*The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria*

*University of Algiers 2*
*Faculty of Arts and Languages*
*English Department*

# THE POLITICS OF IRONY AND SATIRE IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *A MAN OF THE PEOPLE*, NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S *DEVIL ON THE CROSS*, AND WOLE SOYINKA'S *THE INTERPRETERS*

***Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister in literature and civilization.***

***Board of Examiners:***
***Chair: Dr. Louiza AIT HAMOU, Univ. of Algiers 2***
***Supervisor: Prof. M'hamed BENSEMMANE, Univ. of Algiers 2***
***External examiner: Prof. Bouteldja RICHE, Univ.of Tizi-Ouzou***

***Candidate : Mr. Waheb FERACHE***

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# Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference and acknowledgements are made, whenever necessary, to the works of other researchers.

Saturday, June 23rd, 2012
Mr. Waheb FERACHE

# Acknowledgements

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# ABSTRACT

The guiding principle underlying this dissertation is to cast a critical eye on the politics of irony and satire prevailing in three famous African novels: Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*, and Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters.* These highly satirical texts expose, through different techniques of derision, the evils of authoritarian power that followed the departure of the white man from Africa.

The tree novels mentioned apply derision to some of the contemporary power elites for betraying the promises of independence. Politics is kept by Machiavellian power-despots from being an arena of meaningful social relations and practices and becomes instead a hermetic ivory-tower where they have locked themselves and proved to be more corrupt, absurd, grotesque and brutal than their predecessors – the departed imperialists.

My intention in this dissertation, via the three outstanding fictional works and other related texts, is to probe the game of politics and the way it is deconstructed in African literature.

Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka employ diverse techniques of the satiric spectrum ranging from irony to ridicule through laughter and cynicism in order to blow the whistle on the growing crisis which is inflicted by the body politic. They exploit the gap between the exploiting "*haves*" and the exploited "*have nots*" which widens and bring to light uncertainty, dejection and bitter cynicism.

Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka claim that African literature exists in a historical continuum. Neo-colonialism infected post-colonial Africa as a cancer or a severe form of imperialism where the neo-colonial hegemony assume a kind of power without responsibility or exploitation without restitution owing to the continuation and perpetuation after independence of economic, political and social practices established by the old-fashioned colonialism.

It will be shown that the language of irony and satire is skilfully employed by Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka to express their bitter disillusionment and that of most African peoples and to denounce the shortcomings and flaws of contemporary Africa in its dealing with neo-colonialism.

For this purpose, I shall resort to a variety of theoretical notions that will support my analysis of satire and show how this particular writing strategy has informed and enriched the post-colonial African novel. It has also provided a wealth of insights in what it means to write satire, to be ironic, and to surmise to satire's social or political purpose.

The three canonical texts of African literature selected, share a number of affinities at the linguistic, aesthetic, and ideological levels, as I will attempt to demonstrate.

*Chapter One* will be devoted to the discussion of Achebe's techniques of irony and satire in *A Man of the People*. In this novel, Achebe draws humorous and grotesque portraits of post-colonial Nigeria through his witty foreshadowing of the crisis of leadership facing it. His satire derives from the duality intrinsic to the Igbo world view and best illustrated in the Igbo proverb that advocates the idea that whenever something stands, something else will stand beside it, and

traditional modes of representation of derision constitute the essence of Achebe's satiric spectrum, and in each of these, a norm is transgressed and a gap is constructed to strengthen the satiric intent.

*Chapter Two* follows on with Ngugi, who introduces *Religious Allegory, grotesque body and satire in Devil on the Cross* as potential threats to Kenya's mundane reality and most significantly to capitalism in a totalitarian state. In his ritual of anatomizing the monster capitalism in his novel, Ngugi's satire is didactic and polemical to the point of transgressing the boundaries of conventional creative writing. He is particularly mocking the gullibility and insatiable envy of those members of Kenya's capitalist bourgeoisie, thus he enters into a brutal and savage satiric exposure to disclose their inanities and immoral actions.

*Chapter Three* will focus on the use *Satiric Humor and Laughter* in Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters.* The novel is, without question, a linguistically rich and sharp satiric representation of the new, hybridized culture of post-colonial Nigeria. In this polyphonic and highly rhetorical work of art, Soyinka juxtaposes existentialist philosophy and indigenous myths, creating thus memorable satiric passages fused with humor, sophisticated wit and memorable laughter.

The ultimate objective of this dissertation is to study the discursive strategies stressed by Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka based on irony and satire, in order to generate an opposition to despotic abuses of power. Their crucial purpose is to move the African audience to scrutinize and denounce the flaws and shortcomings of post-independence politics.

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# *INTRODUCTION*

African literature is replete with fictional works dealing with social and political situations which feature the corrupt management of newly independent African states. Some writers show a resolute commitment to convey a progressive vision in politics leading to the eradication of the deviant means used by authoritarian leaders to remain in power. In this dissertation, I intend to focus on Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'O and Wole Soyinka, these novelists being known as staunch opponents to totalitarian and corrupt regimes in the African continent.

They have highlighted a history of political decadence following the heroic times of struggle against colonialism, with their politicians portrayed as false representatives of good governance in Africa. I intend to focus more particularly on the portraits and itineraries of such politicians in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross,* and Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*. These writers have used the allegorical mode of writing, coupled with an intensive use of satire and irony fused with humor to foreground the grotesque and ludicrous situations in which such characters are involved.

The story of the African politician, as told by many post-colonial satirists, is that of a man despised for his monstrous appetite for the bounties of his country, and his disregard for the people in whose name he obtained the political freedom of that country. Versions of these totalitarian, money-hungry rulers are represented satirically in novels as diverse in this vein of writing as Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross* (1981), Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*[1], Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1961),

[1] These novels will be hereafter referred to as *AMOP, DOC*, and *TI* , respectively. Page references will be given

and T.M. Aluko's *Chief the Honorable Minister* (1970).

The guiding principle underlying this study is to cast a critical eye on the politics of irony and satire in the first three works mentioned. These satirical texts expose, through different techniques of derision, the evils of authoritarian power that followed the departure of the "*old-fashioned colonialism*[2]", as Kwame Nkrumah dubs it. We find in many African literary works published after 1960 the portraits of "*new saviors*" whose corrupt and obscene ways of mismanaging their newly independent States reveal incompetence, and a desire to maintain the status quo. So after militating against the common foe of the Nation, now the leaders turn again

st the very people who were promised political freedom and economic welfare.

Chinua Achebe's *AMOP*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *DOC*, and Wole Soyinka's *TI*, satirize some of the contemporary power elites for betraying the promise of independence, and provoking widespread scepticism on the inevitable indifference of the wealthy and powerful towards the enormous problems of the continent. Through the subversive power of the word, all three authors expose skilfully those politicians so obsessed with power that they wonder why they have come to this "*strange devil they call politics*"[3]. Through the consistent use of the subversive strategies of satire and irony, fused with witty and critical attitudes whose function is to strike at established orders, Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka, deride and ridicule the absurd antics of these corrupt "*Descendants of our great forefathers*" who have assigned to themselves the power to rule without opposition, appeal and limit. Politics in the newly independent States

in brackets in the text.

[2] Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. London:Heinemann,1965,p.ix.

[3] Ekwensi, Cyprian. *Jagua Nana*.London:Hutchinson,1961,p.155.

has become for them an inalienable site of opportunity to accumulate capital and to enlarge their material wealth at the expense of the public. The portrait of the African politician shows him as a chameleon-like trickster – in the manner described by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in his book *The Signifying Monkey*[4]. Politicians like Nanga or Oguazor are ready to do everything to secure and keep maintain power whatever the means used. For this reason, they use different strategies, including rigging elections, bribing voters and harassing their opponents, punishing and arresting people on trumped-up charges. In extreme cases, the man in power is ultimately prepared to kill in order to maintain his political position as a loyal agent of the "*anti-people regime in the name of stability*"[5], to borrow Ngugi's words.

Politics is kept by such Machiavellian power-despots from being an arena of meaningful social relations and practices and becomes instead a hermetic ivory-tower where, in the words of Frantz Fanon, "*ministers grow rich, their wives doll themselves up, the Members of Parliament feather their nests and there is not a soul down to the simple policeman or the customs officer who does not join in the great procession of corruption*"[6]. In short, politics for these "*new patriots*" would give them the ultimate power and the immunity that would protect them from the people's wrath and legal actions as well. Indeed, they prove to be more corrupt, absurd, grotesque and brutal than their predecessors – the departed imperialists.

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[4] Gates, Henry Louis Jr.*The Signifying Monkey:A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism (1988).USA:OUP,1998.*

[5] Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Moving the Center: freeing Culture From Colonial Legacies," Imperialism and Revolution"*,London:Hienemann,1993, p.110 .

[6] Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth (1961)*. Trans. Richard Philox. New York: Groove Press, 2005,p.172. 6 August 2007. <http:books.google.com>

My intention in this dissertation is to probe, via the three outstanding fictional works mentioned and other related texts, into the game of politics and the way it is portrayed in African literature. The satirists' works stand as a stark reflection of their respective countries as well as media reflecting the realities of political mismanagement and the people's disillusion with independence, in the sense that the new leaders have failed to address such important issues as poverty and healthcare, and have instead indulged in tyranny and political oppression.

Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka employ diverse techniques of the satiric spectrum ranging from irony to ridicule through laughter and cynicism in order to blow the whistle on the growing crisis, which is inflicted by the body politic. They point at the gap between the exploiting "*haves*" and the exploited "*have nots*" which widens and bring to light uncertainty, dejection and bitter cynicism. Since satire or "*militant irony*" as Northrop Frye dubs it , is acutely conscious of the difference between what things are and what they ought to be, African satirists are one step nearer to exploring fully the differences between appearance and reality and more significantly to expose hypocrisy. They are, as it were, performing a socially and morally useful task of muckraking the filth of power which danced and "*rampaged naked*"[7] across the continent, calling for a conscious control and refinement with authentic moral values.

Achebe ,Ngugi and Soyinka claim that African literature exists in a historical continuum. Neo-colonialism infected post-colonial Africa as, in the words of Nkrumah, the *"cancer*", "the *worst form of imperialism…power without*

[7] Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah, London & Ibadan: Heinemann, 1987, p.102.*

*responsibility…exploitation without redress*"[8], owing to the continuation and perpetuation after independence of economic, political and social practices established by "*old-fashioned*" colonialism. This "*one-arm bandit*"[9] as Walter Rodney labels it, laid the roots of neo-colonialism by creating Africa's economic dependency on the international capitalist system. This is a form of economic order for which Karl Marx foreshadowed a heavy downfall in his *Communist Manifesto.*

The study of *AMOP, DOC,* and *TI* will reveal how irony and satire, as efficient weapons, can be used in literature to oppose such tyranny and despotism. As Henry Levin observes, "*since totalitarian regimes have trouble in living up to their own propaganda, they offer a standing incitement to satire, which of course they can ill afford*"[10]. It will be shown that the language of irony and satire as employed by Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka to express their bitter disillusionment and that of most African peoples and to denounce the shortcomings and flaws of contemporary Africa in its dealing with imperialism and neo-colonialism. Their ideological positions on post-colonial issues will pave the way to the intellectual's definition of democracy within a universal framework.

For this purpose, I shall draw on a variety of theoretical notions that will support my analysis of satire and show how this particular writing strategy has informed and enriched the post-colonial African novel. It has also provided a wealth of insights in what it means to write satire, to be ironic, and to determine satire's social or political purpose. A long list of essays might include the theories

[8] Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. London:Heinemann,1956,p.259
[9] Rodney Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. London* :Howard University Press, 1981.
[10] Ball, John Clement (et al) (eds.).*Satire and the Postcolonial Novel: "In All Fairness"*:Chinua Achebe,p.10.

of John C. Ball, Alvin B. Kernan, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and others. Their standpoints will help to a better understanding of the function of irony and satire and will enrich our study of the role of the satirist as moralist, the nature of satiric rhetoric, and the impact of satire on the political order.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters, each of which being primarily devoted to the study of the politics of irony and satire in Achebe's *MOP*, Ngugi's *DOC,* and Wole Soyinka's *TI.* The three canonical texts of African literature share a number of affinities at the linguistic, aesthetic, and ideological level. These works can be classified as satires of corruption which expose the true nature of the post-colonial African politician and dissect with much attention the body politic. Irony and satire are used by these creative writers as a form of resistance and subversion of the entire *status quo*. The satirists' texts are characterized by sophisticated wit, comedy and subtlety of irony. They are widely considered as mirrors of the painful process of adjustment that African society as an entity must undergo as it seeks for new values to replace the values left behind.

*Chapter One* will be devoted to the discussion of Achebe's techniques of irony and satire in *MOP*. In this novel, Achebe draws detailed and grotesque portraits of post-colonial Nigeria in an "*unusually prescient and canny foreshadowing of the crisis of legitimacy*"[11] facing it. The Nigerian scholar Adebayo Williams tries to mystify Achebe when he says that his "*natural aversion for cant and hypocrisy*" helped him to prove himself as an all-knowing,

[11] Olaniyan Tejumola , "*Chinua Achebe and the Archeology of the Postcolonial African State," Research in African Literatures*, Vol.32, N°3, Fall 2001, p 22.

all-seeing; a kind of "*traditional deity*"[12]. Ball notes that Achebe's satire derives from the duality intrinsic to the Igbo worldview and best illustrated in the Igbo proverb: "*Whenever Something stands Something Else will stand beside it*". "*It is in the gap between the proverb's demands for cultural balance and satiric modes of representation as... reduction, [and] selective exaggeration*"[13], All of them constitute the essence of Achebe's satiric spectrum, and in each of these, a social standard is transgressed and a gap is constructed to strengthen the satiric intent.

Yet, the theoretical standpoints supporting this work will be established along with the chapters, in which I define key-terms that constitute their essence. These include namely the concepts of 'irony' and 'satire', 'laughter', 'humor', 'grotesque', 'dialogic', 'hegemony', 'subversion', 'neo-colonialism' and other related terms which establish a more open view and will add to our awareness on the functions of irony and satire in the subsequent chapters.

*Chapter Two* follows the same chain of thought with Ngugi, who introduces *Religious Allegory, grotesque body and satire in Devil on the Cross* as potential threats to Kenya's mundane reality and most significantly to capitalism in a totalitarian state. In his ritual of anatomizing the *monste*r capitalism in his novel, Ngugi is didactic, polemical and angry to the point of transgressing the boundaries of conventional creative writing. He is particularly fond of mocking the gullibility and insatiable envy of the "*handful of us*" who control vested interests in order to gain unlimited power and wealth, impoverishing the underprivileged and imposing misery and suffering upon the shoulders of the

[12] Williams Adebayo . "*The Autumn of the Literary Patriarch: Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Remembering.*" *Research in African Literatures,* Vol.32, N°3, Fall 2001,p.8.
[13] Ball, John Clement.*Satire and the Postcolonial Novel*: V.S.Naipaul (et al): "*In All Faireness: Chinua Achebe*". New York: Routledge,2003,p 87.

mass majority. In the satiric humour of his narrative, members of Kenya's capitalist bourgeoisie, the fervent agents of neo-colonialism enter into a brutal and savage satiric and rhetorical self-exposure to disclose their grandiloquent attitudes.

*Chapter Three* will follow up with a study of the use of the *Satiric Humor and Laughter* in Wole Soyinka's *TI.* The novel is, without question, a linguistically rich and sharp satiric representation of the new, hybridized intellectual's culture during the post-colonial era in Nigeria. In this polyphonic and highly rhetorical work of art, Soyinka uses existentialist ideas and indigenous myths, creating thus memorable satiric passages fused with humor, sophisticated wit and memorable laughter.

The ultimate objective of this dissertation is to study the discursive strategies stressed by Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka based on irony and satire, in order to generate an opposition to despotic abuses of power. Their crucial purpose is to move the African audience to scrutinize and denounce the flaws and shortcomings of independence. They arouse in their readers a variety of emotions, ranging from laughter and a sense of ridicule to contempt and anger. The audience thus discovers how some characters are made the satirists' buts – the likes of Achebe's Nanga and Odili or Ngugi's thieves and robbers or Soyinka's existentialist personae – because of the ludicrous situations in which they appear. By trying "*to mend the world as far as they are able*"[14], as Swift puts it, and to rid the continent of its parasitic power-despots , the three creative writers prove to be genuine keepers of conscience and morality , genuinely concerned

[14] Quoted in : Smith Frederik N.(ed)*The Genres of Gulliver's Travels:* Simon Varey*:"Exemplary History and the Political Satire of Gulliver's Travels".*Delaware: Delaware University Press, 1990,p.47.

with the destiny of their peoples during a critical era. They believe in the possibility to create a powerful order free of all forms of exploitation, an order where every African feels at home. In the words of Aimé Césaire, "*it is a society which we must create with the help of all our brother slaves, a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all fraternity of old days*"[15].

The following dissertation will show that despite its apparent moral-didactic and entertaining functions, sometimes, satire is a problematic and open-ended. Very often, as Frank Palmeri notes, "*Narrative satires do not end with an achieved harmony; the struggle they embody between opposed views of the world reaches no satisfactory resolution or synthesis*"[16]. Satire also is inclined to pose more questions than to provide answers. The way in which characters are portrayed, for instance, can raise doubts. One might wonder if a shallow young man like Achebe's Odili or a committed intellectual like Soyinka's Sekoni, or a naïve woman like Ngugi's Wariinga are the appropriate mediators for a revolution. What is the effect of satire outside the boundaries of the text? Is satire an effective medium to reflect by itself the dramatic situations that occur because of the "fat-dripping, gummy, eat-and-let-eat regimes"? (*AMOP*, 166) or is it to be contrasted with other forms used in the same novels? These questions will be dealt with in the following pages.

[15] Aimé Césaire. *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955-,p.34-5.(Trans. Joan Pinkham)
[16] Ball, John Clement (et al) (eds.).*Satire and the Postcolonial Novel:"In All Fairness*":Chinua Achebe,p.107.

# *C H A P T E R  O N E*

## *Irony and Multidirectional Satire at Work: Achebe's A Man of the People*

***After all, the salvation of the world depends on the men who will not take evil good-humouredly, and whose laughter destroys the foul, instead of encouraging him Rightly to be great.***

**George Bernard Shaw, *Quintessence of Ibsenism*(1891).**

Beneath the heady euphoria of independence, political satire has become a major fighting tool and writing strategy in Nigerian literature and also in East African literature. West African creative writers such as Chinua Achebe, T.M. Aluko, Cameron Duodu, Kem Nkwanko and Wole Soyinka grew more and more intent on exposing and fighting the evil intentions and corruption of the so-called representatives of the people. Irony and satire, therefore, have become favourable weapons in the hands of African creative writers to expose and excoriate the new post-colonial state. Whether elected through rigged polls, or being downright dictators, politicians became an obscene joke as often represented in popular parlance, and turned into disputable figures.

In a public lecture in Toronto, USA, Soyinka claimed that the last thirty years of history show that Africa is "*open for satire*". He expressed his bitter anger, berating the so-called African "*new patriots*": "*What can you do with someone like Nkrumah in Ghana? You can't blow him up, so you have satire.*"[17]

Chinua Achebe's fourth novel, *A Man of the People* (1966), echoes Soyinka's anger and bitter disenchantment with Africa's new rulers. The novel exposes through irony and satire the subversion of Africa's post-independence hopes and promises. "*Seek ye first the political kingdom*" was the battle cry of Nkrumah who asked for the opportunity that should be given to Africans "*to govern or misgovern themselves*". Ironically, there was a half truth in Nkrumah's call, in the sense that disenchantment ensued unfortunately when the "*political kingdom*" was obtained and the rulers including Nkrumah set out on a path of

[17] Quoted in Ball, John Clement's, V.S.Naipaul (et al). *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel*: "In All Faireness: Chinua Achebe". New York: Routledge,2003 p.32.

misgoverning their countries. With such "*parasitic*" "*power-despots*", democracy and socialism have become, indeed, hollow slogans.

Chinua Achebe's *AMOP*, satirizes some of the contemporary power elites for betraying the promise of independence. Through the subversive strategies of irony and satire, Achebe exposes politicians like Nanga and Koko obsessed with power and intent on keeping it whatever the means. In his satirical novel, Achebe's portrait of the African politician shows him as a self–seeking knave ready to do everything possible to continue to deal in politics whatever the cause adhered to. For this reason, Chief Nanga is able to use his unlimited powers, including rigging the elections, bribing voters and harassing his opponents, punishing and arresting people on trumped-up charges "*in the name of stability*", to borrow Ngugi's words. Indeed, the "*Nangas*" prove to be more corrupt, absurd, grotesque and brutal than their "*white masters*". However, Achebe rarely refers to his *AMOP* as satire, but "*a rather serious indictment of post-independence Africa*"[18] in particular Nigeria which turned into " *a cesspool of corruption and misrule*"[19]. He also rarely identifies himself as satirist but as a novelist who sees himself as a teacher, not a teacher in the narrow sense but a "*teacher in the sense of great teachers ,like Jesus Christ, Mohamed, Buddha or Plato*"[20] .For Achebe, the writer is an initiator and an agent of social transformation ; in this , he is both someone especially gifted – a leader and teacher of the people – and empowered to show his people the way to a better, more promising future. However, the writer is a by-product of his historical moment, and, thus, fulfils a "*historical*

[18] Duerden, Dennis, and Cosmo Pieterse, (eds.). "Chinua Achebe."*African Writers Talking*: A Collection of ...Radio Interviews. New York: Africana, 1972, p.13.
[19] Heywood, Christopher(ed). *Perspectives on African Literature*. London: Heinemann 1975, p.82.
[20] Wilkinson, Jane(ed).*Talking with African Writers.:Interview with African Poets, Playwright, and Novelists*. London:Heinemann,1992,p.47.

*need*" in which case the power he wields is a function of that moment. Achebe sees himself in "*historical terms as coming into being where these books had to be written, and if I hadn't written them someone else would have done so*"[21].

Achebe writes because, he says, "*I have a deep-seated need to alter things*". In one of his oft-quoted interviews, he expresses this continuing hope despite the depressing post-independence realities foreshadowed at the close of the end of *AMOP* .The novel offers a satiric critique of post-independence Nigeria; in Achebe's words, "*It is a protest against the way we are handling human society in view of the possibilities for greatness and the better alternative which the artist sees*"[22]. In a declaration, Achebe refers to his novel as "*a social satire*"[23] ,thus sharing Margaret Laurence's view that "*What begins as a comic novel ends as an incisive social satire, written in scalding prose, the purpose of which is to c*auterise."[24]Joseph Okpaku also echoes Achebe's view that the novel is "accurate" and "satirical." [25]

Bernth Lindfors admits that *AMOP* "*should be recognized as devastating satire in which Achebe heaped scorn on independent Africa by picturing one part of it just as it was*"[26]. Dubem Okafor holds that the novel is "*concerned with contemporary society, and exploiting the long and rich Igbo satiric tradition, pokes the sharp stick into the warts on the face of decadent society*"[27] .The

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[21] Quoted in *South East Responses to Chinua Achebe*, Bernth, Lindfords and Bala Kothandaraman (eds). New Delhi: Mehra Offset Press, 1993. p.310.

[22] quoted in John Clement,V.S.Naipaul (et al): *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel*: "In All Faireness: Chinua Achebe". New York: Routledge,2003 ,. p.109.

[23] Achebe, Chinua. *Hopes and Impediments.* London: Heinemann, 1986, p.104.

[24] Quoted in Margaret Laurence's and Nora Foster Stovel's *Long Drums and Cannon,* 2001*, p.110.First edition , 1968.*

[25] Okpaku, Joseph O. "*A Novel for the People: A Brief Critique of A Man of the People by Chinua Achebe".* Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts 2, 1966, pp. 76-80..

[26] Lindfors, Bernth.*Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe.* Killam, G.D.(ed.) London: Heyman, 1969. p.249.

[27] *Okafor,Dubem (ed).Meditation in African Literature.* Port, Conn.-London:: Greenwood Press,2001,p.92.

project is in part to prompt the readers to engage in an introspective quest: in his book of essays, *Morning Yet on Creation Day,* Achebe asserts that "*What we need to do is to look back and try to find out where we went wrong*"[28]. He seems to approach the post-independence body politic much in the way a scientist does in his laboratory. In the same sense, Aristotle seems to approach poetry as a biologist would approach a system of organisms, formulating the broad laws of literary experience, and in short writing as though he believed that there is a totally intelligible structure of knowledge and art attainable about poetry which is not poetry itself, or the experience of it but poetics. Achebe maintains that "*perhaps what I write is applied to art as distinct from pure art. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind and I don't see that the two* need *be mutually antagonistic*"[29].The same sentiment is expressed somewhat more acerbically by Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike:

> *The function of the artist in Africa is keeping with our Traditions and needs, demands that the writer as a public voice, assume a responsibility to reflect public concerns in his writings, and not preoccupying himself with the puny ego. Because in Africa we recognize that art in the public domain, a sense of social commitment is mandatory for the artist.* [...]*It also demands that his theme be germane to the concerns of his community.*[30] [...]

In his essay "*The Writer as Teacher*", Achebe has emphasized the moral-didactic and nationalistic function of literature in the African context, as a means

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[28] *Achebe, Chinua. Morning Yet on Creation Day. London: Heinemann,*1975,p.44.

[29] *Achebe, Chinua. "The Novelist as a Teacher".*1965,p.45;quoted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge: 1989 p.125.

[30] Quoted in Joe E. OBI, Jr. and Morris(eds.). *A Critical Reading of the disillusionment novel College, Journal of Black Studies,* Vol.20, N°4, June 1990, p.339.

of recovering an integrated consciousness of self, after the degradation of colonial servitude and the self-hate it engendered. His main purpose for writing as he has stated in various interviews and other essays, is to set the records straight about his people and his culture and to awaken the consciousness of the common man because Igbo people have a saying that *"a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body*"[31]. Achebe espouses this fundamental pedagogic and didactic role for the African writer.

Achebe points to the principle that the primary duty of the African writer is to restore the dignity and self respect of his people. His literary project is anchored in firmly to his concern for his people and he suggests that a writer can restore confidence in his people. He calls on his follow African writers to regain initiative in their owns histories, to rewrite Africa and to make themselves the subjects of their own stories. Achebe's work then is part of the still-growing body of post-colonial writing, and in this regard, his work is not to bear solely on his country. In this connection, the American critic Bernth Lindfors insists that a novel like Achebe's *A Man of the People* should not be seen as limited to a description of the moral and political decay of Nigeria alone, but as a parable for much of Africa.

Achebe has observed in his own country that many of the events described had happened and were happening in other neighboring independent African countries. By ending with a coup, an event anticipated yet still unknown in

[31] Okechukwu, Chinwe Christiana. *Achebe the Orator : The Art of Persuasion in Achebe's Novels*.Westport, Connecticut: Greeenwood Press, 2001,p .1 .

Nigeria but familiar elsewhere in Africa.

In *Homecoming*, Ngugi asserts that

> What Achebe has done in *A Man of the people* is to make it impossible or inexcusable for other African writers to do other than address themselves directly to their audiences in Africa –not in a comforting spirit — and tell them that such problems are their concern. The teacher no longer stands apart to contemplate. He has moved with a whip among the pupils, flagellating himself as well as them. He is now the true man of the people" [32]

Referring to Chinua Achebe's satirical novel, Eustace Palmer, considers that *AMOP*

> raises the curtain on his society to reveal the full horrors of the status quo in most African countries – ministerial incompetence and corruption ; social inequalities, rigged Elections, thuggery, poverty, mass indifference and cynicism and intellectual bankruptcy. [33]

In order to achieve all these purposes, Achebe makes a brilliant use of irony and satire directed at times against Chief Nanga, at times against Odili, Nanga's rival, and at times against both. Achebe handles the language so that he not only gives the illusion of the talking voices but contrives to expose the seamy side of his characters' hollowness and people's cynicism.

Eustace Palmer believes that Achebe achieves "*stylistic virtuosity through the use of Odili as his eyes*" while at the same time using Odili as a means of deconstructing Odili himself. He also shows consummate skill in the use of irony.

Unlike Eustace Palmer, Adrian Roscoe rather praises Achebe's earlier novels, *Things Fall Apart*, and *Arrow of God* for their didactic content, but

[32] Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture, and Politics*, … .Heinemann, 1972, p.54.
[33] Eustace, Palmer. *The Growth of African Novel*. London: Heinemann, 1979, p.82.

thinks that while Achebe's desire to teach through the novel form is not new, there are special implications of the choice for his style and method[34]. Roscoe goes so far as to affirm that Achebe is inept as a satirist and his use of the first person narrator "*introduced problems that marred the novel – reduced it to the job of radio, TV and journalism*[35]*.* Roscoe believes that the use of a persona can be very effective in assuring the author's detachment in writers such as Swift and Conrad; however in Achebe's hands "*the technique is a failure because it seems that the zeal displayed…was politically rather that artistically directed."* Conversely, Simon Gikandi strongly believes that Achebe's work reveals a great depth in the study of personal motives and politics as a game. The satirist achieves universality and artistic maturity in *AMOP* since the novel is not only a devastating satire on Nigeria but a satire on the rest of independent Africa as well. Nigeria, therefore, stands as a microcosm for the rest of African newly independent states.

By the time Achebe came to fashion his fourth novel, he had bitterly witnessed in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa situations considerably more appalling than "*the gargantuan disparity of privilege*[36]", the "*institutionalized robbery of the common people…by their public servants"*[37]*, "the thrusting discipline"*[38] of his society and "*official thuggery*"[39]. Achebe's anger reaches the boundaries of derision and cynicism, which drives him to declare, unleashing a dense stream of invective, that Nigeria is "*disorderly…corrupt, insensitive,*

[34] Okechukwu, Chinwe Christiana.*Achebe the Orator : The Art of Persuation in Achebe's Novels.* Westport, Connecticut: Greeenwood Press, 2001,p.156.
[35] Rescoe , Adrian. *Mother Is Gold*. London:CUP,1971,p.130.
[36] Achebe, Chinua. *The Trouble with Nigeria*, London: Heinemann, 1984, p.22.
[37] Ibid. p.23.
[38] Ibid, p.29.
[39] Ibid, p 35.

*inefficient, …expensive, …dirty, callous, noisy, abstentious, dishonest and vulgar*"[40].All these devastating attributes seem relevant to the situation exposed *in AMOP*.

Vachaspati Dwivedi,[41] argues that Achebe's *MOP* reflects his distaste for post-independence Nigeria as a place where leaders who fought for independence became traitors after attaining power, and sacrificed their country in exchange for middle class comfort. Achebe's bitter denunciation of Nigeria's post-independence graft and corruption reinforces the author's idea that "*The prime failure of our government is the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being.*"[42] Achebe puts the blame on the "*old-fashioned colonialism*"[43] which "*handed over the reigns of government to a small group of educated people who became the" new rulers…The leadership does not really care for the welfare of the country and its people*"[44].

Echoing Achebe's standpoint, Henry Indangasi[45] defends the moral-didactic qualities of Achebe's novel. He asserts that *AMOP is* "*a satirical book that merely aims to correct the moral decadence in society*". Underlying Achebe's satire there is a "*set of morals to make us laugh at ourselves and the characters who are depicted as morally deprived*". Achebe, he adds, "*is not telling his readers to behave like the characters, but wants them to learn from the book*".

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[40] Ibid, p. 9.
[41] http:// *jambo.africa.kyot-u.ac.jp/kioku/asm_normal/abstracts/pdf/29-01/06-43Dwivedi.pdf*
[42] Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* . London: Heinemann,1987.
[43] Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. London:Heinemann,1956,p.ix.
[44] Achebe speaking with Atlantic Unbound's Katie Bacon at his home in New York . Source: http://www.theatlantic.com/Unbound/Interviews/ba2000-08-02.htm. The Atlantic Online. Atlantic Unbound/Interviews. 2009.
[45] *http://www.nathanielturner.com/banningachebeinkenya.htm*

Achebe wants his audience not only to laugh at the oddities of his characters but to be conscious and to distance themselves from them.

As a literary technique that exposes folly and chastises vice, satire is always acutely conscious of the discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. The satirist often hides himself behind his characters. Henri Bergson maintains that somebody who wants to laugh at something must dissociate himself from that thing; a satirist is always an outsider in one way or another. However, according to Wayne Booth, although an author can choose to hide himself in his work, he cannot choose to disappear, as he is always either "*showing*" or "*telling*" always attempting to express a viewpoint in some forms[46] . For Jonathan Swift, "*Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own.*"[47] James Joyce exaggerates a lot when he goes as far as to say, "*The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence ,indifferent, paring his fingernails.*"[48]

The satirist, to be successful in his society, has at least pay lip-service to the ideals he upholds. If he does, he is placed in a more subtle and potentially more effective position than that of simple denouncer of vice. He is then able to exploit more fully the differences between appearance and reality and more significantly to expose hypocrisy. The hypocrite's skin is tenderer than that of the openly vicious. The one has nothing to conceal, the other everything. The whole reputation is at stake. Openly, he subscribes to the ideals that secretly he ignores

[46] Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1991,p.17.
[47] Swift, Jonathan. *The Battle of the Books.* From the Preface ,1704.
[48] Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* Penguin Classics,1917.

or defies. Such a man we may feel, deserves exposure. To this extent the satirist is performing a socially and morally useful task of universal validity. In his *English Satire*, James Sutherland sees that "*the satirist is nearly always someone who is abnormally sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is*." [49]

Achebe's satirical novel is characterised by a shift in satiric technique from primarily writing back against Empire to deriding attitudes of people in his own post-independence society. At the beginning of his career Achebe used the element of satire in his first novel *Things Fall Apart* to target a powerful but deficient colonialist discourse whose general procedure is to fix and diminish the other – to render the other as incomplete, silent and inert. Achebe's depiction of the District Commissioner at the close of the book suggests through irony that any narrative this man produces out of his brief encounter and surface observations will seem inadequate and incomprehensible when judged by the standards set by Achebe's subsequent narratives.

*AMOP* departs from the irony of situations built into the historical novels by integrating satire as form for his narrative. The indeterminacy and mutability of post-independence realities expands satire's project beyond the unidirectional exposure of inadequate, inflexible discourses. Satire in the contemporary moment is used by him liberally in his narrative representations. In a national community in which Achebe says, "*some of the worst elements of the old are retained and some of the worst of the new are added on to them*"[50], the fall in ethical values he

[49] *Sutherland, James*. *English Satire*. Cambridge : Cambridge UP,1967, p.4.
[50] Duerden, Dennis, and Cosmo Pieterse, (eds.). "Chinua Achebe."African Writers Talking: A Collection of Radio Interviews. New York: Africana, 1972, p.13.

opposes invites satire as a seemingly necessary and even realistic way to inscribe demands for reform as an imperative in the project of social and political progress in his country.

In *AMOP* Achebe shifts from his primary aim of showing his people "*where the rain began to beat them"* to showing them how long the exposure to the rainfall has had tremendous consequences, and has eventually deprived the society of its independence. He also sifts from a valorisation of his culture in relation to Western culture, which had intruded and sought to destroy it, to a demonstration of the polarization of society in which, in Robert Wren's words, "*the political platform has become the new shrine,*" and "*the chief celebrant is unprincipled, corrupt, powerful and vengeful.*"[51]

Achebe changes his strategy and adopts the ironic mode as technique for exposing political issues of his country and his level of involvement as illustrated in his creative work. An Igbo proverb befittingly describes the strategic rhetorical change: "when *the dance rhythm changes, the dance steps change as well*" or as Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* describes the propensity for change, "*the world is like a mask dancing, if you want to see it well you do not stand in one place."*[52]

In his 1972 interview with Ernest and Pat Emenyonu, Achebe accounts for the shift in emphasis in the use of irony from his three novels, *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God* by asserting that

> *The post-independence period in Africa is bound to create in the Writer a new approach [...] to the disenchantment with the fruits of independence was already there in the early sixties. A Man , which came out*

[51] Okechukwu, Chinwe Christiana.*Achebe the Orator : The Art of Persuation in Achebe's Novels.* Westport, Connecticut: Greeenwood Press, 2001,p.99.
[52] Achebe, *Arrow of God*. London :Heineman,1964.p.46.

> *in January 1966 and which I wrote in 1964 and 1965, shows quite clearly this new preoccupation with the reality of post-independence Africa*[53].

The shift in emphasis leads to a shift to what Achebe sees his responsibility as a writer. His attention is now fixed solidly on the indigenous ruling elite – the likes of Chief Nanga and the sycophantic people who collaborate with him. Those "*power despots*" seem to fill the vacuum vacated by the ex-colonizers, without reconstructing the political, social, and cultural arrangement left behind by the white intruders. One might consider Ngugi's particularly acute account in "*Towards a National Culture*" of the motivations that drive the native ruling elite – an account that is also of a piece with Achebe's assessment of post-independence rulers of Nigeria in *AMOP.*

> *In fighting for independence, some of the African intelligentsia only wanted that which was forbidden to them, or rather they say the struggle in terms of other immediate needs turned by the social position they had attained under the colonial system whose fulfilment was however frustrated by the racism inherent in the system[...]After independence, the racial barrier to their needs was broken.* [54]

There is hardly any trace of the urge to establish "the noble dignity" of Africa's past in Achebe's satirical text. Kolawole Ogunbesan observes: "*Here he has forsaken his earlier duty to give back to his people their dignity. Now he focuses his gaze on the evils inflicted on the African society, not by an alien race, but by the Africans themselves.*"[55] But Ogunbesan seems to overlook the corrective and "healing" function of Achebe's satirical treatment.

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[53] Emenyonu, Ernest, and Pat Emenyonu. "Achebe: Accountable to Our Society." Interview. Africa Report 17.5, 1972,pp.32-3.

[54] Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture, and Politics*, *Towards a National Culture.* Heinemann, 1972, p.54.

[55] Quoted in *South East Responses to Chinua Achebe*, Bernth, Lindfords and Bala Kothandaraman (eds). New Delhi: Mehra Offset Press , 1993,p.84.

Achebe has used the techniques of irony and satire fused with a witty diagnosis to indict a situation that indeed needs to be attended to if ethics in politics should prevail at all in his country. Like other writers, he takes to task contemporary power elites for betraying the promise of independence, for shoring up privilege and wealth through corrupt politics and collaboration with First-World capitalism while ordinary people remain the poor and the downtrodden.

Both writers draw satiric portraits, in which post-independence politicians become grotesque caricatures, often implying that the horrors of neo-colonialism can be ascribed partly to "*old fashioned*" colonialism whose attitudes are still ingrained deeply in the minds of Africa's ruling elite and in those who applaud every single word they utter . Timothy Brennan calls such novels "*a pointed exposure of the Empire old clothes worn by a comprador elite... who take the old dependency*"[56] .

In *AMOP*, Achebe shows clearly the switching of power from the old to the new styles of African leaders, and how the old style of bush politicians, Chief Nanga , is becoming more and more greedy as he barricades himself within the confines of the political system. Chief Nanga is one of the people in charge of his country as Minister of culture, and his thugs do whatever he says to make sure he keeps winning elections whatever the consequences. Achebe thus comments on the agents that paved the way for the emergence of the likes of Chief Nanga:

> *the colonial departure from the scene was not really a departure. I mean independence was unreal , and people like Nanga were actually used as front men, as*

[56] Quoted in John Clement,V.S.Naipaul (et al): *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel*: "In All Faireness: Chinua Achebe". New York: Rootledge,2003 , p.12.

> *puppets , by the former colonial power. As long as they enriched themselves, they were happy, and they would leave the real exploiter at his work. So, I think in a very basic sense, characters like Nanga flourished because the colonial situation leading to the independence period in Africa made it possible.*[57]

Achebe wants to say that the independence was nothing but an obscene joke, a fake independence in which the essence of European imperialism remains the same. There is only a change in role between the old and the new authoritarian and oppressive leaders.

Odili, Nanga's rival and Achebe's satiric referent, sees a different side of Chief Nanga that the people could not see. He sees the greedy and gluttonous Chief Nanga and he sees the lust and passion driving Nanga to have his way and to have women bow to him. The ironic structure of the novel depends on the notion of the members of the governing group as esteemed politicians, each of whom has a claim to the title "*a man of the people*" – the novel's tragic irony that extends throughout its fabric. The novel accomplishes this by showing that the politicians are indeed esteemed because of the perpetuation of people's cynicism mainly those who approve of and patronize with the Chief Nanga and his likes. The reader might wonder who is "*the man of the people*" announced in the novel's title. Achebe masterfully utilises Chaim Perelman's and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca's concept of incompatibility[58] to debunk Chief Nanga to be "*a man of the people*". In drawing a portrait of Chief Nanga as "*a man*" and "*enemy*" of the

[57] From Palaver: *Interviews with Five African Writers in Texas*, edited by Lindfors, Munro, Priebe and Sander. …Austin: African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin,1972,pp.10-11.

[58] Chaim Perelman distinguishes two techniques of argumentation; liaison and dissociation. Incompatibility is a type of quasi- logical argument, in which one is faced with a position in conflict with a position previously held. (cf. Chaim Perelman views on rhetoric)

people at the same time, Achebe succeeds in asserting and negating his qualities, thereby rendering them unstable and likely to elicit condemnation rather than praise for him. In fact, Achebe's natural aversion to cant and hypocrisy helps him to disclose the seamy side of Chief Nanga's character.

*AMOP* transcends its immediate connoting of Nanga's populism to suggest other meanings through the multiple significance of "*of*" as a marker of origin or deviation (Nanga came from the people), and of causality and creation (Nanga is not born Chief, he was allowed to be Chief). In a kind of post-colonial co-dependency, Nanga and the people reinforce and exploit each other's misadventures and weaknesses; if he is a monster, they made him so. As Frantz Fanon says of post-independence Africa, "*A government or a party gets the people it deserves and sooner or later a people get the government it deserves*"[59].

Fanon believes that bad governance is nothing but the result of people's bad choice in appointing their representatives.

In general, the satire in Achebe's novel arises from the narrator's awareness of the gap between the people's illusions and the realities they overlook in their sweet dreams, realities that Achebe puts in comic perspective. In *AMOP*, Odili the narrator draws the reader's attention to the Minister of Culture Nanga's "*princely seven bathroom mansion with its seven gleaming silent action, water closet!*" (*AMOP,*40-1) While the rest of his countrymen must settle for "*squalid and unsanitary bucket and pit latrines* – ". "*The surprises and contrasts in our great country were simply inexhaustible*" (*AMOP*, 41) and though Nanga adopts the posture of nationalism and its rhetoric to acquire power and wealth, he is

[59] Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*.Transl. Richard Philcox. New York: Groove Press, 2005. p.139

simultaneously the obedient servant of British Amalgamated. Echoing these character traits, His Excellency Sam – Achebe's protagonist in *Anthills of the Savannah*[60] – " imitates the English, "*his major flaw*" according to him, is that "*all he ever wanted was to do what was expected of him especially by the English whom he admired sometimes to the point of foolishness*"(*Anthills, 49*) ; and he preserves their rituals, the "*sophisticate*" cocktail/dinner party, held in the Presidential Retreat "*perch(ed) like a lighthouse*" above and away , much like the colonizer's living spaces , from the living spaces of "*the very people who legitimize (his) authority*"[61] .

To write ironically with success a satirist needs to be alert to two different poles that constitute his audience. First, those who recognize the satirist's ironic intention or under-the-surface meaning, and might be delighted by it. Second, those who recognize themselves as the objects of the satirist's scrutiny might feel thwarted by it. Moreover, the success of satire depends on the success of the satirist at invoking an absent meaning or the unsaid present in a carefully worded statement. In this connection, Achebe's satire exerts tremendous impact on readers whose awareness of the satiric spectrum is minimal. Yet, Achebe is highly aware of this. In the light of his different uses of irony and satire, one might consider particularly the risk he takes of being misunderstood, bearing in mind that some problems in the interpretation of his irony and satire may arise. Because satire depends principally on the interpreters' ability to recognize that an oblique expression is actually an attack on a certain target, it is an ambivalent genre. The satirist objectifies his or her aggression indirectly and satire may,

[60] Achebe,Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. London: Heinemann,1987.
[61] Ibid, p.73.

therefore, elicit multivalent readings. One of the primary questions that comes to mind in reading Achebe's novel is who actually is "*the man of the people*?", even if the irony in the title may suggest reference to Chief Nanga.

Achebe seems to be aware of the possibility of being misunderstood even by his knowledgeable readers. Already, Jonathan Swift, in the *Apology* which he wrote for his first major work, *A Tale of a Tub*[62] , admits that he had *"played some tricks*", which might well have provoked some of his unsophisticated readers, but appealed to "the *Men of Taste, who will observe and distinguish that there generally run an irony through the thread of the whole book…which will render some Objections that have been made, very weak and insignificant*."[63]

In his construction of satirical effects, Achebe has been much commended for the creation and use of the naive character Odili. Like Warĩĩnga in Ngugĩ's *Devil on the Cross* and Gulliver, in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*[64] who expose the imperfections of mankind and political conflicts, he is a good reporter of what he sees and he is instrumental in creating irony and providing a satirical view of much of the action of the novel. However the big irony is that once Odili enters narrative he becomes a version of what Robert C. Elliott [65], calls "*the satirist satirized*", in which the satirist-persona or satirist-character makes his or her attack and is ironically ridiculed himself. In other words, like Obi Okonkwo,

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[62] Swift, Jonathan. *A Tale of a Tub, to which is added The battle of the books, and the Mechanical operation of the spirit. By Jonathan Swift. Together with The history of Martin, Wotton's Observations upon the Tale of a tub, Curll's Complete key, &c.* A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, editors. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd edition, 1958.

[63] Quoted in *Irony in Defoe and Swift* by Macimillian E. Novak and Herbert J. Davis. California:University of California, Los Angeles, William Andrew Clark Memorial Library, 1966. Seminar April 2, 1966.

[64] Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. London: Signet Classic, 1960.

[65] **I** n his book *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*. Princeton. Princeton University Press,1960**.** Robert C. Elliott asserts that "the theme of the satirist satirized appears (in various guises) with remarkable regularity throughout the history of satirical writing." The Renaissance certainly provides many examples: *Timon of Athens, Troilus and Cressida, Le Misanthrope*, and *The Anatomy of Melancholy*--a fact which perhaps is best explained by Alvin Kernan in his focusing upon the Elizabethan concept of the satyr.

in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, Odili is drawn into what Nanga calls "*the dirty game of politics*", and compromises his ideals in order to survive. He gradually sinks in corruption much like the "*bush politician*" he is denouncing. Achebe casts an eye on the inability of the new generation of educated Africans to resist the temptation of corruption and to hold on to their principles. Ironically, it is only when Nanga, the ruthless trickster-like; the greedy and gluttonous charismatic figure who often overcomes his opponents through calculating suaveness combined with sheer lack of scruple, outwits Odili and "*sexploits*" his girlfriend, Edna, that Odili reverts to his initial idealism and enters politics, determined to take his revenge by contesting Chief Nanga's seat in election. Achebe's scrutiny seems to be directed towards Odili's shallowness and lusty desires which are the only motives for him to enter politics.

Achebe's aim underlying his creation of the naive narrator is to achieve structural irony which extends throughout the fabric of the novel. Structural irony may be defined as a kind of irony that involves a naive hero or an unreliable narrator(like Achebe's Odili or Ngugi's Wangari) whose view of the world may differ from the circumstances recognized by the readers and the implied author. The success of Achebe's irony depends, however, on the reader's understanding of the author's intention and perceiving an authorial presence behind the naive persona. The satirist uses the discourse of another for his own purpose to show his characters' unreliability by incorporating the characters' intention expressed in his "own" words into a discourse that has its own goals. This allusion and incorporation of the words of others make the text double-voiced. The satirist makes room for the voice of the other to be heard and assessed by the audience.

*AMOP* indicates that Achebe is an authentic Igboman and his satire can be related to Igbo satirical traditions . Satire is so prevalent among the Igbo that virtually all Igbos participate in it in some form or another. As a matter of fact, Igbo satire has a long history, ranging from its beginnings as a tool for the propagation of moral and social control to its contemporary function as an aesthetic tool and form of entertainment. In traditional Igbo society as well as in many other African societies the satirical singer/poet was perceived as having the magical power of the word. In addition, Shame is perceived as a powerful motivating force in Igbo culture, and serves as a means of punishment and social control. Shame is regarded as driving force of self-amendment and fear of the public opinion in Igbo tradition. In *AMOP* Achebe borrows from Igbo orature. He writes satire while thinking through the old tradition of the African sense of humour and the Igbo proverbs. Proverbs are extremely important to the Igbo people. They constitute the most important form of Igbo narrative custom. Achebe himself describes them in his novel *Things Fall Apart* as "the palm oil with which words are eaten", which is a very striking metaphor, since there are almost no Igbo meals cooked without palm oil, just as there is hardly any good Igbo speech that is not adorned with proverbs. Achebe's use of satire, as Clement Ball puts it, derives from the duality intrinsic to the Igbo worldview.

In the novel, Achebe draws a reviled portrait of the African politician. The latter is very often the object of irony and the main target for his satire .The two opposing forces that shape the satirist's multidirectional satire and the narrative are Chief Nanga and his rival, Odili. Odili's object of scrutiny is Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga, Member of Parliament, Odili's former teacher and

popular "*bush politician*" in his West African homeland. As satiric referent, Nanga stands for a debased post-independence politics through his activities and attitudes. He appears as a composite of opportunism and pragmatism whose morality is one of survival. Nanga's portrait drawn by Achebe shows him as openly corrupt in his involvement with "British Amalgamated", the novel's representation of the economic imperialist that sustains African dependency after the withdrawal of the political power. Chief Nanga distorts the meaning of the term democracy when he attacks his election rival Odili, whom he satirises as "*boy*", for aiming to "*overthrow a duly constituted government*"; i.e., under western tutelage.

> *Chief Nanga was a born politician; he could get away with almost anything he said or did. And as long as men are swayed by their hearts and stomachs and not their heads the Chief Nangas of this world will continue to get away with anything.* **(*AMOP*, 65)**

This viewpoint echoes Achebe saying that "*Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient.*" **(*AMOP*, 38)** Chief Nanga has a firm grasp of what the electorate want. They want, he says, their share of the national cake. But "*our great and God-fearing leader, Chief Nanga*" is not simply a "*man of the people*", in this cynical sense. He also has a genuine sympathy and rapport with the people he represents. Even when he exploits them he remains sensitive to their demands, so that there is an ironical half truth in this assertion that he represents the government "of *the people, by the people, for the people*". Indeed, in his glib talk,

he is shown formulating persuasive arguments to make the electorate believe that he is on their side. He provides them with a few crumbs of the "*national cake*", and makes them feel that they are much better than they would have been under European control.

As a result, they do not even question what Chief Nanga is doing with his unlimited power and wealth. Ironically, they seem to ascribe their idleness to the Igbo proverb which says, "*The inquisitive monkey gets a bullet in the face*". Chief Nanga's portrait calls to mind Alexis de Toqueville's remark that

> Each person withdrawn into himself behaves as though he is a stranger to the destiny of all the others. His children and his good friends constitute for him the whole of the human species. As for his transactions with his fellow citizens, he may mix among them, but he sees them not; he touches them, but does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms, there remaining his mind a sense of family, no longer remains a sense of society.[66]

Antonio Gramsci believes that the failure of the workers to make an anti-capitalist revolution is due to the successful capture of the workers' ideology, self-understanding, and organizations by a hegemonic culture. Instead of working towards a revolution that might truly serve their needs, the workers (here the Nigerian people) admire the rhetoric, the attitudes, and the guidance of their leader. The opening chapter of *A Man of the People* clearly reinforces that. Chief Nanga's portrait is similar to that in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* where the animals having been exposed to the hardships of Farmer Jones's day are willing to undergo whatever hardship as long as their former human master does not come back.

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[66] Alexis de Tocqueville, cited in Richard Sennett's, *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Alfred A. Knop Inc.,1977.

> *Now if there was one thing that the animals were completely certain of, it was that they did not want Jones back. When it was put to them in this light, they had no more to say. The importance of keeping the pigs in good health was all too obvious. So it was agreed without further argument that the milk and the windfall apples (and also the main crop of apples when they ripened) should be reserved for the pigs alone.*[67]

The vision articulated in the novel is like that which results in the difficulty of distinguishing the pigs from the humans. Since the worst fear of the people is the return of their former rulers, it is ostensible that the people will remain in the vicious cynical situation unless a divine power intervenes.

Within Achebe's satiric agenda, Chief Nanga is projected as being a man of certainty. He is seen to have correctly appreciated the national situation and made full use of its opportunities. In this respect, the figure of Nanga is surrounded by a field of values that are projected in the "realistic" mode as pieces of commonsense. As said in the novel, Chief Nanga is a born politician and actor, and he needs hypocrisy and flexibility to succeed in both activities. Nanga believes that a man who prides himself on following a straight line through life is an idiot who believes in infallibility .For him, there are no such things as principles: there are only events; there are no laws but those of expediency. Achebe's satirical treatment of the character seems to call for a more critical attitude of the people towards the politicians in office. The implicit questions which are raised are: Can a man be popular, and remain a knave? Can a man proclaim honesty and indulge in corruption? Can political success be achieved and the common cause betrayed?

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[67] Orwell, George. *Animal Farm.* New York : Signet Classic,1956,p.26.

Chief Nanga appears to his people as the approachable politician who makes sure that his people's needs are satisfied. He tells his audience that he is on their side and he would have preferred to speak in the vernacular, however, he uses English because, as he puts it, speeches made in the vernacular were liable to be distorted and misquoted in the press. In remarks such as these, where one notes the socio-political contradictions that are revealed by the use of satire, the main target is clearly the exposure of hypocrisy.

Indeed, Nanga's hypocritical approach to his role of benevolent politician clarifies the connection between "honest" national aims and personal hypocrisy. In Nanga's character, Achebe has drawn a memorable portrait of "*one of the finest rogues in African fiction*;" someone to criticize, deride, and laugh at. Odili, the satirist's eye and the novel's main voice of critique comments directly and ironically on the deficiencies of Nanga: "*Just think of a cultureless man going abroad and calling himself Minister of Culture. Ridiculous. This is why the outside world laughs at us.*" (*AMOP*, 23) Achebe's satirical whip is pointed towards Nanga who fails to promote his country's culture and flouts his responsibility as Minister of Culture. His leadership becomes destructive rather than redemptive to his nation and hastens the collapse of the system that he and his colleagues lead. The African politician, who is quite often a target for Achebe's satire, is by nature and profession consistently unethical. Chief Nanga, the epitome of the corrupt post-independence leader grows fat on graft and ill-acquired wealth. His open-handed manner of giving and receiving bribes can be read as a symptom of an immoral society. "One must look into the body politic to

account for a deceased member, such as Nanga"[68].

Odili's satirical diagnosis is furthered by his use of a grotesque imagery for both Nanga as body and the people as body politic. Nanga's caricature can be read on the basis of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of grotesque body elaborated in his books, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,*[69] *The Dialogic Imagination*[70], and *Rabelais and His World*[71]. Bakhtin's two concepts are not linked in his writings, but he clearly finds both Menippean satire and "*grotesque realism*" preferable to what he sees as the deriding, oppositional, negative type of satire. Menippean satire, in fact, is a formless version of satire derived from the work of Menippus, whose works utilized a multitude of different genres.

The satirist whose laughter is negative, Bakhtin says, places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it. Achebe's portrayal of Chief Koko, Nanga's friend, as "*a fat jovial man wearing an enormous home-knitted read-and-yellow sweater, was about to have coffee…He explained that nothing warmed the belly like a coffee*" (*AMOP*,33) reinforces the assumption that in some African cultures to be fat or to have a large belly that hung over belt, is to be healthy and wealthy; a sign of popularity and admiration. Nonetheless, in Western culture this might signify satirized excesses with satiric value. In using negative grotesque imagery to render the African politician awkward, strange, ugly, and bizarre, the satirist's underlying aim is, of course, to induce disgust and scorn in

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[68] *Lindfors, Bernth. Comparative Approaches to African Literatures: "The African Politician's Changing Image",p.115.*

[69] Bakhtin, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minnieapolis: University of Michigan Press, 1984.

[70] Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.* Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin and London: University of Texas Press,1981.

[71] Bakhtin, M. M. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

the reader's feelings and this might lead to deflating the ruler or at least increasing his anxiety.

Achebe's representations of the negative grotesque body is part of his satire, and therefore offers a subversive challenge to the imposed status quo. By offering images of alienation and departure from the traditional norms of his society, Achebe aims to widen the discrepancy between what the African politician is and what he should be. His satire, therefore, becomes a potentially subversive threat and resistance to cultural and political neo-colonial hegemony of his country, for words in satire are not just means of communication, but a very ideological tool, that if mastered can serve a number of purposes. Irony is itself a dialogic relation; satirists, by utilizing irony, call on interpreters to refigure the meaning of the utterance in view of its new context of use. In this sense, satire is dialogic in at least two senses. First, it makes reference to another text that is the subject of critique. Chief Nanga might share a number of affinities with Aluko's Honourable Minister, Ekwensi's Uncle Taiwo or even Orwell's pigs. Second, satire depends on the audience to read it as a satire. Satirists do not expect their utterances to be taken at face value. As George Austin Test has emphasized, satire by its very nature asks the audience to make a connection between the work and the context in which it finds expression[72].

Achebe's subversive strategies of irony and satire are not directed towards Chief Nanga alone. In fact, his satire tends to be sweeping. For instance he uses the occasion of Chief Nanga's visit to his electorate, through a masterful employment of irony, to expose the people's blindness to his devises when he is

[72] Test, George Austin. *Satire: Spirit and Art*. USA: University of Florida Press, 1991, p. 32.

due for a visit. There is among them the Hunters' League, with its members dancing and shooting their guns in ecstasy and anticipation of the visit. The visit is seen through the sceptical eye of Odili, who has been thoroughly disillusioned and overwhelmed by the recent events which enveloped his unnamed country's (Nigeria) political scene. Odili's disillusionment includes both the politicians and the electorate who have entered into a conspiracy of "eat-and-let-eat" interests. Odili, Achebe's first figure of criticism comments directly and ironically on the deficiencies of his society and on Nanga as an example of its degradation:

> As I stood in one corner of that vast tumult waiting for the arrival of the Minister, I felt intense bitterness welling In my mouth. Here were silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting to blow off their gun-powder in honour of one of those who had started the country off down the slopes of inflation . I wished for a miracle , for a voice of thunder, to hush this ridiculous festival and tell the poor contemptible people one or two truths . But of course it would be quite useless. They were not only ignorant but cynical. Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you – as my father did – if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth. (*AMOP,2)*

Obviously, Achebe's biting satire is directed towards people's cynicism. The reception given to Nanga is ironically the most befitting manner of Igbo tradition that is normally given to a hero of great moral integrity. In the traditional Igbo society, when a great warrior returns home , he is warmly welcomed with special names of praise attributed to him for his bravery , for crossing rivers and climbing high mountains, for returning home safely, above all, for bringing home human heads, as seen in *Things Fall Apart*. The satirist uses the narrator to tell us that "*the hunters reserved their precious powder to greet the*

*Minister's arrival – the price of gun powder like everything else having doubled again and again in the four years since this government took control*" (*AMOP*, 2).

Ironically, the hunters respond to the inflation but are not critically the source and cause of that inflation since they are wasting that same small amount of gun powder to welcome one of those who have caused the scarcity. Kwame Nkrumah thinks that "*The danger...springs not from the action of those who seek to end neo-colonialism but from the inaction of those who allow it to continue.*"[73] In such circumstances "The *worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost.*"[74] Achebe is clear about what he thinks of the people who accord this minister a hearty welcome. Indeed, Odili pokes fun both at Nanga and at the "*silly, ignorant villagers*" who patronize with him blindly; he anecdotally describes outrages involving this "villain" that are replete with images of grotesque physicality and animality and scenes of chaos and indignity, whereas Odili, at the start of the novel, stands as a "clean" observer. In this respect, Bernth Lindfors says of Odili: "*Whatever he says can be trusted to be accurate and honest. Somehow Odili has managed to remain unattained amidst all the surrounding corruption and his clear vision provides an undistorted view of a warped society.*" [75]

One of the memorable passages, which can be deemed as the ideological core of the novel, is marked by Achebe's witty use of the logic of the proverb. Odili, in a period of meditation, considers the overall position. He defines it in

[73] Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. London:Heinemann,1956,p.259.
[74] Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," p.8.
[75] Lindfors, Bernth ."The Palm-Oil with Which Achebe's Words are Eaten," in *African Literature Today,* Vol. 1,1968, p.62 .

terms of a man who has just come in from the rain, dried himself and put on new clothes. That man, thinks Odili, is more reluctant to go out again than another who has been indoors all the time. In plain terms, the privileges acquired from the exercise of power cannot be relinquished that easily by their owner.

Achebe's keen diagnosis is that people who have recently survived the hardships of colonization adopt a rather a shallow attitude towards political corruption. They are willing to excuse the extravagances of their leaders because they believe that these "patriots who survived the bullets" (*AMOP*, 57) and led the struggle for independence now have the right to eat from the "*national cake*". They also believe that a well-fed MP might let a few crumbs fall to his constituents. Nanga relates to them because he considers himself closer to the common man and far away from the intellectuals, the likes of Odili who represent a more alien style of thinking and living. In this kind of political climate, reformers such as Odili and his party receive little public support. "*Let them eat*" was the people's opinion, "*after all when white men used to do all the eating, did we commit suicide?*" (*AMOP*, 144) Apparently, this kind of cynicism seems to keep despotic tyrants like Nanga in total control of power and perpetuates a tradition of corruption in government. "*The sick society must undergo a major political convulsion before such cynicism is transformed into hope.*"[76]

Ironically, Odili's main internal voice of satire in turn becomes itself an object of satire. The big irony is that he betrays the portrait he draws of himself as ethically pure and above political fray. His confused motives for challenging Nanga blur his idealism with a wounded ego, sexual humiliation, romantic desire,

[76] Lindfors, Bernth. *Comparative Approaches to African Literatures: "The African Politician's Changing Image".* The Netherlands: Editions Radopi B.V., Amsterdam - Atlanta, 1994, p.116.

and revenge fantasies. He neglects to investigate the sources of C.P.C funds before accepting the party's money and car and he makes personal use of party funds before and after the election. He belongs to the same narrative that reveals Nanga as the satirized representative of what Gikandi calls "*the great ironic moment*"[77] of independence so dashed because it promised a break from the colonial past but produced instead the perpetuation of imperial attitudes.

In Gikandi's analysis, Achebe's satire opposes narrative closure and coherence and stresses reduction and violent distortion. Satirists are never so wholly successful at "finishing-off" what they oppose, even if specific targets invariably remain as present and future disturbances. Although some incidental satirical jabs are made in the novel, the effects of satire remain hypothetical.

Another irony in *AMOP* is that the military is portrayed as the redeemer of the nation and the people are relieved and herald the military intervention. An unsigned article in the Lagos *Sunday Express* of January 3, 1965, supports the people's cynical attitudes towards democracy and politics in general:

> *Democracy has bred corruption in our society on a scale hitherto unknown in human history. Nigerian needs a strong hand. By this I mean, that Nigeria needs to be disciplined. Nigeria needs to be drilled. The leadership we want is the leadership of a benevolent dictator who gets things done; not that of democratic administrators who drag their feet*[78].

The irony is that the very people whose opinion towards their leaders was "*let them eat*" , now, once the same "redeemer" is ousted by a military coup, they "*began to shake their heads at the excesses of the last regime*" (AMOP,148). Their

[77] Quoted in Ball, John Clement. *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel*: V.S. Naipaul (et al): "In All Fairness: Chinua Achebe". New York: Routledge,2003, p.106.

[78] Quoted in Emenyonu, Ernest (ed.), *Emerging Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* .Vol. I Trenton: Africa World …Press, 2004, p.281.

cynical and destructive opinions towards their leaders *who were "followed with song and talking drums wherever they went"* (*AMOP*, 148) have given them a distorted perception of politics and the self as well.

Because Achebe creates an entirely imaginary world in his novel, the subversive strategies of his irony and satire tend to be sweeping rather than aimed at a particular target. Like Ngugi in *DOC*, and Soyinka in *TI*, Achebe idealises none of his characters in *AMOP*. As a matter of fact, his narrative neither completely debases nor fully endorses a character, but participates in the "*dialogical*" critique that Frank Palmeri identifies as narrative satire. For Palmeri, the meaning of narrative satire emerges through repeated "*internal reversals of value and implication*"; "*such satire counterpoises multiple frames of understanding without asserting the authority of any single perspective*"[79].

Our concluding remarks about *AMOP* will highlight Achebe's deepest emotions of anger and despair at the betrayal of the ideals of democracy and the aspirations of the newly independent African states. The reader may be entertained by the comic medium used, and still share Achebe's diatribes which can make him feel that change in Africa is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. Through his subversive strategies of irony fused with a pessimistic diagnosis, Achebe drives home the point that the history of post-independence African society has been plagued by deception. It is nothing but a vicious circle of exploitation of the ordinary people by white intruders with the help of their black surrogates.

[79] Palmeri, Frank. *Satire in Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville, and Pynchon*. University of Texas Press; 1st edition,1990 ,p.4. (*http://books.google.com*)

All in all, Achebe proves to be an ardent critic of the inept political leaders in contemporary Africa, of the shallow philistinism of the new ruling class and their supporters. His reputation rests on his unbiased satirical exposé of the post-independence Nigerian environment and his ability to inspire a true revolution, " *a revolution that aims towards true independence, that moves towards the creation of modern states in place of new colonial enclaves...a revolution that is informed with African ideologies*"[80].

[80] Quoted in Kolawole Ogunbesan: "*Politics and the African Writer*". *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* .Lindfors, Bernth & C.L. Iness (eds.). Lonson. Africa World Press, 1978,p.41.

# *C H A P T E R  T W O :*

## *RELIGIOUS ALLEGORY, GROTESQUE BODY AND SATIRE IN DEVIL ON THE CROSS*

*Instead of Jesus on the Cross*, *she would see the Devil*, with skin as white as that of a very fat European she once saw near the Rift Valley Sports Club, being crucified by people in tattered clothes-like the ones she used to see in Bondeni – and after three days, when she was in the thrones of death, he would be taken down from the Cross *by black people in suits and ties*, and, *thus restored to life*, he would mock Wariinga.

*(DOC, 182)*

Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* is preoccupied with a number of the issues that Chinua Achebe dissects in A*MOP*. The Kenyan bourgeoisie which "steps fast into the shoes of the departing whites"[81] as Wole Soyinka puts it, became the new ruling class through its hold on the state apparatus; by developing its power of decision, it may include the masses in the share of the "national cake" which would transform their hegemony into a national consensus; or through its use and abuse of the state, it would benefit selfishly the comprador bourgeoisie and would open the door to foreign interests. This overwhelming status quo has led to the production of Ngugi's satirical novel *DOC* which epitomizes the author's anger for the non-fulfillment of the socio-political promises directing the revolution. This novel carries prominently a denunciation of the link between the Kenyan bourgeoisie and its Western allies. This Kenyan bourgeoisie is not, as Frantz Fanon puts it,

> Geared to production, invention, or work. All its energy is channeled into intermediary activities. Networking and scheming seem to be underlying vocation. The National bourgeoisie has the psychology of the businessman, not that of a captain of industry[82].

Describing his seminal novel *DOC*, his first to be written in Gikuyu, Ngugi wa Thiong'o claims that satire, when used to expose neo-colonial realities, is one of the most effective weapons that a writer can borrow from the oral tradition. Echoing Ngugi's standpoint, the Brazilian literary critic Roberto Schwarz argues

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[81] Wole Soyinka, Biodun Jeyifo (eds.). *Conversations with Wole Soyinka*. Mississippi: MUP, 2001, p.117.

[82] Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1963. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Groove Weidenfeld,1991,p.98.

that parody is often the most combative of literary forms. What these writers share is the belief that satire and parody have the ability to expose the contradictions of a retrograde ruling class that ignores the progressive desires of the general population. This chapter explores the ways in which satire in Ngugi's *DOC* can be used to reveal the ills and contradictions of the post-independence national bourgeoisie that failed to bring down the structures of colonial hegemony. Ngugi in a sense follows the model of his Nigerian fellow-writers mainly Chinua Achebe, T.M. Aluko, Kem Nkwanko, and Wole Soyinka. He uses satire to show that the hopes for change were dashed by the governments that took power when the colonialists left. For Ngugi, satire not only works to expose the paradoxical socio-political forms of postcolonial Africa, but it also articulates a form of subversive resistance that militates for an African modernity that is non-identical to the Western modernity embraced by the post-independence governments.

In *DOC* Ngugi satirizes the post –independence phenomenon as it appears through the relation between Kenya and the West. Via the means of his skillful use of the subversive qualities of irony and satire, Ngugi aggressively defies this status quo. The satirist's work is, without question, a refusal to be part of the system and to bow to its authority.

Accordingly, through satire fused with religious allegory, the novel postulates, highlights and fictionalizes socio-historical realties and brings into focus the problems of governance in newly independent African countries. Ngugi sheds light on the gloomy situation of the post independence Kenyan state, and virtually all the major events and personalities in the country's political landscape

up to contemporary times are exposed in his work. To do so, he empowers his central characters with an understanding of the psychology of power and also portrays other characters as actors who lead their country to a state of economic dependency on the West, at the expense of their compatriots' well being. And in like manner, he uses his characters to lament Kenya's breakdown of norms and traditions that have regulated social life over the centuries.

The story of *DOC* is about a group of six memorable protagonists travelling in a Matatu taxi to Ilmorog in the manner of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. On their way they discover that they are mysteriously invited to a devil's feast where thieves and robbers of Kenya enter a fierce competition for the election of seven cleverest thieves and robbers. The characters are: Wariinga, Wangari, Gatuira, Muturi, Mwererei and Mwawra the taxi driver.

The setting of the novel evolves mainly around Ilmorog and partly in Nairobi, which is significant of Ngugi's interest in the marginalized peasantry. The novel is dedicated to "all Kenyans struggling against the neo-colonial stage of imperialism"[83](*D0C, 2*). It speaks for Ngugi's eagerness to be connected with the people of Kenya, with the peasants and the toiling workers of Ilmorog.

In *DOC*, the reluctant narrator is commanded to tell his tale because it is not " yours alone, to keep to yourself"; he agrees realising, "the voice of the people is the voice of God" *(DOC, 8).* The communal production and reception or what Ngugi calls"appropriation" of narrative, is especially significant for him in conditions of neo-colonial oppression, at a time when indigenous forces endorse the report on the "Suppression of Savage Customs," submitted by Joseph

[83] wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Devil on the Cross*. London: Heinemann, 1982. First published in Kikuyu under the title Caaitani Mutharabaini by Heinemann Educational Books, East Africa, 1980. p.2.

Conrad's Mr Kurtz, and the District Commissioner's book on "*The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger,*"[84] in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Using religious allegory, Ngugi demands that his readers actively participate in the reading process, make the necessary connections, and draw the required parallels. This is essential, as the consequence of reading *DOC*, the writer, implies that he is not to produce any epiphany or intellectual enlightenment, but a dynamic transformation of consciousness leading inexorably to a violent revolutionary action. Ngugi's implied audience is composed of African peasants and workers weighted down by subalternity, the legacy of feelings of social and cultural inferiority, as explored by Fanon. This psychic disenfranchisement or rural masses, and their alienation from forms of collective life, Ngugi suggests, is one of the worst consequences of neo-colonialism's ravages, and the communal reception of his narratives is an attempt to heal these wounds. Ngugi appeals to Biblical narrative and also to Bunyan's form of allegory to respond to his implied readers' expectations. He assumes that his Kenyan audience might be familiar with John Bunyan's work *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Bible*, and so chooses forms which were themselves inscribed in the minds of his readers with a colonial context. One understands then Ngugi's intention to empower his readers with the will to fight neo-colonialism by transforming what he regards as one of the tools of colonialism, i.e., the religious discourses of Christianity. Ngugi accomplishes the transformation of Christian discourses into a revolutionary type of what Frederic Jameson terms a "*national allegory*"[85]

[84] Achebe Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann, 1958, p.191.
[85] Frederic Jameson. *Live Theory*. New York: Ian Buchanan, 2006, p.22

By the time of the publication of *DOC* in 1980, Ngugi's satire had become part of what Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* calls *"literature of combat"*[86]. Ngugi's targets had become the new agents of neo-colonialism, the oppressive regimes and their collaborators in Kenya, who led the satirist to cry out loud:

> I would cheat them out of that last laugh by letting my imagination loose over the kind of society this class, in nakedly treacherous alliance with imperialist foreigners, were building in Kenya in total cynical disregard of the wishes of over fourteen million Kenyans.[87]

*DOC* is certainly a biting satire that is aimed at making the readers recognize the kind of fluffy rationalism when used to address social problems such as poverty, health care, social security and the likes.

For the aim of dissecting the post-independence phenomena, a form of satire that involves the Christian religion has become Ngugi's favorite literary device. One important way in which the author engages with the audience is to make them see deeper political, moral, and social truths through his use of irony and allegory. Tzvetan Todorov believes that such mixture of forms in literature complies with Mikhail Bakhtin's "carnival," which, "with its whole complex system of images, was the purest and fullest expression of comic popular culture." Ngugi's intentions are explicit as to his use of this mode of writing :

In *DOC,* the village of Ilmorog and its inhabitants struggle against overwhelming external forces of exploitation and corruption became Ngugi's centre of focus. This shift towards the centre of moral conflict corresponds to a change in enterprise: from explaining the past, Ngugi, using satire and allegory as

[86] *Charles* Cantalupo (ed).*The World of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. Africa Word Press, 1993, p.110
[87] Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary, 1981,p.10.*

his preferred mediums, has moved to justifying the demand for social change and creating models for taking the first steps toward it.

Ngugi subverts the role of Christianity by making it an active agent of a neo-colonial apparatus, and Biblical narratives as the targets of his irony and satire. The author's satire becomes more fierce and sharp when portraying the local allies of European imperialists. The local competitors are all given satirical appellations and their popularity, an euphemism for notoriety is determined by their philistinism and cultural alienation.

Ngugi has wrestled with the problem of cultural affiliation: an exiled Kenyan nationalist whose mother tongue is Gikuyu, his educational career in Kenyan missionary school and British universities, both in Africa (Makerere) and England (Leeds), has made him an Anglophone writer with anti-colonial ideological perspectives on art and politics. Ngugi has attempted a partial rejection of his past through a series of political, religious and aesthetic transformations. He has moved through Achebean realism, Conradian modernism, Socialist Realism to a radical linguistic nationalism. These complex transformations can be plotted against his forty-seven year career as a novelist, playwright and essayist. Personal political experiences, such as his imprisonment in the late 1970s and exile in the early 1980s, have accelerated his cultural and linguistic shifts from Afro-Saxon ambivalence of cultural ideas and languages to a more essentialist cultural and language-rich literature.

Ngugi's novel draws extensively from Kenyan oral formulas, Mau Mau and other patriotic songs as adorned with English language, symbols and concepts. The writer acknowledges quite openly that his works and critical stances are a

blend of affiliations which can be quite confusing and culturally contradictory. While his Kenyan nationalist ideology is well focused, his creative writing is a collection of ideologies and languages. But the fact that Ngugi's nationalistic narratives may bear Marxist-Leninist Orientation and European cultural values and meanings does not render them unreadable or untranslatable. As Bakhtin would argue, it is natural for narratives to be syncretic cultural and linguistic amalgams, constituting the polyphonic hetereodsglossia of carnivalized narrative performances.

*In DOC* Ngugi returns to the issue of neo-colonialism, but he shifts his focal point from the intense drama of his previous novels to satire, irony and inversions, though without jeopardizing his underlying concerns. The link between the ruling forces in society and institutionalized Christianity are caricatured in the title of this satirical novel, and symbolic elements intrude throughout. The protagonist of the novel is Wariinga; in one episode, she has a nightmare of the Devil on the cross. In her dream, she sees a "crowd of people dressed in rags" who nail the Devil to the cross "singing songs of victory". (DOC, 13) The subversive power of satire and religious allegory give the victims of neo-colonialism a rare opportunity of seeing their tormentors reduced to grotesque images by being able to boast in public of their conscienceless excesses.

*At the time of its publication, DOC* was very popular in Gikuyu, going into a second printing by popular demand.[88] It uses satire, combined with folkloric structures. A group of characters meet at the Devil's feast, where capitalists give

[88] David Cook, Michael Okenimkpe (eds.).*Ngugi, an Exploration of his writing.* Heinemann, 1983,p.117.

presentations boasting of how they defraud and rob the poor and occasionally each other, leading to arguments and sheer violence

Pan-Africanist scholar Walter Rodney has argued, "It is typical of underdeveloped economies that they do not (or are not allowed to) concentrate on those sectors of the economy which, as a result, will generate growth and raise production to a new level altogether".[89] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as a committed novelist, is sensitive to that issue as he witnessed Kenyans reaping the fruits of independence. As a radical, he felt a sense of belonging to the workers and peasants, developing, thus, a national culture in the way that Frantz Fanon had advocated:

> We must work and fight with the same rhythm as the people to construct the future and to prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already springing up. A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover a people's true nature... A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which a people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.[90]

Still, his audience has reached an international dimension, largely Western; his novels were reviewed and well received in the Western press initially, and were put on university syllabuses, and yet they were not known by workers and peasants in Kenya. In his writing he shifted to a more straightforward didactic style for the play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), which he co-wrote with Micere Githae Mugo, recreating the trial of one of the leaders of the Mau Mau

[89] Walter Rodney(et al.) (eds.).*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981,p.18.

[90] Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1963. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Groove Weidenfeld,1991. p.233.

rebellion. What finally put Ngugi in trouble with the authorities was the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, co-written with Ngugi wa Mirii (which was translated as *I Will Marry When I Want*). The play was workshopped in Gikuyu—the Kikuyu language—with peasants and workers in Limuru. It was banned and Ngugi was detained for a year by the government. He wrote a powerful memoir of this time, *Detained* (1981), and while imprisoned he also wrote his first novel in Gikuyu D0C which turned out to be very popular and went into subsequent printings due to popular demand.

In the novel, satire is fused with religious allegory as well as folkloric structures. The novel's method had precedents. Nigerian Amos Tutuola wrote *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1952) and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954) in a surreal folkloric style that foreshadowed later more sophisticated works like Ngugi's. Ngugi has said, "I think he is incredible. The way he could move from a modern technological image and somehow change it until it becomes part of the life beyond. Borrowing from the folkloric he managed to collapse the barriers of time and space". A similar "dreamtime" from folklore has appeared in other books such as Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) and its sequels. Ngugi wrote *Matigari* (1986), using the same techniques. In it, a semi-mythical guerrilla fighter returns from the forest and tries to find his family and justice in modern Kenya.

Though he has continued to write on both literature and politics, it was not until 2006 that another novel was published in English, the epic *Wizard of the Crow*. Like *DOC,* Ngugi's last novel is a satire on neo-colonialism and much of the issues treated in *DOC concerning* the disenchantment with the attitudes of

the black ruling class are pursued there. Using the Bakhtinian notion of the "grotesque body", Ngugi casts an eye on The Free Republic of Aburiria—a surrealistically exaggerated Kenya—governed by a dictator known only as the Ruler. His three fawning ministers have each undergone plastic surgery to enlarge respectively their eyes, ears and tongue, the better to see, hear and denounce dissent. In a luxurious world separated from the suffering poor, the ministers compete to flatter the Ruler. To celebrate his birthday one suggests that they build a tower to heaven, so that the Ruler will be able to pop in on God.

The satirical medium adopted in DOC is also conspicuous in this novel. All through the book the Aburirian government tries to get the Global Bank to fund Marching to Heaven, but are set back again and again by the activity of the poor, and particularly a group of militant women. Ngugi says of the book:

> I was very much influenced by the trickster tradition. The trickster character appears in tales all over the world. In West Africa it is Anansi the spider. Elsewhere it is Hare or Tortoise. The trickster is very interesting because he is always changing. He always questions the stability of a word or a narrative or an event. He is continually inventing and reinventing himself. He challenges the prevailing wisdom of who is strong and who is weak.[91]

From an aesthetic point of view, and in respect of Africa's Oral Tradition and the trickster figure, *DOC* is written in a unique style, a sort of oral performance. It begins and ends with the third-person omniscient narrating voice of the "Prophet of Justice" who provides clairvoyant social and existential commentary. Borrowing from traditional African ballad singers the novel can also

[91] Olende, Ken, 2006, interview with Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 10 August 2006. An edited version of this interview appeared as *"Ngugi Wa Thiong'o Interviewed On His New Novel, Wizard Of The Crow"*, Socialist Worker, 4 November 2006.

be performed as a play and thereby used to educate and inform the grassroots of their political situations.

Among Ngugi's concerns in telling the story of the Kenyan people, there is the need to be the spokesman for them, to be their voice, for *"the voice of the people is the voice of God."* The use of traditional proverbs and songs reinforces this intention, which is to celebrate Kenya's cultural history and heritage maily the good old days. The use of Gikuyu is also meant to reinforce the supremacy of the people, as opposed to their leaders. It also serves to combat the forces of neo-colonialism, and their culture which dominates and belittles that of the colonized. As Ngugi explained in an interview regarding his choice of language, "*African writers working in colonial languages can be unclear as to who their audiences are. They are not addressing the very same people or culture that is enriching their writing.*"[92]

In his essay "*Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the Question of Language and literature in Kenya*" Dieter Riemenschneider says that Ngugi is a critically self-conscious writer who basically succeeds in his attempt to escape the strictures of hegemonic Europhonic languages. He has done this by not only selecting Gikuyu but also by turning English against its masters for satirical purposes[93]. Literary critic Patrick Williams, also defends Ngugi's transnational projects and theoretical pronouncements in his article "*Decolonizing the World.*" He argues that Ngugi is able to bridge the gaps caused by colonial and translational

[92] <http://suite101.com/article/devil-on-the-cross-a51919>

[93] Riemenschneider, Dieter. *World Literature Written in English* Volume 24, Issue 1, 1984, p.78 Special Issue: "Commonwealth" Literatures in Germany Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the question of language and literature in Kenya."

contradictions through a heteroglossic model of linguistic dialogue and dialectic which resolves the contradictions of theory and practice.

However, other literary critics find Ngugi's position on language and especially his linguistically oriented cultural theories contradictory and flawed. The main point of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their book *The Empire Writes Back* as well as Alamin Mazrui in his essay "*Relativism, Universalism, and the Language of African Literature*" is that language is a tool and weapon which can be used for multiple purposes: English can be used just as well as Gikuyu for anti-colonial statements. Mazrui argues "*any language can be a weapon for either colonization or liberation*"[94]. While Ngugi has made it clear that languages are tools, he nonetheless is adamant about the "harmony" that results from using one's own native or mother tongue, and the disharmony of using an imposed imperial language. This is especially true for the young and the marginally educated. Joseph_Mbele, in his essay "*Language in African Literature: An Aside to Ngugi,*" Thinks Ngugi exaggerates the distance caused by learning and internalizing colonial languages.

In "*Recuperating a 'Disappearing' Art Form: Resonances of "Gicaandi" in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Devil on the Cross,"* [95] Gititi finds in Ngugi's first Gikuyu-language novel and his subsequent fiction a variety of motifs associated with the traditional Gikuyu art form of "gicaandi." It is a comprehensive term, including oral performance in a variety genres: riddles, proverbs, epigrams, biography,

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[95] Gititi, Gitahi. "Recuperating *a 'Disappearing' Art Form: Resonances of 'Gicaandi' in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Devil on the Cross"* Ed. Peter Nazareth. *Critical Essays on Ngugi wa Thiong'o.* New York: Twayne, 2000.

history, commentary, fictional narrative, satire, poetry, and song "Gicaandi" also can be the name for the musical instrument of a calabash with picture writing on it, a kind of dance, and the site of performance.

Apart from the African "Gicaandi", Ngugi's *DOC* can be compared to *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. Both satiric works share a multitude of features. They use satire and religious allegory as primary devices. When drawing a parallel between *DOC* and *"Gulliver's Travels*" by Swift one can see clearly how Jonathan Swift is using irony, satire and satirical situations to point out problems in society and to comment upon them without directly and seriously addressing the reader. Likewise Ngugi uses satire and irony to achieve the same goals although because of the differences in the structure of each piece, the use of satire may differ in technique and the satirists' ultimate goal as well.

Ngugi's religious allegory, however, insist on the reader's interpreting the coherent, public, political range of reference for narrative comprehension. In DOC, characters draw parralels between their situation , Biblical narratives, and the country's political predicament. Muturi, the taxi driver in *DOC* explains, for example, " *I believe that God and Satan are images of our actions in our brains as we struggle with nature in general, and with human nature in particular"* (*DOC, 57*). In *Matigari*, the jailed drunkard points out the similarities of the captives' position to that of Paul in the Capernaum prison. Following this, *Matigari*, fusing Mau Mau songs and biblical principles : "*let the will of the people be done! Our kingdom come as once decreed by the Iregi revolutionaries*" (*Matigari,* 63). Such "intrusions" alone do not define these narratives as purely fictional or auto

referential texts in a contemporary, Western postmodern mould but rather in Brechtian fashion. This is one of the ways in Ngugi's poetics of fiction in which "*figuration in a story relates to figuration in history*"[96]. Ngugi's transformation of sacred history is accomplished through his use of allegory. He extricates his narrative practice through this choice of allegory from what is for the African writer. Thus in the search for an authentic rendition of his people's culture, he attempts to expose the inanities and transgression of the neo-colonial agents of his country through the medium of the traditional discourse of authenticity in allegorical form.

Ngugi's allegory draws on the radical and class-conscious, but also the anti-intellectual and populist stance of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress.* This is apparent in the journey "progress" structure of *DOC*. Ngugi's religious allegory subverts the actual Kenyan status quo. Using his wit, he removes the essence of Bunyan's politics of power from the dross of religion. Also, he derides the monstrous qualities of the human ogres of *DOC*. The competition in the "Competition to Select Seven Experts in Modern Theft and Robbery" *(DOC, 76)* are the novel's Apollyons,[97] like Christian, Wariinga must surpass the false claims of the Mr. Turn-aways, and she is tempted by devilish voices in dreams. She is also visited by faithful guardians, like Muturi, the "angel in rags" (*ibid*, 183). Workers and peasants, like the elect in George Fox's *Journal*[98], are able to detect demonic, animalistic natures hiding within people. Whenever one of the

[96] Norman R. Cary. ***"And the Birds Began to Sing": Religion and Literature in Post-Colonial Cultures.*** *Christianity & Literature; Autumn*1997, Vol. 47 Issue 1, p109.
[97] Apollyon is an evil character from Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress,* the second widely read book after *The Bible.*
[98] Fox, George *The Journal of George Fox,A Revised Edition* .Edited by John L. Nickalls.CUP, 2010

thieves yawned, Gatuiria thought he saw his teeth transformed into blood-soaked fangs" ( *ibid,* 76). One wishes to grant the purchase of a second life to the rich, and another *plans to pen the workers (…) like the animals. He will then fix electrically operated machines to their bodies for milking their sweat or the energy that produces the sweat, their blood and their brains. The three commodities will then be exported to foreign countries to feed industries there.* (*DOC, 187*) This infernal machine will be oiled by "priests," who will sermonize that this system "is ordained by God, and that it has something to do with the eventual salvation of their souls" (*ibid*, 188).

Ngugi's connection with the people is emphasized in the portrayal of two archetypal characters: Wangari, a poor peasant woman and Muturi, a factory worker. The old Wangari who fought during the Emergency on the side of the Mau Mau, finds herself without resources, compelled to sell her labor to survive, and this is one of the motives for Ngugi's anger. The new political and economic reality is reflected by Wangari who is part of a "growing minority of landless laborers and squatters" *(DOC, 117)* Nditika, a landowner, says with sarcasm: "most of the laborers who dig up the grass on my farm are the very people who once took up blunt swords and homemade guns claiming they were fighting for freedom" (*ibid*, 117) .

As a Marxist advocate, Ngugi is attempting through irony and satire to show his sympathy for the working class. However, the irony is that his overt sympathy led him to Kimiti Maximum Security Prison. Of his dilemma, Ngugi writes:

> *When I (…) used to write plays and novels that were only critical of the racism in the colonial system, I was praised. I was awarded prices, and my novels were in the syllabus. But when toward the seventies I started writing in a language understood by peasants, and in an idiom understood by them and I started questioning the very foundations of imperialism and of foreign domination of Kenya economy and culture, I was sent to Kamiti Maximum Security Prison.*[99] .

In one of his gloomier moments, Ngugi points out with grim irony that today it is dangerous for African writers to attempt to represent the realities they daily encounter. In the light of Ngugi's bleak standpoint, it would seem that in order to pursue his unlimited inquiry without the danger of losing his head, the African satirist must take extraordinary pains to avoid entanglements with authority. However, under totalitarian regimes he even risks imprisonment on trumped-up charges or even death, and the baleful experiences that Ngugi had undergone in prison, where he wrote *DOC* on toilet paper drives us to bring into light George Test's standpoint that "*satirists have been the most persecuted of artists—exiled, silenced, sued, physically attacked*"[100].

In his *Theory of the African Literature*, Chidi Amuta agrees with Ngugi and Soyinka that

> *The post-colonial period in Kenya witnessed a gradual but progressive Betrayal of the aspirations or which the peasants waged the Mau Mau Guerilla struggle against British colonialism. The present situation in which the bulk of Kenya's economy and culture are controlled by foreign interests and in which the United States and other Western countries maintain military bases in that country*

[99] Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Barrel of a Pen. London/Port of Spain: New Beacon,1985,p.65. ( quoted as well in *The Theory of African Literature*, p. 52)
[100] Test, George Austin. *Satire* .Florida University Press, 1991, p.1.

> *provides a veritable ambience for the flowering of revolutionary thought and literature.*[101]

Gitutu, one of Ngugi's satiric butts, who is a representative of Kenyatta's politics, has a capitalist get-rich-quick mentality. He looks for profits outside the national boundaries. He is portrayed with sarcasm when he reaches the international market through the growing demand for land by foreign investors. This neo-colonial situation is very often under Ngugi's biting satire. The political irony is that after the departure of the settlers, Western multi-national companies take over and buy land for their industrial plans. Gitutu announces his connection with Europe with pride: "*Today, I am about to join hands with some foreigners from Italy who are planning to purchase an entire country to grow rice and sugar*" (*D0C*, 25). Ngugi uses grotesque imagery and caricature in his portrayal of Gitutu wa Gataaguru, thus generating humorous sarcastic sense:

> Gitutu had a belly that protruded so far that it would have touched the ground that held up his trousers. It seemed as if his belly had absorbed all his limbs and all the other organs of his body. Gitutu had no neck—at least, his neck was not visible. His arms and legs were short stumps. His head had shrunk to the size of a fist.(*DOC*,99)

In the above passage, Ngugi is using negative grotesque imagery, one with the purpose of satirizing or ridiculing and mocking Gitutu. In the following passage Ngugi's biting satire is directed towards Kihaahu wa Gatheeca, , who is described as having everything long in him; he's

[101] AMUTA, Chidi. *The Theory of African Literature: Implications for Practical Criticism*. London: Zed Books,1989, p.24.

> tall, slim fellow: he had long legs, long arms, long finger, a long neck and a long mouth. His mouth was shaped like the beak of the kingstock: long, thin and sharp. His chin, his face, his head formed a cone. Everything about him indicated leanness and sharp cunning … he looked lide a 6-foot praying mantis or mosquito. (DOC, 108)

In the above caricature he draws of Kihaahi , Ngugi is putting emphasis on the importance of the physical appearance of the target being satirized, the reason underlying this is obviously to trigger the feeling of hatred towards such characters.

Apart from Gitutu's satiric caricature, Ngugi also mocks Wangari's naivety. He uses her as a model to lament the fragmentation of Kenya's society. At the sight of Nairobi, she comments that "Kenya *has certainly made progress*" and that in the city she will find shelter. But her disillusion is bitter because her tireless and persistent search for a job as a charwoman gave her no results and leaves her on the pavement like many disillusioned Kenyan peasants. Ngugi uses Wangari's naivety to achieve a structural irony. Wangari's verbal irony: "*Kenya has made progress*" carries two meanings; the explicit or apparent meaning and the second mocking meaning which runs counter the first one. . In the above irony, Wariinga wants to poke fun at the surface reality of her post independence Kenya's which acknowledges that the outside shinning appearance distorts reality and alter it into a sort of deodorized filth.

Wangari comes to note that her revolution had been robbed. She quickly perceives that the "Uhuru" for which many have shed their lives was cruelly limited in its effects. It is liberation to suit the greedy and gluttonous money-

hungry elites. Actually, it was a liberation for the robbers of Kenya, for the envious landowners, the nouveau riche and their affluent western allies. However, for the likes of Wangari—the uprooted and dispossessed, the proletariat, the hungry, the Other—it was sheer curse.

The ill-fated woman was told by a shop-owner that the only job he could offer is spreading her legs. Explicitly, "*sexploitation*" or sexual abuse does not spare even an old woman. In addition to that, she felt inferior overwhelmed, bewildered and shocked because whenever she turns her face she meets foreigners, white men holding key posts in hotels and offices. They are as "*numerous as locusts*"*(DOC*,42) According to Fanon "*The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative of the European's feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior."*[102] It is against this background that Fanon claims: *"I find myself suddenly in a world in which things do evil; a world in which it is always a question of annihilation or triumph."*

In her independent Kenya, she experiences contempt and even racial discrimination which takes her back to the Emergency Era. Her situation stands as a microcosm of much of the ill-fated post independence Africans. The brave Wangari who fought the British at the time of Dedan Kimathi, and finds herself in a paradoxical situation after independence where she begs to clean "*the toilets for the whites*" when they are supposed to have left the country. "*The national bourgeoisie and their specialized elites, as advocated by Edward Said, tend to replace the colonial force with a new class-based and ultimately an exploitive one*

[102] Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press. 1967,p.93.

*which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms.*"[103] This is actually what Ngugi wants to expose in *DOC*.

It seems that Ngugi wants to admit that if colonialism led to the fragmentation of African society and exploitation of the marginalized groups in Kenya, then these forms of fragmentation and exploitation repeat themselves in independent Kenya, except with the minor difference that in the colonial context the exploiters were white, helped by black traitors, while in contemporary times the exploiters are black working with their white masters from Europe and America.

Although Wangari's independent country has cut its colonial bonds, the influence of its former British occupiers has never ended. The political gap created by the departure of the old colonizer was quickly filled by black despotic surrogates, more oppressive and brutal than their white predecessors. Like white colonists, the bourgeois class taunt and look down upon the poor people they rule. Wangari's situation is akin to most of the African subjects in neo-colonial Africa. Obviously, it evokes the imperialist rhetoric for the oppression of the masses, a rhetoric adapted by the neo-colonial hegemony of the independent Kenya. In Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah,* during one of the organized government's organized public executions, Ikem wonders how the common man who is standing in noontime heat can bear to see shaded seats reserved for the VIP's remain totally vacant:

[103] Terry Eagleton et al. *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*. University of Minnesota Press.1990, p.74

> *You see, they are not in the least like ourselves. They don't need and can't use the luxuries that I and you must have. They have the animal capacity to endure the pain of, shall we say, domestication. The very words the white master had said in his times about the black race as a whole. Now we say them about the poor.*[104]

Ngugi's satire is dark and bitter. His objects of criticism are hammered harshly and bitterly. Sometimes, Ngugi's acerbic diagnosis transgresses the boundaries of taste and propriety. He satirizes American tourists who abuse young Kenyan women whom they consider as "sugar girls"(*DOC*, 92). They have found in the newly independent country protection, discretion, pleasure and lust. Mwawra, the car driver cast aspersions on one of these American tourists who has picked a young Kenyan girl, presenting thus an astounding image of neo-colonial Kenya.

> *This American was really old...the African girl could have been a schoolgirl...They sat in the back. I drove them all around Nairobi for an hour or so. All he did was to keep pressing and pinching the little girl's thighs...when the girl pretended to feel pain she cried out a little, the eyes of the American would light up with happiness. Foam dribbled out of the sides of his mouth, and he groaned as if the real deed was on.*(*DOC, 70*)

Ngugi's bitter satire is at work through this impotent old man who nevertheless appreciates Kenya which provides "*fantastic women, so beautiful*"(*DOC*,70) that they may make him promise that he would "*come back with even more tourists so that they can see Kenya's wild game and women for themselves*" (*DOC, 71*) Through the issue of prostitution and the depiction of

[104] Achebe, Chinua .*Anthills of the Savannah*. London: Heinemann,1987,p.40.

Western tourists, Ngugi's bitter satire is directed towards the Kenyan authoritarian rulers who put the independent country and its people at the service of Western capitalist's pleasures. By altering Kenya into one of the most advertised African countries in modern international tourism, the government "nurtures a nation of prostitutes, servants, cooks, shoeshine boys, bed makers, porters" (*DOC, 223*) The issue of black women's exploitation is expressed by Wariinga who wonders satirically: "*Why can't they admit that they're building a factory for modern prostitution.*" (*DOC, 223*)

Ngugi's denunciation of neo-colonialism is reinforced in the creation of the Devil's feast where national robbers and their foreign allies gather in order to reveal their tactics and motives. Ngugi's satire on the Kenyan bourgeoisie is at its best when Kihaahu—one of Ngugi's robbers—reveals his road to success and wealth through his first failure. Indeed by opening a day nursery entirely run by Kenyans for VIP children, where Kiswahili is spoken, where Kenyan songs and Kenyan lullabies are used, Kihaahu fails. After having noticed that successful businesses were the one headed by Europeans, he decides to run a nursery with a white staff. The advert for the new pre-school reveals the foreign impact and the abnormality of the whole affair in an independent country.

> *Modern Day Nursery School. Experienced European Principal. Formally for Europeans only. Now open to a few Kenyans. Foreign standards as before. National languages, National songs, National names Banned. Foreign languages, Foreign Songs, Foreign Toys, etc. English Medium for instruction. Limited places. Telephone or Call in your Car. Color is no Bar: money is the Bar.Fees High. (DOC,113)*

All the political elements which Ngugi satirizes are contained within this advertisement: cultural alienation, no difference between Black or white

bourgeoisies insofar as capital exists. Kihaahu's day nursery succeeds, however, the irony of the whole enterprise is that the experienced European Principal is "a decrepit old woman, half-blind and hard of hearing" (D0C, 112) who spends her time dozing. Besides, in order to attract VIP parents, Kihaahu puts on display expensively-dressed moving mannequins which reassure and convince them that the high price that they pay is well worth it. This grotesque situation is of course surrealistic but effective in bringing out the absurdity of the conduct of the ruling class, being under the spell of Western values and totally alienated from its own.

Ngugi's technique of setting up the Devil's feast is effective for social criticism. His satirical presentation of the impact of neo-colonialism on the attitudes of the bourgeoisie is taken each time one step further here. Ngugi's anger reaches the boundaries of cynicism when the robber baron Gitutu suggests that thanks to his novel mentality, it would be worth considering the sale of "*imported air*" for people to breathe. The air would be consumed according to the length of their conversation. The poorest would have to speak less. Respecting the logic of the existing Kenyan system, Gitutu suggests satirically : "*We could send out air abroad to be packaged...because the technology of foreigners is very advanced!...it would be sent back to us here labeled Made in USA, Made in Western Europe, Made in Japan*" *(DOC, 107).* We note the sarcastic import of such an utterance, marking the blind dependence of the country on the West, and the resentment of peasants, workers, and rebellious students at this situation.

After the thieves and robbers of independent Kenya are chased away by

the workers and students, "the Beatitudes of the rich and the imperialists" are replaced by "the workers' catechism" (*DOC, 209-10*). The realization of the workers' aspirations and the crucifixion of the spirit of capitalism itself must take place. Until then Wariinga's allegorical nightmare of Kenyan history lacks a revolutionary closure:

> Instead of Jesus on the Cross, she would see the Devil, with skin as white as that of a very fat European she once saw near the Rift Valley Sports Club, being crucified by people in tattered clothes- like the ones she used to see in Bondeni – and after three days, when she was in the throes of death, he would be taken down from the Cross by black people in suits and ties, and, thus restored to life, he would mock Wariinga.(*DOC, 139)*

But, then, she is shown to be in the forefront of the revolution imagined by Ngugi. She is after all, an arch-representative of the grassroots, and rising against those in power, and who are the people's enemies.

The expression of this revolt may partly result from the context of the novel's production on toilet paper in cell 16 of a detention block of Kimiti Maximum Security Prison, and from Ngugi's sense of the enormity of the crimes he was reporting. Yet, it also derives from this writer's desire to illuminate his audience and thus to make them see his satire in action.

Ngugi's criticism of neo-colonialism and his skillful handling of the subversive techniques of satire and irony blended with an excoriating diagnosis of the social ills afford a vision of change and hope through the positive acts of Wangari and Muturi who led the demonstration with their bare arms against the capitalists gathered in the cave which is set on fire by the ferocious crowd. The

march of the peasants, workers, students, and grass roots is illustrated by the following slogans:

> WE REJECT THE SYSTEM OF THEFT AND ROBBERY; OUR POVERTY IS THEIR WEALTH…WHAT'S THEBIGGEST THEFT? THE THEFT OF THE SWEAT AND BLOOD OF THE WORKER! WHAT'S THE BIGGEST ROBBERY? THE ROBBERY OF THE BLOOD OF THE MASSES. (*DOC, 28*)

In such an instance, the device of satire is replaced by plain language. Ngugi wants to point out that the neglected masses are not cynical and that their ferocious actions can blast anytime: "Those thieves were armed but none was able to use his gun because they were terrified by the eyes and the massive roar of the crowd" (*DOC*, 33). Within the context of Kenyan politics, Wariinga embodies the struggle against neo-colonialism, reviving Muturi and Wangari's song, a shame song directed to the neo-colonial imperialists and their black surrogates:

> Kenya does not belong to you, imperialists!
> Pack up your bags and go!
> The owner of the homestead is on his way. *(DOC, 47)*

In addition, it is worth mentioning that through Ngugi's astute use of satire and his exploitation of farcical scenes, *DOC* conveys a message of hope to all African oppressed people, and within this message Ngugi aims to awaken the African masses and to make them aware of the dangers of neo-colonialism, the new phase of imperialism, and to push them towards action and change. All in all, *DOC* remains a message calling for revolutionary stance to be taken against undemocratic and authoritarian regimes.

# *C H A P T E R  THREE*

## *HUMOR AND SATIRIC LAUGHTER IN THE INTERPRETERS*

Instead of heat, he obtained electric shocks; once as he touched the faucet of a bath with his toes, and another time through a finger as he dialed a number on the phone. When he told Mathias, he said "Na austerity measure, Government wan join three ministry together, Works, Electricity and Communication. (*TI, 107*)

Soyinka's novel, *The Interpreters*, widely acclaimed in Africa and abroad, contains yet another tinge of humor in dealing with the post independence situation in Nigeria, where similar issues of post-colonial management are dealt with. Soyinka is among the West-African writers who could not ignore what they saw around them. The novel remained their major literary medium to express their concerns and they used it as a vehicle of strong social and political satire. While making a point of re-examining the African past, and tracing the ethical nature of his society, Soyinka has pointed out the need for political reform and genuine democracy. He shuttled between drama and fiction after independence, stressing that the African writer needs to free his literature from the fascination of the past if he is to fulfill his function as the record of the mores and experience of his society *and* as the voice of vision in his own time."[105] *TI* certainly adheres to this principle.

In response to traumatic political and cultural changes since independence, Soyinka has, like many other West African writers, moved from an obsessive concern with the residual effects of colonialism in Africa to a preoccupation with more universal themes rooted in more specific contemporary realities. In other words, there has been both a narrowing and a broadening of his range of interests. Instead of continuing to delineate the sociological and psychological damage suffered by Africans during the colonial encounter, he is now attempting to explore dimensions of the human condition by looking more closely at local examples of post-independence situations. Attempting to dissect

1 Biodun. Jeyifo. *Wole Soyinka*: *Politics, Poetics, and Postcolonialism.* .Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004,p.19-20.

these post independence issues, Soyinka willingly uses the mediation of the novel, a versatile genre that can accommodate many different approaches to reality not least through the media of irony and satire. This involves revealing truths plainly so that everyone can easily internalize the issues at stake.

Soyinka's sophisticated use of satire borrows notably from the African forms of laughter and oral tradition. Literature in Africa has traditionally played a transformative role in society. Satiric or abuse songs, such as the Udje of Nigeria's Urhobo people and the halo of the Ewe of Ghana and Togo, were composed to check the excesses of individuals in a communal society through insults of those breaking the communal ethos. One can say that the Yoruba ijala and the Zulu and Tswana izibongo, by praising individuals in society with the virtues of courage, generosity, and others, also stirred people to strive for such virtues. Oral narratives, especially epics such as that of Sundiata, Ozidi, and Mwindo engage in stirring up a sense of heroism in individuals among their peoples. In simple folktales, the small animals outwit the big, with the animals behaving like humans in order to proffer lessons for humans in society. The mould that communality is supposed to ensure is often broken by the tricksters — the tortoise, the spider, the hare, and the hyena—that get away with unacceptable behavior in society. Thus, while there is a sense of community, there is room for the individual to be unique as long as that does not infringe negatively on others or communal harmony.[106]

2 <http://www.tanureojaide.com/blog/index.php/2009/03/21/examining-canonization-in-modern-african-literature/> June, 2010

One of the most famous Yoruba figures that Soyinka uses is the "divine trickster," Esu. In *TI,* the incorrigible journalist Sagoe is obviously modeled after Esu. Sagoe shares with Esu a multitude of character traits, notably his sparkling wit, cunning, and intelligence. Like Esu, Sagoe is invariably associated with disorder. Whether it be in Dehinwa's household or at the private party of the Ogazors, Sagoe can be trusted to spark off confusion. We also observe in Sagoe the same undisguised delight in flouting taboos that characterizes Esu. Only Sagoe can convert scatological functions into a consistent philosophy. But more than all this, the strongest resemblance between Sagoe and Esu lies in their satiric intent. The satiric portion in it rests totally on the exploits of the trickster Sagoe.[107]

Many African literary works fall into the satiric corpus of laughing at follies and foibles of individuals and society to change them for the better. Examples are plentiful, suffice it to mention a few. Wole Soyinka's *TI* , which is the chapter's centre of focus, attacks the vulgar materialism of Nigerian, politicians of that time, as in Achebe's *AMOP.* Okot p'Bitek, with the folklore of West Africa, for his part, in his long poem *Song of Lawino*, ridicules Africans who were aping Western lifestyles without discrimination as shown in the lampooning of both Ocol and his girlfriend Clementina, while portraying the culturally nationalistic Lawino in a positive manner. Much of modern African poetry is critical of political corruption as in Niyi Osundare's *Songs of the Marketplace* and Tanure Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures.*

[107] Lindfors, Bernth , Kothandaraman, Bala (eds.) *The Writer As Myth Maker South Asian :Perspectives on Wole Soyinka* . Trenton, NJ. Africa World Press, 2004, p. 211.

Like other writers from West Africa, including T. M. Aluko, Cyprian Ekwensi and Achebe, Wole Soyinka has liberally used satire and irony. His satiric medium does not provoke laughter merely for its own sake, but laughter which underpins a denunciation of the plight of the ordinary man surrounded by self-seeking politicians and thus reforming his own society. That was the function of masquerade verse in traditional Yoruba society, and, as will be seen later, Soyinka has moved strongly in this direction[108].

Like his colleagues discussed in the previous chapters, Soyinka in *TI* dissects the social ills of his society conveyed through the variety of the memorable characters that the reader encounters. Such characters assume moral positions which they occupy in the scheme of its actions. By fusing humor with laughter, Soyinka is able to show the reader the seamy side of his intellectuals who fall into three main categories. The first group is about the morally and socially corrupt politicians and public servants and pretentious and snobbish academics. The second group, composed mainly of fervent professionals who are skeptic about body politic, is set to criticize the elitist group, whereas the last group includes most of the other characters. Soyinka uses the first and last group of characters as the main targets of his laughter and satiric humor. Professor Oguazor, the chief comic butt, is a hypocrite and obsessed with "merals" and ferreting out those guilty of "meral turpitude". Soyinka spends much of the narrative illustrating the rottenness and hypocrisy of this leader of the elite pack who has a daughter by his maid, hidden away at a private school. The irony is

[108] Dathorne O. R. *African literature in the twentieth century*, Heinemann, 1976.

that he denounces the 'mural terpitude' of the younger generation, including the pregnancy of a young girl at the university.[109]

Soyinka uses the grotesque body technique as a trigger of laughter and humor. He pokes fun at Chief Winsala, the fat, vulgar and ungainly buffoon as caricatured in the novel. Likewise, Sir Derinola who is nicknamed "the Morgue" for carrying about the graveyard countenance he has cultivated as a judge; is always covered with the *abetiaja* cloth-cap. Similarly, the black American Joe Golder, who is a subtle source for Soyinka's humor and laughter, is portrayed as having "big teeth and his lips slid apart in a near snarl" *(TI, 190 ).*

In fact, humor is seen as a distorted mirror of the mind. Research on humor reveals attention, memory, emotion, and personality, but the images are often vague and unclear. For centuries it has been little problem and challenge for explanations of human nature. Patricia Keith-Spiegel[110] rendered researchers a great service with her survey of philosophical approaches over that span of time. Morreall helped further with a representative collection of the writings of many other theorists. [111]

Humor plays a crucial role in our lives. Plato, known to have said that "Even the gods love jokes". Laughter is, first and foremost, a social signal – it disappears when there is no audience, which may be as small as one other person – and it binds people together. It synchronizes the brains of speaker and listener so that they are emotionally attuned. Laughter establishes – or restores – a

4 B. J. Barthold, ***T**hree West African Novelists: Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Ayi Kwei Armah*, Ann Arbor University Microfilms International, 1975, p. 101.

[110] Patricia Keith-Spiegel, PhD, regularly taught professional ethics and ethical leadership classes in her 35 years as a university professor and as the Director of the Center for Teaching Integrity at Ball State University,USA.

[111] Antony J. Chapman, Hugh C. Foot**. *Humor and Laughter: Theory, Research, and Application*. p, iv.**

positive emotional climate and a sense of connection between people, making them take pleasure in the company of each other. Laughter is not chiefly about humor but it centers around social relationships. Most people would argue that academia and laughter are about as compatible as oil and water.

The main duty of the African humorist is to tell stories to empower and educate the people in a way they could improve morally and spiritually as social beings. He is to show them how economic, political, religious and social situations relate to a neo-colonial "independence" that should be seriously engaged with. Thus, the themes dealt with by African humorists include art, religion, urban-life, tradition and culture, ironies of life, and post-independence realities. Just like the common storyteller of the "good old days", the contemporary Nigerian writer aims at helping his society to make a change while retaining the features of authentic Nigerian culture that hold people together.

Mark Kinkead Weekes, professor of English and American literature, believes that Soyinka's *TI* is essentially socio-political satire, mediated by the interpreters on behalf of the author. To this one might resort that the novel begins in a language, Sagoe's, in which nothing serious can be said; and ends with another, Egbo's, in which nothing can be resolved.[112]

He goes even further to admit that we "do not make sense of the book until we see that the challenge of the form involves challenging the characters as well as the reader, and results in an interpretation of life and consciousness in a "language" the interpreters cannot command. The socio-

[112] Quoted in *Critical perspectives on Wole Soyinka* By Wole Soyinka, James Gibbs, p. 219

political satire, as in all Soyinka's best work, is a station one passes through in order to arrive at more significant destination.[113]

David Attwell thinks that the novel "obscures the particular moral and aesthetic framework within Soyinka's satirical attack is launched. What conditions, literary and cultural, validate or invalidate Soyinka's satire? In what interests does the satire operate? The questions point to an area of interpretation in which the criticism of Soyinka tends to flounder".[114] In an article entitled "*Satire in Nigeria*" Ngugi comments on *TI*:

> Confronted with the impotency of the elite, the corruption of those steering the Ship of the State, and those looking after its organs of justice. Wole Soyinka does not know where to turn. Often the characters held up for our admiration are (apart from the artists) cynics, or sheer tribal reactionaries like Baroka. The cynicism is hidden in the language (the author seems to revel in his own linguistic mastery) and in occasional flights into metaphysics.[115]

My discussion of the theme of humor and satiric laughter in *TI* will shed light on the theories of humor and laughter that have been developed in the fields of anthropology. In order to lay the ground of this analysis, a closer look into the philosophical writings on humor and laughter will be of a great help. In his *Talking Laughter*, John Morreall discusses the three basic theories of laughter. The first is the "superiority theory," which originates with Plato but is articulated most forcefully by Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes asserts that laughter results from a feeling of superiority over others – a laughing at others. A second

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Cosmo Pieterse, Donald Munro (eds.).*Protest and Conflict in African Literature*, Africana Pub. Corp. 1969, p.68.
[115] Ibid.

theory is set down by Hebert Spencer and later taken up by Freud; this is the "relief theory." Spencer asserts that our laugh is a release of nervous energy. Freud refines this theory by further classifying the types of energy that laughing releases. The third theory, found in the writing of Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer, is referred to as the "incongruity theory." Our laughter is the result of some perceived incongruity between concept and object. Morreal points out that laughter and humor are not synonymous and that laughter exists without humor and humor without laughter.

In *TI*, Soyinka fuses humor with satiric laughter as symbols in myths, rituals and festivals, in short, as attributes of everyday Nigerian life. Because of its lack of decorum and its threat to orderliness, laughter has again and again been subjected to critical discourse and systematization. It has been, as well, a subject of scientific inquiry at least since the time of Plato. Greek philosophers restricted it. Christian theologians condemned it: the monks and virgins of the early Church in particular had to maintain a serious countenance. The Buddhists, on their turn, gave careful recommendations for how Buddha's monks and other would-be holy men should laugh. The same for orthodox imams and sheikhs of Islam, who restricted laughter and the way Muslims laugh. But just as strenuously as some religions have tried to contain laughter, others have exploited its eruptive force, as seen for instance in the ancient Algerian anti-colonial poet *Si Mohand* U M'hand (1843-1905).

In his *The Sense of Humor*, the theorist Max Eastman sees laughter as "a definite affirmation of hospitality and delight."[116] Laughter is not the chief

[116] Piddington, R. *The psychology of laughter: A study in social adaptation*. London: Figurehead, 1933, p.174.

aim of the satirist nor is the effect of great satire to provoke loud laughter. As a matter of fact, the satirist and the comic poet in the mood of the satirist, when laughter is their purpose, generally take care to precipitate it by incidents which are potentially laughable independently of the general satirical purpose, and which, when used to further that purpose, cause the behavior of the audience to twist round, so to speak upon itself. According to Eastman, the humorist does not dissipate our pity, but urges us to rise about it by taking a wider view. The sting of pity is gone, for the mere event that provokes it is set in a context of relations that takes us a step further beyond it. Eastman thinks that the greatest humorist does not laugh. Actually, they are fully preoccupied with their activity. Yet, the tendency and possibility of laughter is in them, because they are thoroughly preoccupied with the contradictions of life in its pleasures and distresses, and they are skeptic about man's true nature.

"The only problem which we all face is one which besets not only writers but citizens in Nigeria: the problems of our unbelievable and unacceptable social-political situation, which gets more and more reactionary and inhuman with every succeeding regime" [117] .

Because of its violent, eruptive character, laughter tends to be perceived as powerful, either destructive or life-giving. Yet it does not point to one ultimate meaning, but it rather a sign embracing many different meanings. Despite laughter's lack of fixed semantic content, however, ludicrous meanings in religion are often clustered into two opposing phenomenological fields, constituted roughly by theories of laughter.

[117] Wole Soyinka , from *Talking with African Writers*. Jane Wilkinson, ed. London: James Curry, 1992, p.97.

As a matter of fact, Laughter is a versatile phenomenon and its study has been pursued in several fields, from philosophy to the social sciences and psychology. Theories of laughter deal with laughter's meanings, causes and functions, and the mechanisms involved in the production of humor. We laugh at forbidden things, things we usually spend energy on keeping locked up. Laughter is an expression of the relief felt when the pressure is released, thus functioning as a safety valve for the individual and society.[118]

Whatever their focus, these three theories have all treated laughter as a universal phenomenon. They do not capture the subtleties of laughter's relationship to cultural meaning and charge. In this study of Soyinka's *TI*, the insights provided by these existing theories are used as tools to search for political and cultural idealism.

[118] Ingvild Sælid Gilhus. *Laughing gods, weeping virgins: laughter in the history of religion.* Routledge,*1997,*p.5

One common criterion seems to underlie the working definitions of humor implicitly, and sometimes explicitly: laughter. The assumption behind this identification of humor and laughter is that what makes people laugh is humorous, and hence the property is incorrectly seen as symmetrical – what is funny makes you laugh and what makes you laugh is funny. This leads to the identification of a mental phenomenon (humor) with a complex neuro-physiological manifestation (laughter). For example, Henry Bergson clearly considers laughter and humor to be interchangeable, as can be seen from the complete title of his 1901 book "*Laughter. Essay about the meaning of humor*"[119], and so does Sigmund Freud.

Despite the fact that many critics who hailed Soyinka's novel as social satire, believe that *TI* makes no sense and that the diction in use therein is too highly strung. It probably is, if the novel is to be compared with the works of iconic literary figures like William Faulkner and James Joyce. Yet, one might say that Soyinka's masterpiece remains a cocktail of sorts, adorned with humor and laughter, social realism and attempting to explore the seamy side of the neo-colonial system that still envelops the Nigerian society.

After studying Achebe's *AMOP*, and Ngugi's *DOC*, one might encounter an immediate problem : unlike Achebe and Ngugi, Soyinka provides almost no metalinguistic commentary, and it is hard to figure out what kind of language is actually in use in *TI*. Unquestionably, the words of the novel are English. Yet, Ngugi seems to be at ease towards "making strange" of standard metropolitan Englishes ( U.S. English in the case of Peter, British English in the

[119] <*http://books.google.dz/books/about/Laughter.html?id=NvUSEbZsbCsC&redir_esc=y*>

case of Dr. Oguazor). However, Soyinka undermines the radicalness of his gestures by aiming at the targets of British and U.S. English: Dr. Oguazor is only a fake Englishman, not a genuine native speaker, and Peter only thinks he is an American. Both men's speech is a botched version of English, but the locus and the significance of the botching remain ambiguous, suspended between an imitator's imperfect mimicry and soyinka's parodistic technique making strange the elitists' standard. Otherwise, at the level of actual representation, educated Nigerians and the British speak the same way, and their English implicitly defines the standard within the novel.

In the novel, a distinguished character who shows an intriguing linguistic versatility – who not only speaks different kinds of English in different contexts, but makes uses of Yoruba as well. Chief Winsala is a member of the board that interviews Biodun Sagoe for a job at the newspaper the Independent Viewpoint. Lecherous, venal and a lover of alcohol, he is to Sagoe's mind "a brazen clown" (*TI,* 86). The chief's few utterances at the interview itself are in perfectly grammatical English: "Well well [...] That is what a man can call an honest answer" (*TI,* 78) and "A-ah, you are no judge of character, Mr. chairman" (*TI*, 80). When he visits Sagoe at his hotel two days later to solicit a bribe, however, nonstandard features increase in Chief Winsala's speech. Tense becomes erratic—"you are a bad boy the other morning [...]. But that is the same with all you boys when you are just returning" (*TI*, 83) – and many articles disappear : "Before, degree is something, but now everyone is having degree. Degree is two for penny, so everybody is rushing to fill all vacancy. No more

degree passport" (*TI*, 84). He alternates between the formality of "Unfortunately things are always more difficult than one can wish" and the pidgin-inflected "too much canny for English man, so diplomacy but they are much more so wicked" (*TI,* 84).

Obviously, these nonstandard features in the Chief's speech are part of Soyinka's attempt to turn his character into an oddity for humoristic effects. Soyinka deploys here astute techniques to unveil the seamy side of official reality which he pokes fun at through his deflation of Chief Winsala's affected dignity. The chief's crucial message, however, is conveyed in Yoruba; after drinking his schnapps and pronouncing a series of "trite irrelevances" (*TI*, 83), he finally comes to the point, asking Sagoe "*Se wa s'omo fun wa*?" (*TI*, 84). The novel's glossary translates: "literally, 'Will you act as a dutiful son should?", i.e., look after elders (*TI*, 260). Sagoe immediately understands the euphemism and responds, "How much?" Having moved from the ceremonious distance of standard English to a colloquial, nonstandard register of English, Chief Winsala finally invokes the cultural background he shares with Sagoe and asserts the younger man's filial obligation to him, using the language of origin the two men share. He slips into modes of speech that assert progressively a greater degree of intimacy with Sagoe, so the chief moves further from ethical norms; his assertion of the traditional ethos of kinship and duty to the elders are only hollow slogans in this urban society. What is distinguishing is the marked correlation between two processes of evident decline – the chief's progressive loss of dignity and moral stature and the movement from standard English to Yoruba.

In terms of Stenberg's varieties of translational mimesis, Soyinka's

strategies are close to the substance of language – though the language at issue is not always what one might expect: the heterolingual forces shaping the speech of Dr. Oguazor and Peter are alien, non-Nigerian influences. Apart from the pidgin-speaking office messenger Mathias, Chief Winsala is the only significant character to speak a variety of language distinctly and markedly Nigerian, and he is an idiolect of all that is worth observing in the same nation – holding power owing to one's chiefdom, but being subject to the corruption of money. All three characters, whose speech is shown as strongly deviant are the objects of Soyinka's satiric humor and laughter; and their distorted speech is a sign of their despicable nature.

Echoing this standpoint, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, thinks that .Soyinka places his own protagonists in a (...) helpless situation that appears almost as cruel. Whilst commenting extensively on their surroundings, the interpreters have no real power themselves, and are simply left helpless in the 'position of cynical outsider'.[120]

Mark Kincaid-Weekes remarks on the intensity of Soyinka's "satiric impulse" and the extent to which "the caricature and farce tend to dehumanize. The portrait of 'Perrer,' as an extreme instance, is so exaggerated, (...) a conflation of dislikes and so little an imagined person, that the intensity tends to misfire in incredulity" (*TI*, 228). On the other hand, the actual representation of Professor Oguazor's speech is somewhat problematic; it is a strinkingly text-based representation, in which the main strategy is the substitution of the letter 'e' for various other vowels, with little regard for how

[120] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, '*The Interpreters: A Form of Criticism'* in J. Gibbs (ed.), *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka*, Washington, Three Continents Press, 1980, p. 237.

the resulting word might be pronounced – the likelihood, for instance, that the readers, following well- established conventions, will pronounce the initial consonant in "Ceroline" and "centry" as 's'. Ignoring the very different phonetic values of the English grapheme e in different contexts, this strategy yields such oddities as "Ef cerse der" ("Of course dear") (*TI*, 142), "Cem en de" ("Come on dear") (*TI*, 143), and "jein" ("join") (*TI*, 250) where the altered spelling indicates no change in pronunciation. What is being parodied is evidently the Professor's hyperrefined exaggeration of British English, in particular his raising and fronting of many vowels.

Soyinka's big irony is that on the very flyleaf of the Africana Publishing Corporation edition of *TI* the note directing readers to the glossary reads, "A glossary of dialect words will be found on page 253." The words in the glossary are virtually all Yoruba.

Following the same stream of ideas, Nigerian scholar Oluwole Adejare identifies in the dialogue of *TI* "three regional varieties of English-Nigerian, British and American-German". The "Nigerian variety of English" she further Divides into "Pidgin," "Interference Variety," and "Nigerian Standard English" and indeed she does not point out any differences.

Apart from Soyinka's mimicry of his characters, he also mocks Western notions of escapism in Africa.[121] Joe Golder, a black American, comes to Nigeria in search of his 'lost birthright', but is instead mistaken for a white man because of his light skin color. Monica, a wife of a Nigerian doctor, revels in romantic notions of Africa – palm wine and wild music. Instead, the social circle

[121] B. J. Barthold,. *Three West African Novelists: Chinua Achebe, Wol Soyinka, and Ayi Kwei Armah,* Ann Arbor. University Microfilms International, 1975 p. 107.

her husband pursues is determined to follow British social traditions, and she must drink gin and listen to classical music.

Soyinka's *TI* is concerned about the plight of five young Nigerian intellectuals trying to fit into the new Nigerian society to which they return after a period abroad or into which they have to fit going against the traditional role of their parents: Sekoni, Muslim, deep thinker, failed engineer turned carver; Kola, painter struggling with an enormous canvass with the Yoruba gods- a sort of Nigerian doomsday- Egbo, a flippant aetheist who works in the Foreign Office; Bandele, Sagoe, the idealist journalist up against tradition and corruption in the newspaper world and his girl friend, a sophisticated city girl hunted by traditional relatives. The novel mimics the language situation of Nigerian society. The simpler people speak pidgin English as seen in the dialogues of Mattias and the taxi driver:

> Oga, sometimes den go want me for other office. Messenger job for newspaper office no get siddon time... Oga, make a go drink my own for canteen. (*TI*, 69) Oga, na dese follish firms o. Na today I take this car Commot for service, then rain begin and look my trouble. De ting no gree work... Enh, oga mi, you see wetin man dey suffer. Sixteen pound ten na in den charge me for service. Unless we Africans drive all dis foreign firm commor. (*ibid,* 109)

The interpreters themselves speak English fluently yet, on occasions, they lapse into their tribal languages to express concepts that are special for the society in which they live such as egbo, a potion of bark and roots; oriki, a chant of family names, titles of antecedents; and omo ole, seemingly an equivalent to "son of a thief." The narration is that of a third person implied author and here the English is at

times magnificent, now written with crystal clarity: The dome cracked above Sekoni's short sighted head one messy night. Too late he saw the insanity of a lorry parked right in his path, a swerve turned into a skid and cruel arabesques of tyres. (*TI*, 155)

now the tone becomes more and more ironic :

> The ambassador approached the Faseyis accompanied by a waiter bearing a trayload of champagne. Monica shook her head and already Faseyie looked displeased. The ambassador was hospitably incredulous. "But you don't drink at all, Mrs Faseye?" [...] "I am sorry, I really wish we had palm wine." (*TI,* 42)

In the passage below, Soyinka uses pure poetry of language, mocking Egbo when he commits adultery for the first time: A lone pod strode the baobab on the tapering thigh, leaf-shorn, and high mists swirl him, haze-splitting storms, but the stalk stayed him, when it lay flooded. (*TI*, 60)

The complexity of Soyinka's literary manner drives critics to hail *TI* as a work of a new James Joyce. The novel has in common with the writings of Joyce a surface of realism and an underlying profundity of epiphany and symbolism.

On the surface level, the novel shows us a realistic picture of experience of the five intellectuals in traditional Nigerian society, portraying their work, their leisure and their personal relationships, crisscrossing with the few foreigners, Joe Golder, the American lecturer at the university and Monica, married to a Nigerian lecturer at the Medical School. We see the difficulties of

getting on with the family. The comment of the narrator about Dehinwa's relationship with her family is intensified in the following quote;

> And Dehinwa's, steeling herself for the final act that must pronounce the break, was slowly being worn down from the midnight visitations of aunts and mothers, bearing love, and transparent intentions and manufactured anxieties, and quite simply, blood cruelty. (*TI*, 39)

The corruption of the society into which they have returned is shown at various moments, with the engineer Sekoni and above all with the journalist. He is told bluntly; Well, he lets the other side know what he has got on them, If they decide they can weather it, they say go ahead. (*TI*, 95)

In the following quotation, Soyinka pokes fun at the incompetence of the state services which failed to provide the common man with social facilities for example:

> Instead of heat, he obtained electric shocks; once as he touched the faucet of a bath with his toes, and another time through a finger as he dialled a number on the phone. When he told Mathias, he said "Na austerity measure, Government wan join three ministry together, Works, Electricity and Communication. (*TI, 107*)

Above all, the novel presents a society warm in friendship living together in closeness, one deeply involved in the welfare of the other, caring and sharing in leisure but above all in moments of difficulty. The picture is colorful and presented with humor and we have a verbal incarnation of the Nigerian way of

life. The result is the obtaining of what Achebe declared was his aim;

> I would be quite satisfied if my novels did no more than teach my readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.[18]

This is surely a classic of Nigerian literature, forging the consciousness of the race as Joyce would have it. But the novel has more than the realistic level of a portrait of a society with rich characteristics and a wealth of images in its idioms. The book has a deeper level and while there are no moments of epiphany such as we find in Joyce, there is a general showing forth of the reality of these intellectuals being initiated back into a society which is changing and which needs to change. There is the quest for meaning. There is the continual tension between the past and the present, tradition and novelty, tribal belief and western ideology. This is seen clearly in the final scene of the novel;

[122] Killam, G.D. (ed.). *African Writers on African Writing: 'The Novelist as Teacher'*. London: Heinemann, 1973, p.54.

> Bandele looked at him then thoughtful, and he looked round the circle, calm, body lax again. He was looking at them with pity, only his pity was more terrible than his hardness, inexorable. Bandele, old and immutable as the royal mothers of Benin throne, old and cruel as the ogboni in conclave pronouncing the word."I hope you all live to bury your daughters". End of interval; and the bell recalled them, distant and shrill like a leper's peal . But they stood unbelieving. By Sekoni's Wrestler Simi waited. Kola poised near her in confusion. Egbo watched her while she walked towards him, eyes ocean-clams with her peculiar sadness... like a choice of a man drowning he was saying... only like a choice of drowning. (*TI*, 251)

And the five characters try to find a balance in this field of tensions and point a way forward. This shows a maturity of mind working through a maturity of language calling for a response among all classes and conditions of men.

In this part of our discussion, light will be shed on the trickster motif, one of the basic narrative elements of the African lore, in the light of Soyinka's own ethical, dramatic, and esthetic considerations – particularly his views on the artistic reproduction of the African past. In *Myth, Literature and the African World*, a collection of his theories and views on literature, he postulates, "I have long been preoccupied with the process of apprehending my own world in its full complexity, also through its contemporary progression and distortions". [123]

At the present time, it seems that the hard-lines in 'contextual' criticism particularly in African writing have set their sights mainly on the socio-economic and political aspects of the conditions from which the literary texts emerge. Such

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[123] Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Cambridge: CUP, 1976, p. ix.

criticism provides terms which we cannot do without, by drawing attention to the shifts, reflected in the literary works, of Africa's changing socio-historical landscape, colonial to neo-colonial Soyinka's satirical voice is, for such criticisms, rich with interest—perhaps for the obvious reason that a satirist necessarily offers the kind of perspective which criticism through "ideology" ably interprets. In *TI* the post-independence elite is given a harsh treatment through the portrayal of Faseyi, the Oguazors, Chief Winsala, Sir Derinola. This may give free reign to a criticism which explores the social stratification induced by the colonial heritage and capitalism in neo-colonial African society, and which attempts to locate Soyinka within such stratification by interpreting his fictional response to those conditions. At this point, however, the text itself obscures the particular moral and aesthetic framework within which Soyinka's satirical attack is launched. What conditions, literary and cultural, validate or invalidate Soyinka's satire? In whose interests does the satire operate? The questions point to an area of interpretation in which the criticism of Soyinka tends to flounder.

In *TI*, Soyinka comes to a conclusion that "the enemy within was going to be far more problematic than the external, easily recognized enemy."[124] Soyinka's satirical genius, like in most of his works, finds an outlet in *TI*. He pokes fun at the African elites whose cultural, aesthetic and political visions only succeed in paralyzing people's will as well as theirs.

In a world where the holders of the pen, to use Ngugi's words, are tortured, where the masses are taxed for the oxygen they breathe, laughter becomes the very negation of itself. We laugh the better to cry; and by a unique

[124] Ibid, p.55.

twist of emotions, crying becomes the better experience, for it washes away our bitterness.

*TI* combines social and psychological themes. Yet, what really comes best in this novel is the series of caricatures that Soyinka draws of the interpreters themselves – Egbo, Sagoe, Kola, Sekoni, Bandele, Lasunwon, the lawyer. Each man emerges from the printed page with all the paradox and conflict and warmth of a living man. To have done this with five closely associated characters, and to have maintained unfailingly the uniqueness of each, is a remarkable achievement.

Soyinka gives free rein now to his satiric impulse apparently. He is a good hater and in the creation of the compound expatriate "Perrer" he puts together intense dislikes. As the action moves to the oguazors' phony accent and his wife's phone gentility, that they have lost their own culture and acquired only plastic fruit and artificial flowers. Finally, as the gossip turns to the unknown girl whom we know,, we deterct callousness and hypocrisy. Oguazor never connects "moral turpitude" (*TI*, 148) with his own illegitimate child, and none of the laughters sees the girl as human being. Yet, as Monica's refusal to be anything but herself, or to do what has no meaning, galvanizes the interpreter into action, we may well question the value of what they do...and of the satiric art which renders the action.[125]

Apart from Oguazor's portrait, now Soyinka turns to "Perrer," who is hammered to the point of exhaustion, so much a conflation of dislikes and so little an imagined person, that the intensity tends to misfire in incredulity. The

[125] Gibbs, James. *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka.* USA: Three Continent Press, 1980, p.228.

point of such art in Jonson, Swift or Dickens is that the specialization of the focus, the freedom from complexity, the detachment produced by farce and fable, throw the emphasis not on character and realism but on the analysis on value.

Soyinka's writing is flowing with value, capable of realizing human personalities and catching the sound of one particular voice, at times intensely comic, colored with rhythm and dance, with drums and masquerade. But underneath, there is a concern with the inner territory of the spirit, a painful appraisal of the usually hidden parts of the mind. This strong undercurrent in his writing places him, ultimately, among the chroniclers of the areas of darkness within us all.

In this work, Soyinka follows the same chain of thought of Achebe and Ngugi. In his satiric humor, Soyinka seems to idealize none of his characters. His satire is poignant and sweeping. In his often-present theme; the presentation of the clash between the values and ethos of the old society and the new, he constantly derides and pokes fun at both sides and continually considers the value of both.

Soyinka's *TI* is skillfully combining pure comedy and scrutinizing irony. The grotesque and the beautiful coexist in passages of description of forests and sea and city. Above all, living people inhabit the novel's pages. The interpreters are a group of young intellectuals, men who went to university together in Nigeria and then went away to England and America for further studies. Now they are back home and can remain together as a group once more, comparing reactions and opinions, testing themselves against the eyes and feelings of the others, protecting each other when they can and giving their affection or grief

when they cannot. They are representing and interpreting their society but they are interpreting themselves as well. And each man's view turns both outward and inward.

Soyinka thus stands in a middle ground between Achebe and Ngugi. He has more social commitment than Achebe but less pessimism than Ngugi. He appears to believe that reform is possible so long as one can recognize and speak out against the evils that man brings upon man. *TI* is his attempt to provide clues about the Nigerian dilemma and thus contribute to the reform of contemporary Nigeria through humor and satiric laughter.

Any African writer who chooses not to provide any answers to philosophical or social questions in his work, but instead gives the reader "headaches", to use Achebe's word, runs a risk of critical reaction; an ideological refusal to accept the true answers and to say what ought to be said.

Wole Soyinka's creative energy transforms many questions about human life into satirical literary work of intellectual significance and sheer delightful laughter. Whether he is dealing with African or non-African themes in his work, he reduces all cultural idiosyncrasies and ideological differences to their common denominator: human problems. In are as particular as they are universal. He artistically transforms power, greed, love, hate, death, and survival into a vast arena of intellectual quest for his audience. And this is the case with his satirical delineation of the trickster.

*TI*, which laughs at the "get-rich quick" mentality, desires an alternative to the political impasse it satirizes, since on the surface Soyinka seems

to be doing other things with myth, such as associating and identifying mythological figures with characters of elite status. Myth as a symbol always acts as a paradigm disrupting the syntagmatic narrative of the novel. Yet, despite the fact that Soyinka's *TI* is concerned about present-day Africa fuses sharp humor with satiric laughter, imagery and symbolism, the very choice of the memorable characters gave it a universal appeal which Soyinka defines as the apocalyptic awareness. Africa's tragedies today are a carbon copy of the rest of the world. They seem to have no resolution in the near future.

Soyinka does not provide a clear ending in *TI.* There is some resolution in the lives of the young Nigerians: Egbo chooses which woman he is to be with, Kola finishes his masterpiece and Sagoe chooses to do away with his dashed aspirations. However, the ending of *TI* has been viewed by some as confirmation that the potential of the interpreters has also been wasted, as they are still self-absorbed in the trivialities of their lives.[126]

In honor of Kola and Sekoni's work, the interpreters hold an exhibit, of which all the characters of the novel attend. Through the skillful use of satiric humor and laughter Soyinka wants to us to witness the moral hypocrisy of the elite. The novel ends with Bandele's bleak curse on the old guard: 'I hope you all live to bury your daughters'. *(TI,* 251)

Our concluding words about Soyinka's work of art which uses satiric humor and laughter, tends toward questioning the role of individual will

[126] Kinkead-Weekes, '*The Interpreters'*, p. 228; Moore, *Wole Soyinka*, 215.

as the agent of social transformation, a role that is generally affirmed in the author's prolific literary output. In following the lives of a group of friends, their drunken bouts, their individual love affairs, and their idiosyncrasies, *TI* launches a supremely witty critique of Nigerian society, steered by a corrupt, laughable, humoristic and self-hating elite. On one hand, the novel preempts any possibility of social transformation as coming from this elite: one has only to glance cursorily at Soyinka's excoriation of this elite present at Professor Oguazor's party to be disabused of any such notions. On the other hand, the novel also deliberately eschews presentation of its individual protagonists as agents of any transformation. The journalist, Sagoe's, "dissertation" on the voidante's manifesto reveals not only Soyinka's mistrust of collective activity, but also of these new interpreters, the novel's protagonists. By the end of the novel, when the epic painting by one of the protagonists, Kola, is finally revealed, we find the Ogun figure "distort[ed]."(*TI*, 253) Another of the protagonists, Egbo, describes Kola's Ogun as having been presented, not in his heroic aspect, but "frozen" in Kola's depiction of one single myth associated with Ogun, during which he, "at his drunkenness, los[es] his sense of recognition and slaughter[s] his own men in battle"; he is presented only as "a damned bloodthirsty maniac from some maximum security zoo."(*TI*, 253) Though Egbo sees this depiction of a distorted Ogun as Kola's failure, the drunken Ogun also refers us to the drunken bouts of this novel's protagonists, in a self-critique of the Soyinkan practice of valorizing the Ogunian individual will and agency.

*TI,* which is hailed as "complicated", explores through satiric humor and laughter individual isolation, uneven development, corruption and wasted potential in newly independent African nations against a backdrop of centuries of colonial rule. Apparently, there is no clear resolution in the novel, as in most narrative satires, and its outlook can be easily perceived as gloomy and pessimistic. Soyinka mocks with great vehemence and laughter, humoristic and grotesque language, all that is rotten in the world – hypocritical people, lost opportunities and the enormous gap between the few with all the money and power, and the masses without anything at all. It depicts the depressing surroundings of filth and corruption, but there are also moments of humor and hilarity in its observations. Good can be found in the vitality of their characters, who are prepared to search for something beyond that of everybody else.

*To sum up, TI* is without question a cathartic experience for Soyinka, who involves himself in his own stories. *It* remains a complex work of art and a satirical novel which fuses laughter and sheer humor to poke fun at the post-colonial Nigerian intellectuals. Soyinka's main concern is man, human nature, and man in conflict with himself, with God, with religion, established institutions and nature itself. As a conscience-keeper of his society, conscious of the time, he brilliantly explores the meaning of life to spiritually awaken. He is essentially a critic and his weapon is satire fused with laughter. He is greatly concerned about the well-being of his community and his satiric work, *TI*, is a dissection of his society and a ritual carrier of the sins, maladies and political injustices he explores and exposes. All in all, he strives on to correct the follies implicit in change via the subversive methods of satire and laugher. Indeed, he proves to be

"a conscious artist of high order and a writer for all time and place.[127]

[127] Khayyoom, S.A. ***The Dramatic Art of Wole Soyinka, The Nobel Laureate.*** *S.K. University, Anantapur website: http://www.yabaluri.org/TRIVENI/CDWEB/thedramaticartofwolesoyinkaj!ul88.htm . (September 2010)*

# *CONCLUSION*

The present study has attempted to bring out and to discuss the effectiveness of the medium of satire and irony in the hands of three of the most successful writers in Africa: Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Wole Soyinka. As critics of their respective societies, they have obviously expressed their disappointment with inept and corrupt leaders who came to replace the colonizer, and their only "weapon" is the pen. Yet, the worth of that pen which forms words and conveys messages can have more strength, will, and power than the gun which brings forth death and devastation.

In their firm desire to expose the seamy side of the body politic in post-colonial Africa, Achebe, Ngugi, and Soyinka aim primarily to awaken the consciousness of the oppressed African masses; to make them aware of the dangers of that "cancer;" the parasitic bourgeoisies that has facilitated and perpetuated the western control of African resources. That enduring torment, the heavy yoke that the ill-fated African peoples carry around their necks has spread and created a feeling of revolt and regret within the African community, including intellectuals, and led to the deterioration of the link between the "haves" and the "have nots", between those who govern with injustice and those who are marginalized and became the neglected "Others". The satiric techniques of the three works fuse irony and humor afford sharp and lucid diagnosis of social ills.

Yet, none of Achebe's, Ngugi's, or Soyinka's protagonists seem to be ideal advocates for radical change and revolution. One can indeed wonder about their roles as valid representatives of society. Can the likes of these immature young

men and women stand for the oppressed? Yet, only Wariinga points the way to social reformation, and seems to represent the progressive role to be played by African women today. Are there any tangible and pragmatic results outside the boundaries of these satirical works discussed in this research work, or does change occur only between words and beneath lines? Yet, the three outstanding works discussed in this dissertation have proved to be among those African canonical works that are widely read and esteemed, and yet have not received sufficient treatment from the satirical perspective.

Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka make use of diverse techniques of the satiric spectrum ranging from irony to ridicule through laughter and cynicism in order to shed light on the growing crisis which has stained the body politic. They dissect with much attention the widening gap between the exploiting men in power and the exploited men under power and bring to light uncertainty, dejection and bitter cynicism. As long as satire or "*militant irony*" as Northrop Frye dubs it , is acutely conscious of the difference between what things are and what they ought to be, African satirists are one step nearer to exploring fully the differences between appearance and reality and more significantly to expose hypocrisy. They are, as it were, performing a socially and morally useful task of disclosing the evils of power which "danced" and "*rampaged naked*"[128] across Africa, waiting for a solemn control and sound political management with authentic moral values.

Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka, as fervent opponent to totalitarian regimes, think that literature exists in a historical continuum. Neo-colonialism infected

[128] Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah, London & Ibadan: Heinemann, 1987, p.102.*

post-colonial Africa as, in the words of Nkrumah, "the *worst form of imperialism…power without responsibility…exploitation without redress*"[129], owing to the continuation and perpetuation after independence of economic, political and social practices established by the "*old-fashioned*" colonialism. This "*one-arm bandit*"[130] as Walter Rodney labels it, laid the roots of neo-colonialism by creating Africa's economic dependency on the international capitalist system. The latter stands as an oppressive economic order that Karl Marx foreshadowed its downfall in his *Communist Manifesto.*

This study of *AMOP, DOC,* and *TI* has attempted to show how irony and satire, fused with humor and laughter as efficient weapons, can be used in literature to oppose such tyranny and despotism. As Henry Levin observes, "*since totalitarian regimes have trouble in living up to their own propaganda, they offer a standing incitement to satire, which of course they can ill afford*"[131]. As discussed in this dissertation, the language of irony and satire is employed by Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka to express their bitter disillusionment and that of most African peoples and to denounce the deficiencies and flaws of contemporary Africa in dealing with colonialism and neo-colonialism. Their ideological positions on post-colonial issues will pave the way to the intellectual's definition of democracy along universal lines, but with a fund of traditional ethical values.

[129] Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. London:Heinemann,1956,p.259
[130] Rodney Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.London* :Howard University Press, 1981.
[131] Ball, John Clement (et al) (eds.).*Satire and the Postcolonial Novel: "In All Fairness*":Chinua Achebe,p.10

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# ABSTRACT IN ARABIC

# ملخّــص بالعربـيّة

يتمحور بحثنا المتواضع هذا على دراسة الكتابة التهكمية و الهزلية كوسيلة للتحرر من الإستعمار الجديد الذي جثم على صدور الشعوب الإفريقية المقهورة بعد رحيل الرجل الأبيض.

لذا فمع حصول معظم الدول الإفريقية على إستقلالها و تمكن شرذمة من السياسيين الرأسماليين على الأستحواذ بالقوة و الجبروت على السلطة و جعلها ملاذا آمنا لهم و لمعارفهم، إتجه الكُتاب الآفارقة ، و نخص بالذّكر في بحثنا هذا الكاتب النيجيري تشنوا آتشايبي ، و مواطنه وُولي شوينكا و كذا الكاتب الكيني اللامع انقوقي واثيانقو للكتابة التهكمية و الهزلية لفضح أعمال رجل السياسة الإفريقية وتنبيه عامّة الشعب لخطر الإستعمار الجديد الذي ينخر جسد القارة الإفريقية و يسرق دماء مواطنيها الآفارقة الذين يتحكم في أموالهم و في أرواحهم ، ما داموا قاصرين، و المقصود بالقصور هنا، هو عدم القدرة على التغيير بالطرق السلمية ، لأن إفريقيا كما يقول الكاتب النيجيري آلوكو غير جاهزة للديمقراطية.

في الفصل الأول حاولنا دراسة اللغة التهكمية التي إستعملها المعلم نانقا ، الذي تُحوله لغة آتشايبي من رجل للشعب ، إلى عدوّ للشعب ، غارقا في السلب و النهب و إحتقار شعبه.

الفصل الثاني تتمة لما فعله آتشايبي في كتابه ، حيث حاول الكيني انقوقي من خلال روايته شيطان فوق الصليب إستعمال التهكم لتحويل مبادئ الإنجيل لسلاح ، همّه الوحيد فضح و تعرية شرذمة اللصوص التي تسترزق من دماء و عرق المعذبون في الأرض الكينية ، حيث نجح إلى حد بعيد ، و ما حصل في نهاية الرواية يقوّي هاته الفرضية .

أما الفصل الثالث فقد أبدع الكاتب النيجيري وُولي شوينكا في جعل تقليد

لغة أبطال روايته ، المترجمون ، يعرضون الطبيعة الحقيقية لشخصياتهم التافهة و المتهورة البعيدة كُليا عن المسؤولية و خدمة مُجتمعهم ، و تنازلهم عن مبادئهم ، و إتباعهم أسلوب النفاق في العيش مع الأعداء و الرفاق.

و عن الأسباب التي أدت بنا إلى إختيار هذا الموضوع ، هو أن دراسة لغة التهكم و الإستهزاء لم يُعطى حقه في الدراسة و التعمّق، و كذا فإن القارة الإفريقية تُعتبر أرضية خصبة و منبعا للتهكم للإستهزاء.

كذلك فلغة التهكم و الإستهزاء تُعتبر ملاذا آمنا للكاتب الإفريقي و تمنحه الحرية المطلقة في الإختفاء وراء أبطال روايته و بالتالي ليحميها من الملاحقة القانونية و اللاقانونية ، فما حدث لنقوقي من سجن و لآتشايبي من نفي يُقوّي هاته الفرضية .

أخيرا، نتمنّى أن يساهم بحثنا المتواضع هذا، و لو بشكل يسير في دراسة و الدعوة إلى البحث في لغة التهكم والهجاء في الآدب الإفريقي، فإن الإفريقي كما يُقال ، وُلِد مُمثّلاً ، أو بالأحرى بطلاً.