pauperism is recurrent in the world and affects societal, political and economic dimensions of life. With regard to the above achievement, these works are a positive creativity to my study which is interested in condemning poverty as being the origin of social misdeeds and socio-ecological insecurity. Thus, people should enjoy an adequate standard of living. In this vein, Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* is set against post-colonial background and all the social forces.

This work highlights the outcome of pauperism and the use of urban slums on the ecosystem. It also looks at how the novelist denounces poverty as a source of social insecurity and moral depravity. To contribute to the analysis of this urban problem, ecocriticist theory offers an account of the connection of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment. An Ecocritical interpretation of *Going Down River Road* comes about holding the attention as it expresses considerations which are intended to illustrate how environmental problems and ecological ones function.

In the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. xviii). It provides tools that describe the environmental harm caused by human being and the negative social and ecological effect. According to Donald, (2000, p. 24) Eco-imbalance is not a specific problem. It is a global phenomenon. In the wake of global ecological crises and resultant life, threatening effects prompted literary thinkers to formulate an eco-oriented approach called "ecocriticism."

The second literary theory used in this research paper is Marxist critical approach which sheds light on a neo-colonial African society where extreme class structures have left menacing consequences in the community. It opposes two social classes with the haves on the one hand and the have-not on the other hand. "It is to legitimate power of the ruling class in society ; [...] the dominant ideas of a society are the ideas of its ruling class" (Eagleton, 1976, p. 5) Marxism is a method of socioeconomic analysis that views class relations and social conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and takes a dialectic view of social transformation. Then, there is a crucial function between literature and

historical conditions. "Marxist criticism analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it and it needs similarly, to be aware of its own historical conditions" (Ibid, p.vi) This image is demonstrative in *Going Down River Road* when the project of Ben and Ocholla on the 'Development House' failed. This controversy is due to the conduct and political corruption which subdue the welfare of any country as the profit belongs to those at the top.

The article consists of two sections. The first section studies Mwangi's conception of the difficulties of everyday life viewed as a real estate. The second section puts forward the urbanisation and slum socio-ecology which affect the ecosystem. It also highlights the indigence influence and garbage accumulation on the ecosystem and in the process of developing the social and economic resources.

1. Poverty as a Social Reality

Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Poor people live with daily deprivations such as limited access to employment opportunities and income, inadequate and insecure housing and services, violent and unhealthy environments. Furthermore, they have little or no social protection mechanism, limited access to adequate health and education opportunities. In Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* the plot evolves in a certain environment whereby we experience some harsh and challenging conditions in the slums. Poverty refers to the complete lack of the means necessary to meet basic personal needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Most of the time, this is caused by lack of education, overpopulation, ecosystem problems such as lack of rainfall and climate change. These issues can be seen throughout the novel. The depiction of the character Baby is related to the depiction of this social context. In this respect, it is stated that:

Baby stirred in his cot by the corner. He exploded into fits of coughing, choking and whooping his little chest out. Ben grimaced. If it was not coughing the child was busy at, it was running a temperature, or a diarrhoea, or something. Never an appreciable break from maladies. And as always, Baby did everything with enthusiasm, even being sick. His coughing grated on Ben's ears, the racket tickling his throat so that he felt like coughing too. [...] A gust of cold fresh air shoved the flimsy curtain aside and boldly stamped into the stale warth of the room, reverberated and settled smugly on the dirty mottled walls electric light [...] Baby coughed and began to cry. (Mwangi, 1976, p. 3)

The foregoing passage shows how this innocent individual is suffering in his environment. Both temporal and spatial indicators crystallise the stress and the frustration of the characters under study. A case offered as an exemplification is the description of the living room. "The dirty mottled wall" is a wall distinguishing different color destroying the beauty. And a "dim electric light" is that light which is unclear. All these elements and the temper of Baby 'coughing', 'choking' and 'whooping' and crying put in appearance poverty which encompasses lack of health, lack of comfortable accommodation.

Furthermore, the narrator has portrayed Ben who is living in hardship and does not have all that he needs to survive. The writer depicts his daily habits and the space to allude human's living condition. Ben had hard bread and lived near the dustbin and broken bits of things. Even the floor was littered with broken bit of soap.

Time and space depicts people's conditions and needs. The quality of the breakfast betrays the characters' condition of want. Even the position of the things around people gives a message "a chair lay on its only leg raised as though in protest." In so doing the writer is showing the relation between the status of the poor persons and their dwelling. Focussing on these issues, the writer is showing the level of hard times which individuals cannot bear. Then, it is believed that poverty is much more than not having enough money and people want to escape this situation. Regarding the issue of hardship and this indigence that influence this atmosphere, Pewissi substantiates this reality when he opines:

Analyzing Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Arko draws the reader's attention to the connection between the physical environment and the impact on the emotion that the novel loads on the readership: "The novel's environmental images of decay and entropy have almost always provided the fillip for the reading[...]. The putrefaction of the environment is an attempt to account for why corruption of the mind is commonplace, taking bribe is the norm and people are surprised when the man refuses bribe despite the abject poverty in which his family lives (Pewissi, 2017, p.63.)"

In the above quotation, the critic relates human's condition to the atmosphere in which he lives. The portrayal of a putrefied setting and the contempt of societal norms bear witness of the power misrule. This passage describes and establishes a link in both cases. The aesthetics showing the putrefaction denote the moral decay and its outcome through people's attitudes. Hence, there is a need to invite people to avoid being caught into the trap of corruption because of their necessity. Though bribery is seen as a heinousness, it is not easy to escape being fallen into this situation. In this way, people are exhibited because penury is a disease which reduces human being to baseness leading to moral, physical, or intellectual degeneracy. Then, everyone wants to escape poverty by all means. For K. Gyekye:

Poverty can lead to the degradation of the human spirit:
 In the extremes of need, a human being will
 Live in the forest [like an animal].
 Poverty is madness [i.e, the poor man acts like a mad man]
 Poverty has no friends. (Gyekye, 1996, p.104)

At this juncture, Kwami Gyekye's conception of poverty affects with lead the human spirit and reduces the individual to a beast. This idea uncovers pauperism that haunts the society. In this framework, Ben worries because of his hand-to-mouth existence. Here, there are lamentations and Ben cannot understand why some people are miserable whereas others are in happiness. It is difficult to find jobs in these conditions and sometimes they are obliged to become casual

labourers. This situation of being occasional labourer is an atypical situation that poor people dislike. Their shelter and the quality of food show how this social group is in squalor and bestial condition of life. P.D. Agossou emphasizes this point when he quotes Nwaobi in these terms:

poverty is related to [...] lack of income and assets to attain basic necessities (food, shelter, clothing and acceptable levels of health and education) ; sense of voicelessness and powerlessness in the institutions of state and society, and vulnerability to adverse shocks linked to an inability to cope with them. (Agossou, 2014, p.75)

Another aspect depicted is the happiness of the masses once they have an opportunity to eat. This joy is expressed through their attitudes and the atmosphere that these inhabitants experienced, 'the site is nice' Mwangi (1976, p.164) and the workers and labourers are glad and smile as it is agreeable.

This is what happens in the communities where the majority is in squalor. Moreover, we can see the hurry and greediness of these poor individuals in need and the environment in which they live. This position is expressed when we realize that people eat quickly and efficiently. No one speaks. It is not easy to do so through a mouthful of ugali and sukuma wiki. Excited by the smell of food the mice race one another from one end to the hut to the other. Then, the mice will feast, dance around a while and retire the night too. The relationship between human and his condition is illustrated through the changing of the environment in which the hopeless people live such as housing infection, squalor and even hungry rats.

Another characteristic described to raise people awareness on the critical situation of the social order is shown plainly through the discrediting of poor environment management, the unequal distribution of the population, the misallocation and property misappropriation. For Mwangi, these elements are entailed in the ecology matter and social flaws. To mention as a case, the narrator makes Machore utter that the rich can do whatever they want with them [the poor]. Mwangi points out pauperism as a social reality by revealing the situation and describing the poor and the rich in binary opposition. The latter own everything including the shops, houses matatus, kiosk and even roads. Their social rank makes them raise the cost of living and keep the poor weak and quietly starve to death. That is what happens, unless the masses rise up and say enough is enough in order to disregard corruption, exploitation and claim for their rights.

Arguing that poverty is a social problem, it is my belief that poverty is a source of hunger, lack of shelter. Considering that, squalor and poor nutrition strike people with diseases while they cannot afford appropriate health care services with physicians, it is obvious that this state of affairs brings about hardship in many domains. Thus, people will lack access to school and literacy. With the result that, they live in fear because of not having a job for the future and living one day at a

time. This case is a serious problem that people undergo in their daily life. This social reality is a wellspring of individual's misbehaviour. With regard to these circumstances, human being fall upon some events resulting in great loss. These occurrences commonly bring about social and economic turmoil. Palmer points to the way poverty is perceived and how it affects the ghetto dwellers' sensitivity:

The squalor, degradation, and misery are tellingly presented through case histories such as that of Wini, Ben's girlfriend who had a child at the age of 14 and was forced into prostitution to keep herself and the fatherless child, [...] but is forced to abandon her baby and elope with her boss as a way out of the urban impasse. (Palmer, 1978, p.105)

The passage above makes visible the issue of pauperism and its implication on individuals. Given the recurrent and depressing picture of the victims in a society of an unjust system, this state of affairs restricts opportunities to human's well-being. Then, the haves are wealthy and privileged status. They are contrasted to those who are poor or underprivileged.

A Marxist description of this modern Kenya shows two groups of characters in binary opposition enlightening their social classes and relationships.

The haves	Versus	The have-nots
Live in nice houses	Versus	Shanties and Dustbin
Well fed	Versus	hungry and illfed
Powerful	Versus	Powerless
Job Providers	Versus	Job seekers
Exploiters	Versus	Exploited

From the analysis of this chart, we have various interpretations of poverty and it can be seen as a complex and societal issue. The characters who are poor are job seekers, exploited, powerless, live in shanties and are illfed. Far from it, those who are rich provide job, exploit the deprived persons. They have power, live in luxurious houses and are well fed. Cases offered as exemplifications are shown in the processes of characterizing. Hence, Ben encounters people and situations. He met a gang leader who lured him into a plan to help them steal. He becomes jobless because he lost his military position. Likewise Ben, Ocholla is a laborer who struggles through his daily life in his work at 'The Development House Building' site. Wini and Susan also become "sex workers" in order to survive. This image of the female character portrayed as an object for male's pleasure is pointing out how poverty can lead to irresponsibility and moral decay. All these characters' status is against Mr Cadwell's position. He ran away with Wini and used his money to satisfy the latter's desires. Therefore, the story line of these

characters shows that Meja Mwangi is putting the people of story at the center of analysis to scrutinize how the social organization is affected.

Marxist belief in this study reveals that the idea of class is subtle, not rigid as in the former economic-employer in opposition to employee. And the ideas of people reflected the position of the class they belong to. (Pewissi, op.cit, pp.122-123). This sense of class is displayed when we realize that there were different job classifications. The highest-placed are people who did specialized jobs and the lowest ones, those who had nothing as job.

We can see that the distribution into groups is done according to some common relations or attributes. So we have the decision-makers and those who carry out these decisions. Mwangi portrays characters with specialized jobs: masons, carpenters, electricians but Ben and Ochlla stay in a place, waiting for the rulers to do as indicated. This is the poignant and pitiful situation that poor people underwent. It is on purpose that Mwangi deals with this characterisation. This way of portraying explores and elaborates on the relationship that exists between the wealthy persons and the impoverished.

It is noted that in addition to this lifestyle, the individuals who witness these situations have a given geographic space which is qualified as a shanty or a slum. A slum is a dilapidated neighborhood where many people live in a state of poverty leading to moral debasement and social perversion. This is seen through prostitution and urban criminality in the novel.

2. 2- The impact of slum and socio-ecology on the socio economic development

A slum is a highly populated urban residential area consisting mostly of closely packed, decrepit housing unit in a situation of deteriorated or incomplete infrastructure, inhabited primarily by impoverished persons. It can also be a heavily populated urban area characterized by substandard housing and squalor. Moreover, a slum can be defined as a household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area and lacks one or more of the following: durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions. Given that, the slum is an area of a city that is very poor and where the houses are dirty and in bad condition; the setting and characters analysis show up these areas which have an impact on the environment. Here, it is the case of Ben and his friend Ocholla and makeshift shanty-hut with all the squalor and degradation that it involves.

In this context, the place and space demonstrate the social reality with great effect. It is an unclean and unpleasant place which mirrors a common genuineness in the polarized setting of the possessed and downtrodden. There are many places

describing uncleanliness and impurity in Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road*. These places are Grogan Road, Capricorn Bar where Ben used to go and got himself drunk on karara. Wasteland, Eastleigh and Kariakor are city centres. It is exactly the context upon which the narrative sheds light hereafter: "Most of the paths criss-crossing the dewy grass land were scattered with human excrement" (Mwangi, 1976, p.6.) What's more, the surrounding areas Duske Street and Tusker House are littered with maize cobs and rubbish. It is also noted that Muthaiga is a rich white suburb which is depicted versus Mathare Valley a shanty with rubbish (Ibid, pp.11-14) The state being unclean, it can affect people, organisms and the environment interaction. Still in the framework of the place cleanliness and filthiness, the dwelling's outcome on the connection of the human, the society and the ecosystem in which people are imbedded is irrevocable. Kirkpatrick Sale's comment about it is quite noteworthy:

The crucial and perhaps only and all-encompassing task is to understand place, the immediate specific place where we live the kinds of soils and rocks under our feet, the source of the waters we drink, the meaning of different kinds of wind, the common insect birds, mammals and trees the particular cycles of seasons, the times to plant and harvest and forage-these are the things that are necessary to know...And the cultures of the people of the populations native to the land and of those who have grown up with it, the human social economic arrangements shaped by and adapted to the geomorphic ones in both urban and rural settings-these are the things that must be appreciated (Sale, 1991, p. 42.)

As the population grows in urban areas, some traumatic and stressful changes occur. Likewise, the increase of these crises such as high population density, poverty are an unplanned growth leading to casual settlements and slums. These settings are places affecting the ecological community. As this urbanization, urban agglomeration and the garbage accumulation function as a unit, the atmosphere aggregates the toxins degrading the nature and changing climate. In consideration of the fact that human being is part of the ecosystem, the dilapidated neighborhood where poor people live can bring about pollution influencing the ecosystem. This context leads to a challenge whereby literature becomes a wherewithal. As a result, it is written in the following terms : " Literature is very much art of such a shift helping people reimagine the places where they live and their relations to those places as well as reflecting the unique bioregional character of specific communities." (Ibid, p. 4)

The foregoing literary work unveils a solution to the problem of slum dwellers, like lack of clean water, settlement restriction layout. Subsequently, there is a room to ask out literature in order to implement the eco-region system. Hence, people should plan and provide the necessary resources that has long-term effectiveness to the dwellers. For instance, Ben, Ocholla and other characters in Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* are united. What unites the different characters

in the novel is not only their oppression but also their geographical and cultural displacements (Nagesh, 2004, p. 4.) The narrative shows that Ben and Ocholla are the mouthpiece of the displaced youths who leave their villages for a paradise in the cities. Unfortunately, they are disillusioned and live in nightmare and in the wretchedness of urban slums. As a matter of fact, literature involves the notion of ecosystem and its management. Human being belongs to the earth where there is a sphere of anxiety and vulnerability, literature sheds light on the ecosystem and the community. In this way, this novel is focused on ecological and social aspects.

Ben's neighborhood accommodates all sort of people interacting. This shows a social interaction in livelihood and habits, professions and activities of the characters. With regard to this way of living, one can affirm that the town is an area of pollution, choked air and dusty lanes. This is what Nairobi experienced in their city. Moreover, Ben notes that Good old Karara centre was hell yet warm as home. Moreover the inhabitants of Shantytown had lunch nearly everyday. Besides, the ecology, poverty has an influence on the world at large, then, they are interwoven. As poverty brings about misery it obliges the individual to lead an unwanted life. In the context where the narrative gives clues, the impact of slum is proven and one should sympathize and important questions are raised in order to keep away from this phenomenon.

In regard to the dependence of people condition and their geographical position, it is clear that poverty and joblessness go hand in hand with dirtiness, moral depravation and criminality. J. Richard affirms that:

Today, although the continent is fully under African rule, the broader emancipatory promises of decolonization are unmet. With the fiftieth anniversary of many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa on the horizon, challenges of conflict, undermining poverty, and the destructive import of malaria tuberculosis, AIDS and other maladies are mounting. (Richard, 2003, p.10)

In this critical standpoint, the problem of class brutalization and dehumanisation in postcolonial Africa is a disease and needs a treatment that relieves. This alarming situation due to pauperism and the dream of independence brings the atmosphere depicted. Moreover, these individuals experience moral depravation because they need something to survive. This is revealed through criminality and prostitution. The female image is victim of sexual discrimination and harassment, as the source of living is sex. In this perspective, E. Palmer records that:

The prostitutes are dogged by a basic insecurity and the fear of hunger; the fun-loving teenage girls who are hired out by their boyfriends are so vulnerable to the sadistic whims of drunkards, thugs, and drug-addicts. Indeed, violence is never far from the surface. It degenerates quite often into motiveless hatred and even murder. (Palmer, op.cit, pp.105-106)

With regard to Palmer's assertion on the social conduct in urban sphere, there is evidence that the hopeless masse is struggling to survive. It is the pathetic social

life that many characters underwent in the novel under study. This is a vision of life as hell, whereby the destitute population, the impoverished resident and the powerless live in slum setting, here in Nairobi's marginal spaces namely Eastleigh and Mathare Valley.

Similarly, Mwangi draws the spatio-temporal texture in order to express the impact on the individuals' attitude. In this context, the dialogue between Ben and Ocholla is illustrative:

'Ben,' Ocholla speaks up
 'Yes'
 Where are we going to sleep, Ben?'
 'I don't know,' Ben glides to a halt. 'There are your wives and the children and...I don't know what.'
 Ocholla waxes his head.
 "They are all over the place, and I want a woman tonight. Let's go to Eden, Ben. My harlots are all there. You must have a woman too, Ben.
 How is your harlot wife? Oh, I remember, she left... left the baby. Hell, let's hurry before they are picked by someone else. Those harlots are bastards.'
 They change course, take a urine-stinking lane that will conduct them to a brothel the soonest possible. (Mwangi, 1976, p. 191)

Such a situation brings about poor living standard of slum dwellers, altering the ecosystem through various ways of pollution. Mwangi shows the unpleasant image of the environment where the inhabitants enjoy themselves in spite of the bad mood. A 'brothel', a house of prostitution attended by 'harlots', this is a relationship that arouses melancholy because it is not descent and healthful behaviour. One can state that the lack of adequate job or work opportunities do not give access to a suitable place to live. Then, poverty can neither allow the fulfillment of human being nor a healthy environment. The impact of the socio-economic problems that occurred in the post colonial Kenya, especially in Nairobi inspired several writers giving rise to new type of literature called urban literature, and poverty and slum are part of these questions.

Those people who are barely able to pay for food and shelter simply cannot consider other expenses. When people are excluded from a society, when, they are not educated and when they have higher incidence of illness there are negative consequences for the community. The increased cost on the health system, pollution, injustice system and other systems that annoy those living in poverty have an impact on the economy.

Nearly all possible effects of dirty slums and pauperism on children' lives vary on different dimensions : poor infrastructures, unemployment, lack of basic services, income, education, malnutrition, violence at home and outside, child labor, diseases of all kinds transmitted by the family or through the ecosystem corrosion . The following is the unbearable atmosphere at workplace.

A white-topped tipper, Onesmus's brand new death machine, reverses to the mixer, to empty another load of sand. Ocholla's hauling bucket sighs on the way down, the thick greasy cables quivering with tons of strain. Ben leans back to smoke, reap the fruits of his bhang traffic. A man could get to like it in the construction industry. Particularly so if one has a bhang-hungry foreman who also prefers *changa* to beer. Finally Ben drops the cigarette-end to the ground below and leaves his hideout. The lifts have not been installed yet. He climbs the rough flights of stairs slowly to conserve the little energy gained from the cigarette. In the construction business one has to sometimes take a cigarette for lunch. (Mwangi, 976, p.145)

As the narrator illustrates it, the juvenile delinquency is the result of unemployment and malnutrition. As a matter of fact, Ben and Ocholla undergo all this hardship. Shivering with a load and smoking a cigarette for lunch are the appearance of those people who are in an extreme pain. With such a situation, the writer reveals the negative attitude of the people who are devoid of anything and the outcome. For instance, the Ladies, Ben and Ocholla fall in prostitution and theft. This matter of contention prevails over the economic prosperity, of people productivity, and increases crime in unsafe neighborhoods which leads to lower graduation rates and a reduced participation in the workforce. So, a decrease in human capital puts a strain on government resources and causes decreased economic output. To this end, N. McEwan (1983, p.124) acknowledges that "development in Kenya has reduced Mwangi's people to an alien kind of poverty." In fact, hard times and painful life in city bring no development to youth. Conversely, this plight leads to despair and hopelessness.

The prevalence of poverty and slums among the Nairobi inhabitant in Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* has contributed to raise people's awareness. In this connection, there is a need to break the bondage of poverty in the social and ecological scope by revisiting urban centers and workers' condition and renewing strategies. With regard to the proportion of the urban population living in slum areas, wild settlement or inadequate housing, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) UNDP, (2016, p.30) stipulates in point eleven that there is a call for ensuring the access to affordable and adequate housing and basic services for all cleaning up slum areas. In Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road*, we realize that poverty has constrained people by force to live in inadequate shelters. One can deduce that Mwangi is awakening people's consciousness to remove the poor living standards of slum dwellers. As well, "reduce the negative environmental impact of cities per inhabitant, including paying particular municipal waste management." (Ibid. p31) This can help sustain a development concept based on the safekeeping of the earth and its inhabitants.

CONCLUSION

The article has pointed out the social flaws and their impacts on the human being's fulfillment. It has unveiled the extent to which poverty brings about social evil and inadequate housing. Ecocentrism and Marxism have enlightened the

analysis in order to show an undesirable influence on the ecosystem on the one hand and the class relations, social conflict through the historical understanding for a social transformation on the other hand. Through this study, I have come up with the conclusion that Meja Mwangi has talked about poverty that put up social insecurity which has affected the environment in manifold dimensions. The end results after this evaluation, is that, the youth are denied education and job opportunities. This circumstance has led to misery and exploitation. The noteworthy torments found are lack of adequate nourishment and housing, diseases, thievery alcoholism, juvenile delinquency and the like. Furthermore, I have made known the effects of poverty and slums on the development of a society. The work has pointed out how the social position compelled the individuals to live in slums and how the latter can destroy the ecosystem.

In the end, the issues that appear in Meja Mwangi in *Going Down River Road* can be overcome. As such, the communities' hardship is an issue that requires everyone's attention. Therefore, it is important that all members of our society work together to provide the opportunities for them and reach their full potential. It enables a collaboration among people of any social rank. It is on purpose that the writer has depicted Nairobi city and other places as glittering spaces and at the same time as dirty places. An exploration of these polluted places where poor people live discloses a moody atmosphere. Subsequently, one can infer that there is a need to strengthen sustainable urbanization for all and adequately manage urban waste. Thus, citizens are invited to promote economic social and ecological links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by increasing the strength of internal and regional development.

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