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Satire in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's the river between

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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

Satire in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's The River Between

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A thesis submitted by Philbert NIMBONA in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree "LICENCE EN LANGUE ET LITTERATURE ANGLAISES"

Bujumbura, January 2004

DEDICATION

To my family,

To Alexandrine BURAKUVYE,

To all who are dear to me,

I warmly dedicate this thesis.

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The realisation and completion of this work would not have been possible without the contribution of many people.

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O. INTRODUCTION

The novel The River Between is a literary work concerning many issues. It would not be erroneous to state that social problems are among the most striking throughout the novel. As they are treated in an accomplished novel, the issues developed in The River Between have attracted the interest of some researchers and scholars. In his thesis "Conflicts On Religion, Education and Land in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's The River Between", Barthazar Nahimana is mainly concerned with the conflicts reflected in the novel. Being a work of art with the literary value it has, The River Between is worthy of consideration.

This study is intended to focus on the novel in general and on one literary device it uses in particular: social satire. But, before tackling the matter, an overall view of the word satire is necessary.

According to Macmillan English Dictionary (2002:1258) satire is the *"use of humour to criticise someone or something and make them seem silly".* But this word *satire* is full of complexity in its origin. In his work A Dictionary of Literary terms (1979:598), Anthony, J. says that

> *it may be a cooking term in origin. Quintilian used the term to refer to the kind of poem written by Lycilius. Elizabethan writers, misled by the etymology, supposed that it derived from the Greek satyr 'woodland demon'*

The situation was later cleared up by Johnson who defined satire in the same work as "*a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured" (p.598).* As it is, this definition is not accurate; that is why Dryden preferred to give only the

end of satire: "*The amendment of vices*" (*p.*598). In addition to the aforementioned, one of the most famous definitions is Swift's and it interests us in this study. For him, in Epilogues to the Satire, as quoted by Anthony, J. in his aforementioned dictionary (1979:598):

> *Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.*

Numerous writers have proposed many definitions of 'satire' but almost all of them agree on the purpose of it: to correct individuals', societies' or institutions' wickedness, vices and follies by ridiculing them.

This study is a literary study of a novel developing a situation that was prevailing in the late 1920s and 1930s in Kenya. However, it is not a study of the Kenyan society but a study of a novel in purely aesthetic terms. It analyses the novel on the basis of only its aesthetic value and characteristics.

The novel under study presents the dilemma of people confronted for the first time with the threat of change. Due to the advent of white men, some values of old are breaking down and two ridges Kameno and Makuyu become antagonistic. However, there are people who try to reconcile the two ridges. Among these people, there is Waiyaki, the protagonist of the novel, who does his best to save his people from despair and to reconcile them. The people believe and obey him at first time, but when he is involved in a love affair with a Christian lady, Waiyaki becomes an alien in the eyes of the people of the ridges and is no more trusted as before. He then fails to achieve his plan. Behind his failure, there is his opponent Kabonyi whose greed for power is devoid of patriotism and sentiment.

As seen before, a novel deals with many issues and matters. This research intends to analyse the novel by following the path of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, a satirist, in order to unfold the subtlety of the novel. In addition, The River Between remains not understandable as long as we cannot interpret the style, some figures of speech and other literary devices used by the author. Indeed, sometimes throughout the novel, the author relies on symbols to convey his message and we cannot easily decipher what he wants to mean without knowing what they stand for. Then, there is a need to interpret his style and know the meaning of the symbols used in the novel.

The River Between has attracted our attention for its aesthetic value and content. It presents a fictitious society but when reading between the lines, the Gikuyu community is being depicted and Kenya at large and even African societies or communities to some degree. It presents men, the prevailing atmosphere and events in a way that lets their wickedness, greed for power and selfishness unveiled. The exposure of society's vices is our concern in this study as well as the way used by the author to present this society. Indeed, the literary techniques used in the novel are crucial to this study. But, before going deeper into the matter, it is worth giving a glance at the author's life, literary career and output.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan teacher, novelist, essayist and playwright. He was born in 1938 in Kamiriithu village, near Limuru in Kiambu District, 12 miles northeast of Nairobi. He himself has disclaimed any precise knowledge of his date of birth as Cook, D. and Okenimkpe, M. quote him in their work Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of his Writings (1997:3): "*I'm sure of the year but not of the month and day*". But two different critics Eddah Gachukia and Micere Githae-Mugo both specify 5 January.

Ngugi's family belongs to the Kenya's ethnic group the Gikuyu. At the time of his birth, Kenya was under British rule and his father Thiong'o Wa Nducu, was an ahoi – a dispossessed peasant farmer forced to become a squatter on the estate of a well-to-do landowner.

In 1962, Ngugi's play The Black Hermit was produced in Kampala. In 1964, he left for England to pursue graduate studies at Leeds University in England. Leeds opened up new perspectives. He made friends with radical fellow students. He now moved in a society where all questions were open and which encouraged him to rethink many issues: political, social, literary and academic. He wrote later, as quoted in the aforementioned work of Cook, D. and Okenimkpe, (1997:7):

> *I think I was confused at Makerere (...) I had more questions than answers and by the time I left I was disillusioned about many things. Leeds systematised my thinking.*

Returning from Leeds in July 1967, Ngugi took up a Special Lectureship in English in Nairobi University College. In March 1969, after only some twenty months, Ngugi resigned this post. On leaving Nairobi, he returned to Makerere for a year as Fellow in Creative Writing. Here, he played a vigorous role in the Active Writers group. At the end of the Fellowship, he went again for a year, to Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, to teach African literature. In August 1971, he returned to the Nairobi English Department.

Ngugi was imprisoned under Public Security for a year without trial in Kamiti Maximum Security Prison. Behind his arrest was the uncensored political message of his popular play Ngaahika Ndeenda. Ngugi was not reinstated in Nairobi University after his release. In June 1982, while in

London for the launching of Devil on the Cross, on hearing of his impending arrest in Nairobi, he determined to remain in exile.

Ngugi has travelled widely since 1982, attending conferences and seminars, and giving lectures in Africa, USA, Germany and Sweden. In the autumn of 1991 he was the Five College Distinguished Professor at Amherst, Massachusetts, on detachment from his much longer period from 1989 till 1992 as Visiting Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Performance Studies in New York State University. In 1994 Ngugi was made Honorary Doctor of Human Studies by Albright College.

Among his literary works are: Weep Not, Child (1964); The River Between (1965); A Grain of Wheat (1967); Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics (1972); Petals of Blood (1977); Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature (1986) and others.

Ngugi's childhood and adolescent experiences are woven into his fiction; he draws on his background judiciously in a number of works. In particular his family situation in an extended African household provides a framework, transmuted into fiction. The parallels between fiction and fact are numerous and he deploys in his novels the names of those near and dear to him. Being a work of art that has interested other researchers, a review of other related works is necessary.

The novel The River Between has been an interesting subject of study for writers, critics and commentators ranging from Africa to Asia. In his critical study An Introduction to the African Novel, A Critical Study of Twelve Books by Chinua Achebe, James Ngugi, Camara Laye, Elechi Amadi, Ayi Kwei Armah, Mongo Beti, and Gabriel Okara, Eustace Palmer recognises that The River

Between is a more accomplished novel than Weep Not, Child. And for him, there is a noticeable control of language in The River Between.

According to him, Ngugi's power of characterisation is developed in this novel under study. Ngugi's treatment of the love affair between Waiyaki and Nyambura demonstrates great sensitivity and skill and Ngugi makes a deliberate attempt to use symbols relevantly.

On this stance, it is worth recognising Ngugi's powers of characterisation. In The River Between, the characters are so convincingly and substantially depicted. Then, the reader knows them from every angle, from inside and out. Not only their physical appearance is drawn but also their inner being so that we get to know their feelings and motive for action. The protagonist for instance comes to life as a would-be hero and his portrayal is carefully "*devised so that at the end we feel we really know him, and accept him as credible and convincing*" as Palmer,E. states it in An Introduction to the African Novel: A Critical Study of Twelve Books by Chinua Achebe, James Ngugi, Camara Laye, Elechi Amadi, Ayi Kwei Armah, Mongo Beti, and Gabriel Okara (1972:12).

In addition, according to Eustace Palmer, the treatment of characters' deeds shows the author's skill and sensitivity. For him, in the same work (1972:12):

> *Ngugi's treatment of the love affair between Waiyaki and Nyambura in this novel demonstrates greater sensitivity and skill than his handling of the same kind of relationship between Njoroge and Mwihaki in the earlier novel(Weep Not, Child).*

Indeed, the growing strength of their feelings towards each other, the dilemma in which they find themselves, the choice they have to make between love and duty (in this case synonymous with death and life) is much more powerfully and convincingly evoked than in the adolescent affair in Weep Not, Child.

Adding to this, Palmer acknowledges Ngugi's use of symbols as being relevant. In fact, circumcision, the two ridges, the river Honia, ... are given a symbolic value and the way the writer describes them evidences his skill and sensitivity. There is also a way to recognise the advance in Ngugi's control of language in The River Between. There is also stylistic sophistication and an awareness of the complex rhythms of English in the same novel.

Another scholar who had an interest in The River Between is Barthazar Nahimana for he dedicated a thesis to the novel. For him, this novel is a reflection of the conflicts on religion, education and land. Indeed, Ngugi's The River Between is a novel concerned with the social and political situation of Gikuyu people and Kenya at large in the 1920s and 1930s. Then, being so attached to their land they could not easily accept another power setting the stage for reforms and a new order. Therefore, this could result in conflicts on any sensitive matter as land, culture and education.

Concerning the characterisation of the novel, Barthazar Nahimana in his thesis "Conflicts on Religion, Education and Land in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's The River Between" (1981:16) sees the character in The River Between as an individual who is affected as a member of the group. For him, The River Between presents a situation that is "*a felt-group experience and implies that the final result is felt by all the people involved in the story -the community, the collective consciousness of the novel*".

And then, he classifies the novel The River Between in the category of situational novels. According to Said, The River Between is a major resistance novel that appropriates the colonial ambition to quest and voyage into the unknown for postcolonial purposes.

In another writing – The Growth of the African Novel, Palmer argues that this novel under study is concerned with the first phase of the historical processes consequent to the imperialist occupation and exploitation.

In E. Said's view, The River Between concentrates on the disruption caused within traditional society by the alien educational and religious systems. Furthermore, the aspects of The River Between are the widespread and effective use of symbols and images, the concern with education and religion, the resourceful and morally courageous women and the indecisive young men who are called upon to play a major role in society but are unable to do so successfully because they are plagued by a sense of insecurity or guilt.

Describing Ngugi's Petals of Blood, Palmer acknowledges that its narrative technique seems to be a conglomerate of the methods of A Grain of Wheat on the one hand, and The River Between and Weep Not, Child on the other. Then for him, The River Between is constructed on grand epic proportions too, but it is not an epic; not just of the East African struggle, but of the entire African struggle. Indeed, The River Between reflects many of the features of an epic especially the traditional one. It is fashioned by a literary artist from historical, mythological and legendary material that he derives from the oral tradition. In addition, as the traditional epic hero, Waiyaki presents features of a figure of immense importance to his nation, often having divine

associations. His origin and forebears are respected as though related to divinity.

The stances and arguments are varied and numerous but we can argue that The river Between is a kind of debate in which characters are allowed to reveal their contrasting attitudes to the business in hand. And then, by their contrasting attitudes, they show their incapacity to hide their weaknesses and vices and since the novel is to a wide range reflecting this fact, it is worthy of this study as a social satire.

In order to deal successfully with this study, there is a need to rely on certain literary styles or methods. Being a literary study, it is essential to put emphasis on the artistic form of the novel rather than the emotional meaning as the Formalistic School implies and therefore there is a reason to rely on this School.

Being grounded on the principle that art is primarily a matter of style and technique and that technique is not only the method but also the object of art, this approach could not escape our interest. Indeed, it is needed in this study for it helps the researcher avoid hasty or biased judgements because it holds that a literary piece of work exists on its own laws and life. Furthermore, since it is against the penchant for religious, social, ethical or political beliefs while studying a work of art, it deserves a special mention. Benjamin Ndayisaba is not far from this view, in his thesis " A Study of Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People as a Political Satire" (1995:7), a work of art is "*a result of a creative process rather than the expression of religious, social, ethical or political beliefs.*"

In addition, being a novel dealing with some aspects of society and humankind, there is a need to use the Sociological Approach. In fact, since

this study is concerned with social satire, this approach becomes very relevant. It is necessary in this study because it links art with society. It holds that society is mirrored in works whose authors belong to. Indeed, the sociological approach does not put the society wherein works of art are produced outside the scope of their study because they are intimately linked.

The study being dealt with is to be subdivided into three chapters that are preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion.

The introduction presents how the study is organised. It gives the general overview of it. In addition, it is in the introduction where are presented the life of the author of the novel The River Between and his other writings.

The first chapter tackles the characterisation of the novel. In this chapter, some characters of the novel are thoroughly studied as satirical figures. Their actions, their motives for action, their deeds and failures are seen in the chapter. However, the characters do not operate in a vacuum but in a particular fictional society. That is why their actions or motives are analysed in relation to their performers' society. In this way, we are in line with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics (1972:31):

> *I write about people: I am interested in their hidden lives, their loves and hates, and how the very tension in their hearts affects their daily contact with other men: how, in other words, the emotional stream of the man within interacts with the social reality.*

The second chapter is concerned with the style used by the author throughout the novel. Since the novel is a literary work, there are some methods used by the author. Among these, there are symbols and some figures of speech. Indeed, before studying a novel, it is necessary to understand it and this requires knowing the symbols used and what they stand for. In the same chapter, there is also an overall study of some figures of speech helping the author to convey his message. Therefore, the analysis of symbols and figurative language used in the novel is prerequisite inasmuch as they are used in a considerable number and have a deep meaning crucial to the understanding of the whole novel.

The third chapter is essential to the whole study. It analyses the novel as a social satire and the novel is analysed in every angle: its content, its plot and its literary form are studied in detail in the chapter. As the title of the novel is, all this is done in order to demonstrate how the novel is a social satire.

In the conclusion, a brief summary of the research is presented and above all, the main phases of the study are pointed out.

CHAPTER I: NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S THE RIVER BETWEEN: SATIRE IN CHARACTERISATION

The novel The River Between presents characters in a struggle for survival. The way in which Ngugi Wa Thiong'o creates his characters in this novel is set as though they are driven by certain forces. These forces – which are sometimes not understood by the characters – lead them either to success or failure. During the course of the story, the reader encounters characters that are motivated to perform earnest actions but that fail later on. In significantly different degrees, either their personal weaknesses are at the centre of the failure or others' weaknesses have a share in it.

Therefore, the author's unhesitating exposure of their attributes as well as their follies and vices helps the reader to know the character and there is an invitation to learn from their mistakes. In order to know them better, we examine their thoughts, feelings and behaviour individually as a way of understanding their emotional and mental problems. While studying these characters, I try to subdivide them in two categories: main characters and subsidiary ones. Although there is a subdivision of characters into categories, there is no character operating in vacuum hence an analysis of any of these characters is done in relation with others.

I.1. Main Characters

According to this subdivision of characters, Waiyaki and Kabonyi fall in the category of main characters. Furthermore, they are round characters for they are the fully realised individuals of the novel and they are fully depicted, with more details than others. While Waiyaki is worth being recognised as the protagonist of the novel, Kabonyi is worth being recognised as his antagonist and each one has in a certain way his extensions in the category of subsidiary characters. Indeed, if Waiyaki has extensions like Chege, Muthoni, Kinuthia or Nyambura; Kabonyi has his own namely Kamau and Joshua.

I.1.1°. Waiyaki

The protagonist of The River Between is Waiyaki who, from the beginning of the novel, is seen as having attributes and opportunities to lead his people. Waiyaki is descendant of Chege, himself lining from famous Gikuyu seers. At first sight, Waiyaki is destined for greatness and respect. His personality is impressive and even his eyes are commanding. But, are these attributes sufficient in order to meet the task and successfully deal with it? In fact, the task is not easy. It is to save his people from the depressive conditions created by an alien power and to solve the problems of his society.

The perplexities facing him create inevitable inner doubts for he is too young for the mission. Waiyaki, despite his pride and enthusiasm for achieving that noble social mission, wonders and fears to fail. As he goes to visit the sacred grove with his father Chege, Waiyaki doubts the sanity of his father. Waiyaki, the renowned obedient son, cannot be blamed for the momentary

loss of confidence in his father. He is simply impressed by what he is told by his father.

However, there is a way to blame Waiyaki for his weakness, that of fearing when the time of having responsibilities draws near. Before significant events or ceremonies, Waiyaki's fear is unveiled and this is noticeable in many situations. When his father is teaching him the secrets of his tribe, Waiyaki is so frightened that he does not want to hear more of his father's prophecies. In The River Between (1969:23), we find a frightened Waiyaki:

> *For the first time, Waiyaki felt really frightened ...*
> *He wanted to cry out: 'Don't tell me more. I don't want to hear more. No! No! No, Father.'*

Surely, he is neither bored with the secrets of tribe's life nor afraid of stepping into the shoes of his old father. The fact is that the author simply unveils the true face of the hero: he is a person, not supernatural as he appears, with his moments of fear and doubt before great things.

In the course of their actions, the characters in The River Between especially Waiyaki, Kabonyi and Joshua are not only confused by external facts but also by their inner being. Indeed, they are imbalanced and their imbalance cannot ease their actions or decisions. In fact, as he is informed to be the last in their line, therefore the last hope, Waiyaki is self-doubting. He knows that he has in his veins the blood of great and legendary personages in the tribe, but he still considers himself not as bold as them and he acknowledges it in this novel under study: "*But-but-they don't know me. I am a child and they rejected Mugo..."(p.24)*

Waiyaki can be taken as a would-be model leader but throughout the novel, one comes across situations where his stature is badly challenged. Indeed, in The River Between, no character escapes his or her due portion of blame and Waiyaki is not an exception. Cook, D. and Okenimkpe, M. (1997:30) are clearer on this point:

> *Ngugi thus tests in his fiction the manhood of his protagonists in the pursuit of certain goals. He asks how far these key figures, unpredictable as they are like all mankind, inevitably subject to psychological imbalance can cope with the challenges which must accompany high aspirations. Whatever the verdict in each case, all Ngugi's novels pay tribute to the high-mindedness and moral courage that lead men to outface hardships and sacrifices in the pursuit of excellence, above all for the good of society at large.*

Even though we can pay tribute to Waiyaki's high-mindedness, this cannot blind us altogether. Waiyaki's situation is sometimes worsened by his inadequate vision. He is aware of the problems of his society but the solution he seems to propose is not the sole cure. For him, education is the only way to freedom from the white men's domination. The problem is that Waiyaki is so obsessed by education that he forgets about other ways. Knowing that Siriana remains the only school and also run by those he is supposed to chase away, the prospect is that this education could produce the 'learned native', whom Macaulay, in Kothandaraman, B. and Lindfors, B.'s The Writer as Activist: South Asian Perspectives on Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1997:30), would perhaps have acknowledged as "*being African in blood and colour, but English*

in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect"; therefore incapable of any change.

Waiyaki's obsession for education so blinds him that he cannot even notice the intention of Kabonyi. As a matter of fact, Kabonyi's plan is to destroy Waiyaki and take his place. Waiyaki seems to be oblivious of this fact and that is a big mistake on his part. It is surprising to find a Waiyaki leaving the leadership of a traditional organisation so influential as the Kiama to his opponent Kabonyi. Waiyaki's naivety and neglect of this fact could result in nothing but catastrophe. For a keen observer – as we would expect Waiyaki-Kabonyi is a threat to all his plans. Indeed, Kabonyi does not hide it. In his speech, he clearly means his stance vis-à-vis Waiyaki: "*Do not be led by a youth. Did the tail ever lead the head, the child the father or the cubs the lion?" (p.109)*

The author here satirises a suffering society where some well-intentioned people are restrained by the antagonistic reception of those who are supposed to support them. In fact, waiyaki is supposed to be a God-sent saviour revealed by the ancient prophecy. But, surprisingly, his fellows, instead of obeying his instructions to the letter, some as Kabonyi, selfish and non-sentimentalist as he is, prefer to sacrifice his people's welfare for the benefit of his own interests. This state of things raises questions. Is Waiyaki wrong to appoint himself to lead and save the people; or, is his society ready to receive him as that saviour they had heard of in prophecies a long time before, the one who would come from the hills?

Waiyaki is not in any way wrong for appointing himself to lead his people. Actually, he does not appoint himself; rather, he simply accomplishes the ancient prophecy that "*salvation shall come from the hills" (p.24).*

Unfortunately, his people are not sighted enough to see in him the son *"who shall rise and whose duty shall be to lead and save the people." (p.24)*

For this fact, his people are so pitiful for not learning a lesson from their situation. In fact, the situation in which they are is not a surprise because they had been warned to be on their guard but they did not listen to the prophecy. When the famous seer Mugo Wa Kibiro warned them that there should come a people with clothes like butterflies (the white men), they did not believe him, some even poured scorn on him and laughed at him. But, what they thought to be a mad man's dream happened. They remained sitted on the fence in their coward hope that things would change with time.

Cowardice is here strongly satirised because it is one of their weaknesses. Indeed, cowardice is one of the people's inherent characteristics in The River Between. They get enough warnings but to a warning or prophecy, they try to counter it just for setting their mind at ease.

Nevertheless, they cannot set their mind at ease for a long time because the problem they refuse to boldly face is not altogether avoided. On the contrary, there is little prospect for any improvement in their condition as long as they still postpone dealing with it for posterity. Waiyaki's people should have learnt a lesson from what happened to them after Mugo Wa kibiro's prophecy; but as they are, they are not the kind of people to heed a prophecy and that is their fatal mistake. Even when Chege had warned them against Siriana Missionary Centre- another chance for them-, they had refused to hear his voice. Instead, they whispered together: "*The white man cannot speak the language of the hills." (p.9)*

This attitude of hiding in a momentary shelter from such an issue- synonymous with life or death- is disastrous in essence. This passage of The

River Between is a satire of the incapacity of Waiyaki's people to stand up and take their responsibility.

Ngugi depicts a society in quandary caused by the advent of a new and stressful power. He makes an exposure of men's behaviour in a tough situation. That is in the situation of this kind that the grandeur of men is tested or else, the wickedness are unveiled.

Towards the end of the novel, the people's inhumane behaviour is strongly satirised. On the love affair between Waiyaki and Nyambura, Waiyaki's fellow people show their ungratefulness and non-readiness to unity. Normally, if these people were aspiring to unity between Kameno and Makuyu, they would sponsor such opportunities of reconciliation between the two ridges. By that love, Waiyaki attempts to prove that Kameno and Makuyu, then Christians and traditionalists are not inherently antagonistic. There is a possibility of living in peace and harmony as before the advent of Christianity. For Waiyaki, the difference of beliefs cannot in any way hamper the relationship between people willing to make it. On this fact, Waiyaki seems to be a more practical and realistic Christian than Joshua and his counterparts. "*After all, he himself loved some Christian teaching. The element of love and sacrifice agreed with his own temperament." (p.114)*

As a matter of fact, Christianity is in essence not against the fact that everyone could uphold his or her own culture and remain a Christian in harmonious relation, communion and mutual respect with other people of different beliefs. The problem is that some people as Joshua with little knowledge of the matter want to exploit the religion according to their egoistic drives claiming to be the right way to follow.

Waiyaki and Nyambura's love is a test to both factions. It is a concern of two young and warm hearts but also an issue involving two ridges and to some extent a community. That love and its interpretation by both factions- Kameno and Makuyu- demonstrate how far the people of the ridges can go in tolerance.

For Joshua and his followers, this love is an additional discredit- after Muthoni's death- brought upon him and his religion. Some among his followers even interpret it as a fate that befalls his household. When Nyambura publicly states her love after Waiyaki's warning that Joshua and his men are in danger of being attacked, Joshua is strongly shocked. His egoism and hatred for the opposing side prevent him from believing Waiyaki's well-meant warning. Nyambura's public statement is a revolt against her father's stubborn behaviour. She is tired of her father's refusal to cope with their neighbouring ridges especially Kameno. Indeed, for Nyambura, a religion has no meaning as long as it restrains her from loving whomever she wants even if he comes from another religion. Even Christ has no meaning without Waiyaki near her, without freedom of action in love:

> *...she hungered for somebody human to talk to; somebody who she could actually touch and feel and not a Christ who died many years ago, a Christ who could only talk to her in the spirit. If only she could meet Waiyaki more often; if only he could stay near her, then Christ would have a bigger meaning for her. (...) Nyambura knew then that she could never be saved by Christ; that the Christ who died could only be meaningful if Waiyaki was there for her to touch, for her to feel and talk to. She could only be saved through Waiyaki.(p.117)*

Her attitude is a sign that, like her sister Muthoni, she also appreciates both Makuyu's and Kameno's way of life and at the most, their beliefs. She is for restoring unity of Makuyu and Kameno. Though emotionally motivated, Nyambura tries in her way to span the gap between the two ridges. However, her daring initiative is strongly restrained by both her father and the people of the ridges.

The attitude of the people of the ridges towards this love affair evidently shows their lack of foresight. For their attitude, both Kameno and Makuyu's people are to be blamed. It is not normal on their part to dramatise a simple fact and make it a social concern. Waiyaki and Nyambura love each other, their unconditional love is devoid of any bias, then normally destined to last forever. But, in the society of this kind, people interfere where they could not and their interference is mainly intended to destroy. After all, Waiyaki has a right to a private life that the people would respect. In addition, the people's manner of handling this love can be held up to ridicule for many reasons.

Waiyaki or Nyambura has the right to choose the love of his/her life. So, if he or she had made his/her choice, the people of the ridges could not have treated them as betrayers. If Waiyaki had pledged all his life to their cause, it is not by falling in love with a Christian lady that they could consider the fact as a betrayal. They want to take Waiyaki prisoner of their antagonisms but he could have the right to individual freedom. It is not right and proper to hurt their hero's deep-seated emotional links because Waiyaki has the right to have a public and a private life.

What is more ridiculous for these people is that their feeling against Waiyaki's and Nyambura's love is dictated by Kabonyi. Before Kabonyi's speech in which he strongly condemns Waiyaki for breaking the oath he had taken before, no one had said a word against Waiyaki. Even when Kabonyi

mentions that Waiyaki had broken the oath he had taken before, people do not believe him, arguing that The Teacher could not break it. When Kabonyi insists that Waiyaki is Joshua's man since he wants to marry his daughter, people refuse and ask for proof. This demonstrates their attachment-though slight- and confidence to Waiyaki.

However, Kabonyi, a deceitful man, had brought Nyambura as a proof and threw the challenge to Waiyaki 'Let him deny her.' Kabonyi well knows Waiyaki for being loyal and deeply exploits his knowledge. Then, Waiyaki cannot rise to the challenge and people finally believe Kabonyi. Despite this change, people cannot find enough to say against Waiyaki, the only word is 'The Oath'. They are manipulated by Kabonyi who takes a sensitive fact as the oath in order to drive their emotions so to reach his goal. In truth, that is Kabonyi who puts words into people mouth, they are not convinced at heart. Even though they suddenly shift from Waiyaki's side to Kabonyi's, they do have a guilty conscience:*"For they did not want to look at The Teacher and they did not want to read their guilt in one another's face". (p.175)*

Indeed, they knew they were in the wrong for having betrayed Waiyaki in a difficult period. Therefore, there is a way to blame them for their incapacity to notice inadequacy in Kabonyi's stratagem.

Kabonyi presents Waiyaki as a betrayer to the tribe but he does not propose any valid alternative solution to their problems. The people's weakness is that they do not ask Kabonyi for any more solution to their predicament. It is as though Waiyaki's love were the cause of their problems. After all, Kabonyi, the renegade Christian who leads the reinstated tribal council, the Kiama, and conducts the campaign for immediate action, is from Makuyu, the heart of Joshua's territory. If people were sighted enough, they could see in Kabonyi rather than in Waiyaki, a man capable of treachery. If a

contact with Christians is really synonymous with betrayal, Kabonyi had betrayed them long before Waiyaki.

In addition, Kabonyi's conversion to Christianity cannot be on a par with loving a converted girl in terms of betraying. Waiyaki's act is minor compared to that of Kabonyi. Therefore, either Kabonyi or the people have not any reason to accuse only Waiyaki of betrayal. Adding to this fact, the people's failure to take a firm and sure stance is worth satirising. They make allegiance to one person with a seemingly deep-seated devotion and when another one presents a different viewpoint, they easily shift to his side. They even not take time to analyse the consequences of their act and this inevitably leads to their downfall. For this fact, the author does not wait until the situation worsens, he simply satirises the people for their weaknesses, who act counter to their society's aspirations with hope for the best. Cooks, D. and Okenimkpe, D., in the aforementioned work (1997:36), add:

> *Ngugi is concerned not with happy endings nor neat resolutions but with having some impact on his actual society by provoking and stirring his readers.*

This people's easy shift from one side to its opposite extreme highlights the confusion in a fast changing environment and the unease to find their feet. It is also Ngugi's setting for the clashes between viewpoints and personalities within this society confronted for the first time by the thrust of imported innovations.

To variably different degrees, all the characters in The River Between are under the influence – if not under the control – of the new force. They can devise strategies to survive, discomfit their opponents or betray their friends but even though they are sometimes unaware of this fact, that is the new

force which is behind almost all their acts. As a result, the characters in The River Between are incapable of mastering their fate even though some of them show signs of the attempt.

In the same way, in the course of their actions, the characters show themselves still wanting and far from being immune to criticism and satire. The irony of this novel's storyline is that the hero is a victim of the people's irony and hypocrisy. He is too much confident to his people and they seem to deserve it at first sight. Then, the hero does whatever possible in his limits people acclaim him. He is so much stirred by their encouragement that he endeavours to perform the impossible and even forgets his private life.

For instance, after his debarment from Siriana School, we find Wayaki, who, instead of despairing, rises and pledges himself to quench the children's thirst for learning. He does the impossible for he has actually no means to achieve such a goal. His dream is to build as many schools as possible in the ridges so that any child could have an opportunity to study. Waiyaki does not want children to be victim of their social background like him at Siriana School. The people's irony and hypocrisy is that they would esteem Waiyaki as long as he would be working for their welfare. Whenever he slips in his way, no one is there to assist him and there is no tolerance of a mistake on his part.

That Waiyaki does his best to satisfy his people and their children is not too much of a sacrifice. But, doing all this at the expense of his private life is significant and deserving at least gratefulness from his people. On the contrary, in the need of people's support that could comfort him after Kabonyi's challenge, Waiyaki does not see 'his people' as he thought them to be - thankful and obedient to him - but people under Kabonyi's weight. Remembering that Waiyaki's situation is a result of many forces and

weaknesses ranged against him, there is a way to specify that each one or faction could be blamed for their own weaknesses.

For Waiyaki, the weakness lies in the way he handles people. He operates on an unknown field and due to his idealism and exaggerated goodness; it could not come to his mind that the people of the ridges could betray him. Furthermore, his learning somehow restrains him because he has developed a conscious personal inner life that makes it hard for the new learned man to accept the kind of total communal involvement that both tradition and his mission demand. He wastes too much time in the realm of books and forgets that his opponent Kabonyi is tricking his way. He has dreams- good indeed- and thinks that they match with people's aspirations. However, even though his dreams are in general his people's needs, Waiyaki's neglect or unawareness of the people's great need 'action now' compromises him.

However, before too readily blaming Waiyaki, the people of the ridges are worth blaming for their weaknesses too. They are selfish for instance in the handling of the love affair. They want a Waiyaki serving as an instrument of only their interests. The people do not permit Waiyaki's imagination free scope to lead a private life. Whenever Waiyaki's deeds do not meet people's expectations and immediate needs; he appears to them a renegade, an iconoclast, who had joined the enemy instead of arming himself and his society against him.

Ironically, Waiyaki's contact with more formal patterns of thought has heightened his awareness of human rights but his situation as a public man does not allow him to enjoy the inalienable right to love who he wants. As a man who brooks no restraints, even when his private life is infringed upon, Waiyaki does not stop his burning aspiration to freedom. But, it is late in the

day for him to learn that the outcome of the life process is confrontation rather than accommodation.

Waiyaki and Nyambura's bad posture is not a by-product of an inadequate love as people could assume, but it is shaped by the clash of antagonistic forces within the ridges. Waiyaki and Nyambura choose their way to span the gap between the two ridges but their society leaves little chance to people who take their own way different from the communal belief. Seemingly he who takes his own way in this society appears an iconoclast and has to pay for his conduct. Thus, Waiyaki and Nyambura are victims of this social system and they also pay with suffering for having chosen their own way.

The River Between is rich in such dilemmas as that of Waiyaki and Nyambura. It leaves characters bewildered and their confusion is mostly at the core of their failure. In the society of this kind portrayed in The River Between, choosing one's way and success, instead of being partners, become antagonists. This contention is the pivot of both plot and characters. The characters are under the weight of their society, when they become aware of the fact and try to raise their voices, they are in many cases countered by social constraints.

The author makes it clear by this fact that social values are to be respected and treasured but by the same token satirises some attributes that are unnecessary in the cohesion and advancement of a society. Indeed, in the novel under study, society sometimes exercises restraint on the characters who are working for the good of the same society. It becomes then clear that characters are not only victims of their personal weaknesses and follies, but also of their society's values. However, amid the social values, the will of

characters is vital. They crave for both change and continuity of the society even though the conditions are against their will.

In The River between, the development of characters helps the reader understand their behaviour vis-à-vis some issues because it may be due to the process of their experience of life. As a matter of fact, the protagonist of the novel starts as a mere character still wanting. Afterwards, he is revealed to possess some attributes. So, his mind is awakened and he is urged to make use of his attributes. This urge is still confusing him at the beginning but fortunately, the more he grows the clearer is his vision. He then gets a sense of purpose that will possess him thereafter. Throughout his actions, the protagonist's philosophy of life grows in three phases.

First, during an early period up to about his creation of Marioshoni School, he evinces an essentially moralist-humanist outlook on human affairs. This period is characterised by a confident hope in a better future, and an innocent, youthful trust in people's good intentions and goodwill in the process of bringing about that future. This period reflects also a reformist and conciliatory mood, which dominates the protagonist. His mood is characterised by an urge to justice and fair play in human affairs, the only possible measure of their sense of dignity and self-respect.

Secondly, the intermediate phase is the period of involvement in teaching his pupils and people. This is a period of fame and trust in him. People do respect the protagonist and call him 'The Teacher', they see in him the Saviour revealed by seers of old. It is also the period when he comes to know people's stance upon key issues as how to free them from the alienating power. For this, he is assailed by a feeling of pity and disgust for his people are not awakened and wise enough in the ways of the tribe.

The last phase is the period of corrosive disillusionment and a bitter revulsion against his people's behaviour. He is remorseful for having forgotten to teach them to unite with Makuyu and that could have alleviated the feud between the two ridges. It is a disastrous period for the protagonist who has to face a growing opposition and a destructive anxiety.

The characterisation of this novel under study is set according to a pattern that displays characters with great goals in mind who intermingle with wicked ones. On their road to great achievements, the former are countered by the latter to the point of being destroyed but their grandeur in society survives. The irony of the story is that the hero does not get to know his opponents. He meets them during his action and even gives them confidence, they are put in full knowledge of his plans. Contrary to the hero, his opponents get enough time to know him so that they could later fight him with the weapons they had got from him.

I. 1. 2°. Kabonyi

Kabonyi is the version of this type of opponent to Waiyaki. According to Kabonyi, Waiyaki is his foe. Evidently, he must do his best to destroy him and take his place. Kabonyi's folly is that he directs his fury to his supposed saviour instead of his actual enemies. Actually, Kabonyi is not out of the throng of the dispossessed and Waiyaki is not the one to have created his situation. Instead of uniting his force with Waiyaki's in order to change the state of things. Kabonyi chooses the opposite way and fights the one who was meant to be his ally. Kabonyi pretends to be wiser than Waiyaki, then fitting the position of a saviour since he is older than Waiyaki:

Kabonyi saw Waiyaki as an upstart, a good-for-nothing fellow, a boy with rather silly ideas. He was a mere boy in the face of someone like Kabonyi, whose age and experience entitled him to greater attention. (p.106)

Therefore, a youngster like Waiyaki could not lead the people in any way. It is true that Waiyaki is younger than Kabonyi but why did Kabonyi not be aware of the need for leadership before Waiyaki? Age alone cannot entitle him to greater attention in a reasonable society. As Waiyaki emerges and prospers, Kabonyi's sudden call for leadership is suspect. In any way, Kabonyi's drive could not lead him to the position of a good leader. Through Kabonyi, the author presents to the reader the kind of man who is propelled only by his negative instinctive desires and drives. As a result, these drives lead to disaster as that of breaking Waiyaki's project, and then his society's hope.

This pair of Kabonyi and Waiyaki epitomises the example of people who are facing a common danger. However, this pair represents two worlds in one with two contrary visions and lets the reader to judge. Thus, it means en passant to the reader – especially the youth – to identify the powerfully positive elements in their heritage. It challenges the youth to refuse to sit on the fence and retreat from a complex situation into self-pity or despair. It is not only Waiyaki who is called for responsibility of building on the sacrifice of his private life, rather any reader of the novel is invited to such a commitment. Then, such a commitment could enable people to find ways of realigning the drive and direction of a society – which is in danger of losing its ways – through concerted policies and actions.

Kabonyi lacked foresight and determination to stand alone against colonialism and alienation of the land when he was still young. In old age, he

finds that a youngster, in the age group of his own son, is about to fulfil what he had failed to do. That is why he wants to create more difficult conditions for the hero for he does not want anyone to do it if it is not he or his son and he cannot accept that Waiyaki succeeds where he had failed.

Valuable leaders could avoid this selfishness of Kabonyi. They must unite and accept their incapacity on some points, they must show their readiness to suffer for a communal cause like Waiyaki. They are invited to understand one another for the sake of their society's welfare because the contrary is observed as actually or potentially disastrous.

Ngugi does not overtly adopt a stance for or against any of his characters. He simply shapes them with their attributes, achievements and failures. Throughout their development, we come to conclude that this or that character deserves to be congratulated for his/her outstanding actions; otherwise he or she is despised for his or her vices or follies that lead him or her to downfall.

However, even though there is liberty for action to each character, The River Between's plot does not give a chance to a wicked character for everlasting prosperity and fame. A bad tempered character does his best to keep the top but unfortunately for him, the more he climbs, the deeper he badly falls destroying all what he dishonestly built.

In fact, Kabonyi is a prototypical wicked character whose passion is to be on the top of his society and for him, no matter how he can achieve it even if it requires Waiyaki's death. The plight of Kabonyi is caused by himself because he perseveres in quibbling on mere affairs in an inappropriate time. As the situation is, there is no room for individual happiness whereas the

whole community is suffering. Rather, there is a pressing need for joint action by the community instead of individual self-assertion.

As we can notice through Waiyaki and Kabonyi, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o depicts a society, not ideal, but a society of antagonisms and problems that need to be solved. He fictionally caricatures some of his characters not for the sake of fun but for the purpose of correcting their defects and those of living people. As we read about Waiyaki, Joshua, Kabonyi, Muthoni or any other character, we get to know their personal dreams and their ways to reach them. Then, for a successful character, we are informed on his or her hints to survive in an almost hostile environment. On contrary, a failing character reminds us of the risk of failure that runs counter to one's initiative, therefore an invitation to care about the way to take in any action.

Ngugi's portrayal of his characters reflects a call to action because in his narrative, there is a need to change the state of things in the society he describes. Even if the conditions for action are not propitious, the author dares the character to go on and the result will determine the stature of the performer.

As Waiyaki, Kabonyi is not immunised against bewilderment. The problem of identity is not altogether solved and he is so confused about this. He abandoned his traditional beliefs in order to embrace Christianity as a saving new faith. He then afterwards finds out that Christianity cannot be the shelter he expected, he withdraws and goes back to his early practices without conviction. Then, we could not expect him to defend the traditional values he had rejected in good faith. In reality, his true colours show that he readopted the traditional beliefs for want of any alternative.

I.2. Subsidiary Characters

In this category, there are Joshua, Chege, Muthoni and others. Furthermore, they are flat characters for they are lightly sketched. However, even though they are lightly sketched, they leave their imprint on the course of the story.

I. 2. 1°. Joshua

With Joshua, the problem is that he has a stubborn faith in his newly acquired religion. The way he acts makes him ridiculous. He even denies his origin and relatives who cannot follow him. He identifies himself to alien people-missionaries- whose culture and vision is by far different from his. He is not aware that missionaries have another purpose, that of helping the alien power by shaping the indigenous into a docile servant and he becomes one.

For him, there is no room for questioning what he is taught in the new religion. Joshua is a fanatical Christian who wants to dictate the way to his followers. For Joshua, Christianity is a religion learnt and accepted as it is, he cannot dare make any criticism because it would be an act against God, a sin that cannot be forgiven.

In his view as a chosen and saved man of God, the problems of his actual fellows are of the world of sinners. He is not concerned with those earthly problems of land and cultural alienation. Relying on the principle of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's, the dispossession of the land by the new power is not a catastrophe, that is how things must be and it is normal for him. Joshua's imbalance lies in the fact that he does not have a foot on earth; he wants to live in an ideal world when it is actually impossible. According to him, there is no place for him in the earthly world and there is a contradiction.

Joshua denies being a sinner but he hates his fellows from Kameno and teaches his followers to do so - which is not a minor sin. If Joshua were really a chosen and saved man of God, he would preach positive values as unity, love, equality, etc because they are basic doctrines of Christianity. Joshua, in reality, is the kind of Christian who imitates the missionaries without knowing their purposes as observed by Mugambi, J.N.K. in Critiques of Christianity in African Literature with Particular Reference to the East African Context (1992:101):

> *Becoming a Christian meant imitating the ways of living of the missionary. But the missionary himself did not expose his culture completely to the African catechumens and catechists. For example, in the company of fellow Europeans, the missionaries talked, ate and joked as Europeans, while in the company of Africans they had to select and give to Africans what they considered simple enough for the 'primitive' Africans to understand.*

In addition, Joshua's new religion does more harm than good. The relative social harmony that characterised Makuyu and Kameno has been affected by his alien religion. Then, a person with traditional beliefs is considered by the new converts as a sinner and new converts as white men's slaves. Indeed, Cook and Okenimkpe's observation in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of his Writings (1997:30) is not very different from this point of view because for them, in The River Between: "*Christianity is so encrusted in its missionary form with racist, class-ridden bigotry that it is seen as doing more harm than good ...*" *(p.30)*

Joshua is a satirical character who takes for granted what he is taught without understanding. Then, he appoints himself to be the representative of missionaries in remote ridges and spreads the received teaching with a vigorous conviction and zeal. He is an instrument of the colonising power but he is not aware of it. Joshua, a model Christian as he considers himself, fails to make his household a model in the village.

> *He meant to be an example to all, a bright light that would show the way, a rock on which the weak would step on their way to Christ.(p.34)*

Joshua wants his wife and daughters to be examples of Christians but it is not the case in practice. First of all, his wife is circumcised and seems not to be a believer at heart.

> *Her faith and belief in God were coupled with her fear of Joshua. But this was religion and it was the way things were ordered. However, one could still tell by her eyes that this was a religion learnt and accepted, inside the true Gikuyu woman was sleeping.(p.39)*

Secondly, his daughter Muthoni embodies both Christianity and traditional beliefs, what is against her father's teaching Joshua deeply regrets to have a circumcised wife and he is morally stressed, his sorrow can be noticed in his prayer: "*God, you know it was not my fault. God, I could not do otherwise, and she did this while she was in Egypt.*" *(p.35)*

The fanaticism of Joshua is here strongly satirised. Ngugi Wa Thing'o wants to show through Joshua, how Christianity worked hand in hand with colonisers and colonised people's mind to the point that they denied their

roots. For the author, Christianity and colonialism had the same mission and Joshua is their pitiful and unconscious victim. Ngugi's position in Cooks, D. and Okenimkpe, M.'s Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of his Writings (1997:191) is so revealing on the matter:

> *... the missionary, the settler and the colonial governor came as three imperial missives of the Western-monopoly capital. The settler grabbed the land and used African labour. The Governor protected him with the political machinery and with the gun. And the missionary stood guarding the door as a colonial spiritual policeman.*

Therefore, Joshua's non-calculating and passionate involvement with the new religion puts in evidence his short-mindedness on a complex and delicate issue. In the main, Waiyaki, Kabonyi and Joshua share some features. They are all of them, to some different degrees, committed to devise the directions in which their society is to move. Nevertheless, their points of view are inherently incoherent and this deepens the plight of their society. As long as they cannot look in the same direction and take agreed upon decisions, there is no hope for their society to successfully withstand the new power.

Starting from Waiyaki, though his stance is invariably different from his counterparts', that is Kabonyi and Joshua, he leaves room for unity with them. Indeed, there is no vindictive intention towards them in his actions. Even though he is challenged by Kabonyi, he does not lose his temper; instead, he takes a time of self-criticism so as to find better solutions to the challenge. In his nature, Waiyaki is not ill tempered; he is not at ease whenever he is working against the will of his fellows. He always feels the need to unite with his opponents Kabonyi and Joshua against what he considers to be a common foe- their exploitation by an alien power.

Compared to Joshua, hats off to Waiyaki for his admirable loyalty to his society. Even his father had feared for his change when at missionaries' school but Waiyaki remains loyal to the tribe's way of life. His loyalty is put to test at Siriana School but he does not change his mind and not turns the back to his tribe.

On the contrary, Joshua's short contact with missionaries completely changes him to the point that one who had known him before could not have recognised him after. However, despite his attributes, Waiyaki can be blamed for his naivety that prevents him from handling people as human beings capable of treachery. In addition, Waiyaki's lack of interest in radical social thinking is also to condemn. In such a situation as his, he could counter Kabonyi by a deep involvement with the wider Gikuyu movement-the Kiama organisation. But, his lazy-minded conservatism, his overmastering passion for teaching and his fiery idealism are a handicap to his imagination. For this, he fails because his malicious opponents like Kabonyi jump at this opportunity and purposefully make use of it.

As a matter of fact, his conceptions are more limited. As the state of things is, education is of course of paramount importance but it is not the sole way to take. The weakness of Waiyaki is that he considers education as a panacea for all the problems of his society. Instead, he would have thought about various solutions because the issue is complex. As a teacher, "*he foregoes the opportunity to relate his school and its syllabus to the environment and the social climate in which his students live*" as Cook, D. and Okenimkpe, M. state it in their work Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of his Writings (1997:38).

It is then hardly surprising to find Waiyaki[s], Kabonyi[s] and others in one's environment. All of Kabonyi, Waiyaki and Joshua are so committed to their plans that they cannot easily be deflected from their set purposes. However, if Kabonyi and Joshua share the feature of trusting only people of like mind, Waiyaki is not of their group. Kabonyi differs from Joshua on various aspects. Whereas Joshua is a staunch believer in the new faith, essentially dehumanising and mechanical in his evangelical work and subservient to ideas which he makes no claim to have mastered; Kabonyi is a critical believer and deceitful in his calculation. He cannot be fully converted in the new faith since he cannot find immediate profits, the only purpose of his turn to Christianity.

In addition, Waiyaki, Kabonyi and Joshua are central figures in their society. And more, their will is vital to the society; the immediate outcome of the social struggles is determined by their strengths and weaknesses. If they differ in their prescriptions and assumptions, there is no way of containing the resultant conflicts. The situation in which they are requires unity that would enable society at large to retain its positive traditions and withstand the disintegrating force of the new power, whose pressure inevitably deepens rather than alleviates social injustice.

There is in their society, an innate wisdom in working folk that needs to be fostered and given a sense of direction by far-sighted, selfless leadership. Thus, Waiyaki, Kabonyi, Joshua and other influential people in the tribe would have to work consequently. However, the fact is that they do not have the same will; some even do not care about the crying need for unity. Some as Waiyaki can hardly distance themselves sufficiently from the personal dilemmas of youths. Others like Kabonyi and Joshua are not willing to put the interests of the majority before their own. For this, they cannot hope to co-ordinate the various needs of society without being carried away by individual obsessions and diverted into private dramas. Waiyaki may be seen as a model,

but his story serves even more forcefully as a warning. Leadership must not become distanced from the throng. United action presupposes the mustering of a corporate will, not the mass following of a self-ordained saviour.

The characters in The River Between are fictional. Yet, their views, actions, misfortunes or their success reflect the author's world and fellow people. Even Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's view in Kothandaraman, B. and Lindfors, B.'s The Writer as Activist: South Asian Perspectives on Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1997:175) is almost the same:

> *Multiple narratives, time-changes, events can be seen by the same character at different times, or by different characters at different times, and of course, they have different implications for each of those situations [...] But, it is of course, quite frankly, my own development as a human being...*

It is then hardly surprising to find Waiyaki[5], Kayonyi[5] and others in one's environment. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, being a recorder and monitor of society, tries to describe and-if necessary-satirises these people and society as he sees and knows them. However, there is no narrow sentiments in his narrative, he simply presents things as they are. But also, through some highly minded characters, there is an allusion to how things might be. Then, it is up to those characters to set their own purposes either on their own or inspired by some old seers as Chege for Waiyaki. The characters have individual responsibilities that are at the same time of the whole community in which they operate. As a matter of fact, as Cook, D. and Okenimkpe, M. (1997:69) put it:" *Ngugi insists that all of us as members of a community must individually or collectively accept responsibility for its growth and well being."*

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o puts his characters in an environment where they can find themselves misfit. As a way of survival, they have to struggle. In The River Between, the characters have no way to surrender because it would endanger their lives. Even though the situation is upsetting or unbearable, there is no attempt to commit suicide as that of Njoroge in Weep Not, Child. Before vicious counter-currents at a time of great confusion and uncertainty, the characters have to choose the way to follow in order to attain a certain goal. In their way, there may be plenty of tempting facts, that is then when their vices and weaknesses surface. If they overcome their weaknesses, there is a way to succeed or else, if they are overcome, there is a failure near at hand that mostly results in a tragedy. By their failure, the author reminds the reader that there is no way to exonerate a character with vicious social conduct. Instead, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o satirises their vicious conduct so that the character-and therefore the reader-could positively change his conduct for better results and therefore for a better society.

I.2.2° Chege

Some characters in The River Between do not develop according to the aforementioned pattern. There are some who appear either at the beginning or in the middle of the storyline and vanish but after having left a significant imprint on the novel.

In this category of characters falls Chege, the father of Waiyaki for he does not last for long. Even though his life is short in the novel, he tries to bring a very significant contribution to the running of his community. His stature and knowledge could entitle him to greater attention in normal circumstances, but in his case, his fellows do not lend an ear to him. He advises and foresees things that happen to his surroundings but he is never

believed by his fellows. People do not hear a word of wise people as Chege but when demagogues like Kabonyi deliver a speech, they carefully manage to attend and listen to him.

Here then lies the irony of the story. Instead of believing wise people and closing their ears to liars and demagogues, they do the opposite. People's behaviour on this issue is dangerously inhumane and this fact does not augur well. These people are satirical figures for they live from day to day relying on futile principles. Instead of doing the best to free themselves from the predicament in which they are, they excel in its deepening by inadequate handling.

I.2.3° Muthoni

Another character who pays by suffering for having chosen her own way in The River Between is Muthoni. She is a Christian but longing for traditional ways of life. She wants to be circumcised in order to be a real woman in the tribe.

Her longing for circumcision is against her religion and family's principles. Nevertheless, in her view, she can be a Christian and at the same time embrace the traditional way of life. For her, there is something lacking in her being as long as she has not yet undergone circumcision like her father and mother. That is why she feels the need to choose a different way from that of the family. However, her choice is not easy to make, either she remains bound to her father's teaching and misses the opportunity to womanhood or she chooses womanhood and becomes subject to her father's curse. She then prefers to answer to the demand of the tribe, stronger and more meaningful than that of her family.

Muthoni's choice is not synonymous with revolt, it is a sign of realism and her thought is devoid of hypocrisy. Indeed, she knows that her father and mother are circumcised and are Christians, so why her father forbids her to be circumcised, she wonders:

> *Father and mother are circumcised. Are they not Christians? Circumcision did not prevent them from being Christians.I too have embraced the white man's faith. However, I know it is beautiful, oh so beautiful to be initiated into womanhood. You learn the ways of the tribe. Yes, the white man's God does not quite satisfy me. I want, I need something more. My life and your life are here, in the hills, that you and I know.(p.29-30)*

Muthoni finds her father's way of life hypocritical and purposeless. She chooses her own way in defiance of her father's religious fanaticism and zeal. Muthoni's choice once more highlights Joshua's inhumanity and blind fanaticism for once Muthoni had left her family for Kameno to be circumcised, she had ceased to be his daughter and had become the child of the devil.

In the novel, the author sets to some characters an obsession that becomes their drive to act and Muthoni is among them. If Waiyaki is obsessed with education and unity, that he suffers for it, Muthoni is not an exception. However, her suffering is less due to her physical wound than to the moral pain. Like Waiyaki, she is worried about the deep gap between Kameno and Makuyu and wants to span it in her own way.

Contrary to many a people of the ridges, Muthoni is not the kind of person to waste time wondering about the complexity of her situation and retreat into despair. Muthoni, in her small ways, much more nearly fulfils her ideal. She does not seek martyrdom; she suffers in the pursuit of the fullness

of life. Within the small spheres in which she can hope to exercise her influence, she stands up to defend her convictions fearlessly and unequivocally. Muthoni can be contrasted with Waiyaki in her undeviating steadfastness in all her beliefs. Since religion has no meaning without a foot in the tribe according to her, she is ready to confront and surmount her religious obstacles. While Waiyaki fails and fumbles, Muthoni remains undefeated. Waiyaki himself admits her success where he himself is found wanting. Even though short her life is in the novel, she makes serious efforts to reconcile the conflicting ethics and mores of indigenous and adopted religions.The death of Muthoni even leaves an imprint on both Kameno and Mayuku so as to show that she is a product of both Mayuku and Kameno. Indeed, after her death, not only Makuyu people are worried and wonder, but also Kameno people.

For Kameno people, her death is a punishment to Joshua for having betrayed his tribe by being converted to an alien religion. Their Murungu is angry and it is therefore a warning for all the people not to provoke their God any more. Then Muthoni's death could serve as a lesson that people of Kameno and Makuyu could not like to learn any more. For the people of Makuyu, Christians, the death of Muthoni is a sign that circumcision is an evil thing and "*Muthoni was an evil spirit sent to try the faithful." (p.67-68)* For the missionaries of Siriana Centre, "*the death of Muthoni for ever confirmed the barbarity of Gikuyu customs." (p.63)*

Muthoni's life was meant to unify all the antagonistic factions in her society. But her death does not augur well because it revives the old antagonisms. In fact, after her death, all the factions involved in the novel show themselves still clinging to their wicked positions instead of following the way of Muthoni to unity. Each faction interprets Muthoni's death as a warning and stiffens its position. The resultant outcome is the reinforcement of the feud between Makuyu and Kameno.

In Kameno, since all other circumcised boys and girls healed and that only Muthoni-a Christian from Makuyu - died, the new faith is itself evil and endangering the life of the ridges. "*The death of Muthoni had clearly shown that nothing but evil would come out of any association with the new faith.*" *(p.67)*

For the people of Kameno, no more relation with Makuyu is envisageable in the near future. Instead, people must stick more to the ways of the ridges for Muthoni's death "*...was also a punishment to the hills. It was a warning to all, to stick to the ways of the ridges, to the ancient wisdom of the land, to its ritual and song.*" *(p.62)*

For Makuyu people, the death of Muthoni is also a warning and brings a new light to their life. "*It was now clear to all that nothing but evil could come out of the adherence to tribal customs.*" *(p.68)*

Therefore due to her death, Joshua's followers are invited to strengthen their faith in order to triumph over temptation of the devil because "*the journey to the new Jerusalem with God was not easy. It was beset with temptation.*" *(p.62)* In Makuyu, Muthoni's death then strengthens the hatred for tribal practices and anyone who could dare follow Muthoni's example would be an outcast. "*Therefore nobody would ever be a member of Christ's Church if he was so much as found connected in any way with circumcision rites.*" *(p.68)*

For Siriana missionaries, the death of Muthoni brings a new vision on the matter. Missionaries have to take measures against traditional rites especially circumcision. Livingstone, the head of the mission, who had refused to adopt harsh measures against tribal customs, has to change his policy after Muthoni's death. He feels that circumstances are laughing at his old age; he is

determined, after this death, to fight by all means in his hands the Prince of Darkness - circumcision.

Muthoni is not out of the throng of obsessed characters. She has a burning drive to achieve what she considers to be essential to her full self-realisation. Indeed, if Muthoni dies and that there is no sigh of regret in her last words shows that she is still committed to the achievement of her dream. As she is dying her last words to Waiyaki are: "*... tell Nyambura I see Jesus. And I am a woman, beautiful in the tribe...*" *(p.61)* Muthoni dies still clinging to circumcision as the kind of self-fulfilment, self-realisation, and liberation from the destructive influence of her father's religion.

If we do pay tribute to characters for their courage, Muthoni deserves it for her boldness to confront death. We could expect Muthoni's desperation at her worsening wound due to circumcision. But on the contrary, in her last days - and she knows it -, we find Muthoni still leaning on her meaning of circumcision with an admirable courage.

However, if we pay tribute to Muthoni for her courage and undeviating steadfastness, it is not synonymous with minimising her weaknesses. Despite the very best intentions, she does not escape her due portion of blame because her obsession is fanatical as that of her father. And, to some degree, there is a way to assume that Muthoni's kind of fanatical devotion to her set purposes is inherited from her father. Therefore, to variably different degrees, the tragedy of Muthoni is an outcome of conflicting forces inside and outside her very being.

CHAPTER II. THE AUTHOR'S STYLE IN THE NOVEL

When reading The River Between, there is no plenty of room for disagreement in the use of stylistic principles by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. In fact, in the novel, there is an awareness of style on the part of the author; style taken as the appearance, the organisation and as the effect of the text.

As long as the use of style is concerned, the two opposing traditions of style cannot escape our attention in this study. On the one hand, style considered by Gunther, K. (1988:126) as "*the realisation and organisation of linguistic features in a text.*" On the other hand, style considered "*in relation to the effects produced in the complex interrelations of the producer of the text, text, and consumer of the text in their specific social positioning.*"

Since the object of this study is social satire, the relation between the producer of the text, the text and the consumer of the text- who can himself be an indirect or secondary target of satire- is to be looked upon. Therefore, in this chapter, we take as granted the interrelation between the two aspects of style- style as the appearance and organisation of linguistic forms in a text, and the effects produced in the relations of production and consumption of a text.

The novel under study is written in prose. It is a prose which is gently but firmly patterned, bound together by balances, repetitions, parallels and contrasts. Its pattern is achieved by an author who bears in mind the taste of his readers. Indeed, being a writer who has always aspired to be popular in the most enterprising sense of the phrase, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o offers in The River Between the best of himself as a popular novelist: a style which is neither very difficult nor laborious.

Short, concentrated sentences are the key to the style in which Ngugi launched and developed his career as a writer and this is noticeable in The River Between. His structures are varied and highly concentrated; he uses a diction that is spontaneous and exact. He tries to reach a simplicity which is neither elementary nor a reduction of language to bold outlines. However, it is a distilling of all the main possibilities of a language so as to arrive at a clarity which has both subtlety and richness.

In The River Between, looking more closely at its short sentences, we may at first be surprised to find how grammatically they often are. Yet Ngugi achieves sophisticated effects without departing from either a vocabulary or arrangement which is comprehensible to average readers. Indeed, the style used by Ngugi in this novel is direct and easily accessible. It is not of such a complexity of a kind to prevent the reader to enjoy its content.

In addition, the use of proverbs in the novel serves a purpose. Either the author uses them directly or else, through characters that he endows with the status of living men and women. Whoever may be, the character or the author's use of proverbs is meaning and crucial to his speech or statement. Whenever there is a tendency to raise questions about the validity of their statements, speeches or claims, the author or the characters rely on proverbs and they are effective. Either the proverbs are used for the purpose of emphasis or for persuasion.

Ngugi's style makes that few elements of language are extended so far as to become obstructive in The River Between. Instead, neatness and meanings are looked for and Ngugi makes use of these valuable adjuncts without hesitation, but sufficiently carefully so for not having a ponderous or obstructive effect. In addition, sometimes throughout the novel The River Between, we may find some structures used by the author, which seem to

deviate from formal English traditional grammatical structure. For instance, we find sentences half English and half Vernacular: *'From agu and agu'; 'the mugumo tree'; 'kagutui ka mucii gatihakagwo';' it was the tree of murungu...'* This is not a sign of immaturity or poverty of the author's English lexicon; instead this is part of his style. He relies on words or proverbial structures of the vernacular languages in order to give much more meaning to the fact involved. We as readers are taken inside the mystery rather than being external observers. Some vernacular words as 'thingira' are part of Ngugi's English because there is no appropriate English word to mean exactly them. He deploys vernacular words because he feels somehow decanting their meaning when translated into English. He then prefers to add on an 'equivalent' meaning in English if need be. Moreover, this is a manifestation of Ngugi's penchant for being free in creative urges and in his manipulation of English.

In addition, throughout The River Between, we find Ngugi's frequent echoings of biblical language and quotations quite often used with a slight irony. However, we may notice en passant that the Bible is mostly used more as a reference book than a religious guide. On his religious faith, Cook, D. and Okenimkpe, M. (1997:249) add: *"We have no doubt that the Bible sang its music to him and excited his emotions less equivocally than its content and message influenced his thinking."*

In a certain way, the conscious use of irony on religious issues is part of Ngugi's style in this novel under study. Irony is especially used when he is describing new converted characters to Christianity.

For instance, Joshua is the target of his irony when he does not mind the payment of taxes to the newly settled government whereas his fellows are dreadfully worried about it.

> *He himself [Joshua] knew what a government was, having learnt about this from Livingstone. He knew it was his duty as a Christian to obey the government, giving into Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. That was what he wanted every Christian to do. And was the white man not his brother? (p.36)*

Here the author ironically depicts the devotion of a new converted to an alien religion and shows ironical pity for him. The last interrogative sentence more clears up his ironical voice that was a bit obstructed in the previous sentence. In fact, the question is not intended to be answered. Instead, it is a means of Ngugi's style in The River Between. He makes use of rhetorical questions in order to intensify the previous tendencies in style. In this quotation, there is a certain irony -though subtle- in the sentences before the interrogative sentence. Then this rhetorical question is used to intensify the previous ironic tone. In this way, Ngugi explores the mind of people who, for fear of facing the common foe, retreat into collaboration with the adversary hoping to escape it. The realities of their environment prove the contrary for there is no individual escapism when the throng is in wonder.

In the same way, with these rhetorical questions, the author gives time to the reader to concentrate on the issue at hand. He somehow gives food to the reader's thought and this helps the reader avoid hasty judgements, generalisations or stances upon such particular issues. In this instance, the question is only used as an intensifying device, there is no required answer on the part of the readers collectively. The reader, individually, can try to answer but he is not compelled to. Even when he answers, he is advised to do it after thinking things through.

Irony is not simply a device but fundamental to Ngugi's style as Cook, D. and Okenimkpe, M. (1997:258) go on saying:

> *Irony is fundamental to Ngugi's style. [...] Ngugi's wily smile at human foibles, his sad exploration of the contradictions in society, his angry exposure of specious justification for individual self-interest are all essentially ironic.*

In The River Between, there is another technique used by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: that of letting a character take him over in his narratives. In fact, in this novel, we find some instances where the author deliberately lets the narrative be taken over by some characters. For the purpose of emphasising or giving much more detached meaning to his personal statement, or belief, Ngugi leaves the appropriate character to go on with the narrative. It may be his personal point of view that he avoids being responsible for or else, a communal belief that is not understood by younger generations and then, he lets an old character, wiser and more experienced than them, explain.

Chege is a good example of a wise and experienced character. From page eighteen to twenty-four, he takes over the narrative explaining to his younger son Waiyaki – then young people – the origin, belief and secrets of their tribe's life. Here, Ngugi avoids appearing in the explanation of the way of life and beliefs of Gikuyu; he leaves the task to Chege and seems to learn like others. Through this process of indirectly conveying ideas or feelings, Ngugi makes use of various grammatical and rhetorical devices. For instance, a fluid of incomplete but meaningful sentences is used to convey strong feelings. When Chege is explaining how their land is a divine gift, he whispers:

> *"Yes"*
>
> *"It is beautiful to the eye — "*
>
> *"It is beautiful."*

"And young and fertile ——— "

"Yes. Young and fertile."

"All this is our land."

"Yes, Father."

"You know Gikuyu and Mumbi ——— " (p.20)

In the same way, there is a modulation of the human voice and formulation of characters' thoughts in order to achieve a convincing effect on the hearer. Here for Chege, it is as though the voice is not his but a divine one so as to give much more meaning to his words.

Another technique used by Ngugi is that of creating suspense by leaving some problems or tense situations halfway up to their denouement. For instance, at the end of the novel, Waiyaki's exciting situation is not much narrated up to its denouement. Ngugi ends the story at the highest point of excitement, the climax of his love story. This passage somehow leaves the reader wondering or perplexed. In this way, the author intentionally lets some problems unsolved or situations unexplained. Waiyaki's destiny is not known after the public blame. Therefore, it is practicable for Ngugi to create suspense, climax or to arouse more interest to the story by using this technique.

For the same effect of gradually arousing interest for his story, Ngugi uses another technique. He starts with apparently mere things but, helped by his stylistic techniques, develop to a new complexity. Of course, the reader is meant to be aware of the parallels and patterning. Indeed, so many correlations are made to interlock, even the motifs of heart and humanity are so rallied that build up into emotional emphases or climaxes.

In The River Between, the acme of this style – short, concentrated and proportionally developed sequences – is the love scene between Waiyaki and Nyambura. The whole sequence is briefly described without undue haste or lack of proportioned development. The very many parts of this sequence make a complex design. There are stances and facts that are inferred from cultural or communal ideological points of view which themselves dictate the development of their love. There are details – seemingly unnecessary – added but used to good purpose. For instance, Waiyaki and Nyambura's meeting at Honia River is the most emotional moment of their love. Waiyaki and Nyambura reveal to each other their deep and hidden feelings. For the first time to Nyambura, Waiyaki bursts out in an environment of intense emotional feelings and fond remembrances: *Nyambura, I love you* (p.121). On this very moment of their meeting, the author shows his mastery of the art of driving readers' emotional senses by using clauses that bear an intense emotional tone. However, these incidental emotional happenings or associations are not out of his plot. They are necessary ingredients to The River Between's plot and part of the complexity of Ngugi's design. In whatever way, they make a complex design that never gets out of his control.

The plot of The River Between is proportionally developed. Each event happens at its due time and in harmonious interrelation with others so as to make a unified plot. Although there is at times abruptness in the juxtaposition of the pieces of the text, the overall effect is surprisingly sophisticated. This author's consistent awareness of stylistic techniques is not only in The River Between but also in other works.

However, even though he is familiar with brevity and incisiveness, Ngugi's sequences of lengthy descriptions or repetitions in this novel are not rare. We find instances of the same event told twice. This is done for the

purpose of fuller depiction and meaning. For instance, again Honia is importantly depicted during circumcision. And at all times, when an important social issue is involved, its name is hardly avoided.

In this novel, almost all of Ngugi's brief narratives bear a dramatic tone. They maintain a plot that achieves a build-up to a peak of intensity. Indeed, a climax in a novel by Ngugi is no sudden disconnected event. It is the outcome, and to some extent the resolution, of forces and events which we have seen gathering with increasing speed and violence towards such a culmination. Any such climax before the conclusion itself is pointedly recalled and referred to, becoming a key point in a cyclic development, and thus achieving significance and resonance.

The end of The River Between is much telling on Ngugi's style and especially on how he ends his narratives. Indeed, the denouement of his novel is powerfully integrated with all that has gone on before. He knows how to manage the final almost instantaneous and abrupt reversals in a way that is breathtaking for the reader. In the last five pages, Waiyaki is at the height of his popularity and influence and even seems to be assured about his stature as we notice it after his speech on unity:

> *People seemed moved, and when he sat down they rose and, as if of one voice, shouted: 'The Teacher! The Teacher!' And when Kabonyi stood to speak, people began to press towards Kabonyi as if animated with the desire to tear him into pieces.* (p.171)

Therefore, this scrupulous planned reversal of roles at the end of the novel is deliberately prepared for generating emotional tension and

excitement on the reader. It is a vital ingredient of the narrative for it makes it end still arousing interest by surprising. It turns to be crucial to the narrative because it creates a peculiarly sophisticated climax of suspense and drama for the reader. By this fact, we can acknowledge this technique as a hallmark of Ngugi's style.

II. 1° The use of symbol

As far as the study of The River Between as a literary work is concerned, we cannot let aside symbols inasmuch as they are worth a particular attention in this study for they appear in various degrees in the novel: as local, universal and transcendental symbols. In fact, throughout this novel, some sites, concepts or individuals appear as symbolic figures and we can afford the interpretation of their meaning by analysing the symbolic value they have in the society they are set in.

But, before going into details about the matter, an overall view of the terms 'symbol' and 'symbolism' is necessary. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995:1464), symbol is "*a picture or shape that has a particular meaning or represents an ideal*". According to Anthny, J. in A Dictionary of Literary Terms (1979:672), in its origin, "*the word 'symbolism' derives from the Greek verb symballein that means 'to throw together' and its noun symbolon means 'mark', 'emblem', 'token' or 'sign'*." Whatever it maybe, a symbol is an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or stands for something else. However, a symbol differs from an allegorical sign in that it has a real existence, whereas an allegorical sign is arbitrary. And, a literary symbol combines an image with the concept. It is needless to mention that words are themselves symbols because they stand for something different from what they are.

Starting with the title of the novel, we can be puzzled by it without knowing the meaning of the words which make it for they are themselves symbolic in a certain way. As a matter of fact, in the first pages of the novel, there are concepts like 'sleeping lions', 'river', and 'valley' that appear as mere

words when taken out of context but in the context of the novel, their meaning becomes symbolic.

In fact, the river Honia flows in a valley between the two ridges Kameno and Makuyu considered as sleeping lions. This river's name is mentioned time and again whenever the two ridges are referred to, to mean that they are all of them taking part in the same game. Behind the 'sleeping lions' lies a meaning that the author deliberately makes use of. He wants to endow the ridges with greatness and reverence. Since the lion is powerful in the animal kingdom, an allusion to these ridges is made with reference to the lion's greatness in its kingdom.

However, even though they are strong, the ridges are not aggressive, it is as though they are sleeping but their sleep is meaningful. It is not a mere sleep but the 'big deep sleep of their creator '. They are not sleeping for the sake of sleeping; the intended meaning of the author is wisdom and understanding that characterised the people of these ridges. Their might is noticeable without being exposed, when they are sleeping. Their power is the sum total of their wisdom and will to live without confrontation that makes them be revered.

Though facing each other from long before, the two ridges never came to confront themselves. They could uphold mutual respect and communal interests, human dignity and integrity – symbol of their power – but that was before the advent of the new power – colonisation. This new power's settling marks the embrace of new values and this ushers in the disintegration of the ridges. The loss of their symbolic sleep means the loss of confidence and understanding between them, loss of old values of mutual respect and dignity. Therefore, this sleep is not to be confused with naivety or ignorance on the part of the ridges. Ngugi explicitly gives the true significance of their

sleep; it is elevation rather than ignorance. In a certain way, he seeks to recreate meaningfully a recognisable epoch in Gikuyuland. And it is therefore hardly surprising that we can relate the principal milestones in the narrative to an actual sequence of happenings.

Between the two ridges Kameno and Makuyu is a valley in which flows the river Honia. Honia is very meaningful to the ridges; it is not simply a stream, not flowing water but a river that holds the destiny of the people and beasts of the surrounding ridges. Its significance is symbolically important and recognised as a cure or bring– back – to – life. However, the symbolic value of the river and the valley in which it flows is twofold.

On the one hand, the river Honia embodies unity and prosperity for the two ridges. For this, there is no way of noting any problem in the way they face each other. There is only understanding and mutual respect between them. In the light of this view, the ridges seem to have everything in the right way. They are rich in values, upholding human dignity and integrity, they are the repository of legends, lore and secrets of tribes, and they are preservers of bygone ideals.

On the other hand, Honia River appears to play a dividing role. Leaving Makuyu to Kameno or vice-versa, there is Honia River and the valley. It is when standing in this valley that we can notice the growing antagonism between them. Even though there is nothing tangible proving their antagonism, one just feels it when standing there. The only explanation of the antagonism is the symbolic role it has for Kameno traditional rituals. Most of the significant traditional rituals are enacted in or related to Honia River and this fact induces hatred for the other side: Makuyu. Due to its important role during rituals especially circumcision, Makuyu people no more take Honia River as a source of life but as a soul of the devil, the embodiment of only Kameno.

Therefore, a frontier between two worlds: that of traditionalists and the world of Christians. Then, the image linking the two ridges, together with the river which both unites and divides them and from which the novelist takes its title, is fundamental, reappearing time and again as a central statement and subtle inference.

Though the extended metaphor of the ridges is in essence perfectly clear, upon close inquiry there are aspects of this symbolism that are less easy to interpret. This is not necessarily a criticism of the concept but perhaps rather an indication of its ability to express the full complexity of the situation. If Kameno basically represents traditional society and Makuyu the Christian minority, what or who is symbolised by the intervening river? Is Waiyaki to be understood as the Honia River - redeemer and destroyer, the saviour, the reconciler, and at last unintentionally the divider? There is room to assume this since Waiyaki is from Kameno and if he is working for the good of only Kameno, it is the outcome of his work that will determine his status and role between the two ridges.

Though there is no consensual appreciation of the importance of the river Honia for both Kameno and Makuyu, the land is estimable for both Kameno and Makuyu. In fact, people from the two ridges have a kind of reverence for land. For them, the land is not simply for growing crops, it is a kind of divine inheritance that they must treasure and keep intact as God gave it to them: *"This land I give to you, o man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity."* (p.2) In the common belief, the land is a symbolic treasure. It is a bond, people's covenant with God.

Furthermore, if there are symbolic elements in the narrative, circumcision is among the main symbolic components of Kameno life. In this society referred to in the novel, circumcision is a symbolic and ceremonial

event. It is accompanied by ritual dances and festivities prepared for a long time. Indeed, in the novel, circumcision is not seen by the people as a simple ceremony, but as a common bond for people who undergo it. It fosters the link between people and the land and therefore God. The blood trickling freely on to the ground, sinking into the soil is a divine bond linking the initiated to the earth and the blood is a kind of offering.

As long as a person has not undergone circumcision, he cannot know the secrets of the tribe. Circumcision is not only a ceremonial ritual but is also a symbol of maturity and trust. People who are not yet circumcised cannot be trusted and socially elevated to the rank of responsibility since they have not yet drunk from a calabash of trust and responsibility as Ngugi states it. In a certain way, circumcision is a touchstone of human ability to deal with the difficulties of life. Even the pain after the surgery is felt as the gate to the mystery of the hills. They must undergo it – open the gate – as a way to the knowledge of the mystery of the tribe. Certainly, it is for this fact that there is no great personage referred to in the novel who has not been circumcised.

The controversy over circumcision between Christians from Makuyu and traditionalists from Kameno explains in one aspect the title of the novel. Honia, being the river between the two ridges, alongside which the rituals of circumcision are enacted and whose water is used as an anesthesia, cannot augur well in the relationship between the two ridges. For traditionalists, as long as Honia River will flow, people will be circumcised and life will be better. On the contrary, for Christians from Makuyu, Honia River is the embodiment of the satanic world. In this perspective, since it is halfway between Kameno and Makuyu, Honia River is a dividing force between the two ridges.

Ngugi's style is rich in symbols explaining the human condition of these ridges. Life in these ridges requires certain knowledge of the tribe's secrets.

Ngugi uses the visit to the sacred grove as a way to that knowledge. It is only when under this sacred grove – at a high altitude therefore high level of knowledge and wisdom – that a person can fully understand and get a clear vision of the ridges in opposition to standing in the valley – lower in altitude and then in level of knowledge. By this visit to the sacred grove by Waiyaki and Chege, Ngugi makes use of the transcendental symbolism. He uses a concrete image like that of visiting the sacred grove in order to explain an ideal world of which Kameno and Mayuku – therefore any region of the real world - are a shadow. In fact, the sacred grove inspires a harmonious vision of life in the ridges, they are no longer antagonistic when you look at them standing under the sacred grove and that is how they might be.

However, their relationship is characterised by jealousies and antagonisms that make them a negative shadow of the ideal world seen when under the sacred grove. Ngugi deplores the sorry state of these ridges by involving the visit to the sacred grove in order to have a wide right vision and knowledge of how life might be in these ridges. This visit is then an allegorical meaning of the school of knowledge of life and wisdom.

Ngugi is not only indirect in his symbolism but also in his language. His style is a conglomerate of fine rhetorical devices in which symbolism and figurative language take part.

II .2° The Use of Figurative Language

"[Style] refers [...] to a selection of language habits, the occasional linguistic idiosyncrasies which characterise an individual uniqueness"

Ngugi's style in the novel referred to is a conglomerate of numerous linguistic and especially rhetoric devices. Figurative devices he uses are among the linguistic idiosyncrasies that characterise his individual style if we refer to David, C. and Derek's view on style in Investigating English Style (1969:9) as aforementioned. To state that figurative devices or language are the mainstay of his style would be too readily concluding and too much of an exaggeration. However, the fact is that they play an important role both as ingredients of the text and as effective devices on the reader of the text. Throughout this novel, we come across many instances of figurative devices used either for the purpose of emphasis or of producing a certain effect. Indeed, we can scarcely find a chapter of this novel without themes or issues dealt with and in which figurative devices are used to no purpose.

From the first page, Ngugi shows his penchant for metaphorical language. He uses the river and the valley as metaphorical concepts. Either the river is compared to a snake or a 'bring-back-to-life', a cure to the ills of the hills. For this fact, the comparison is implicit. The meaning of these concepts is to be looked for in a different angle. They cannot only and simply be taken as a river from which the people of the ridges fetch water or as a fertile land to cultivate and grow crops, as they seem to appear in the novel; but they are to be considered in the light of dividing or uniting forces. To some extent, there is a juxtaposition of metaphor and simile when Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is referring to these ridges as sleeping lions.

On the one hand we can explicitly assume that these ridges are great and peacefully live. But on the other hand, we can implicitly draw a parallel with sleeping lions but which can wake up and resist or be harmful to an aggressive force. If these ridges are potentially powerful and not by the time exposing their power, they can eventually wake up from their sleep and make use of their strength to change the run of things.

In other instances, we find Ngugi who makes use of a hyperbolic tone for emphasis. When he is depicting Waiyaki's potential character for a good leader for instance he states:

> *A light came from them (his eyes), a light that appeared to pierce your body, seeing something beyond you into your heart. Not a man knew what language the eyes spoke.* (p.12)

We cannot judge Waiyaki only on his eyes; they are certainly not special eyes that can let us know his true colour. There is simply an intentional exaggeration in the description of his personality. The purpose is that of depicting his early noticeable qualities of a young man who is not like others of his age. He has quick wits and moral qualities of a man who is destined for leadership and greatness.

In the same way, as Waiyaki's character is depicted with a hyperbolic tone, his land is referred to with the same tone*: "Do you see all this land, this country stretching beyond and joining the sky?" (p.20)* There is a feeling of admiration on the part of the character describing the land. His words are of a person so much attached to his land, a land that is so much regarded that it is hard to notice the limits between the sky and that land. Here the author juxtaposes adynaton and hyperbole to depict the vastness and significance of

the land by involving the magnification of it with reference to an impossible join of the sky and the land.

Ngugi's style is in some way unpredictable. In some elements of the text, we find Ngugi starting a statement or proposition with a figurative device or tone but sudden changes of tone or devices can occur within the same element without impeding his text meaning. Or else, a combination of figurative devices in the same element of the text can be deployed so that its interpretation cannot be easily attained. Indeed, it is typical of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o to add flavour to his texts or narratives by manipulating different stylistic devices.

By whatever means, Ngugi attempts to achieve a certain stylistic sophistication of his texts and we cannot make a successful interpretation of his texts without bearing in mind his stylistic tools. Indeed, a text by Ngugi is not to be handled without a glance at his style. If Ngugi excels in using figurative language, it is not without the help of the happenings or incidents in the text. For instance, the encroachment of white men on the land of natives in this novel corresponds with an important change of seasons' pattern.

> *In the past few years, things were changing; the pattern of seasons was broken. It no longer rained regularly. The sun seemed to shine for months and the grass dried. And when it fell, the rainwater carried away the soil. The soil no longer answered the calls and prayers of the people. Perhaps it had to do with the white men and the blaspheming men of Makuyu.* (p.92)

This change of the seasons' pattern is itself ironical and metaphorical in more ways than one. The people's survival is assured by a fertile soil and equilibrium of seasons. A change of the pattern of seasons is not different from a turbulence of life. It brings hard and awful conditions of life. To some degree, this seasons' change is a metaphorical representation of the advent of the depressing new power of colonisers. Its advent puts an end to the joyous way of life as a change of the pattern of seasons could do. It is as though God has forgotten the people, no more hearing their prayers. As a consequence, they can no more trust or believe in any principle and this cannot alleviate their moral pain.

Though ironical, the debarment of Waiyaki from Siriana School cannot be put on a par in devastation with the change of the seasons' pattern. Although nearly followed by the death of Waiyaki's father, his debarment opens his eyes and new perspectives of life both for Waiyaki and the people of the hills can be envisaged. Its irony lies in the fact that the consequences are interesting and opposite to what we could expect. Chege's death added to his debarment from Siriana School would make us expect another different Waiyaki: a depressed, corrosively disillusioned and then despaired man. On contrary, Waiyaki successfully raises to this challenge of life. Instead of decaying his life, it provides him with courage and creativity and the result is beneficial to both Waiyaki and the people.

Therefore, in addition to what is aforementioned, the happenings and incidents in a text by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o are to be considered as much as figurative devices for they are also necessary adjuncts to his style. In some elements of the narrative again, Ngugi uses synecdoche to presents things and to some extent, the novel is so presented. For the purpose of putting much emphasis upon a statement, he uses a component in order to mean the whole of a body or system. Indeed, in the passage that shows the category of

people to whom can be revealed the esoteric way of life, synecdoche is used for the effect of emphasis:

> *Thereafter, the oilskin of the house was not for them. It was for those who lived inside. These were the people whose blood and bones spoke the language of the hills.*(p.4)

Here, the house is used as a part of the tribe and stands for the whole of it. The 'blood and bones' is used to mean the people from only those hills, who can really speak that language of the hills. The 'blood and bones' is exclusively used for the inhabitants of the hills; foreigners are not to be revealed the secrets of the tribe.

Instances of the use of synecdoche are numerous in the novel. By a certain extension of its analysis and in the light of this figurative device, we can assume that to some degree, the novelist relies on synecdoche in the presentation of this novel. In short, if its narrative is mostly centred on the two ridges Kameno and Makuyu, it cannot be erroneous to argue that the two ridges are used as a microcosm of a broader community or a whole country and by extension, the whole of Africa.

II.3°. The Use of Irony

In a satirical work, irony cannot be imperceptible. Indeed, if there are other literary or linguistic companions to satire, irony appears more frequently than others. In this novel, irony is used in two basic kinds: verbal and situational.

The verbal irony presupposes that one says what he does not mean, that the meaning is contrary to words. In fact, throughout the novel, instances of the use of this kind of irony are numerous. To give all the instances of its use in the novel would be to give a roll of quotations and then to write almost half the novel itself. However, some episodes of it can be taken as illustrations.

When Joshua is being described as a man of God, there is a perceptible other meaning that he is not really one but a zealot. In The River between (p.98), he is referred to in these words:

> *They wanted to hear every single word that came from this man of God, their shepherd, a man who had proved himself a rock, invincible of the wiles of the devil.* (p.98)

In fact, he is a zealot because he believes he is right to do whatever will help his religious ideas to succeed and he mixes religious enthusiasm and cruelty. Indeed, he is referred to as an invincible rock to the wiles of the devil for the good reason because he prefers to abandon his daughters whom he considers to be agents of the devil rather than changing his way of believing.

Situational irony is also used in the novel especially by characters when they laugh at the misfortune of other ones even while the same misfortune,

unbeknown, is happening to them. As a matter of fact, Kabonyi uses this kind of irony while mocking Waiyaki. He tries to defeat Waiyaki by portraying him with weaknesses- that he consciously exaggerates- but his own weaknesses resemble or are worse than those of Waiyaki. At the end of the novel, Waiyaki is also a victim of this kind of irony. People laugh at his dilemma caused by his love with Nyambura.

In short, it is not only Kabonyi or the people in the novel who use situational irony; almost all the characters of the novel – to different degree- mock or laugh at the misfortunes of their fellows while they are not immune to the same misfortunes.

Chapter III. The River Between: A Social Satire

The title of the novel gives a certain indication of the existence of two sides between which a river flows. And then, by implication of the existence of the river, there is a temptation to assume that this river is between two opposing sides or communities. It is therefore in this line of thought that this chapter is to be conducted. The two sides we are concerned with are that of natives, the residents – Kameno and Makuyu being a microcosm of their world- seen as primitives to conquer and educate by the other side of settlers seen as an occupying force by the former. Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama's view in Mau Mau From Within: An Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt (1966:89) is not different from the view adopted in this chapter:

> *Regardless of tribe, all Africans were classed as 'Natives' by the dominant Whites and subject as a single people to the discriminatory and degrading polices and practices of European elite.*

Both of the two sides form a heterogeneous society that has its peculiar weaknesses and vices. Although there is emphasis on the natives' situation, this chapter is concerned with the weaknesses and vices of settlers as well.

In the first two pages of the novel, there is mention of two ridges Kameno and Makuyu lying side by side. At first sight, the two ridges are made to cordially and peacefully live together but, on the contrary, they are antagonistic. The feud between the two ridges is unfounded and then worth satirising. In fact, the feud is caused by mere rumours and whisperings about the superiority in terms of leadership for each of the ridges. For Makuyu, a

man rose and claimed that leadership had been left to Makuyu by God. For Kameno, it had always been whispered and rumoured that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kameno and God had told them that the land is theirs and their posterity to rule and till.

By an exercise of implication and assumption, the river between the two ridges can be taken as a dividing force on this level. However, we are informed in the novel that the river is hardly seen when standing on top of either Kameno or Makuyu. For this and the fact that there is not anything tangible proving their antagonism as the author says, added to the fact that you cannot see its whole extent even if you come down the river, we are brought to acknowledge that their feud is unfounded.

Kameno and Makuyu are worth satirising for they are made to live together peacefully and gracefully but their attention is easily diverted from serious problems by simple rumours and whisperings. It is degrading for ridges made to live together peacefully and gracefully to be antagonistic because of a man they heard of claiming that leadership had been left to Makuyu. Just the same, rumours and whisperings that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kameno and had got from God the right to leadership cannot justify their way of conduct.

On this point, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o uses an ironic tone in his interrogative forms which bear a certain doubt on the points involved:

> *For had it not always been whispered and rumoured that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kameno? And had not a small hill grown out of the soil on which they stood south of Kameno ?* (p.2)

Here, the author is ironically questioning their beliefs. They meekly submit to nonsense. A small hill cannot grow out of the soil because of a stay of Gikuyu and Mumbi. The problem with these people is that no one exactly knows from where the rumours came from – they even not know that they are only rumours – and they do not try seeking out how and why they are spread. They hear them and take them for granted.

In this passage, the author freely uses irony and remains detached from his victims. He enjoys superiority on his weak characters who can not lift themselves above the day-to-day small problems preventing them from wide vision of the serious problems of their society. They spend time and energy quarrelling over leadership that they have lost. It is ridiculous of them to quarrel about past leadership. Actually, things have changed by that time. They no longer hold leadership in their hands because the coloniser is the holder of it but what is pitiful for them is that they are ignorant about it and maintain the illusion that they are masters of their own lives. They do not see the whole extent of the danger of their quarrel. If they continue quarrelling on leadership they do no longer have, they will be clearing the way to the coloniser who needs to exploit this opportunity of division in order to rule. For him, whether leadership has been left to Makuyu or Kameno matters little. He can simply support one side against the other, like Makuyu against Kameno, and he will be serving his interests. Therefore, in this way, by quarrelling with their fellows, they serve the interests of colonisers without being aware of it. This passage is an exhortation to overcome life's problems and have moral rectitude in order to withstand the degenerating force.

In another passage, during hard times for the people in the novel, the author involves great personalities who marked the native community involved in the story. Through Kamiri, the great witch, Ngugi depicts how people were easily degenerated and he seems to question that easy shift. Kamiri's witchery

bewildered the white men at Muranga but finished being overcome by the white men's smiles and gifts. It is somehow surprising of great leaders who had led for a long time the tribe against dangerous catastrophes like invasions, droughts and famines but who fail at that moment. The author somehow questions where they had been when the settler came. By reference to these great legendary people, there is a melancholic allusion to the lost liberty. And therefore, there is an urge to the character to regenerate the indigenous culture and values that were annihilated by colonisation.

The sad situation of these people of the ridges is not a result of the intimidating and degenerating force but also of their conduct. If the disintegration of their indigenous society is achieved without a restraining opposition, it is due to their lack of agreement on the means to use. Their viewpoints are set worlds apart and there is no hope of achieving communal ends. For instance, Joshua and his men opt for collaboration with the coloniser by hiding in Christianity. Actually, religion is not an end in itself but a means to achieve the control of Makuyu and other surrounding ridges. However, Joshua's stratagem is not of a kind to lift him above the communal suffering for he remains a subordinate preacher for the remote ridges whose access is difficult. To say the least, Joshua becomes an unaware prototype of the resident population as seen by Sir Charles Eliot in State of Emergency: The Full Story of Mau Mau (1963:14):

> *They [resident population] would be civilised by the proximity and example of the settlers ; by conversion to Christianity; by being taught to know their place and accept the status of a docile and compliant working-class.*

In addition, to paraphrase Eustace Palmer, Joshua's religious fanaticism is not only just grotesquely comic but it is also destructive. Indeed, it is destructive in many ways. His fanaticism is self-destructive because it makes him deny life as it is in the ridges. Furthermore, his household, the very meaning of his life, breaks down because of his fanaticism. His daughter Muthoni flees from his restrictive and fanatic teaching and dies afterwards. His other daughter Nyambura, though docile at the beginning finds out that her father's religion is not compatible with her being. She leaves him for the religion of love, that of Waiyaki.

We would expect from Joshua a melancholic and bitter man after all that bad experience but he remains with his dreams. He is a dreamer living in a world of illusions and seeking every possible opportunity to escape the tough reality of the life of the ridges. In addition, his faith is more of a cynical and revengeful man than of a Christian. Indeed, his prayers for those who do not accept to follow him prove it:

> *Bring down fire and thunder,*
> *Bring down the flood.* (p.37)

Joshua fails to attract the pagans from Kameno because of his inadequate procedure. Instead of teaching values that can make pagans be converted, he preaches against all that is good and beautiful in the tribe. He is well equipped to succeed where his masters failed since he knows the people of the ridges, but he is overwhelmed by his blind fanaticism and fails. Inside Joshua acknowledges the greatness of rituals like circumcision but fails to delicately handle it. In short, his role is more of an agent of colonisers than a disciple of Jesus. For this fact, Joshua's acts show him as a good example of a man experiencing the torture of a soul torn between two loyalties.

Actually, he is not the only one in that confusing situation. In fact, even the hero of the novel is torn between two loyalties. During circumcision rituals, Waiyaki does not spontaneously respond to the dances and celebrations. His unease is much more induced by the fear of Livingstone, his headmaster, than the taboo words spoken. He cannot deny the influence of Siriana teaching on his character. Despite the fear of his headmaster and the influence of his teaching, he undergoes circumcision for fear of disappointing his father's dream to perpetuate traditions.

Coming back to Joshua, he hides his suffering but inside lies a more restless man than his counterparts: "*After a prayer, he would feel re-assured and a calmness would settle on his face.*" (p.36)

He knows he is a betrayer and fears what the inhabitants of the hills can do to him. On the other side in Kameno, the conduct of people is another dimension to the satiric scenario. Looking at their level of understanding, there is seemingly a reluctance to evolve with the time changes. They cannot notice that things are rapidly changing and the few who can do it have a blurred vision and cannot estimate the whole extent of the situation. Sometimes, when the situation becomes complex and unbearable, they retreat to the safety of traditions. Though traditions are a treasure for them, it is high time they changed their traditional way of life especially the way they view their relationship with their fellows from Makuyu.

It is a deliberate part of the novel's plot to view Kameno and Makuyu as two opposite extremes, one clinging to traditions and the other to the novelty: Christianity. As in all satire, these ludicrous extremes enable us to contemplate and grasp the level of human viciousness. Each of the extremes sees the other as its real enemy and potential destroyer; each of the extremes charges the other with all the crimes. Though the novel's plot seems to emphasise on the

native's situation and their viciousness, the colonisers and correlatives' does not escape the author's and our attention.

In the novel, if we look for the domicile of colonisers and correlatives, it is to be found at Siriana Centre. Indeed, Siriana Centre is a microcosm of the world of missionaries and colonisers, like Kameno and Makuyu are for natives. Following the line of thought used in this chapter, there is a gap, a river between Siriana Centre and Kameno-Makuyu.

The attitude of the agents from Siriana Centre is at the core of this gap and the clashes between natives and the newcomers-colonisers and missionaries. On their arrival, they find a people whose morality and integrity is so strong that they cannot let a stranger – a kind of guest in their vision – be bewildered. The natives welcome them as visitors and even fraternise with them but the natives are soon deceived by their conduct.

Their conduct cannot escape its due portion of blame. Instead of collaborating and gradually spreading their cultural values and faith, they harshly impose them as a perfect model that the natives must copy. They are not oblivious of the importance of tribal customs that sustained the natives' life for centuries before but they do the best to degrade them. They ignore the way of life of the natives and try to impose in good faith their own ways and their own ideas about civilisation. Actually, they cannot pretend to cleanse the natives of 'bad habits' when they are part of their being.

In a society where tribal customs and secrets are treasured, the conduct of these agents is inadequate. To some point, they are overwhelmed and blinded by their strong trust in their values, so blinded that they are unable to analyse the whole dimension of the unpopularity of their measures. They are also selfish because they trust, esteem only their values and do not take time

to consider and learn the native's different set of values. After all, the natives' values are not definitely inferior and worth despising. They cannot be so disdained to the point of being taken as evil habits.

However, if there are few of them who are not blinded by this selfish trust, Livingstone is among them.

> *Livingstone was one of those missionaries who thought themselves enlightened. They were determined to learn the customs of the natives and not repeat the mistakes of the missionaries of the earlier generation who had caused tribal warfare and civil strife because they could not appreciate the importance of tribal customs.* (p.64)

However, Livingstone is not enlightened for long. His impatience does not allow him to deeply concentrate on the matter. He fails to achieve his goal – to eradicate the custom of circumcision and related rites – because he repeats the mistake of his predecessors. He who has a chance to learn from the mistakes of his predecessors is normally destined to succeed where others failed but it is not the case for him.

Like his fellows, he does not admit anything right in the natives' values. Instead of changing his view on their values, his short time of attendance to the dances on the eve of circumcision deepens his conviction that the whole affair is dictated by the Prince of Darkness and therefore must be fought by all the means; even Christ is called upon to help him: "*It was Christ who would be fighting the Prince of Darkness through him, yes, Christ working in him, making him young in action.*" (p.65)

Livingstone's incapacity to overcome his biased opinion and that of his fellows against the natives makes him appear more as a disciple of the colonising power than of Christ. He seems more a civilising missionary than an evangelical missionary for his work is more concerned with the eradication of cultural customs than the eradication of pagan practices. Indeed, he could succeed in his evangelising mission without hurting the natives, without attacking their very life.

His role as a colonising agent is powerfully depicted in the novel. As a matter of fact, being a teacher at Siriana School, Livingstone forbids his students – mostly natives – to be involved in political affairs. They are inclined to be docile, to obey more the Christian and colonisers' laws than the tribal rules. It is therefore a strategy to help and clear the way to the colonisers who find no resistance on the part of natives because they are trained by missionaries to be docile and to meekly submit to their laws.

Livingstone's role seems to be more of a spiritual policeman for colonisers than of a spiritual guide for natives. His words are too far different from his deeds and this is not a good example for a Christian who is supposed to clear the way for pagans. In this novel, there is a relentless exposition of how the conduct of these missionaries involved in the story dehumanises them. They cheat the Christ they are supposed to serve by their involvement in a project that seems ridiculous to a real Christian for it treats native people, sons and daughters of Christ, as brute commodities.

Livingstone and his correlatives' vices are worth satirising because they compromise themselves in their conduct. If they were objective in their mission, if they really wanted to eradicate the pagan or evil customs, they could not preserve colonisation because it is itself an evil thing especially for the people who undergo it. But, since they are not the victims of it, they

simply turn a blind eye to it and concentrate on the habits of the natives. They are selfish in their enterprise because they work for their own satisfaction but not for that of the souls they pretend to save. If their religion were for loving each other as they claim, if the natives were really sons and daughters of God like them, the missionaries could resent colonial rules like their brothers and sisters in Jesus – the natives. But, on the contrary, they work hand in hand with the oppressors of the natives. They are hypocritical because they claim to be the saviours, the guides of the natives from the darkness to the light but they are really their oppressors, they are wolves in sheep's clothing.

Livingstone's feeling that things are laughing at his old age is not mostly due to the mistakes of the natives but to his own mistakes and weaknesses. Since he knows the experience of his predecessors, their difficulties to harshly change the natives' tradition, he can be patient and gradually make reforms. When Muthoni dies, his weakness is that he repeats the mistake of his predecessors, he responds to the call of his emotion rather than to his reason. After her death, he immediately changes his policy but he changes a policy that is much more effective and replaces it by an adventurous one.

Though the hoped-for results are not achieved, at least the first policy of moderation and gradual approach makes him to be more accepted by the natives than his predecessors. But, since he is obsessed with eradicating the custom of circumcision, he cannot notice inadequacy in his sudden change. This abrupt change is at the core of his failure and it cannot escape a certain portion of blame and criticism. Indeed, in the novel, abruptness and desperate changes of characters' conduct are greatly satirised. If Joshua, Kabonyi and Livingstone fail to achieve their aims, it is not mostly due to the difficulty of their task but to the procedures adopted.

In any way, there is no hope to succeed if they cannot overcome their emotional calls, biased judgement or selfish conduct. If we take Kameno-Makuyu and Siriana Centre as two communities apart, they are not perfect models of good manners and values. We discover that they have both of them some weaknesses and vices worth satirising. Therefore, in this chapter, there is no exoneration of their weaknesses and vices. Instead, they are put in the open and let to be the object of satire.

Though this experience of Makuyu, Kameno and Siriana Centre seems to lie far in the past, they are still interesting today's studies and this fact remains in the line of thought of this novel's author. The social facts or human experience focused on in this writing are perennial and the author's satire is of a kind to sustain a permanent and positive change with hope for the best to come. Ime Ikiddeh says more in Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics (1972:xix):

> *Ngugi's great strength lies in his realisation that in the Search for social well-being, questions arising from the experience of yesterday must lead to a consideration of the here-and-now as a basis of hope for the yet-to-come.*

Therefore, it becomes a stern lesson to the reader to learn through the experience of the characters and correct the conduct if necessary. Therefore, the aim of the author as a teacher and satirist is attained. In diminishing or questioning the status or conduct of the characters, the author of this novel induces a certain amendment of vices and a reformation of manners. He puts the manners of the characters in the line of his satire and the reader is invited to be a spectator not neutral but concerned with this experience in order to reform his vices in turn.

Conclusion

The study of a novel by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o ensures that the interest centres not on political matters, but on the relationships, and on the effects on the characters of the pressure of events if we paraphrase Eustace Palmer. The study of The River Between as a social satire cannot avoid the relationship between the characters and their environment especially their society. The effect of the events on the characters is not only to be sought out in the nature of events and the personality of the characters – their weaknesses and vices being taken into account –, but also in the nature of the forces involved in the course of the story.

In fact, the first chapter shows us that some characters have opportunities and are trusted by their fellows but fail later on. Either the forces involved in the course of their action are not favourable to them and they fail or succeed at least for a while or else, the characters realise too late that their views are entirely incompatible with the forces involved in the course of their action.

In other situations, the character's nature is of a kind that cannot let him survive to destructive forces. The objective of the first chapter is to detect those vices and weaknesses that hamper the characters in the course of their action. Most of the time, they are condemned for they contribute to the reduction of the status of the characters and as satire is, a character of this novel under study is hardly immune from criticism or satirical comments.

Indeed, if the use of satire achieves its ends, no character, by virtue of birth or rank, is set worlds apart from others. As a matter of fact, Waiyaki could not fumble had it not been this fact. If this study focuses on the

weaknesses, wickedness and vices of characters, it does not mean that the novel reflects only them; it is only this aspect of the novel that attracted our attention. The novel is worth other studies on its other aspects. As the second chapter touches its stylistic aspect without going deep into the matter, studies intending to concentrate on this aspect of the novel can bring a contribution to its exploration.

The third chapter again concerns the weaknesses and vices of characters and their society. It is not a repetition of what has been said before; it is rather a complement to the first chapter. They explore the weaknesses and vices of characters and their society not for the sake of only ridiculing them but also for their reformation towards a fairer society.

If they explore weaknesses and vices like treachery or selfishness, heroism and sacrifice are not left aside. If all that is essentially anti-social is condemned, socially positive behaviour is lauded. The study in general tries to analyse the novel as a work that explores the nature and causes of frailty and failure, and expressing a humane concern for social misfits, provided it arouses to some degree a willing for self-examination and readjustment. The novel mostly presents individual weaknesses and vices but they are representative of the society at large. Therefore, the reformation of the former can induce to some degree that of the latter and in this way, the social satire would have achieved its goal.

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