



Gender Complementarity in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and *Wizard of the Crow*

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ABSTRACT

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This paper takes a critical journey into Ngugi wa Thiong'o's adoption of gender complementarity in *Petals of Blood* and *Wizard of the Crow* as one of his salient narrative technique in advocating a collective struggle of the masses of Africa towards an equitable and dignified society. The paper examines how Ngugi assign complementary roles to his female characters in assisting their male counterparts in the struggle against injustices and corruption. In doing this, the paper focuses on two major themes that are common in the two novels - corruption and protest. The method of data collection and analysis employed in this research is basically textual analysis of the two novels using the purposive sampling technique in selecting portions that supports the claims in this work. These also include excerpts from other critical works on the author. The analysis is done using Marxism as theoretical framework and concludes that Ngugi has seen the vision of hope in African youths and the combined efforts of men and women in the struggle for peace and justice.

Keywords: Gender;
Complementarity; Marxism;
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INTRODUCTION

Culture is the bedrock of development in any given society. A healthy culture is a culture of equality, free from all forms of exploitation and rooted in true tradition of the people. Talking about culture, Ngugi is quoted by David Cantalupo in *The world of Ngugi wa Thiongo* as saying that “Culture that change to the ever changing dynamics of internal relations and which maintain a balanced give and take with external relations are ones that are healthy”.(6)

The creative writer therefore concerns himself with how his target audience receives his message. Consequently, he uses his imaginative art to palliate his intentions on the surface value and thus conveniently criticizes, instructs, educates and entertains. He is a historian and artist who chronicles his people’s past as he projects into the future. Such projection does not fail to embody experiences which are already lived or ongoing in his society.

The unfolding socio-political issues in Africa have, continued to form the message in most contemporary African literary works and Ngugi is no exception. Carl Wood attests to this about Ngugi in these few words thus: “cut the Kenyan novelist, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, and he bleeds politics.”(www.runmuki.com)

As social crusaders, the power of the African writer depends on how skillful he manipulates his literary message and style to depict the society in which he finds himself. This is because the essence of literature is to effect a functional change in society. That is why Ngugi tries to re-enact the history of the Kenyan people’s historic struggle by extolling their heroic struggle and that of Africa in general in the wake of colonialism and now neo-colonial era. Paul Dorn affirms this commitment thus:

One African writer with an explicit desire to overturn and end “the whole thing” is Kenyan (Gikuyu) writer, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. Through his numerous plays, essays and novels, Ngugi has constantly positioned himself as an advocate for the ordinary peasants and workers of Kenya, and more generally, Africa (www.runmuki.com)

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history class struggle - the oppressor and the oppressed who are in constant opposition to one another, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary re-constitution of the society at large or in the common ruin of the classes. Such struggle is what one finds in almost all of Ngugi’s literary works. He gives an account of this in history, showing how each of these contending classes emerged in the decisive moment when the Kenyan people reacted to foreign invasion. Thus, the Mau-Mau struggle is seen as the culmination of the previous struggle wage by the other resistance heroes in Kenya. Therefore, one function African literature has

continued to play is that of mapping out unique political and cultural consciousness as part of a larger project of liberating the Africans from the harsh conditions and realities created by imperialism and neo-colonialism.

African novelists respond with a certain urgency to the need not only to decolonize the minds of the citizens but also to expose and condemn the subtle and indigenized forms which oppressive power has taken in the post-colonial era in Africa. This conforms to Tirop Simatei’s assertion that:

The novelist’s relevance to the society is attained through a conscious intervention in the unfolding of history; an intervention which, as a kind of artistic mission, is already over-determined by the inhuman politics of both colonial and post-colonial epoch. (10)

From the above therefore, literature is an important tool in the struggle for national liberation and in the formulation of national consciousness. However, the specific historical realities and conditions that dictate a writer’s response to such events differ from place to place. For this reason, Ngugi’s tone is certainly dictated by the collapse of the dreams of independence in Kenya, an experience that is considered as a betrayal of the masses who sacrificed their “limbs” and “blood” to see a Kenyan nation ruled by Kenyans. His reactions and criticisms are thus directed to the immediate historical forces shaping these events – the ruling class. Tirop Salman Rushdie’s *Imaginary Homelands* affirms this position thus:

Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official politician’s version of truth. (14)

Therefore, *Petals of Blood* and *Wizard of the Crow* are two novels through which Ngugi attempts to rival politicians’ version of truth.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWAORK

For the purpose of a clear understanding of Ngugi’s ideological stance in his literary achievement, this paper adopts Marxist theory that has continued to influence Ngugi’s works.

Marxism

Marxism as a social and political theory seeks to explain the course of human history and the structure of past, present, and future societies. It provides a unifying and integrating set of values for the prescription of the future. For this reason, there is a vital link between

history as observed by Andre Brink that “A literary text can never be a mere transcription of the historical document, but a re-invention of it” (143)

Literary Marxism, evaluates and interprets literary works based on the material and economic forces that shape them with regards to their origin and depiction of struggle between social classes. Prominent figures in this theory includes Karl Marx, Fredrich Engels, Terry Eagleton and others. This artistic process of re-inventing social realities from historical antecedents is heavily explored by Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* and *Wizard of the Crow* where he call on Kenyans and Africans generally to resist colonialism and neo-colonialism in all its ramifications. It is through this too that Ngugi encourages gender complementarity to fight the common enemy in Africa – the political leadership.

Meyer Howard Abrams attests to this fact that Marxist critics have “concerned themselves with the power of literary culture to intervene and to transform existing economic and political arrangements and activities” (151) in the society. Affirming this, Ngugi categorically states that:

I believe in the socialist vision. I believe that a writer must write not only to entertain people, but also to change society for the better. And as far as I am concerned, only if you are working towards a socialist vision, can you be working for the better. (23)

It is from this stand point that Ngugi strongly advocates mass protest of the working class and the oppressed peasants against corruption and dictatorship of the leaders in these two novels, even a violent protest. Thus, the themes of corruption and protest stand out clearly in the novels under review. To the Marxist, history is made by the low (peasants) in society and not by kings, heroes or generals. So the issue of protest becomes strong in Marxist oriented writings.

Many people consider women’s ‘second class’ status as an imbalance and inhuman portrayal of the feminine gender in all spheres of influence while many others believe that the ‘second best’ status is a just measure for women, that it has its roots in the Holy Bible right from creation. This second set of people base their claim on the book of Genesis:

To the woman He (God) said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrows and your conception: in pains you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. (Gen. 3:16)

To many, including women, this is where women’s present woes lie. Selden, Widdowson and Brooker affirm this in *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* that this position is “an imbalance which goes back to the old testament” and that “being dispersed among men, women have no separate history, no natural solidarity; nor have they combined as other

oppressed groups have” (126-127). The point to note here is that when God created the woman for Adam, God was creating woman as a helper because God discovered that the man He created was not cheerful and he was lonely. The moment God handed the woman to Adam, Adam became a poet to sing glories of his new found companion, love and happiness. Many critics therefore quote Genesis 3:16 out of context and this is what Ngugi attempts to put straight by always attaching his female characters to the male ones for solidarity.

Ngugi sees the importance of the African woman in the struggle to dismantle corruption, dictatorship, oppression and neo-colonialism which stands in the way of development of the African continent and other third world nations. This solidarity is seriously explored by the author

METHODOLOGY

The method of data collection and analysis employed for this research is basically textual analysis of the two novels by Ngugi wa Thiongó, using the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique is adopted because it points the reader to specific portion of the novels that buttress the arguments raised by these researchers. These include excerpts from other critical works written on Ngugi’s literary oeuvres by other literary critics.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF *PETALS OF BLOOD* AND *WIZARD OF THE CROW*

Petals of Blood

Petals of Blood opens with the arrest and detention of the four protagonists, Munira a village headmaster and fundamental Christian, Abdulla a former Mau-Mau warrior, Wanja is presented as a prostitute and now madam of a brothel and Karega, a former teacher and now a trade unionist. Three pages later, the paper “the Daily Mouthpiece” carries the headlines “Mzigo, Chui, Kimeria murdered” (*Petals*, 4). According to the paper, the three men were lured into a house in Ilmorog (by who?) where they were burnt to death.

What the paper failed to highlight is the fact that these so-called men, held as models for new Kenya were all betrayers and exploiters of their people. It was Kimeria who impregnated Wanja in her primary school days and drove her into prostitution. He also betrayed Karega’s brother (Ndiguri) as a Mau-Mau to the police. He also rapes Wanja during the Ilmorogians mass trek to the city. Chui, who once led strikes in Siriana Mission School against Europeans expelled Munira and Karega in the same school when he became principal because they participated in strikes. Mzigo acquired the right to thengeta and the building belonging to Wanja and Abdulla. Thus, forcing them out of business.

After the incidence, police begin their investigation. The four suspects Munira, Abdulla,

Karega, and Wanja are known to be involved in the fire incidence that killed the three directors. It is here that the reader is gradually led into Ngugi's controlling voice that those being questioned are not the real criminals in the society, rather, the police should go deeper into the lives of the common people to find out what is going on or risk the inverted justice which is enacted through the investigation. This point is better understood by the confrontation between the police and the people after the arrest of Karega who is Ngugi's mouthpiece in the novel.

Apart from telling a thrilling story of a crime, *Petals of Blood* shows the changing circumstances in the life of Karega twelve years after independence where the hope of meaningful independence has been frustrated. At the investigation of Karega, backed by the old Nyakinyua, a decision is reached to march to the city to meet the Member of Parliament and complain about drought and neglect in Ilmorog. The result of the mass trek instead of alleviating the people's sufferings brings more hardship than envisaged, as Ilmorog now turns into a modern city with all its associating problems. It is under this background that the enactment in P.4 of the novel signifies the end of the story.

Wizard of the Crow

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* is set in the imaginary country of the Free Republic of Aburiria with the ruler as he is popularly known down with a curious illness which has generated various rumours from the citizenry. The imaginary Free Republic of Aburiria in *Wizard of the Crow* and Ilmorog in *Petals of Blood* are microcosms of any other African country that has come under a similar corrupt and dictatorial rule like that of Imorog and Aburiria respectively.

The ruler's illness has generated a lot of rumour mongering regarding the cause of the illness. The stronger version holds that the ruler's illness is the result of a curse involving the anus of a "wronged he-goat" and hair stolen away by the ruler's barber. The second strong version has it that the illness is the handiwork of demons housed in a special chamber in the State House. All the projects especially "Marching to Heaven" aimed at giving the ruler an unequalled popularity and fame in the whole world have come to nothing. He is surrounded by political sycophants. He is just like any typical dictator who seized power with the help of some western connections. He has been in power for such a long time that he has not remembered how long his reign had been:

His rule had no beginning and no end: and judging from the facts one may well believe the claim. Children have been born and given birth to others and those others to others and so on, and his rule had survived all the generations. So that when some people heard that before him there had been a first ruler ... they would simply shake their

heads in disbelief saying, no, no those are just the tales of a day dreamer: Aburiria had never had another and would never have another ruler, 'because had not this man's reign begun before the world begun and would end after the world has ended?' (*Wizard*, .5-6)

Kamiti and Nyawira find themselves allied in opposition to the ruler's despotic quest for personal glorification at the expense of the well-being of the nation's citizens. This quest is represented by the ruler's attempt to secure a loan from the Global Bank to build the world tallest building, a monument of the ruler called "Marching to Heaven" in the midst of hunger, poverty, corruption and massive unemployment.

As it is a common thing with most African states, the streets of Aburiria are littered with garbage and a large number of beggars, an evidence of unemployment and starvation. Out of desperation to maintain himself in power, the ruler employs the services of a sorcerer, The Wizard of the Crow (Kamiti) who had before now been considered as hostile to the regime. Thus, Kamiti and Nyawira triumph in the sense that they evade with their success as a counterpoint to the beginning of a new circle of exploitation. The ruler has been succeeded by Tajirika (now known as Emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus Whitehead). Loans have also been acquired from Global Bank.

It is against this background that Ngugi advocates protests even if it is violent one. He restates this fact in an interview with Marcuson thus:

I am not a pacifist. I do not condemn violence indiscriminately. For the oppressed have no option but to use violence (31).

This stance is truly portrayed in the pages of *Wizard of the Crow*.

THE THEMES OF CORRUPTION AND PROTEST IN THE TWO NOVELS

A critical study of these two novels by Ngugi shows that his preoccupation has been complete rejection of neo-colonialism which is characterized by corruption in high places thereby alienating the poor peasants and workers from their political representatives and government in general. The sad issue of corruption has eaten deep into African polity, bringing with it underdevelopment, starvation, insecurity, self-seeking individuals as well as suspicion. This is a common phenomenon affecting most African countries. In *petals of Blood*, Ngugi gives a most comprehensive picture of what he sees as the evil that is pervasive in Kenya and Africa in general under black rule. The member of Parliament (MP), Nderi wa Riera, whose corrupt activities were barely suggested in the earlier novel appears as a real life-size character in *Petals of Blood*

continue to demonstrate his incompetence, corruption and indifference to the people's sufferings in a number of telling scenes. He converts the money he had collected from his constituency for a water project into security for loans, buying shares in companies and investing in land and other small businesses, thereby enhancing the further alienation of the poor peasants from their ancestral lands and property.

Nderi has become one of the country's wealthiest capitalist, a fitting illustration of a common phenomenon in Africa where politics is used as a stepping stone to material aggrandizement. The party in power is also subjected to the most scathing denunciation because of its corruption, thuggery, sectionalism and indifference to the people's plight.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, the level of corruption and the resultant effects of dictatorship is portrayed in the physical appearance of the streets of Aburiria. The streets are filled with beggars, refuse dumps, garbages and a fleet of unemployed youths. Ngugi puts it more comical when he states in the novel that:

tourists, beggars and prostitutes dogged one another in the streets during the day and met again in the evenings outside Seven-Star hotels as if these shrines of luxury belonged equally to the rich, the tourists, the beggars and the prostitutes, the major difference being that at night, the rich, the tourist and prostitutes stayed in while the beggar found himself out in the open, enduring rain or cold. But as soon as dawn broke, they all reconnected (34).

The above statement is what befalls a nation that is ruled by insensitive and corrupt leaders. The party forces people to swear to an oath intended to complete the dominance of a particular group of people the political class, while blinding itself to the real problems of their countries which are – poverty, starvation, inadequate housing, health and educational provisions. Ironically, the ideology that informed the Mau-Mau struggle are defeated as people wake up to the realization of what their efforts altogether have produced – disillusionment. The liberation fighters are the most degraded and exploited in independent Kenya. That is why Abdullah can express his disgust about the country in *Petals of Blood* thus:

I waited for land reforms and redistribution.
I waited for a job.
I waited for a statue of Kimathi as a memorial to the fallen
I waited. (254)

To Ngugi, the only remedy to this ugly trend is mass protest by the workers and peasant of Africa and elsewhere. In *Petals of Blood*, this protest is chronicled in the journey to the city by the Ilmorogians. It is against this background that the peasants and workers under

the leadership of the courageous Karega, backed by the old Nyakinyua leads the tradition of protest (the mass trek to the city to seek redress from their M.P) indelible in the history of Ilmorog and Kenya in general. This corresponds to Karl Marx's assertion in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* that:

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie fell feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself ... But not only has the bourgeoisie forgot the weapons that brings death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield these weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians (41)

In *Wizard of the Crow*, protest is humourously presented in the activities of Nyawira and her women of the "people's court" as they call themselves (433-437). Governed by magical realism, the novel treats the dominant theme of corrupt dictatorship in post-colonial Africa. The ruler's strategy to maintain himself in power is to plot discord among his ministers and community against community. This is clearly enhanced by the ruler's cabinet ministers and upstarts like Kanuiru who constantly plots to undo the others and win favours in the eyes of the ruler. Ngugi buttresses this in the novel thus:

The dictator's reputation for making ministers plot against minister, region rise against region, and community fights against community was now a matter of legend. He would side with one warring faction, which would rejoice at its alliance with power only to wake up one morning to find that the dictator has sided with its adversary ... (231)

This is a typical portrayal of how politics is done in post-colonial Africa, especially in countries that have come under a dictatorial regime like that of the Free Republic of Aburiria. It is from this background that Ngugi advances the theme of political resistance in the novel for which Nyawira, Kamiti, and Movement for the Voice of the People stand for.

The history of Kenya has been the history of resistance, first against the white imperialists and now against neo-colonialism. Ngugi in most of his recent novels, has continuously re-enacted this resistance and struggle against exploitation. In *Petals of Blood*, this resistance and protest is played out in the encounter between the people of Ilmorog and their M.P (Member of Parliament), Nderi Wa Riera – during the mass trek to the city to complain about the level of neglect and decay in Ilmorog:

Somebody in the crowd shouted: these are the people who are misusing our freedom; and this was greeted with a general murmur of protesting assent. Suddenly, a stone flew

and hit Nderi on the nose. This was followed by a hailstorm of orange peels, stones, sticks, anything. For a few seconds, Nderi tried to maintain his dignity and ignore the miscellaneous missiles which flew about him. Then a bit of mud hit him on the mouth. It was too late to make a dignified exit. He suddenly took to his heels ... He ran across Jeevanjee gardens towards the central police station with a few pursuing him and shouting Mshike! Mshike! Huyuu. (182)

In *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi re-creates the spirit of resistance in the calculated attempts by Nyawira's movement for the voice of the people in making sure that they disrupt any gathering organized by the ruler to glorify himself. It is illustrative of the people's fighting spirit in the face of provocations, an act which Ngugi portrays Thus:

He stopped, for suddenly near the centre of the multitude issued a bloodcurdling scream. A snake! A Snake came the cry taken up by others. Soon there was pandemonium. People shouted and shouted in every direction to escape the snake unseen by many ... The head of the secret police woke up from a stupor and whispered to the ruler. This might be the beginning of a coup d'etat and within seconds, the ruler was on his way to the State House ... (22)

Ngugi has created stereotype of Africa's brand of dictatorship in *Wizard of the Crow* from which other dictators could be viewed and from which he advocates a collective solution by people of all ages and sexes – young and old, men and women alike. This is a steady but gradual war to end dictatorship and corrupt leadership in Africa and enthrone a genuine African democracy devoid of Western dependency. This resistance is echoed in the slogan by the beggars during the ruler's birthday celebration:

Marching to Heaven is Marching to Hell.
Your Strings of Loans are Chains of Slavery.
Your Loans Are the Cause of Begging. We
Beggars Beg the End of Begging. The
March to Heaven is Led by Dangerous
Snake. This last slogan was chanted over
and over. (74)

Elsewhere in *Writers in Politics*, Ngugi himself asserts that:

A writer is always trying to persuade us view not only a certain kind of reality, but also from a certain angle of vision often, though perhaps unconsciously, on behalf of a certain class, race, or nation. (6)

Ngugi always tries to re-enact the history of the Kenyan people's struggle by extolling the heroic struggle of the Kenyans and Africans in general in the wake of colonialism and after. He feels that as the tentacles of colonial oppression still spread and exist, the down-trodden must rise to the challenges of the times. Cook and Okeninpkpe attest to this fact in *Ngugi wa Thiongo: An Exploration of his Writings* thus:

Ngugi is a man who identifies himself unequivocally with a progressive and radical line of thoughts concerning all the pressing issues of his time and who eagerly deploys every means at his disposal to further the views and policies that he advocates. His fictional and polemic writings, his activities and lifestyle reinforce this image. (266)

Ngugi is a strong advocate of violent protest by the workers and peasants who are the sole producers of the nation's wealth. He defends his preoccupation in *The Works of Ngugi wa Thiongo: Towards the Kingdom of Woman and Man* thus:

Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man. Violence to protect and preserve an unjust oppressive social order is criminal and diminishes man (8)

This violent confrontation is echoed in *Petals of Blood* between the police and the workers during Karega's arrest:

"Within a few hours, word had spread. The workers in a hostile mood marched towards the police station demanding his release. A police officer came out and spoke to them in a surprisingly conciliating manner"
"Please disband peacefully, Karega is here for routine questioning. And it is not about your last decision to take a strike action. It is about murder – murder in Ilmorog."
"Murder of the workers" somebody retorted.
"Murder of the workers' movement"
"Please, disband" appealed the officer desperately.
"Disband yourself ... disband the tyranny of foreign companies and their local black skins! Out with the exploitation of our sweat!
(4)

The preceding confrontation corresponds to Lenin's view of what a class struggle of the proletariat should be like:

The class struggle of the proletariat comprises economic struggle (struggle against individual capitalists or against individual groups of capitalist for the improvement of workers' conditions) and the

political struggle (struggle against the government for the broadening of the people's right) ... (11)

Looking at *Petals of Blood* and *Wizard of the Crow* from a Marxist point of view, it is important that a re-visitation of history be made in order to raise national consciousness especially in a society like Kenya and Africa in general where corruption, exploitation and oppression by the leaders are common phenomena. Therefore, only a mass movement of peasants and workers can usher in an equitable social order where everyone will be his brother's keeper.

GENDER COMPLEMENTARITY IN *PETALS OF BLOOD* AND *WIZARD OF THE CROW*

Even though these two novels by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o contain varied narratives, this paper only focuses primarily on the common technique of gender complementarity in the two novels. *Petals of Blood* is unique with its multiple protagonists and conflicting symbols. Simon Gikandi in *Reading the African Novel* applauds this style thus:

The most salient feature of characterization in *Petals of Blood* is no doubt Ngugi's use of a group of characters from different social backgrounds who are nevertheless, consciously presented as agents of authorial views and thus function as instrument of mediating the character of the neo-colonial state in modern Africa. (135)

In fact, after *The River Between*, Ngugi begins to focus on multiple characters to exhibit African communalism. From then on, it has been a galaxy of multiple characters in one text.

There is however, a shift from Ngugi's well known style of writing from the previous novels to magical realism in *Wizard of the Crow*. Lewis Nkosi (qtd in Cantalupo, 197), commenting on Ngugi's shift in style in *Wizard of the Crow* argues that:

Ngugi's gradual relinquishment and realist representation for the world of fairytale and daydream may provide us with yet another sign of crises afflicting the post-colonial novel in Africa, generally in its attempt over these past three decades to plot the story of corruption and exploitation under the leadership of civilian-military dictatorship ...

One unique feature of Ngugi's narrative technique is his distribution of individual and shared roles among his male and female characters. This is one major area that has clearly portrayed him as a feminist. In most of his novels, if not all, the reader finds his female characters (even though most times portrayed

symbolically in a negative way on the surface value) playing complementary and sometimes leading roles to their male counterparts. In *Petals of Blood*, one finds the old Nyakinyua and the young Wanja uniting the other three protagonists – Munira, Abdulla and Karega. Wanja's arrival in the remote village of Ilmorog from the city after a tiring life of prostitution, brings back life to the once dull village as both young and old gather around her for company. Her presence also changed the face of Abdulla's shop and bar.

Nyakinyua sharpens Karega's knowledge of the history of Ilmorog. She gives Wanja the secret of brewing real Theng'eta which she used with Abdulla that would later become an international drink in the hands of the capitalists: Chui, Mzigo and Kimeria. The exemplary old woman is appropriately called "mother of men" and she is an embodiment of the values of Ilmorog society and the custodian of its legends and history.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, this union of female and male bonding is seen in Kamiti and Nyawira. A union which started from the pursuing police, came up with the idea to frighten their pursuers. The novel derives its title from the notice being hanged on the wall to scare the policemen away. This notice will subsequently become the advertisement for "his" trade as sorcerer:

The other beggar tied the bones and rags together. He then took a felt pen from his bag and wrote on the cardboard in big letter" WARNING! THIS PROPERTY BELONGS TO A WIZARD WHOSE POWER BRINGS DOWN HAWKS AND CROWS FROM THE SKY. TOUCH THIS HOUSE AT YOUR PERIL. SGD WIZARD OF THE CROW. (77)

What started like a joke coincidentally becomes true and within a short period of time, his fame spread all over Aburiria, and even to the United States of America where he is requested, given VIP treatment to go and cure the ruler of his illness.

Even in the sorcery business, the reader finds Nyawira taking charge as the Wizard of the Crow whenever Kamiti is away. She organizes her women to disorganize any function organized by the ruler to popularize himself. Nyawira's movement for the voice of the people also help Vinjinia salvage her marriage by beating and warning Tajirika never to raise his hand against a woman again:

A new order of justice created by today's modern woman. You are now appearing before a people's court ... we are hawk-eyed justice. We float in the air, our ears wide open to the cries of women. Now it has come to our ears that you beat your wife night and day (435).

Such is the worth and value Ngugi has given his female characters in most of his novels. They control the men that matter in the society.

In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi portrays this gender complementarity in the role played by Akinyi who acts as a link between Karega in prison and the workers union:

I have been sent to you ... They sent me ... The other workers ... with a message. They are with you ... and they are ... We are planning another strike and march through Ilmorog (343).

Nyakinyua and Wanja represents two different aspects of the Kenyan woman and also by implication, two different cultural perspectives. The older woman stands for the Moribund past in every respects while Wanja, the younger woman represents the turbulent present. Each in her own way plays a significant role in the struggle which society has also been engaged in. When Nyakinyua tells the story of her past, and the past of Ilmorog, that story reflects the situation in which man and woman labour equally to protect the heritage of Gikuyu and Mumbi. She believes that until the younger generation return to the knowledge of themselves, all will not be well, hence she is always telling stories of that past to assist the youths towards that understanding. One finds this determination in her as a struggle to her last drop of blood even when others refuse to join her. She preferred to die than allow her land to be taken over by black imperialists:

Nyakinyua, the old woman, tried to fight back. She tramped from hut to hut calling on the peasants of Ilmorog to get together and fight out ... she tried to convince them that all these were one and that she would fight them. Her land would never be settled by strangers (276).

Even as she is left alone to fight the course, she chooses to fight it her own way. This is a significant portrayal of stiff resistance to the forceful seizure of lands by black stooges: "I'll go alone ... my man fought the white man. He paid it with his blood ... I'll struggle against the black oppressors alone ... alone ..." (276). It is her sacrifice that is worth remembering.

In *Matigari*, this gender complementarity is exhibited in the person of Guthera and Mriuki as they risk their lives to rescue Matigari from prison. An act in which Guthera is shot by the police thereafter that she almost lost her life:

Guthera screamed and fell to the ground. Matigari and Muriuki threw themselves to the ground too, but they were not hurt ... 'Go, just go!' she told Matigari. 'Leave me behind. Let me die, let me die'. But Matigari lifted her in his arms and carried her towards the river. (146)

The reliance of Ngugi on the younger generation of men and women in his novels has been a continuous

message that the desired change in the socio-political and economic life of Kenya and Africa can only be achieved by the younger generation since the older ones in modern African society have become tired. According to James Ogude in *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*:

The struggle crystallized itself in the Mau-Mau anti-colonial war, a struggle which should continue to inspire new resolves for freedom and dignity in Kenya's post-independence period (9).

One can therefore, assume that this is why in most of Ngugi's novels especially the recent ones, he focuses attention on the youth when it comes to resistance against neo-colonialism. Even when such youthful characters act in company of adults, the youths excel in surprisingly startling colours. This is evident in *Petals of Blood* with Karega and Wanja: Jacinta in *Devil on the Cross*; Guthera and Muriuki in company of Matigari in *Matigari*. Just as we have Kamiti and Nyawira in *Wizard of the Crow* among others.

For someone who has been a constant witness to the inhuman treatment, the resistance and bloodshed of his fellow Kenyans, it is possible that Ngugi has seen the vision of a renewed vigour in the youths to carry on with the struggle where their forefathers stopped. He urges in *Globalistics: Theory and the Politics of knowing* that for him:

My intellectual awakening was thus molded by colonialism and the anti-colonial resistance that generated what the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan famously described as a wind of change sweeping across the continent. I was a witness (10).

This is truly why he chooses to awaken the intellectual awareness of the youths who are now witnesses to neo-colonialism with its attendant problems.

CONCLUSION

Ngugi in these powerful novels, is advocating a resumption of the broken dialogue between Africa and her past to revive those internal dynamics which have existed from time immemorial. His desire is not only to revive them but also to adopt these dynamics to the present needs of the struggle towards an equitably free and humane society. To achieve this, a relationship with history has to be made – especially in Africa where corruption, exploitation and oppression are common phenomena. Therefore, only a mass movement of the workers and peasants, young and old, men and women can usher in such a society.

Leaning on Marxist literary theory, the reader understands and appreciate issues of corruption, protest and class struggle prominent in the two novels. When

the Marxist's process of re-inventing social realities from historical antecedence from past and present societies to shape the future is brought to bear on Ngugi's novels, it aids a better understanding of his agitations.

This explains why gender complementarity becomes a common feature of Ngugi's novels. He has constantly alluded to the fact that men and women play complementary roles in finding solutions to Africa's problems. The various instances in this paper indicates that Ngugi is consistently looking forward to a society in which both men and women will hold hands as equals in fighting against the same cause in order to enthrone a harmonious society as of old.

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