UNIVERSITÉ DU BURUNDI
GRENIER DU SAVOIR DU BURUNDI
Dépôt institutionnel officiel
https://repository.ub.edu.bi

Post-colonial traumas in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's a grain of wheat

Ijimbere, Rosine-Cathy; Supervisor : Mr Divine CHENEBA.

2004
UB, Faculty of art and social sciences
https://repository.ub.edu.bi/handle/123456789/1088

Document téléchargé depuis le **Grenier du Savoir du Burundi** — https://repository.ub.edu.bi

UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

POST-COLONIAL TRAUMAS IN NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S A GRAIN OF WHEAT.

By Rosine-Cathy IJIMBERE.

Supervisor :
Mr Divine CHE NEBA.

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree 'Licence en Langue et Littérature Anglaises'.

BUJUMBURA, March 2004.

DEDICATION

To my beloved Husband,

To my children,

And lastly to my parents,

For all the love they have for me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pages

DEDICATION.....i

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....iii

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....1

CHAPTER ONE : THE QUESTION OF NATIONALISM AND PREMATURE INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS IN NGUGI'S WRITINGS.....9

CHAPTER TWO : BETRAYAL AS LEITMOTIF.....27

CHAPTER THREE : TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE HEGEMONY.....40

GENERAL CONCLUSION.....54

WORKS CITED.....57

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has come to its end thanks to the assistance and advice of many people.

Most of all I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Mr Divine Che Neba who accepted to supervise this work. I appreciate his advice, criticisms and patience

I am indebted to all those who taught me during my schooling.

I am also indebted to the teachers of the Department of English at the University of Burundi. May they find in this work the realization of their efforts.

My profound gratitude goes to all those whose help was essential for the typing and production of this paper.

Lastly, I am very grateful to my parents, relatives and all my friends for their moral and material help. May they find throughout this study my special thanks and gratitude.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The early 1960 marked a turning point in the history of Africa as many nations were granted limited autonomy in the name of independence. This transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism sowed seeds of discord (social contradictions, betrayal and conflicts) which till date are still haunting Africans. Many African scholars were implicitly disgusted with the new ruling elite who could not initiate a struggle and bestowed their faith in the suffering masses.

Amongst these disgusted scholars is Ngugi Wa Thiong'o whose works functions as a gadfly to the hegemony imposed by the colonialist and the neo-colonialist. The transition from colonialism to post-colonialism and the crisis of modernity remain central issues in Ngugi's writings. Ngugi equally argues that writing in foreign languages perpetuates neo-colonialism and that all African literature in English is really Euro-African literature and not African Literature per se. He laments that

> the oppressed and the exploited of the earth maintain their deficiency : liberty from theft. But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily undershirt by imperialism against that collective deficiency is the cultural bomb. The effect of cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their name, in their language, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in

> themselves ... The classes fighting against imperialism even in its neo-colonial stage and form have to confront this threat with the higher and none creative culture of struggle. They have to speak the united language of struggle contained in each of their language. (*Decolonising the Mind, 3*)

Ngugi resigned from his post at Nairobi University as protest against government interference in the University but later on joined the faculty in 1973 as an associate professor and a chairman of the department of literature. A department that man created in response to his criticism of English as a medium of instruction in English colonies. With this trail of events, he wrote *A Grain of Wheat* along other works as his own contribution to the total liberation of Africa. Ngugi's personal and political beliefs are clearly noted *A Grain of Wheat*. The novel celebrates Ngugi's quest for a natural culture and embraces Fanonist Marxism. Ngugi believes that the problems playing Kenya results from the colonial administration. In view of the above, one is tempted to ask whether Africa is truly independent? In the same view, one wonders whether imperialism will ever end in Africa? These questions will preoccupy the researcher in the course of this work.

Before attempting to have a deeper look into the work, it is necessary to define certain concepts that will centre our discussion in this work. These terms include postcolonial and trauma. Postcolonialism is referred to as a school, which is involved in a strong determination to analyse unjust power relationship

as manifested in cultural products like literature. It is seen as a movement to expose and struggle against the influence of large and rich nations on poorer nations. In this respect, postcolonial literature, therefore entails that literature written by people living in countries formerly colonised by other nations. If the term is what it originally meant, it however raises much controversies. For some, postcolonial evokes the after independence era and for others there is no time boundaries as it is considered as an evolving theory. Some scholars attempt to give a solution by arguing that the term should denote works written after colonisation, not only those created after independence. Other believe that the term misleadingly implies that colonisation is over when in fact most of the nations involved are still culturally and economically subordinated to the rich industrial states through various forms of neo-colonialism even though they are technically independent. Indeed, postcolonial writers often call upon the government of these 'neocolonialist' nations to come to the aid of freedom movements seeking to overthrow native tyrants. The definition of postcolonial then appears challenging to the extent of such different views.

According to Giridhar Mallya in his essay entitled "the Evolving Postcolonial: Conflict as a Mechanism of Change", there exist two definitions of postcolonial. He asserts that

> Using the term postcolonial as an adjective to describe a former colony that has completely separated itself the influences of its former colonizer implies that postcoloniality cannot exist, for a

> colonized place and its institutions, a people and their lifestyles of adapt to colonial and may continue to adapt to those influences that persist. In contrast, using the term to describe a place and its people affected by the institutions and lifestyles of the colonizer implies that postcoloniality comes into being not after the colonizer has departed but rather as soon as he arrives. (1)

On the other hand, trauma is a common diagnostic category used to describe symptoms arising from emotionally traumatic experience(s). In the 'purest' sense, trauma involves exposure to a life-threatening experience. This fits with its old roots in life-or-death issues of survival, and with the involvement of old brain structures in response to stress and terror. Yet, many individuals exposed to violations by people or institutions depend on or trust, also show traumatic like symptoms even if their abuse is not directly life-threatening traumas. Experience of the trauma of betrayal may increase the likehood of amnesia as compared to fear-based trauma. In *A Grain of Wheat*, the trauma of betrayal is essentially experienced during the state of Emergency.

This study therefore aims at portraying how the traumas of postcolonial Africa stem from the colonial era. It also aims at examining other challenges of postcolonial Africa like the questions of nationalism and the necessity of a truly independent Africa.

The choice of this novel is motivated by the fact that it deals with an issue that can be generalised for all previously colonized nations at large.

In view of the above-mentioned, the work is based on the hypothetical contention that the shortcomings characterising the postcolonial – African – politically, economically, and socially – are deeply rooted in the colonial encounter. As such Africa shall never be totally independent if these strings of imperialism are not cut off.

A Grain of Wheat summarizes the impact of colonialism on the Africa. With this in min, the postcolonial theory will be central in our discussion. As Bart Moore – Gilbert defines it in his work *Postcolonial Theory : Contexts, Practices, Politics*

> as a more or less distinct set of reading practices, if it is understood as preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, 'challenge' or reflect upon the relations of domination and subordination – economic, cultural and political – between (often within) nations, races or cultures which characteristically have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism and which, equally characteristically continue to be apparent in the present area of neo-colonialism. (12)

A Grain of Wheat reflecting realities of a previously colonized nation is then classified among postcolonial literature according to this history of struggle against Western imperialism. Postcolonial criticism, most notably, perhaps, has helped to undermine the traditional conception of disciplinary boundaries. Configurations such as 'colonial discourse analysis' insist upon the

importance of studying literature together with history, politics, sociology and other art form than in the isolation from the multiple material and intellectual contexts which determine its production and reception. Moore – Gilbert adds that

> moreover postcolonial criticism has contributed to the interrogation of received distinctions between "high" and popular culture which has been such a feature of cultural criticism more generally in recent duals. (8)

This theory is of paramount importance to this present venture in that it is able to negotiate solidarity and alliance between different postcolonial social formation and interest with respect to historical and cultural particularities.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's works have raised much interest in Africa and the world at large. He has been the first writer in East Africa to echo the problems of colonialism and their impacts on Africans.

A Grain of Wheat, one of his well-accomplished novels, has received positive responses from critics in Africa and the world at large. Furthermore, most critics have taken pains to explore elements of characterisation, setting, point of view and narrative strategies to name a few. Others have narrowed their study to thematic discourse.

G.D Killam in his book '*An Introduction to the writings of Ngugi*' shows how Ngugi transcribed his beliefs and vision in his work of art. He concludes by portraying Ngugi as a visionary and critic.

David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe in Ngugi : *An Exploration of his Writings* analyse the themes and issues which are central within Ngugi's novels and finally articulate that the novel *A Grain of Wheat* is an infinitely complex work exploring the nature and cause of frailty and delinquents provided they are in some degree capable of self-examination and readjustment.

Rose Ntirandekura, on her part in Biblical allusion as literary device in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* concentrates deeply on the analysis of Ngugi's writing techniques in conveying his message as such, she shows the relationship that exist between content and forms.

Consolata Nahimana, in like manner in her thesis "Independence as a Bride : 'The theme of disillusionment in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*" focuses on disenchantment in post-independent Africa.

This work distances itself from the above mentioned in the sits focuses on the analysis of traumas orchestrated by colonialism, and at the same time denounces the effects of colonialism neo-colonialism. Ngugi at the same time advocates new forms of struggle – the communal effort and unity in order to reject Western values – capitalism. This work makes then a suggestion of new insights in African culture reconstruction as it is now affected by political

practices shaped after Western style thus influencing as well as economic and social life. It intends then to tackle the problems of postcolonial Africa – those reflected in *A Grain of Wheat* – and being inherited from colonialism.

As a result this study is significant in that it will .... Africans having a new look in Western civilization. As the world is heading to a global culture, Africans should resort to a wiser means, that is, to make the universal cultures collaborate, and be ready to liberate themselves politically.

This work is divided into five sections. There is an introduction which gives an overview of the work and closely followed by there chapters and a conclusion.

Chapter one, entitled 'The Question of Nationalism and premature celebrations', shows how Nationalism fails to fulfil its aims.

Chapter two, entitled 'Betrayal as leitmotif', analyses the trauma of betrayal experienced individually and generally after the so-called independence.

Chapter three, entitled 'Towards an alternative hegemony' centres on the new order that reign after the Mau Mau, the lost of hope and disenchantment.

Finally, the conclusion summarizes the major arguments raised in the work, living and the finding and proposes suggestions for future researchers.

CHAPTER ONE

THE QUESTION OF NATIONALISM AND PREMATURE INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS IN NGUGI'S WRITINGS

Extrapolating from the prevailing situation in Africa, Chinua Achebe in *Morning Yet On Creation Day* reckons that

> to the colonialist mind it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: I know my natives, a claim which implied two things at once: (a) that the native was really quite simple and (b) that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand- understanding being a pre-condition for control and control constituting adequate proof of understanding ...Meanwhile a new situation was slowly developing as a handful of natives began to acquire European education and then to challenge Europe's presence and position in their native land with the intellectual weapons of Europe itself. To deal with this phenomenal presumption the colonialist devised two contradictory arguments. He created the 'man of two worlds' theory to prove that no matter how much the native was exposed to European influence, he could never truly absorb them ... (5).

It is from this dilemma that the early nationalistic spirit and the eventual independence were thwarted. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o remains one of the writers

who translates and reflects the revolting situation of colonialism. He is very committed and his writings excel at portraying the vivid atmosphere that reigned during and after colonialism. In this regard, he uses *A Grain of Wheat*, which particularly fits the era, to denounce white empowerment at the detriment of the African native. This chapter therefore intends to focus on the concepts of nationalism and the nature of independence manifestations celebrated in *Kenya* in particular and Africa as a whole.

According to Guy Arnold in "Kenyatta and the Politics of Kenya",

> Nationalism is an essentially conservative phenomenon, and
> The only radical aspect of it in either Kenya or the majority of other
> African countries has been its automatic opposition to the
> continuation of colonialism. (quoted by Eseme Bokeng Helen, 37)

Alan Lawson in quoting Plamenatz in a similar view in "Discovery of Nationality in Australian and Canadian Literatures" upholds that

> Nationalism is understood as a desire to preserve or enhance
> A people's national or cultural identity when that identity is
> Threatened, or the desire to transform or even create it where it is felt
> to be inadequate or lacking. (168)

He further maintains that "nationalism is concerned with both cultural and national identity. As such, nationalism is primarily a cultural phenomenon, Though it can, and often does, take a political form" (168).

To a majority of Africans, nationalism is the only way towards total independence. In order to get rid of the colonialists, who have occupied their land and made them to live in abject poverty and extreme dependence, Africans became conscious that unity is necessary for their liberation. Ngugi WA Thiong'o in *Homecoming* sees this road to liberation as follows:

> My thesis when we come to today's Africa, is then very simple: a completely socialised economy, collectively owned and controlled by the people, is necessary for a national culture: a complete and total liberation of the people, through the elimination of all exploitative forces, is necessary for a national culture. (13)

In this light, Ngugi sees the Mau Mau movement as the cornerstone for Kenyan's nationalism. He maintains that somebody with intellectual honesty should write the full history of Mau Mau as a cultural, political and economic expression of the aspirations of the African peasant masses, putting it in its revolutionary context. Ngugi explains well the motivations of the Mau Mau in *A Grain of Wheat* when he holds that

> You ask why we fought, why we lived in the forest with wild beasts. You ask why we killed and spilt blood. The Whiteman went in cars. He lived in a big house. His children went to school. But who tilled the soil on which grew coffee, tea, pyrethrum, and sisal? Who dug the roads and paid taxes? The Whiteman lived on our Land. He ate what

we grew and cooked. And even the crumbs from the table he threw to his dogs. That is why we went in the forest. (191-2)

It is clear then that for Kenyans, the liberation war is the only means to get rid of an oppressive and exploitative system, which ties and equally humiliates them. One thing that illuminates Ngugi's strong belief is his strong commitment that one-day things would change for the better. He equally believes that as long as exploitation and oppression continue, nationalism would always be present to serve as a counterforce. Therefore, nationalism can be understood by a national consciousness, which aims at gaining a new political, social and economic order representative of the natives. It is then a natural and legitimate claim for self-determination and consequently self-aggrandisement.

Before colonialism, the people were able to manage their available resources well. Unfortunately to them, the advent of colonisation brought a new capitalistic spirit, which dismantled the existing hegemony. This capitalism as shown in *A Grain of Wheat* and other works of Ngugi is one of the reducing forces that totally dismantled the communal bond that existed in Africa before. In Kenya, it is undoubtedly the few colonialists and later the neo-colonialists who owned the wealth of the nation. This capitalistic spirit reoriented the spirit of nationalism. The nationalist spirit to Eseme Helen Bokeng in "An ideological interpretation of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*" and *Devil on the Cross* becomes a 'revolutionary system which seeks at rooting out all the evils of

colonialism and thus capitalism' (36) and instructing what will be Africans or particularly Kenyans. Among this evil was capitalism.

The history of Kenyan nationalism is best seen within the history of Kikuyu frustration and resistance. As many of them remain enclave by Europeans during their expansion out of forests. They, thus, become squatters or farm labourers on Europeans estates. Some of them leave the land and join the ghettos in cities where the number of unemployed is increasing. Because of the above mentioned, inequality becomes the order of the day as Europeans settlers enjoy the products of the African lands while the Kenyan masses cripple in miserable conditions. Majority of Kenyans lives within the infertile rocky areas while the British settlers occupy the most fertile lands. Ngugi in this vein in a *A Grain of Wheat* laments that

> ... Shouldn't everybody have a share in the common?
>
> shamba, our Kenya? Take you Whiteman, anywhere, in the settled area. He owns hundreds and hundreds of acres of land. What about the black men who squat there, who sweat dry on the farms to grow coffee, tea, sisal, wheat and yet only get ten shillings a month? (85)

In addition of being landless, the Kenyans are exploited by having an insignificant wages within their country on a land they rightly deserve.

From the cultural perspective, Ngugi sees language as one of the tools towards an emergence of a national culture. As a writer he is a strong defender of the promotion of the national languages. According to him, language, as he

holds in "language of African Literature" is first what Karl Marx once called the language of real life, the element basic to the whole notion of language, its origins and development: that is the relations people enter into with one another in the labour process, the links they necessary establish among themselves in the act of a people, a community of human beings The second aspect of language as communication is speech and it imitates the language of real life that is the communication in production .The third aspect is the written signs From the afore mentioned, it becomes evident that Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to another In this light, Ngugi believes that

> my writing in the Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggle of Kenyans and the African people (The languages) and hence nationalism. (Decolonising the Mind,28)

National languages are the ultimate keys for a true struggle against nationalism. Before nationalism and unity is achieved, (as some writers believed), African writers and Kenyans in particular whose main interest is to denounce and make the oppressive and exploitative colonialists to stop their dehumanising mission have to first write in traditional languages. It is in this response that Ngugi published *I Will marry When I Want* in Gikuyu as his own

modest contribution to the nationalist fight. A work which carried him imprisonment without trial for one year.

Acknowledging the influence of European literature's on African writings, Ngugi declares that

> the whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing is misdirected, and has non-chance of advancing African literature and culture. (10)

Ngugi adds "that until African writers accepts that any true African Literature must be written in African languages, they would merely be pursuing a dead end" (*Decolonising the Mind,*24). As long as national languages are considered as senseless and a sign of illiteracy or primitivism, the national consciousness and pride would be difficult to achieve. Indeed writing in their own languages will not only be a way to cultural restoration but also a means to voice the people's resentment of European settlers and the people's claim for independence. Ngugi once more emphasize that writing in national language per se - although a necessary step in the correct direction - will not bring about the renaissance of African cultures if that literature does not carry the content of people's anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control.He further maintains that writers in African languages should reconnect themselves to the revolutionary traditions of an organised peasantry and working class in Africa in their struggle to defeat imperialism and create a higher system of democracy and socialism in alliance with all other peoples of

the world. Language is then an important element as to him it is a culture, the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history.

The 19th century marked a turning point in the history of Africa as many experienced the most humiliating condition under the colonial administration. Colonialists came as friends with anthropologic views but soon became settlers and governors of African countries. During this period, Africans were considered as primitives and were obliged to obey to the new order. As soon as the administrators was too oppressive and exploitative, a feeling of revolt erupted. It is within this backdrop that spirit of nationalism grew.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Harry in order to show his nationalistic plight denounces the whiteman and curses his so-called benevolence and protection, which deprive the people their land and freedom. He surprises them by reading aloud letters in which he states out in clear terms the people's discontent and labour and the soldier settlement scheme which after the first big war "left many black people without homes or land around Tugoni and other places". (13) Harry asks them 'to join the Party and find strength in unity". (13).

After the Second World War the West became demystified and Africans realised that the West was not very different from Africa. This demystification resulted to a mainstream of African consciousness of the crippling conditions they find themselves in their own territories. Among these conditions are the political and socio-economic dependence in addition of the most humiliating-

cultural alienation. Kenya nationalism then has to be subscribed within that mainstream.

The settlers-colonialists- first tried to annihilate African culture and impose their own. They began by denying the existence of African values or by declaring them as primitive and savage. However, some Africans resisted this policy of total assimilation. Some wanted to preserve their own identity as they persistently worshiped and praised their ancestors, gods, and divinities. Amid this, Ngugi is of the opinion that, this cultural liberation can never be realised in Africa except Africa is politically and economically independent. As such, political autonomy is inevitable for cultural and economical independence to be obtained. He maintains that "it is wrong to think of culture as prior to politics. Political and economic liberation are the essential condition for cultural liberation;"(*Homecoming*, 11). Political independence here refers to a system of rule where natives are not under oppression and are directly involved in the management of their affairs. Through political autonomy, a country is free to choose his way of life and to decide the best for its development. Once political independence is achieved, economic will follow. However as modern economies are interdependent it becomes seemingly impossible for any country to pretend to be sufficient of its economy. As such, the ancient colonial powers continuously exploit this opportunity to rob and dominate developing economies (countries) in the name of trade exchange. In view of this, it becomes extremely difficult for African countries and Kenya in particular to

attend political and economic independence. What is central in Ngugi's works is the question of land. What preoccupies many is who controls and owns the land? Land is a source of wealth, social status and moreover it is in it that the ancestors do reside. That is why people organised themselves into liberation movements such as the Mau Mau 'Mzungu arudi ungereza, Mwafrica apate uhuru' to recuperate the land that has been ravaged by colonialists. Ngugi believes and states it clearly in *A Grain of Wheat* that to most Africans, Mau Mau in fact was a heroic and glorious aspect of that mainstream. The sole aim of Mau Mau is to drive out the Europeans, seize the government, and give it back to the Kenyans.

For this struggle people are obliged to make sacrifices. Kihika who is one of the freedom fighters uses sacrifices as motto through his teachings. He proclaims that

> no struggle for Wiyathi can succeed without such a
>
> man. Take the case of India, mahatma Gandhi won freedom for
>
> people and paid for it with his own blood. (*A Grain of Wheat, 82*)

Africans and Kenyans are not afraid to die if it is for a noble cause such as nationalism and freedom. One of the freedom fighter expresses it well when he contends that "to die fighting for freedom sounds more heroic than to die by accident" (*A Grain of Wheat, 133*). Everyone in Thabai needs to be praised for any activity he did for the nationalistic cause. It is in this regard, that some even tells lies in order to show their native participation in the liberation movement.

Githua (a man who has lost his left leg in a lorry accident) most often than not tells the Thabai inhabitants that it is for freedom that he is now handicapped. Contrary to what Githua says, many freedom fighter hold that:

> 'Never. I've also learnt that he was never shot by
>
> anybody.'
>
> 'How did he break his leg ?' Mumbi asked
>
> 'His leg? The lorry he drove overturned in Nakuru.
>
> Githua's left leg was smashed to bits... (*A Grain of Wheat, 133*)

The struggle for independence has experienced numerous counterforces, among which is the church. Ngugi contends that

> the church became the greatest opponent of the African struggle for freedom. The church opposed Mau Mau, but never the colonial Caesar. It saw the Mau Mau liberation as being savage and anti-Christian: it did not see the policies of colonial powers, in depriving people of their land, of legal rights, in having them beaten and mistreated by the Delamere and Grogans, as the exact opposite of all the Church was supposed to stand for. The church appeared to say: the White Caesar can do wrong; white is good while black is bad and wrong. The church instead of fighting against the real colonial anti-Christ, vigorously fought against those who were prepared to loose their lives that many might live. (*Homecoming, 33-4*).

The first white men who settled in Africa were missionaries. They were given places to erect temporal structures as a friendly bond. But as soon as they finish to build their huts they begin to put up other buildings in order to adulterate sacred places. Biblical preaching blinded the few converts. The elders realised that the whiteman is not only building a permanent house but is acquiring more land to meet up with his needs and position. The devoted are told to obey the fellow administrator without contest as the latter are considered as God's workers. Moreover the Bible becomes the tranquillising drug and a powerful tool to make people accept everything. Kihika explains the steal of Gikuyu land in a clear manner when he states that

> we went to their church. Mubia, in white robes
>
> opened the Bible. He said let us kneel down to pray. We knelt down. Mubia said: let us shut our eyes. We did. You know, his remained opened so that he could read the word. When we opened our eyes, our land was gone and the sword of flames stood on guard. As for Mubia, he went on reading the word, beseeching us to lay our treasures in heaven where no moth would corrupt them. But he laid his on earth, our earth. (*A Grain Of Wheat, 15*).

Apart from the above hints or counter forces to nationalism, heavy taxation, lack of education and health care, unemployment amongst many crippled the nationalist force and hence total independence.

On the political scenario, two nationalists are envisaged: the educated elite and uneducated masses. In *A Grain of Wheat*, we have the M.P who stands for the first group and the peasants and freedom fighters for the second one. All of them are under the same canopy-The Party to achieve freedom. They all acknowledge the importance of being a member in the Party. On the contrary nobody cared about its status. The narration in *A Grain of Wheat*, says that

> nearly nobody was a member of the Party, but nobody
>
> could say with any accuracy when the Party was born : to most people, especially those in the younger generation, the Party had always been there, a rallying centre for action. It changed names, leaders came and went, but the Party remained, opening new visions, gathering greater and greater strength, till on the eve of Uhuru, the influence stretched from one horizon touching the sea to the other resting on the Great Lake. (11)

As seen above, masses' preoccupation is meeting up their expectations such as the land recuperation, descent salary, abolition of taxation system and protection of their rights. However, the elite needs are in a sense different from that of the masses, as they want to replace the white. Though with varied objectives, the common ideology is independence. The irony that looms the scene is that, some nationalists are out for the self and not for a national cause. As such, the educated elite was to replace the colonialist at the detriment of the masses.

The second group, that is, the masses mistakenly thought that the educated African elite would restore their rights by recuperating the stolen land, giving free education, providing them health facilities and reducing the taxes imposed by the whites.

In this ideological dilemma between the masses and the educated elite, the spirit of nationalism is threatened. The masses realise that they are cheated by their own brothers. Ngugi in this light insinuates that

> after an hour or so, the M.P arrived; he was dressed in dark suit and carried a leather portfolio. He smoked a pipe. He greeted all the people like a father or a headmaster his children. He went into the office without apologising (*A Grain of Wheat, 72*).

The situation becomes glaring when the M.P refuses to give loans to Gikonyo and other co-operative members in order to buy a farm owned by a British and finally buys it for himself. The off-quoted gives another definition to independence, that is, self-interest. The elite then has another meaning of independence that is to show to the west they can do or rule as they did. They prove themselves as loyal servants to their masters in the treatment of the masses. It is from this perspective that one can categorically assert that African's independence was and is still an illusion. The premature celebrations remain in African annals as orchestrated rituals to satisfy the world.

The novel *A Grain of Wheat* set in the fourth day preceding independence is produced, within the exciting moment of preparation to celebration day. This

celebration however is also an opportunity to questioning the villagers'deeds during the emergency period especially Kihika's betrayer. Mugo who is naively considered as the hero and who is the betrayer whom they are looking for is asked to deliver the speech of the day. He however declines this invitation to address Thabai at Uhuru celebration because he is responsible for Kihika's death. The coming Uhuru day is viewed as a day of justice where betrayers are judged and nationalists rewarded. Independence day is awaited with great impatience; all people are present and smartly dressed:

> There were the schoolchildren in their Khaki uniforms of green, red, yellow – of every colour in the rainbow; the village children in tattered clothes with flies massed around their sore-eyes and mouths; women in flower – patterned calicos that showed bare their left shoulders women in modern frocks; women singing Christian hymns mixed with traditional and Uhuru songs. Men stood or talked in groups about the prospects opened by Uhuru (*A Grain of Wheat, 187*).

The Uhuru as seen above is then the occasion to celebrate heroic deeds punish betrayers. It is a day full of promises as it is a giant step towards nationalism amid the uncertainity that looms around. As the narrator in *A Grain of Wheat* reiterates,

> Would the government now become less stringent on those who could not pay tax? Would there be more jobs? Would there be more

> land? The well-to-do shopkeepers and traders and landowners discussed prospects for business now that we had political power, would something be done about the Indians? (187).

However, the people believed that once independence is achieved, Kenyans will be free from all forms of subjugations . Naturally, the power will be with no foreign interference. Unfortunately, independence left them with virtually nothing. Today, Kenyan and African political, economic and social life is still western-oriented. This reminds us that African independence is questionable. Our economies are largely dependent and our educational programmes are still Western oriented. The former settlers or colonialists keeps on manoeuvring the political system constantly.

As far as Africa is not independent politically, economically as well as socially, it is of no use to celebrate independence. The West until date still has much control over Africa. Michael Barratt Brown holds that

> Imperialism is still without question a most powerful force in the economic, political and military relations by which the less economically developed. We may still look forward to its ending. (Quoted by Edward W. Saïd, 291)

Edward W. Saïd in the same vein argues that the decolonisation is not the end of imperialism but only a continuation and that now technologies are the best tools to the perpetuation of dominance – tools like the media. He adds that the threat to independence in the late twentieth century from the new electronics

could be greater than was colonialism itself. We are beginning to learn that de-colonisation and the growth of supra-nationalism were not the discrimination of imperial relationships but merely the extending of a geo-political web which has been spinning since the Renaissance. The new media have the power to penetrate more deeply into a 'receiving' culture than any previous manifestation of Western technology. The results is immensed havoc, an intensification of social contradiction within developing societies today.

It is evident that imperialism is not only on the move but keeps challenging the social development of the native values. Assessing the arguments of Ngugi and other postcolonial critics, one can conclude that there is an utmost need for Africans to revisit the so-called independence or use the new tools mentioned by Edward said, than feigning to be independent.

U. B.

CHAPTER TWO

BETRAYAL AS LEITMOTIF

Betrayal is one of the most trenchant themes if that has been broadly treated in *A Grain of Wheat*. The novel exhaustively deployed related situations very clearly. According to Govind Narain Sharma in his essay "Ngugi's Christian Vision : Theme and Pattern in "*A Grain of* Wheat", Ngugi's concern is shaped by the way the struggle of liberation has been thwartened not only during its deployment but also after independence. In this sense he asserts that

"So there has been betrayal, not only during the struggle by men such as Karanja, but also after it by the new brand of politician". (167)

Betrayal is however twofold : it can be seem at the personal level and also at the general level that is, the whole concept of neo-colonialism. David Cook and Michael Okenimpke in Ngugi : *An Exploration of his writings* reveal in the following excerpt that:

> Individual betrayals are representative of the vast betrayal of a whole society by its power elite ... The men at the top are a tribe of operators and manipulators who in their own narrow interests are replacing colonialism with neo-colonialism. (69)

A majority of Ngugi's scholars believe that *A Grain of Wheat* with all the complexities and themes mainly centres on betrayal. In this light, for G.D

Killam in *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi* intimates that: "Once of the fundamental themes of the novel is betrayal and the consequent need of the betrayal to expiate the sense of guilt that results." (55)

Mphahlele in *the African Image* in a related sense asserts that betrayal is the central theme in *A Grain of Wheat*. He enumerates that Mugo betrays the forest fighter Kihika to the White police who are able to ambush and kill him. Gikonyo is released from detention after admitting taking the oath ; Karanja betrays Gikonyo by seducing his wife, Mumbi. He also betrays his people by his assumption of the colonial role of homeguard ; Mumbi betrays her husband ; the African member of Parliament buys land from a departing white farmer, which he has to negotiate for co-operative ownership among his people.

Throughout the novel, Ngugi wants to show that the numerous betrayals which proliferate *A Grain of Wheat* as piloted by the urge to satisfy individual egos. This chapter is then concerned with the portrayal of betrayers, their motives and the impact betrayal in post-colonial Kenya.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, colonial capitalist structures and ideology lead directly to betrayal because they suggest that the only important bonds between people are based on a coloniser/colonised model or business contract. By suppressing the possibility of other kinds of bonds, colonialism and capitalism encourage atomisation and a resulting lack of a sense of oneness and responsibilities among all Kenyans. We see the lingering danger of colonial ideology clearly in the betrayal of Kihika by Mugo. After Kihika comes to

Mugo, Mugo decides to betray Kihika by exposing him to danger. This act shows that the sense of oneness in spirit is no mere the order of the day after independence. Asserting his authority over his people, Mugo uses the colonial structure and reflects on its strengths as follows:

> What's power ? A judge is powerful: he can send a man to death, without anyone questioning his authority, judgement, or harming his body in return. To be great you must stand in such a place that you can dispense pain and death to other without anyone asking questions like a headmaster, a judge, a Governor. (*A Grain of Wheat, 197*)

Mugo conceives these colonial structures of which he is a guard in terms of their unquestionable and no accountable power. For him, the absence of accountability is a mark of unlimited prerogatives, thus greatness. But his treachery should be not only restrained on that idea of greatness but also on the fact that he secludes himself on issues of nation building. David Cook and Michael Okenimpke illustrate the estrangement behind which Mugo lived and thought to be protected. They reveal that for two years he successfully avoided involvement in Mau Mau, and eluded his fate. As such,

> Had he not already escaped, unscathed, the early operation of the Emergency ? Kenya had been in a state of Emergency since 1952. Some people had been taken to detention camps; others had run away to the forest: but this was a drama in a world not his own. (*A Grain of Wheat, 212-13*)

However over the revenge on Kihika for having attempted to involve him in his own society's problem, Mugo expects reintegration through a form of compensation. Ngugi makes Mugo the central character. He is the man who secretly betrays Kihika to the colonialists because he believes that by turning to him for refuge, Kihika had irrevocably invaded his precarious security: "I wanted to live my life. I never wanted to be involved in anything. Then, he came into my life, here, a night like this, and pulled me into the stream. So I killed him". (*A Grain of Wheat, 161*)

Mugo makes his confession to Kihika's sister, Mumbi, whom he secretly loved for many years. Mugo is very mysterious to the villagers and refuges to lead the Uhuru celebrations. They do not know the motive of refusal. Deep in him, man is conscious that he cannot lead the Uhuru because of his betrayal of Kihika, which can be seem as the betrayal of the people. Had he not delivered Kihika may be, the villagers would not have undergone all those sad experiences. If he is considered as one of the heroes of independence it is simply due to his remarkable deeds during the hard days of emergency, especially when he attempts to protect a pregnant woman from being beaten by a guard. The narrator says that

> he worked a few yards from the woman. He had worked in the same place for three days. Now a home guard jumped into the trench and lashed the woman with a whip. Mugo felt the whip eats into his flesh and her pained whimper was like a cry from his own heart. Yet, he

> did not know her, had for three days refused to recognise those around him as fellow sufferers. Now, he only saw the woman, the whip and the homeward. Not people continued digging, pretending not to hear the woman's screams, and fearing to meet a similar fate. Other furtively glanced at the woman as they raised their shovels and jembes. In terror, Mugo pushed forward and held the whip before the homeward could hit the woman a fifth time more homewards and two or three soldiers ran to the scene. Other people temporarily stopped digging and watched the struggle and whips that now descended on Mugo's body. (*A Grain of Wheat, 150*)

The irony is that, though he acted as off-quoted, he later on betrays the course by being loyal to the colonialist. Gikonyo meanwhile represents the Kenyan entrepreneur who embraces capitalist ideology. The narrator states that

> He promptly fulfilled his part of contact, he expected no less from the other side. Thus, he insisted on getting the money at the agreed day and time. He would not countenance a delay. He treated the rich and poor alike ... but they trusted and came to respect his scrupulous honesty. At least, he did fulfil, on time, his own part of the bargain. (*A Grain of Wheat, 57*)

The notion of responsibility dictated by the business contract encourages Gikonyo to exploit his own people. He buys and hoards bags of staples during harvest and then when such staples are scare, he sells them at cut throat prices.

Gikonyo is a significant threat to Kenya not only because he becomes wealthy by manipulating his people's needs and perpetuating the effect of colonial policy but also because he becomes the means of glorifying the western capitalist world-view. Ngugi says that "The story of Gikonyo's rise to wealth, although on a small scale, carried a moral every mother in Thabai pointed out to her children." (*A Grain of Wheat, 59*)

Within this capitalist tendency Gikonyo creates the most significant ideological danger for Kenya. If Kenya accepts him as its hero, as a representative of its values, the result will be a society structured around self-interest; this will enable those with power and wealth to identify Kenya's "progress" with their own. As a minority continues to advance materially and politically at the expense of the rest of the "nation", they actually become part of the first world, which benefits from the underdevelopment of the Third World. The result will be betrayal of the majority of the Kenyan people. As such, Ngugi's socialist ideology will be betrayed. This treat is made explicit in the character of the M.P who creates a rift between him and that he represents. He does not come to the Uhuru celebrations in the villages-but remains in the capital to entertain foreign dignitaries. He excuses himself by arguing that "you see we have so many foreign guests to look after. So apologise to the people for me and say I can't come: the M.P tells Gikonyo." (*A Grain of Wheat, 63*)

Gikonyo has another crime to confess his unfaithfulness to other fighters who take the oath. He is overwhelmed with guilt-courage had failed him, he had

confessed the Oath in spite of vows. To the contrary, what difference is there between him and Karanja or Mugo or those who have openly betrayed people and worked with the White man to save them? He is afraid of losing everything even Mumbi he treats with indifference.

Mumbi is beautiful and loved by many in her village. Gikonyo who is her husband and Karanja who admires her are both linked to her. They both tried in their Youth to get her love and even that Gikonyo won the heart of Mumbi, Karanja still had an admiration and a feeling of love for Mumbi. During these trying days of emergency with her husband detained without any hope of return, Mumbi fails under Karanja's argument and becomes unfaithful to her husband. The result of this relation is a child. In this light, Mumbi is also categorised as a treat to the husband regardless of the motive that drives her in this act. Once Gikonyo is taken to a detention camp, Karanja constantly pays visits to Mumbi and helps her with household tasks. She senses the distress in him and would like to encourage him to talk about his problems but she feels inhibited because he once proposed her marriage. Nevertheless, she is surprised and shocked when she learns that he has joined the homewards and she inevitably regards this as betrayal. She laments that "I could not believe it. He had been a friend of Kihika and Gikonyo ; they had taken the oath together, how could he betray them?" (*A Grain of Wheat, 77*)

Karanja offers two reasons in his defence. One is romantic, and the other is practical. He claims that he loves Mumbi and that his joining the home guard

is the only way of being able to remain near her. He also accepts completely the power of the White man. He believes that the Whiteman is going to stay in Kenya forever and that it is therefore senseless to opposes him and his superior might as he firmly asserts that

> you don't understand. Did you want us all to die in the Forest and in Detention so that the Whiteman could live here alone? The Whiteman is strong. Don't you ever forget that. Don't you deceive yourself that Jomo Kenyatta will ever be released from lodwar. And bombs are going to be dropped in the forest as the British did in Japan and Malaya. And those in Detention will never, never see this land again. No Mumbi. The coward lived to see his mother while the brave was left dead on the battlefield. And to ward a blow is not cowardice. (*A Grain of Wheat, 130*)

Gikonyo in a different context echoes Karanja's romantic reason for his act of betrayal. Gikonyo is the first to confess the oath and leave the detention camp at Yala because of his longing love for Mumbi and his desire to return quickly to her. Mumbi accuses Karanja of being a "Judas" for two reasons : for betraying her brother, Kihika, who was caught and killed by whiteman and for joining the white man several years later. On the eve of Uhuru, several of Karanja fellow Kikuyu want him to be punished for an act of treachery which they believe him to have committed. They do not refer to the fact that he joined the home guard and later became a chief in the service of the white settler. But

their suspicions about this particular act of treachery are probably conditioned by his more generalised act of betrayal. If Karanja had not joined the home guard, he would not have been such an obvious suspect in this murder charge.

Karanja did not betray Kihika and the novel ends after Karanja accusers make this discovery. If the novel were to continue we might find that, in the very least, Karanja would be ostracised in the years to come for having joined forces with the white man and thus turning against his own people. We know that, during the Emergency itself, Mumbi regarded his joining the home guard as an act of treachery and there can be little doubt that others would share this opinion. As we have said, it probably formed the psychological basis for the actual charge, which was brought against Karanja. Was Karanja a coward or was he merely a practical and sincere realist? One can argue in this case, that even if he did not support the Mau Mau but he could have remained neutral.

Rather than positing a pre-existing Kenyan 'character' which can be counted on to be the basis for a new society, *A Grain of Wheat* suggests that a truly postcolonial Kenyan nation necessitates the forging of a collective culture and consciousness through a common and evolving history, as defined by the interrelated of its members. As a result, she sharing of personal histories and secrets, often through storytelling, is a critical condition for personal and communal progress. After Mumbi and Gikonyo have told Mug their stories of the misery of the villagers during the emergency, the horrors of the prison camp, the effect of the death of Kihika (which Mugo helped bring about), and

their own stories of misery and betrayal, Mugo cannot deny his connection with the village and his responsibility for his actions. Ngugi states that

> he was irrevocably drawn to the lives of the villagers. He tried to think of something else... but he could not escape from his knowledge of Gikonyo's and Mumbi's lives ... How was it that Mumbi's story had cracked open his dulled inside and released imprisoned thoughts and feelings? (*A Grain of Wheat, 172*)

Mumbi's and Gikonyo's stories have made it impossible for Mugo to separate the trajectory of his life from the trajectories of 'the lives of the villagers' which understood as necessarily intertwined, define a communal history. The feeling of connection, which Mumbi has inspired eventually, leads Mugo to confess his betrayal to her. Ngugi opines that she had sat there, and talked to him and given him a glimpse of a new earth. She had trusted him, and confided in him. The simple trust had forced him to tell her the truth." (*A Grain of Wheat, 234*)

Mugo's glimpse of a "new earth", a community which entails common history, responsibilities, and goals, also brings about his public confession to the entire community. Mugo finds a new vision of his purpose in his life: to share his secret, and so his true history, with the community. This discovery occurs because Mugo acknowledges his historically determined interrelatedness with the community and accepts and even desires the implications of that interrelatedness. His confession is also an act of self-sacrifice for the good of

that community; Mugo is compelled to admit his crime to the villagers, rather than just to Mumbi, when they sing at his hut on the night of Uhuru, believing him to be a hero who embodies the virtues of the liberation movement. And then, suddenly, he hears the village people around his hut singing Uhuru songs. Every word of praise carried for him a threat to the community, because it results from trusting those individuals and values that are most dangerous for the community as a whole. By confessing to the community, Mugo strengthens the community by helping to cleanse the culture of a false hero.

In this novel, people betray each other, women become unfaithful to their husbands, parents ignore their children, friends are disloyal to each other, and many cases of the sort. The characters have then to undergo their own share of sufferings, shame and quiet before Uhuru is achieved. They are plagued with their during the Emergency. So they have quite the same aspiration that of reconciling and resolving their conflicts after then redefines their relationships. Michael Okenimkpe and David Cook in *Ngugi : An Exploration of his writings* acknowledge this communal sense of guilt as they affirm that both are guilty, for both have broken their oath: one of loyalty to their people, the other the marital vow".(79)

They further argue that if the celebration of Uhuru in Rungei has turned out to be an unwriting praise-ceremony for a traitor, so is Kenyan Uhuru itself a giant betrayal of the people who fought it by those manipulating it: 'why should these men be elected only to enrich themselves' (the representatives of

Parliament). For Ngugi, the battle is hard that the situation of betrayal has to be expected and faced by people. Even Kihika the martyr of freedom predicts it to Mugo while he was seeking refuge in his hut. "There are those who'll never keep a secret unless bound by an oath. I know men by their faces. In any cases how many took the oath to confirm a choice already made ..." (*A Grain of Wheat, 167*)

One should say that the situation of emergency was so hard and trying that it was difficult to remain clean and not to be involved in any other uncomfortable situation. Mumbi is one who tried to remain clean and safe but as a human she finally failed to resist to Karanja assiduity. Mugo who has undergone a hard upbringing by his drunkard aunt did not want to be involved, he only wanted to be alone and run his life according to his belief-individualism – but this uncommittment makes him to commit the unreasonable act, which would be fatal to his life. One could argue that if he had a real and normal life maybe he would not have betrayed Kihika instead should have abide to Kihika's cause and fought to his sides. Gikonyo living in hard conditions in detention camps had a longing wish to return home to see his wife Mumbi. After having heard all these figures in which he had believed had failed and were imprisoned and trailed to him there was no alternative than to confess the oath which was no more worthwhile. These circumstances of the struggle seem to be in favour of the white man thus no more sacrifice according to him had a raison d'être. The leaders were on trials, the fighters and their fans arrested the

village was burning and all the villagers crippling in bad conditions under the white man control. Karanja was convinced of the white man superiority so regarding the difficulty conditions of life and refusing to be involved in a struggle he foresee as defeated he decided to stand with the more comfortable side that of a power – the white man's side. The wealth and power of the white man influence this disloyalty towards the villagers. The theme of betrayal has got a great impact in this novel as it is broadly treated. The first impact is the general acknowledgement of being all guilty. All the villagers in a manner or another have the sense of being guilty or committed a crime. With that sense they realise that in order to make life harmonious they should be realistic and forgive each other. They also realised that passion has misled their reasoning and that Karanja was not their traitor. The second is the impact of Mugo's treachery. By this treachery he become involved in the sufferings of all the villagers, he participated and delivered a speech, which made him being acknowledged by the villagers.

Mumbi is realistic and after Mugo's confession she does not want any more crime as people has undergone many sufferings. It is in that sense that she wants to preserve Karanja of injustice. She does not even blame the betrayer for her, sufferings must stop. The confession of Mugo has got an important impact on Gikonyo. He realised that his revenge and chauvinism against Mumbi was nonsense that everyone has a crime he had committed thus they should forgive each other.

A Grain of Wheat does not leave one with a sense of bleakness, but with a sense of the other kind of heroism required to accommodate our own and others' weaknesses and failures, and the need to learn the difficult art of forgiveness – seeking as much as accepting it. Ultimately, however, the basis for hope in *A Grain of Wheat* lies not in Mugo's act of self-sacrifice but in his transformation in the memories and stories of his people into a new kind of hero embodying new values. Mugo's confession has an important impact as it shows others the way. For if he was so courageous as to lay open his terrible secret before all, can others not bare their souls to one another? Kenya already has heroes like Kihika who represent values such as a willingness for sacrifice in the pursuit of common goals, but it now needs heroic figures who represent the notion of sacrifice through public confession because of the growing threat of the irony of false heroes. At the moment of the Uhuru, the danger represented by this irony is persistent: the very men most likely to betray the Kenyan community as a whole, those focussed on gaining personal power and wealth, are those who will prosper and thus be praised.

Progress in Kenya, therefore, requires a focus not only on the recognition of the individual's inextricable links with the larger Kenyan community but also a concomitant willingness to openly integrate the personal self with the communal self through the sharing of personal stories and secrets. Individual growth involves a willingness to recognise and express the truth of one's history, but such growth cannot be separated from the promise of a new and

better socio-political model. This promise is most fully figured forth in the last section of the novel entitled 'Harambee' or coming together – a reference to the slogan of Kenya's government at the moment of liberation.

In this section, Gikonyo begins the healing process with his estranged wife Mumbi by being willing, as a result of Mugo's confession, to connect with her:

> After Mugo's confession, he found himself trying to puzzle out Mumbi's thought and feelings ... he increasingly longed to speak to her about Mugo and then about his own life in detention (*A Grain Of Wheat, 245*)

In this extremely symbolic text, the promise of reconciliation through the sharing of stories represents the hope that Kenya will be able to combat the neo-colonialism foreshadowed in part by forging a collective culture that counters the values of self-interest and exploitation.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE HEGEMONY

At the eve of independence, the greatest wish of many African countries was to get rid of the coloniser. Independence became synonymous to freedom, nation building, economic prosperity and self-determination. In addition, it was considered as the ultimate way to right's restoration and to regain the lost lands. However, independence in this chapter does not have the same significance as described above because the new elite proved the contrary. The expectations varied according to the different classes in the society.

The Kenyan society, like other African societies, is made of three groups: the intelligentsia, the businessmen, and the masses. The first group aspires for self-empowerment and wants to demonstrate that they are as brilliant and intelligent as the coloniser is. They are product of the colonial schools and aspire to have the same way of life as their masters. With this attitude, they adopt the Western style of life and governance. The second group, that of businessmen, wants to be more prosperous and uses every means to enrich themselves by exploiting their fellow brothers. They intend to be rich and use the Western System of capitalism to make their businesses grow. They believe fervently in the darwinistic principle of the survival of the fittest. This principle is at the detriment of the masses. The last group is that of peasants. To them independence is the recuperation of the lost land, restoration of their rights and

the end of mistreatment and suffering. Unfortunately for the masses, the independence in *A Grain of Wheat* becomes a new form of colonisation. In this sense, this chapter also aims at highlighting the fact that the new status quo is breeding ground for disenchantment, underdevelopment and self-exploitation in Africa. It equally examines how the new elite and capitalist back off the Mau Mau by establishing a new hegemony.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi offers us a look at post-independence Africa. He portrays that the high spirit of national commitment is over as tribal distrust and a spirit of separatism reigns everywhere. He regrets how some Africans now celebrate victory even though they did nothing in bringing freedom. However, Ngugi suggests that with truth and effort the people can free themselves. At the anniversary celebration everyone is free. This celebration is short-lived, as the Whiteman's rule undoubtedly continues after a paper freedom is granted. In this light, John Thompson believe very much that Africans cannot survive without the Europeans. According to him "We are not yet beaten"... Africa cannot, cannot do without Europe' (*A Grain of Wheat, 144*). In this novel, Ngugi wants to make his readers see the dangers of betrayal and disillusionment within the newly liberated Kenya. The novel represents the possibility of ideals and goals of national liberation movement by those who have gained power in the newly independent Kenya, precisely because they are still controlled by self-interest and Western ideologies.

As earlier indicated in chapter one, the question of nationalism remained the basic preoccupation for the search for freedom and self-determination are the main objectives of the existence of Mau Mau fighters. After the independence, the vision of the Mau Mau fighters is the establishment of a new status quo that will satisfy everybody. Their expectation is having a free hand in choosing their leaders so as to fulfil their aspirations. The controversy that prevails in post- independent Kenya is that a majority of the Mau Mau fighters are not educated but educated people are needed to replace the Whiteman. Unfortunately for them, a majority of the new leaders did not participate in the Mau Mau struggle. As such, the real fighter feel cheated as others now reap from where did not sow. Amid this imbroglio Ngugi in *African Writers Talking* fervently believes that

> I think it is important because of this very quality, this quality of fighting in the Kikuyu; you know schools have always associated education with advancement, with political freedom, with even economic freedom. They have always seen education as a mean to greater prosperity, and when the Whiteman came to Kenya, and took away the land and rule the people, they said to themselves: "The Whiteman can do this because he has got education now if we can get education, then, we can get the things which he has". (126)

Though Ngugi sympathises with the uneducated masses of the Mau Mau, he at the same time acknowledges the importance of education as a prerequisite

for leadership. This conflict nursed the first seed of discontent among Africans immediately after independence. The greatest question remains, who is who in Kenya, the educated or the Mau Mau? Ngugi once more in his controversial mood attests that

> while we were at out bourgeois schools and universities searching for that truth in book written for us by our imperial conquerors, the peasant masses, those women I once heard sing, collectively rejected the white seizure of the land. It was they who fought for Uhuru ... What have these peasants and workers in control of the land thy fought for?
>
> (*Homecoming, 49-50*)

The greatest challenge is that once the expectations of the different groups are not fulfilled (here the elite and the mass) there is bound to be disillusionment. Worse of all, the people still realise the effective presence of the Whiteman amid the so-called declaration of independence. These observations, by no means exhaustive, suggest that the freedom fighters have lost all what they have considered to be the most precious, as independence never fulfilled any of their aspirations: free taxation, free education, good housing conditions, restoration of the stolen lands and most all the end of colonisation. The backing off of the Mau Mau is partly conditioned by the failure to attain these aforementioned goals. The Mau Mau leaders also aspired to be welcomed as heroes and thus, offered all attention deserved in a such

context (independence day). They expected praise for their deeds (bringing freedom) and moreover some material compensation. Unfortunately, the society fails to acknowledge their immense contribution and pays little or no attention at their coming back from the forest. Instead of being happily welcomed, they found themselves in a different and cold atmosphere of homecoming. Ngugi protests that it was they who fought for Uhuru. It was the united strength of the peasants and workers that made British imperialists retreat, even though they later returned through the back door.

Gikonyo homecoming in *A Grain of Wheat* clearly justifies why the freedom fighters are disgusted about the new status quo establish after independence. The narrator comments that

> he stopped women whose faces he could not recognise and asked them for Wangari's hut. Some stare at him with open hostility and other shook their heads with indifference, making him both impatient and angry. (99)

Even his wife does not seem to value his return. She shockingly says that 'You!' .... 'I knew you would come, but I did not expect you so soon ! 'So soon ?' Gikonyo echoed her words, his inner eyes scanning this distance of six years. (99)

However, the peak of disappointment is that Gikonyo as well as some of the freedom fighter found that their wives have shared beds with other men.

This experience is very bitter. Buijthenthius describes the feeling of Gikonyo after his wife's betrayal in *Mau Mau Twenty Years After* as follows:

> When he comes home after six years, however, it is only to discover that he has betrayed Mau Mau in vain and that his wife feeds a child of the detestable Karanja, once his unhappy rival in love, who took advantage of his position as a home guard during his absence. (102)

The problem here is that those who fought for freedom did not gain anything from it. The ones who did not take part in the struggle enjoy the fruits of freedom. In this light, the narrator once more castigates that

> Whom do we see riding in long cars and changing them daily as if motor were clothes? It is those who did not take part in the movement ... At political meeting, you hear them shout: Uhuru, Uhuru, we fought for. Fought where? (*A Grain of Wheat, 80*)

However, the main reason of their disillusionment is that all the masses are marginalized. Frantz Fanon depicts this in the *Wretched of the Earth* when he maintains that

> the masses by a sort of (if we may say so) childlike process of reasoning convince themselves that they have been robbed of all these things. That is why in certain underdeveloped countries the mass forge ahead quickly, and realize two or three years after

> independence that they have been frustrated, that it wasn't worth while, fighting and that nothing could really change. (85)

What creates this spirit of disenchantment among the masses emanates from the fact that the newly empowered elite quickly forgets the raison d'être for independence. Instead, they concentrate more in enriching themselves at the detriment of the masses. This situation results in widening the gulf between the masses and the intelligentsia. Donald Barnett in a similar vein in the preface of *Mau Mau Within*, writes that

> a remarkable feature of the personnel of the land and Freedom Army was the absence in forest of educated men, educated, that is, in the formal sense beyond primary school level. It is clearly no enough to say that the educated men in those days were few and far between and that most of them tended to be pro-government posts. The reason goes beyond that to the wild gulf that has arisen in many parts of Africa between the intellectuals and the masses. (10)

It becomes that the mission of the new elite is not nationalistic but egocentric. Their major concern is to amass wealth and replace the Whiteman. They are eager to demonstrate that they are equal to the White and thus seek every means to become like them. This results to corruption, mismanagement, lies telling, exploitation, and robbery, to name a few. This new scenario becomes an alternative to the one envisaged by the Mau Mau fighters. Ngugi denounces this behaviour and laments that

> the situation and problems are real. Sometimes too painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet who now see that all that they fought for being put on one side. (*A Grain of Wheat, 1*)

The new rulers did not improve the living conditions of the masses. The peasants and workers are still undetermined by the heavy taxation, poverty and misery. What is unbearable now is the fact they are under black power and they appear to be exploited. The fellow brother though aware of the crippling conditions they all fought for and supposedly elected to estimate them and protect the masses end up in the shoe of the Whiteman. Oginga expresses this in *Not Yet Uhuru* that

> the two sides of Emergency persisted into later years, freedom fighters were unemployed and landless and the loyalists had become the dependable middle group that the government had aimed to create. Those who sacrificed most in the struggle had lost out to the people who played safe. Political division had been given concrete economic shape and so would persist in the post-emergency. (126)

The masses realise that even after the Whiteman's departure the newly empowered elite becomes worse than the colonial master. It becomes evident for the elite, however the independence is a boom.

The elected rulers are much invested in amassing wealth and behaving as their former masters. The masses still suffer from heavy taxation and some are

unable to afford school fees for their children. This situation becomes a public debate as the people conspire among themselves in front of the M.P.'s office

> 'Why, what do you want to ask him?'
>
> 'My son wants a scholarship to America. And you?
>
> 'It's just troubles at home. Last Saturday, they came
>
> and arrested my man because he has not paid taxes. But how does he pay poll tax? He has no job. Our children had to leave school because no money ...
>
> (*A Grain Of Wheat* 54-5)

On the other side, the masses acknowledge that the elite are enjoying the fruits of independence and they are not honouring their mission as Kariuki stresses it in *Mau Mau Detainee*

> Our leaders must realize that we have put them where they are, not to satisfy their ambitions nor so that they can strut about in fine clothes and huge Cadillac as ambassadors and ministers but to create a new Kenya. (181)

Once elected the M.P no more live with their electors. They run to Nairobi all the time and care little about problems plaguing their constituencies. The narrator brings out the realities in Kenya when he alludes that

> Few M.P.'s had offices in their constituencies. As soon as they were elected, they ran to Nairobi and were rarely seen in their areas except

> when they came back with others national leaders to address big political rallies. (*A Grain of Wheat, 53-4*)

From the above mentioned, it is evident that the masses need a new Kenya but ironically the new Kenya they have all planned for is replaced with a new Kenya of self-aggrandisement, exploitation and disillusionment. This new scene breaks the communication between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. This lack of communication contributes to enlarge the gulf between the electors and elected. In *A Grain of Wheat*, the M.P does not fear to break up appointments. 'It's like trying to meet God' rightly complained one woman." (54)

Among the ills that characterize the postcolonial Kenya corruption, lies telling, bribery topped the list. Everyone among the leaders want to amass wealth. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Gikonyo is the prototype of a postcolonial businessman who does everything to amass wealth. The narrator says that

> Sometimes Gikonyo would buy a bag of maize and when sell it higher price ... All the time Gikonyo waited until the maize-grain was very scarce ... At the right time, he poured what he had hoarded on to the market at a high price. (52)

The problem is that he is praised and admired by his fellow villagers and as such becomes a model for others. In addition to this capitalist tendency, he is very corrupt and dishonest. The irony is that many consider this as normal. The people most often than not validates some of these vices. The narrator satirizes a similar situation when he comments that

Independence is conceived as a mere continuation of colonial rule. Then, disillusionment of the African masses is the direct consequence of this failure to undo the colonial structure and change it into a fair, viable and acceptable system for the masses. That is why in questioning the meaning of independence the disenchanted masses sarcastically insinuates that

> what does Independence mean? For the peasants and the urban workers this is a period of gradual disillusionment. Independence has not given them back their land. They are still without food and clothes. (*Protest and Conflict in African Literatures, 58*)

This behaviour contrasts very clearly with the wills of freedom as Oginga says it in *Not Yet Uhuru* that

> our independence struggle was not meant to enrich a minority. It was to cast off the yoke of colonialism and poverty. It is not a question of individuals enriching themselves but of achieving national efforts to fight poverty in the country as a whole. (310)

For Ngugi, they are robbers through their power. The class inherits power and begins to fulfil its historical mission of a messenger class, in the process of looting the people. The masses by a sort of (if we may say so) childlike process of reasoning convince themselves that they have been robbed of all these things. That is why in certain underdeveloped countries the masses forge ahead quickly, and realize two or three years after independence that they have been frustrated, that it was not worthwhile, fighting, and nothing could really change.

The freedom fighters and peasants are unfortunately those who are left to the corner of the society. They are still struggling to get a descent life even today since the people who are supposed to improve their conditions are instead making them almost unbearable. Achebe in The *Black Writer's Burden* translate the peasants acknowledgement of such horrible situation as follows:

> Now no more paleface strangers with unhallowed feet the heritage of our fathers profane. Now no mission benevolent despots bulldoze an unwilling race, no more now the foreign hawks on alien chicken's prey. But we on us (138)

This disillusionment is heightened because the elite or politicians used do not meet up with their promises. Moreover they take an oath to ever be together in order to meet up the needs of everybody. The new elite keep the people dreaming of things they would acquire. This traumatises the masses and they keep wondering the raison d'être behind independence.

The masses bitterly discover that there will be no change and that independence through their leaders is harsh than colonialism. They are no more the committed politicians but merely propaganda tools for the whiteman's. Githua rightly claims that "the government has forgotten us. We fought for freedom. And yet now!" (*A Grain of Wheat, 110*) Now they are aware of the non-commitment of their leaders they even acknowledge the presence and comfort of some Europeans who are still living in their country.

In a nutshell, Ngugi's main concern in *A Grain of Wheat*, is that the African intellectuals must align themselves with the masses for a meaningful nationalism. For we must strive for a form of social organisation that will free manacled spirit and energy of our people so that we can build a new country, and sing a new song. Perhaps in a small way, the African writer can help articulating the feeling behind this struggle. Within this streamline, socialism should be the main tool to combat neo-colonialism. According to him, only a socialist context will be able to achieve such imperative. He concludes in *Perspective on African Literature* that

> In a capitalist state the past is a romantic glimmer, gazing at it is a means of escape from the present. I believe that it is only in a socialist context that a look at yesterday can be meaningful in illuminating today and tomorrow. (8)

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Writing about post-colonial African traumas involves describing the social, political and economical climate of the continent within this era. The departure of the Western colonizer was greeted by slogans of victory uttered with high expectations for bright days whereby any African native would enjoy all aspects of live as citizens.

Unfortunately, this period has turned out to be an era of deception, with the masses realizing that their plight-western dominance-remained. Besides, the economic hardship imposed upon the so-called independent African countries by the newly establishes universal monetary policy, there have been other factors that made life in post-colonial Africa unenjoyable despite the apparent political independence. In this period, individualism becomes a virtue. As a legacy of colonialism, it has put an end to the ancient values such as communal life.

It is then in this perspective that this paper has tried to analyse the traumas, which have characterized the post-colonial African society – as reflected in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* while referring to the realities prevailing in Kenya. At the eve of Uhuru, the optimism is the watchword to the colonised. Everybody was willing to get rid of colonialism and all its practices. The masses knew that it was time for them to enjoy the promised paradise during the long fight.

At the moment of the declaration of independence, the masses shouted songs and slogans to express their relief stimulated by the departure of the European colonizer and his replacement by the "Black Messiah". Unfortunately this hope was endangered by the capitalistic and individualistic traits inherited from colonialism.

The brothers and friends of yesterday have turned out to be the enemies in the after-fight era with the new leaders exploiting and stressing the masses. The masses have greeted this behaviour of their leaders with pessimism, a form of pessimism that has given way to new forms of disorders.

Amongst the traumas that have emerged from this situation, betrayal is at the peak. All the sides of the community – leadership, friendships, economic structures – having been affected the expected bright days have proved to be moments of suspicion and mutual hatred.

Moreover, cultural values broadcast through the Western school – namely the language, the model of government and the monetary system – do not allow the continent to achieve its independence. Instead, Africans find themselves under a new form of colonialism which is more stressful than the one rejected. Unfortunately, the imperialism keeps moving gradually and challenging the total liberation of Africa.

It is in view that Ngugi in his writings portrays the odd image of the continent and suggests a way out of this impasse. For Ngugi, the African elite have to revise their behaviour and orient it towards a meaningful national ideal.

He advocates socialism against neo-colonialism. These elite are appealed to work for a future which will meet the aspiration of all especially that of masses and this imperative is to be achieved through socialism.

This paper has been able to account for the question of nationalism and premature independence celebrations and the traumas of post-colonial Africa as viewed by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his novel *A Grain of Wheat*. Moreover this study has been able to bring out the alternative paths suggested by the same literary artist to get out of this post-independent dilemma.

From critical perspective, this study has initiated new analytical insights – for the profit of scholars making their research in the University of Burundi towards the post-colonial Africa's climate. The human condition becoming more and more unbearable, the African natives have to rely on wiser means to put an end to the worsening conditions of the people. In this light, African scholars are sensitised to take into account the requirements of the modern era in their initiatives for reconstruction. The contemporary world being progressing towards a global tradition, Africans need to moderate their Afrocentric option for making productivity and receptivity of cultural values. From this study emerges the warming that Africa can no longer close its doors to other cultures and this has to be taken as basic point by the reconstructors of the dismembered identity.

This study has not been able to go further in mentioning suggestions for reconstruction as proposed by other writers than Ngugi. The suggestions to re-make the lost values being various and more solving than one another. Further research within this domain should consider the above – conducted one as a basic initiative to stimulate extension of their views towards total retrieval of the dignity of the African continent.

WORKS CITED

PRIMARY SOURCE

Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *A Grain of Wheat*. London : H.E.B, 1981

SECONDARY SOURCES

Achebe, Chinua. *The Black Writers 'Burden*. Présence Africaine,1966

Achebe , Chinua. *Morning Yet On Day Creation*. London: H.E.B,1982

Aschcroft, Bill; Griffiths, Gareth and Tiffin, Helen.*The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London and New york: Routledge,1995

Barnett, D.L and Karari, N. *Mau Mau From Within*. London : MacGibbon & Lee, 1966

Buijjenhius, Robert. *Mau Mau Twenty – years After*. London : Mouton & Co, 1973

Cook, David and Okenimpke, Michael. *Ngugi: An Exploration Of His Writings*. London : H.E.B,1981

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. London : Penguin Books, 1982

Gilbert-Moore, Bart. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London and New York,1998

Heywood, Christopher. *Perspective on African Literature*. London: Heinmann, 1979

Jones, Durosimi, Eldred. *African Literature Today N°10, Retrospect & Prospect*. London: Heinmann,1979

Kahiga, Samuel and Kibera, Leonard. *Potent Ash*. Nairobi : E.A.P.H, 1968

Kariuki, J.M. *Mau Mau Detainee*. London : Oxford University. Press, 1963

Killam, G.D. - *African Writers on African Writings*. London : H.E.B, 1973

- *An introduction to Ngugi Writings*. London: H.E.B,1980

Kourouma, Ahmadou. *Suns of Independence*. London : H.E.B, 1981

Mboya, Tom. *The Challenge of Nationhood*. London : H.E.B, 1979

Odinga, Oginga. *Not yet Uhuru*. London : H.E.B, 1967

Palmer, Eustace. *The Growth of the African Novel*. London : H.E.B, 1967

Pieterse, Cosmo; Munro, Donald. *Protest and Conflict in African Literature*. London : African Publishing Corporation, 1969

Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Homecoming*. London : H.E.B, 1972

Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Writers in Politics*. London : H.E.B, 1981

Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Decolonising the Mind*. London : H.E.B, 1981

Saïd, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* New york: Vintage books,1994

ARTICLE

Sharma, Narain Govind. "*Ngugi's Christian Vision: Theme and Pattern in a Grain of Wheat* "*in African Literature Today n°10,* ed.Eldred.D.Jones.London:Heinemann, 1979:167-177

UNPUBLISHED WORKS

Bokeng, Helen Eseme. " An Ideological Interpretation of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and *Devil On The Cross*" Maitrise Dissertation, University of Yaounde, 1989

Nahimana, Consolata. "Biblical allusion as literary device in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*" licence Dissertation, University of Burundi,1983

Ntirandekura, Rose." Independence as a Bride: The Theme of Disillusionment in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*" Licence Dissertation, University of Burundi,1984

INTERNET SOURCES

File://A:/Postcolonial Literature.htm

File://A:/The Empire Writes Back.htm

File://A:/The Evolving Postcolonial Conflict as a Mechanism of Change.htm

File://A:/David Baldwin's Trauma information, Page2.htm

File//A:/the post-colonial dialectic of Change.htm

http://postcolonialweb.org/zimbabwe/antwan/3.html