

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALGIERS II
FACULTY OF ARTS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

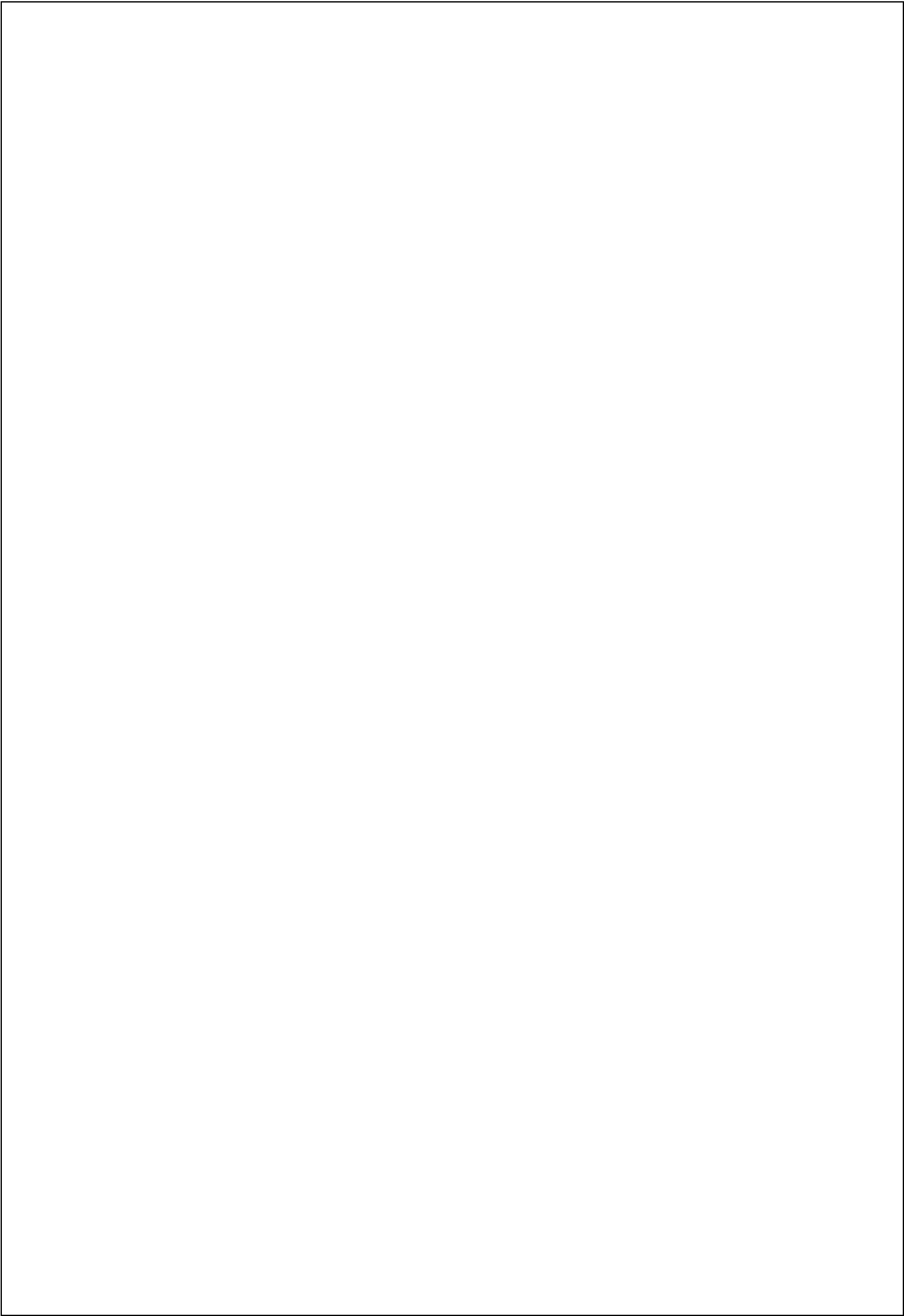
INFLUENCE AND THE SEARCH FOR CREATIVITY IN NGUGI'S FICTION

Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctorate in Literature

Supervised by Professor M'hamed Bensemmane, University of Algiers II

Submitted by Salah Kaci-Mohamed

2010 - 2011



Board of Examiners

Chair: *Professor Yamina Deramchiam, The University of Algiers II.*

Supervisor: *Professor M'hamed Bensemmane, The University of Algiers II.*

Examiner: *Professor Boutheldja Riche, The University of Mouloud Mammeri, Tizi Ouzou.*

Examiner: *Doctor Amar Guendouz, The University of Mouloud Mammeri, Tizi Ouzou.*

Examiner: *Doctor Richard Steadman-Jones, The University of Sheffield (United Kingdom).*

Declaration

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

Salah Kaci-Mohamed

Acknowledgments

This work would not have been achieved without the generosity of many people. First of all, it has been made possible by Professor M'hamed Bensemmane who, besides supervising this project, has always been my research tutor and first academic reference, and always will be. My acknowledgments should go next to my other teachers at the University of Algiers; I am thinking of Professor Si Abderahmane Arab, Professor Yamina Deramchia and Professor Faiza Bensemmane in particular, but also many others to whose teachings my work is heavily indebted. I also express all my gratitude to my teachers and colleagues at the University of Sheffield, particularly those who supervised my researches there, namely Dr. Audrey Small from the French Department and Dr. Richard Steadman-Jones from the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics. It was my good fortune to have immensely benefited from their expertise, advice and academic and administrative support during my visits and stays in the UK between 2008 and 2011 to further and complete this study. I am also specially grateful to Dr. Brendon Nicholls, from the School of English at the University of Leeds, and Professor Neil Roberts and Dr. Samantha Mathews from the School of English, University of Sheffield, mainly for the interviews on Ngugi, Lawrence and Dickens at Leeds and at Sheffield in 2008.

CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter One : Influence and Creativity, African Literature, Its Criticism, and Ngugi's Fiction	6
A. Preliminary Notes: On Literature, Criticism, Influence and Creativity.....	8
B. A Perspective on Literary Influence and Creativity.....	12
C. Influence and Creativity in African Literature and Its Criticism.....	28
D. The Example of Ngugi.....	40
Chapter Two: The Impact of D. H. Lawrence	60
A. The Story of a Kinship	61
B. A Lawrentian Imagination For a View of Fiction	65
C. Nature For a View of the World	84
D. Symbol and Myth For Narrative Style	91
Chapter Three: Ngugi's Indebtedness to Modern African Literature: The Example of Achebe	116
A. On the Question of Analogy	118
B. Influence as Inspiration and 'Transplantation' of Elements of (Hi)Story: Ngugi's Indebtedness to Chinua Achebe	124
C. Achebean Historical Elements in Ngugi's Fiction.....	129
D. The Anxiety of Colonialism	157
E. 'Transplanting the Minds': Achebean Character Schemata in Ngugi's Characterisation	172
Chapter Four: Ngugi and Frantz Fanon - The Discourse of Alienation	195
A. Foreword	196
B. Fanon's Discourse of Alienation	210
C. Psychopathologies of Natives and Colonisers in <i>A Grain of Wheat</i>.....	215
D. The Pathology of Atmosphere and the Psychologies of the National Bourgeoisie and the Native Intellectual in <i>Petals of Blood</i> and the Gikuyu-Language Novels.....	236
Chapter Five: 'Oedipuses' and Muses, Or the Search For Creativity.....	256
A. Ngugi and Creativity: Some Reflections	258
B. 'Oedipuses'	270
- a. Recycling.....	275
- b. Subversion.....	302
C. Muses	315
- a. The Logogenetic Muse.....	315
- b. The Sociogenetic Muse	329
Conclusion	338
Bibliography.....	349
Abstract in Arabic	370

Abstract

This is a study of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's creative undertaking in view of the influences that he has undergone hitherto. We enquire how, on the one hand, Ngugi's fiction interacts with the works of Anglo-Saxon, African and Marxist authors – mainly D. H. Lawrence, Chinua Achebe and Frantz Fanon. These writers are identified here as Ngugi's main "literary fathers," but they are also treated as mediators of his relationships with the traditions to which they belong. On the other hand, we explore the major creative processes which underlie his fiction as it develops through time. Put otherwise, we attempt a reading of Ngugi's fiction based on the contemporary theory of influence.

In the first chapter, we try to set the theoretical and contextual frameworks by investigating the ways in which Ngugi's writings can reasonably be said to relate to the notions of influence and creativity theoretically. First of all, we briefly set forth our approach to literature, criticism, influence and creativity as a necessary first step. Next, we attempt to explain why we have chosen to tackle the topic through an "eclectic" concept of influence rather than relying on any of the theories of influence and intertextuality in their radical forms. We then argue that a more rewarding approach to Ngugi's fiction requires departure from the polemical creed and the "ideological perspective" by which he is traditionally read, and an examination of his "intertexts" with an eye to disclosing the creative processes by which his fiction is composed. Finally, we try to provide an overview of the works, writers and traditions that have mattered for Ngugi, with preliminary inferences – or a hypothesis – on how the concepts of influence and creativity pertain to his example notionally. This hypothesis is the following: on the one hand, Ngugi has three sets of influences: the Anglo-Saxon, the African and the Marxist ones, each of which can be best exemplified through studies of his affiliations with D. H. Lawrence, Chinua Achebe and Frantz Fanon. On the other hand, Ngugi's is a story of a synchronic and diachronic search for creativity both by struggle with the influence of those writers and traditions and by 'extra-textual' processes of literary creation.

In Chapter Two, we introduce a first case-study of the concept of influence in Ngugi's fiction, namely the impact of D. H. Lawrence, identified as his foremost Anglo-Saxon precursor. We first attempt to draw attention to the crucial character of Ngugi's relationship with Lawrence, whose impact on him seems even more powerful than that of Conrad. We then attempt to explore the origin and nature of this relationship. It follows from our analysis of this affiliation that Ngugi is mainly indebted to Lawrence's "neo-romanticism," i.e. to his half-mystic-half-naturalistic imagination, his view of the world through nature, his writing by symbol and myth and to many of the techniques which

he typically uses in that pursuit. We also have observed that though Lawrence's influence on Ngugi is less substantial, less manifest and more troubled in some of his narratives than in others, Lawrence is omnipresent in all Ngugi's fiction.

In the third Chapter, we introduce a second case-study of influence in Ngugi's fiction, that of his indebtedness to Chinua Achebe – his major African literary father. We argue that Ngugi's relationship with Achebe is complex, and sometimes troubled, that it touches on various and changing types of influence, ranging from inspiration of a very deep kind, to different types of borrowing, rewriting, allusion, and – from *Petals of Blood* onwards – even subversion. We also note that these types of influence affect, to different extents, each of Ngugi's narratives and every aspect of them. On the whole, we submit that Ngugi owes Achebe his vision of fiction as art, but with a pointed functional dimension. Among the many more specific ways in which Ngugi dialogises with Achebe discussed in this chapter, we attempt to highlight his treatment of Africa's history with realism. We argue that Ngugi has learnt from Achebe how to play the role of the “novelist as historian” with efficiency. Another seminal aspect of Achebe's impact on Ngugi that we try to illumine is concern with colonialism. We attempt to point up Ngugi's Achebean “anxiety of colonialism;” that is to say, the Achebean subtlety with which the question of colonialism is “problematized” in his fiction. Ngugi, we finally argue, is heavily indebted to Achebe in terms of characterisation. We try to demonstrate that his typical character schemata are nearly identical to those of Achebe. We also attempt to show how he “transplants the minds” of Achebe's characters into his own characters by applying to them the fundamental psychosexual postulates, and by following Achebe's method of doing it with considerable faithfulness. We infer that if Ngugi owes Lawrence his striving to endow his characters with *souls* so that they can look *alive*, he owes Achebe his endeavour to endow them with proper (general) psychological profiles so that they can appear ‘*real*’.

In Chapter Four, we introduce the third and last case-study of influence in Ngugi's fiction, that of his relationship with Frantz Fanon. We pinpoint Fanon as the most shaping source of inspiration and influence of Ngugi's since he discovered him. We argue that Ngugi owes Fanon the lyrical, prophetic and pamphleteering qualities which characterize his style in parts of *A Grain of Wheat* and the later novels, as well as much of the content of his theory developed in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. After a brief foreword about Ngugi's relationship with discursive literature, we first recall that Fanon's theory has three sides, namely the psychoanalytic, the psychiatric and the socio-political ones, and argue that they are interlocking and inseparable. All three aspects of Fanon's theory, we submit, have had a powerful impact on Ngugi's fiction from *A Grain of Wheat* onwards. Ngugi's indebtedness to the socio-political side of Fanon's theory is significant but is already documented, as we specify. Thus, it has been treated as matter of fact here. Concerning the impact of the psychoanalytic aspect of Fanon's theory on Ngugi, we argue that Ngugi applies Fanon's postulates about “Negro-

psychopathology,” “Negrophobia,” and “Negrophobiogenesis” to make up aspects of his characters in *A Grain of Wheat* and, in a more concise way, in the later novels. We also submit that Ngugi applies two other Fanonian psychoanalytic postulates, namely his descriptions of the psychologies of the “native bourgeoisie” and the “native intellectual,” to his characters in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* and, more concisely, in the later two novels. As to the impact of the psychiatric side of Fanon’s theory on Ngugi, we attempt to shed light on how mainly two of them – the “pathology of atmosphere” and the “pathology of the tortured” – are adapted to his characters from *A Grain of Wheat* on. In brief, we argue that in the same way that Ngugi uses Lawrence’s method to endow his characters with *souls*, and Achebe’s method to endow them with general *psychological* profiles, he draws on Fanon to endow them with *mental* profiles that pertain to the colonial and “neo-colonial” situations of the novels which he has written after he is said to have read Fanon.

The fifth and last chapter is devoted to the concept of creativity in Ngugi’s fiction. Here, we submit that Ngugi’s fiction is creative in several ways and to different extents, and that it is so both thanks to influence and in spite of it. We argue that Ngugi’s experience as a creative writer reveals his search for creativity synchronically (in each of his individual works) as well as diachronically (as we progress from one of his narratives to the next one). We first attempt an analysis of the typical creative dynamics and processes by which Ngugi’s narratives are written, stressing the changes and continuities in those processes as the novelist ‘matures’. Then we specify that Ngugi seems to write by reference to two major types of creative dynamics: an “Oedipal,” or “psychogenetic” dynamic, reflecting his search for creativity through struggle with his influences, and a ‘non-Oedipal’ creative dynamic standing for his search for creativity in extra-textual inspirations.

In brief, our investigation would allow submitting the following: “anxious” about influence, Ngugi, like all other serious novelists, “clears imaginative space for himself” through “struggle” with the influence of his precursors. Although he has sometimes borrowed elements from previous works, the reality of his dialogical and intertextual affiliations makes them emerge, on the whole, as cases of “transmutation of historically given material” and “deserved self-appropriation,” rather than ones of mere “transmission of motifs between authors.” Furthermore, being one of those writers who “respond to a world outside of textuality” and who “draw elements of their fiction from their own lives and family backgrounds,” Ngugi also often creates fiction outside of the processes of intertextuality and influence in their strictly intra-poetic senses.

Introduction

The issue of influence and the search for creativity in literature is a fundamental object of enquiry. It is, no doubt, one of the main challenges facing creative writers, one which determines the significance and value of literary works, and is accordingly one of the most relevant and crucial domains of exploration of literary criticism. Such an importance of the subject from a literary standpoint is enough to provoke interest in exploring it in relation to the work of a writer of the first importance like Ngugi.

That, however, is not the only fact that stirs up interest in the question. Despite the significance of the issue of influence and creativity from a literary point of view, it is rather disregarded in African literary studies. It is, to say the least, treated as a peripheral matter in a debate where concerns are often about literary ideology and politics, and focused on that which is general and polemical at the cost of that which is specific and technical. This is not to say that the postcolonial model of criticism has been simply counter-productive. Far from it; it has its points of strength and relevance and has enriched literary scholarship with masterful contributions. This work, as shall be noticed, is heavily indebted to it. None the less, in its typical adaptations, that model has had the serious downside of having negatively affected our understanding of African literary works, including in terms of the issues it typically treated. What Karin Barber says in disapproval of the state of postcolonial criticism in the 1980s and 90s is, to a large extent, pertinent to its condition at this beginning of the new millennium. Her argument introduces, by the same token, the second major motivation of this study:

The postcolonial criticism of the 1980s and 90s (...) has prompted a binarized, generalized model of the world (...) This model has produced an impoverished and distorted picture of “the colonial experience” and the place of language in that experience. It has maintained a centre-periphery polarity which both exaggerates and simplifies the effects of the colonial imposition of European languages. It turns the colonizing countries into unchanging monoliths and the colonized subject into a homogenized token: “that most tedious, generic hold-all, ‘the postcolonial Other” (...) Despite intermittent claims to specificity, this model blocks a properly historical, localised understanding of any scene of colonial and post-Independence literary production in Africa. Instead it selects and overemphasises one silver of literary and cultural production – written literature in the English language – and treats this as all there is, representative of a whole culture, or even a whole global “colonial

experience.” It thus negligently or deliberately erases all other forms of expression – written literature in African languages, oral literature in African languages, and a whole domain of cultural forms which cross the boundaries between “written” and “oral”, between “foreign” and “indigenous” (...) “writing back” in a language the ex-colonizers can understand because it is a modified register of their own. Thus decontextualized, inflated, and made to bear an excessive metonymic burden, the role and significance of African literature in English can not be properly appreciated.¹

The nature of many of the studies of the works of African writers – mainly the novelists –, not just Ngugi, gives reason to Barber. But if there is an African writer the interpretation of whose work has suffered from some of the most devastating effects of that type of criticism, this would be, without a doubt, Ngugi wa Thiong’o. Ngugi, more than any other African novelist, is mainly read on the basis of unrefined versions of postcolonial criticism. A victim of his interest in ideology and politics as areas of exploration and creation, he is often treated in radical terms. His creative work has been largely mistaken for polemical writing, and its literary, or textual, significance has been dramatically neglected. It is hoped that this study can help alleviate this shortfall to some degree and do more justice to the art of Ngugi by attempting a reading of his fiction based on an integrate adaptation of the contemporary theory of influence.

My interest in influence and the search for creativity in Ngugi’s fiction springs from other, more specific, considerations. The first is what seemed to me, before I embarked on this project, simply a paradox. This consisted of the following: both influence and creativity sound as key concepts with reference to Ngugi. Being familiar with the work of Ngugi, to whom I devoted my Magister research,² I knew even prior to my engagement with this project that, of all African writers, he is one of the most concerned about the question of influence. Indeed just a little acquaintance with Ngugi’s discursive work and overall experience is likely to grasp attention to how typically “anxious” he is about finding ways of achieving creativity in view of what a serious novelist like him, and one who is committed to African authenticity as he is, can but regard as the ‘burden’ of influence.³ Ngugi has made personal slogans out of notions such as “homecoming,” “struggle for cultural freedom,” “decolonizing the mind” and “moving the centre” which urge the need for experimentation in African literature and suggest his own search for creativity. Obviously too, he does not only

¹ Karin Barber, “African-Language Literature and Postcolonial Criticism”(3 – 30), *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 26, N° 4, winter 1995, p. 3. Underlining in the source.

² See Salah Kaci-Mohamed, *Western Ethics and Aesthetics and the Discourses of Liberation in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s A Grain of Wheat, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross*, Magister dissertation, supervised by Professor M’hamed Benssemmane, University of Algiers, 2006.

³ Both in his own case, as an individual writer, and in the field of African literature at large.

suggest his concern about the influence of Western literature on him and every other African novelist, crucial as this aspect of his experience is. He also shows his dissatisfaction with the writings of his African precursors, such as Chinua Achebe, as his disagreement with the latter over the language question and his decision to write in Gikuyu came to confirm.

And yet it was equally manifest that Ngugi is one of the African novelists who are influenced the most by other writers, that he is a great practitioner of intertextuality. He has himself cited sources of influence on his work on several occasions, starting with his interviews with Dennis Duerden and Aminu Abdullahi at Leeds, published in Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse's *African Writers Talking* (1972), through the interviews published in Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors's *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks* (2006), to his recent autobiography *Dreams in Times of War* (2010). Also, in all his books of essays, from *Homecoming* (1972) to *Something Torn and New* (2009), he suggests that he writes in very close dialogical and intertextual relationships with at least three literary traditions: the Christian and liberal-humanist, the Afro-Caribbean and the Marxist ones. A body of research has even been carried out on his indebtedness to some writers, mainly Joseph Conrad. In brief, the concepts of influence and creativity sounded, paradoxically, equally central to Ngugi.

While a survey of the theory concerned with the question of influence and creativity – namely the theories of influence and intertextuality – revealed the detailed complexity of the relationship between the two concepts, it made it clear that what seemed to be the paradox of the equal centrality of the notions of influence and creativity to Ngugi is indeed a challenging but not unmanageable problematic. In fact, it allowed understanding that the two concepts need not be mutually exclusive, a view which scholars, from Plato and Aristotle to Harold Bloom via Alexander Pope, T. S. Eliot, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Chinua Achebe, typically maintained. Better, it revealed that what makes the very “greatness” of a given author's work from a literary point of view is the workings of influence, namely the greatness of the influencing authors and the persistence of the influenced author's struggle with their influence as Harold Bloom explains in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) and *A Map of Misreading* (1975).

The issue, however, remains researchable with reference to Ngugi as just noted. An examination of the criticism written on Ngugi confirms the dearth of studies of the question of influence in his work, and discloses serious problems in the way it is treated when this occurred. A first problem is that most of the relevant material is limited to sporadic and peripheral statements about his indebtedness to the Western and the Marxist traditions, all-purpose comments on his affiliations with some individual authors, and a few studies of his relationship with Joseph Conrad. Other surveys related to the subject are devoted exclusively to the place of the African oral tradition

and popular culture in Ngugi's late work. In a nutshell, most of the available documentation consists of studies of Ngugi's debt to Conrad whereas his connections with other writers, such as D. H. Lawrence, Chinua Achebe and Frantz Fanon, though sizeable as we shall see, tended to be ignored or minimised.

What is more, most of the studies of Ngugi's relationship with Conrad either tend to oversimplify or to exaggerate that relationship, a relationship that is more troubled and more complex than such studies allow. Ngugi, as we shall note, is unduly labelled a sort of imitator of Conrad, and is not, at any rate, indebted to Conrad only. Similarly, surveys of Ngugi's relation to African oral and popular cultures take little notice of the impact of Anglo-Saxon and written African literatures on his writings, displaying again a tendency to disregard the complexity and variety of the processes of intertextuality and creativity in his fiction. Typically, the latter type of studies strive to present Ngugi's experience as one of a displacement of the Anglo-Saxon trope by the African tradition while, as we shall see, things are far more problematic than just a story of the dislocation of one type of trope by another. In a word, in spite of such studies, matters remain greatly blurred as regards the question of influence and the search for creativity in Ngugi's fiction.

One does not contend to have produced here *the* missing work on Ngugi, nor to have come to terms with the question of how his fiction interacts with other texts by analysing every single intertext of it. The task is perhaps feasible, especially if we avoid looking at "the intertext" with the 'pessimism' of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, and consider it with the optimism of Michel Riffaterre and Jonathan Culler as we strive to do here.⁴ But such a task would require much more space and time than the juncture allows. All that this work could reasonably claim to do is to take a good step in that direction, by proposing an alternative way of reading Ngugi's fiction based on the modern theory of influence. This will be done with a focus on the key affiliations between his fiction and the works of D. H. Lawrence, Chinua Achebe and Frantz Fanon, and an attempt to illumine the main creative dynamics and processes that have governed the composition of his narratives in view of those affiliations as he progresses as a novelist.

Thus, Chapter One – "Influence and Creativity, African Literature, Its Criticism and Ngugi's Fiction" – sets forth the theoretical background of the study. It sets the topic in due theoretical and contextual frameworks and discusses the relationship between Ngugi's experience as a creative writer and the concepts of literary influence and creativity as we conceive of them. Like the other four chapters, it includes a short sequence of necessary preliminary notes and three other interrelated sections. The first of these

⁴ Unlike Culler and Riffaterre, Kristeva and Barthes consider that "the intertext" "can hardly be known," as we shall note in Chapter One, Section B.

sections lays out our approach to the problematic of influence and creativity in literature in general with regards to the main theories that are concerned with this issue, mainly those of influence and intertextuality. The second section points up, in the light of this approach, and through a critical survey of the conceptions of this problematic by the dominant trends of African criticism – namely the colonialist and anti-colonialist ones – its significance in the African literary context. The last section examines this significance in the case of Ngugi as an African and as an individual novelist.

Chapters Two, Three and Four offer detailed (though not exhaustive) and interrelated practical studies of Ngugi's intertextual relationship with three of his major precursors, respectively D. H. Lawrence, Chinua Achebe and Frantz Fanon. These writers are seen as Ngugi's main "literary fathers" but can also be considered as mediators, or case-studies, of his typical links with the traditions to which they belong, i.e. the Anglo-Saxon, the Afro-Caribbean and the Afro-Marxist ones. All three chapters center on major aspects of Ngugi's affiliations with those authors, and when choice is required the treatment of unexplored sides of these connections has been privileged. Due reference is made whenever necessary to every other individual author and tradition known to have mattered for Ngugi.

Chapter Five, entitled "Oedipuses and Muses, or the Search for Creativity," offers an insight of the main creative dynamics that govern the production of Ngugi's fiction, highlighting the changes and continuities in those dynamics as he progresses as a creative writer. The first section in that chapter, called "Oedipuses," explores the "Oedipal" or "psychogenetic" writing dynamic in Ngugi's work. It enquires how the writer creates his works by struggle with the influence of his precursors, studying the processes of "recycling" and "subversion" as they develop throughout his narratives. The second section explores what Paul Fry calls the "logogenetic" and the "sociogenetic" creative dynamics as two main aspects of Ngugi's "Muse" of creation, that is, of a creative dynamic of his which is of a freer, 'non-Oedipal,' kind.

Chapter One

Influence and Creativity, African Literature, Its Criticism, and Ngugi's Fiction

*S/he who does not grasp our allusion
does not understand our expression.¹*

¹ Abdelwahab Meddeb, *Palimpseste du bilingue : Ibn Arabi et Dante*, in *Du bilinguisme*, Paris, Denoël, 1985, p. 215. My translation.

A. Preliminary Notes: On Literature, Criticism, Influence and Creativity

Our approach to the question of influence and creativity in Ngugi's fiction is related to general conceptions of literature and criticism which it is important to summarise early on.² Literature, I would submit, is the sum of written as well as oral works produced by authors to communicate,³ or simply record, their *private* consciousness, that is, their emotional and intellectual responses to life, by, in Ezra Pound's words, "charging language with meaning."⁴ Creative literature is different from discursive literature in that it is not 'anything spoken or written' but would rather be anything *artistically* told. Literary criticism is, to our mind, a more or less empirical discipline one of the central tasks of which is to discern, as part of what we consider to be its major function, the interpretation of literature,⁵ what is merely "spoken or written" from what is *artistically* so.

In theory, this should be done through strictly objective analyses of literary works by recourse to what Ezra Pound calls "the method of contemporary biologists," and the "ideogrammic method, or the method of science."⁶ For, as Pound postulates:

² It is very important to do so first because, firstly, the notions of literature and criticism are, as is generally known, extremely controversial ones. Secondly, to have any worth, any views on influence and creativity in literature have to be founded on clear and specific conceptions of literature and criticism. Third, the claims that we will make later on concerning influence and creativity in Ngugi's fiction are based very directly on our conceptions of literature and criticism as defined here.

³ We, thus, share, with reservations which will be explained later on, Ezra Pound's viewpoints that literature has much to do with language, and that "language is (...) obviously, USED for communication." Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading*, McClelland and Stewart Ltd. (Canada), 1934, p. 29. Emphasis in the source.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 28. Pound defines literature as "language charged with meaning," and "great literature" as "simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." As to the question of knowing what language is, Pound responds as follows: "spoken language is noise divided up into a system of grunts, hisses, etc..They call it 'articulate speech.' Articulate means that it is zoned, and that a number of people are agreed on the categories. That is to say, we have a more or less approximate agreement about the different noises represented by a, b, c, d, etc. Written language (...) can consist (as in Europe, etc.) of signs representing these various noises. There is a more or less approximate agreement that groups of these noises or signs shall more or less correspond with some object, action or condition. Cat, motion, pink. The other kind of language [which Pound later identifies as non-European language, namely Chinese] starts by being a picture of the cat, or of something moving, or being, or of a group of things which occur under certain circumstances, or which participate a common quality." *ibid.*, p. p. 28 - 9.

⁵ From approaches that vary according to readers.

⁶ *ibid.*, respectively page 17 and page 26.

The proper METHOD for studying poetry and good letters is the method of contemporary biologists, that is careful first-hand examination of the matter, and continual COMPARISON of one 'slide' or specimen with another.⁷

Good reasons to make one suppose that a literary artefact has some intrinsic artistry, which may therefore be efficiently analysed and measured through the method of science, would be the still intact sublimity,⁸ the universal acknowledgment, and the 'contemporaneity' of ancient literature such as the Homeric epics and Holy Literature, and much of Shakespeare's Drama. Indeed, these and such oeuvres' artistic values seem to have (thus far) resisted the kind of changes which ages and awareness of geography have produced.

Yet determining the limits between what is ordinary literature and what is "great literature" – the evaluation of 'just the charge of meaning' that would be necessary for a literary work to be considered *by rights* as "poetry and good letters" – would not depend only on such an intrinsic artistry of the oeuvre. As the reader-based theories show, the significance of a literary text (also) depends on the reader. This implies that a literary work's significance is in part *relative*, because it is a function of the readers' differing and erratic predispositions to perceive, interpret and evaluate the literary text.⁹ Thus, even when they are carried out through the method of science, literary analyses and assessments would inevitably be characterised by some measures of subjectivity and uncertainty, if only because they are partly results of the critics' personal readings and appreciations of the literary works.

The word "critic" as used here refers roughly to a reader who is interested in, and 'qualified' for, the interpretation of literary artifacts. The identification of the standards by which such 'qualification' is to be determined is, to say the least, a problematic task. Nothing would better explain the orthodoxy and controversy which characterise contemporary – post-Bakhtinian – literary theory and criticism than the realization, perhaps more especially since Roland Barthes, that the act of interpretation is dependent on the reader on the one hand, and awareness of the difficulty to define this concept on the other hand. A major consequence of this is that many of the main subjects of contemporary literary theory and criticism are not (any more) the analysis of literature as such but of criticism: its subjects, methods and standards. This 'dialogism' is not necessarily a defect of contemporary criticism. It is perhaps a sign of the latter's dynamism, and

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 17. Emphases in the source.

⁸ That is, power over, and ability to change, our states of mind.

⁹ It is perhaps his awareness of this "dynamic" and "relative" aspects of life, and particularly of an oeuvre's potential "charge of meaning" that made Ezra Pound further add to his definition of literature the following sentence: "Literature is news that STAYS news." *ibid.*, p. 29. Emphasis in the source.

may therefore also be a sign of its good health. However, one need not be a 'regressist' to note that just a modest acquaintance with such a sophisticated and sometimes contradictory – both "self-critical" and highly intertextual – mass of criticism, would be sufficient to give one a fairly clear idea that the more one becomes familiar with it the more one is likely to realize that 'earlier' criticism has not been that mistaken in its preoccupation with literature itself. The more one becomes familiar with contemporary criticism, the more one feels that the latter will always retain its uncertainty and a measure of subjectivity, and that the search for the "zero degree" of criticism will remain an issue for a long time still. Nor would such a 'dose of subjectivity,' provided it is acknowledged and duly justified, be necessarily a weakness of literary criticism. In fact, it may possibly be a mark of an honest recognition of the limitations of the critic's ability to do justice to art. For, after all, what would a purely technical language of criticism be worth before the language of symbol, myth, metaphor, irony, allegory, foreshadowing and allusion – the language of art – which it strives to interpret and/or evaluate?¹⁰ Abiola Irele, one of Africa's foremost critics, would not necessarily be in contradiction with Ezra Pound on "the proper method of criticism" as he puts all this as follows:

I believe that the best criticism implies an effective and intense participation in the creative act. The most worthy and enduring appreciation of the writer's work is that which partakes in the imaginative process in which the senses are alive to the verbal signposts which the writer has planted along the path to his profound intentions. T. S. Eliot has pointed out the importance of the critical faculty within the creative process itself and this made the point that we cannot usefully make a rigorous distinction between the two in considering the writer's work. His observation must surely, by the same token, apply to the work of the critic who needs to have in him something of the writer's intuition, a certain measure of his creative impulse in order to feel his way through the writer's work and move at ease within the universe of the writer. The critic cannot therefore be a pure technician. Whatever form of analysis he employs cannot suffice, unless he brings to his task the full measure of his own sensibilities. His technique has a meaning in relation to the writer's own means of expression, but his task is to see how far they serve the writer's purpose, to determine in what way the work before him creates a satisfactory balance between the writer's imaginative and artistic faculties.¹¹

¹⁰ This would explain the fact that the finest works of criticism such as E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading*, F. R. Leavis' *The Great Tradition*, W. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*, and Chinua Achebe's *Hopes and Impediments* are written in a highly metaphorical and allegorical style, almost in the language of poetry itself. It is also noticeable that such 'classics of criticism' are often either written by creative writers or, one feels, by creative writers – poets – who have 'missed their vocations.'

¹¹ Abiola Irele, "The Criticism of Modern African Literature," (9 - 24) in *Perspectives on African Literature*, Christopher Heywood (ed.), London: Heinemann, 1971, p. 14.

That said, if a critic should aspire to meet one more reasonable 'standard of criticism,' this would perhaps be the one implied by Ezra Pound's argument through the anecdote of "Agassiz and the Fish." "No man," says Pound, "is equipped for modern thinking [and, therefore, is suitable for the "analysis of poetry and good letters"] until he has understood the anecdote of Agassiz and the fish." Here is the anecdote:

A post-graduate student equipped with honors and diplomas went to Agassiz to receive the final and finishing touches. The great man offered him a small fish and told him to describe it. /Post-Graduate Student: 'That's only a sunfish.' /Agassiz: 'I know that. Write a description of it.' / After a few minutes the student returned with the description of the Ichthus Heliodiplodokus, or whatever term is used to conceal the common sunfish from vulgar knowledge, family of Heliichtherinkus, etc., as found in text books of the subject. /Agassiz again told the student to describe the fish. /The student produced a four-page essay. Agassiz then told him to look at the fish. At the end of three weeks the fish was in an advanced state of decomposition, but the student knew something about it.¹²

The artistry of an oeuvre – or, thus, its intrinsic but dynamic, transmutable and relative value – its living substance¹³ – would also depend on factors other than the critic. In fact, it depends, one can suppose, on an extremely complex combination of all sorts of elements. The factors to be taken into consideration in such a definition can be objective and subjective, fixed and variable, apparent and hidden, identified as well as not yet identified ones. Such factors would pertain, not just to the three main areas where the literary work is now supposed to operate – the author, the text and the reader – but also to other, 'missing factors' and areas of involvement of the literary artefact. It would be the rather so because the ultimate origins – the cosmogonic myths – and the essential natures of language and literature are, even to science as such, still as mysterious as the geneses and characters of nature, men and the brain that are supposed to generate language and literature are.¹⁴

¹² *ibid.*, p. p. 17 - 18.

¹³ Adequate description of which, as Pound's anecdote also implies, demands the critic's careful contemplation of the literary work, creativity and "wisdom" rather than his/her 'formal' knowledge *about* literature (only).

¹⁴ R. W. Emerson, for instance, cites language among other "not only unexplained but also unexplainable" phenomena. In *Concise Anthology of American Literature* (445 - 472), George McMichael *et al* (eds.), Macmillan: New York and London, 1985, p. 446. Indeed, linguistics and literary studies, as 'sciences', are, from a technical point of view, reliable as means to get at practical facts about language and literature. In all cases, they seem to be the only 'natural' means we dispose of, perhaps together with language and poetry themselves, even to get at what seem to be unattainable essential facts about language and imaginative literature. True, what we roughly call 'scientific truth' has proven relative -- even in physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics --

And yet from a more practical point of view, a literary work's artistry (or its literariness) should largely have to do with creativity. For what else can allow an author to produce, and/or a reader to experience, an "*ostraneniye*" or "defamiliarisation" effect that makes the literariness of a text?¹⁵ No matter how we conceive of its relation to influence, creativity is certainly what allows such an effect. From this standpoint, determining a literary work's significance means deciphering the ways in which it relates to its precursors (and the ways in which it does not). Our concern with the question of creativity and influence in Ngugi's fiction, and our proposal to tackle it by drawing on an eclectic notion of influence rather than on any of the theories of intertextuality in their radical forms as explained hereafter, are anchored in these ideas.

B. A Perspective on Literary Influence and Creativity

As suggested above, our perceptions of influence and creativity and of the relationships between them are based on approaches to literature and

and to an extent that led knowledge-quest methodologists, or epistemologists, to put into question the irreproachability of the scientific method as a means to get at essential truths. Indeed, the more we discover through scientific methods, the more these methods seem to show their limitations and perhaps their inadequacy as means to arrive at unquestionable knowledge. Yet again, it is definitely the progress of science, along such methods as that of "modern biology," that has made it possible for thinkers like Foucault and Derrida to question the relevance of these methods, by providing them with something like 'scientific evidence' about what would be the limitations of these methods. This is to say that the best alternative seems 'the keeping of the faith' in the methods of science, even if there is growing evidence – provided by these methods – that the furthest and the best they can take us would be the definitive realization of their, and our own, limitations. Hence our agreement with Ezra Pound, in spite of all, on the positivity of his claim that what he calls the "ideogrammic method" would be "the" proper one to analyze poetry and fine letters.

¹⁵ We do not agree with the formalists' exclusion of domains such as psychoanalysis and of social and historical factors from literature and its study. Our approach is eclectic, pluridisciplinary and integrated as we suggested and will further explain. However, we identify with their Platonic approach to the study of literature, and the idea of "defamiliarisation" in particular is crucial to this study. For the early formalists, or the "Prague School" scholars, this effect of defamiliarisation is the main characteristic of a literary text; it is for them what makes its "literariness" or artistry. Janet Maybin and Michael Pearce summarize the (early) Formalists' view of criticism, literature and creativity as follows: "These scholars [the early formalists] (most active in the years between the two world wars) advocated, like Aristotle, a 'scientific' approach to literature. They viewed literary works as self-contained aesthetic objects. Biographical, historical, sociological or psychological dimensions were irrelevant to their main objective, which was to identify and define the form of literary language. The early Formalists focused on how poetic devices in literature produce an effect which they called *ostraneniye* ('making strange'), or defamiliarisation, in which our routine ways of seeing and thinking are disrupted; our perceptions freshened; and our awareness of the world heightened (...) (Their ideas were developed by scholars within the Prague School who analysed literature through drawing on the discipline of linguistics." Janet Maybin and Michael Pearce, "Literature and creativity in English," URL: <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/tasters/e301/objects/d3840.pdf>.

criticism which attempt to combine analytic rigour and evaluative moderation. In other words, as we emphasize the importance of considering the question of influence and creativity in reading literary works in general, and Ngugi's fiction in particular, and hold due assessment of literary works to be an important task of literary criticism, our approach to the issue of influence and creativity is not based on the traditional, "narrow" and "restrictive,"¹⁶ notion of influence which is strictly bent on the evaluation of writers, or of their works. Our view of the problematic is founded on a broader conception of it, the point of which is not to make a value judgement on Ngugi's worth as a novelist, but to attempt to find an objective perspective that would contribute to a broader and perhaps more illuminating reading of his art.

For the reasons that are detailed hereafter, this will be done without taking the "short step" that would separate our view of influence from what a number of critics regard as the "more egalitarian procedures of intertextuality."¹⁷ Because we believe that the theories of influence and intertextuality are basically variations on one and the same theory – that of influence – and consider with Erick Rothstein, for instance, that it is more broadly possible to "imagine a discursive space in which literary histories can coexist and respond to one another,"¹⁸ we will tackle the question from a position, and within a frame, in which these theories converge. We will, therefore, draw upon ideas and concepts from all of them provided these ideas and concepts are consistent with each other, and with our 'eclectic' perspective. We will, on the other hand, avoid or consider with the reservations explained below, all that seems to be too subjective, too restrictive, too assertive, too liberal, or simply too abstract in contemporary views on influence and creativity and on the ways in which the latter could operate in literature, and in Ngugi's novels specifically.

Despite the adverse criticism which Harold Bloom's theory of influence has stirred, and our own reservations as to some of his stands on grounds that will be discussed subsequently, a 'Bloomian perspective' on influence and creativity is consistent with the ideas and objectives stated above. As we will attempt to demonstrate, Bloom's theory can be reviewed and complemented by concepts developed by Roman Jakobson, Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Gerard Genette, Michael Riffaterre, Jonathan Culler, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida so that it can provide a more practical method of criticism which can be used for the works to be

¹⁶ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein's, "Figures in the Corpus: Theories of Influence and Intertextuality" (3 - 36), in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (eds.), *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, p. 6.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 29. Eric Rothstein argues so in his essay "Diversity and Change in Literary Histories" (114 – 145), in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (eds.), *op. cit.*.

studied in the following chapters. Many of the claims which Bloom makes in *The Anxiety of Influence* and its sequel *A Map of Misreading* show a notable demarcation from the rigorously elitist, subjective, judgmental and author-centered ideals of the traditional approach to influence as found in works such as Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) and William Duff's *An Essay on Original Genius* (1767). In fact, though the notion of "the author" – whose importance is one of two main points of discord between the tenants of influence and those of intertextuality (the second being what intertextuality theorists consider as the former's inclination toward evaluation) – remains crucial in Bloom's theory, the latter often argues in terms of "poem" and "text." Bloom can even sound "very much like a theorist of intertextuality when he writes (...) 'influence, as I conceive of it, means that there are no texts, but only relationships between texts,'"¹⁹ and when he uses terms such as "intertextual evidence."²⁰ Specialists of influence and intertextuality sometimes describe him "as a theorist of the latter, despite the "influence" in his title."²¹

In so distancing itself from the older concept of influence, and working with a concept akin to that of intertextuality, Bloom's theory does not, however, go so far as to simply replace the author-centeredness and evaluative leanings of the former by the either-text-or-reader-centeredness, and assertive emphasis on either text or reader, which often characterize the latter. None of the theories of intertextuality in their strict forms would 'give so much ground' on their major premises, as they seem to have primarily flowed from desires, indeed "anxieties," to jettison influence and to "oust and replace the kinds of issues that [it] addresses, and in particular its central concern with the author and more or less conscious authorial intentions and skills."²² Yet a survey of 'the cycle' of the theories/theory of intertextuality and influence, along with some of the essays in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein's *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, shows that "the new and vogueish intertextuality has served," in the end, as little more than "a generational marker of younger critics who end up doing very much what their elders do with influence."²³

We do not mean by this to disregard the theories of intertextuality as elaborated in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Gerard Genette, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Michael Riffaterre, Jonathan Culler, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault altogether from this study. That would mean setting aside a highly masterful and sophisticated body of work that is, moreover, directly pertinent to our subject matter. What we do not endorse as regards

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁰ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973), second edition, New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997, p. xxxii.

²¹ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²² *ibid.*, p. 3.

²³ *ibid.*

intertextuality is, first, as hinted at above, the inclination "toward the model of substitution [to the theory of influence]" which characterises its major "[t]heoretical treatments." We will instead use the word interchangeably with influence, either "in a context of enlargement" of the notion of influence, or in one of its moderation, according to which of these uses seems appropriate in a given juncture or context.²⁴

What one may additionally take with reservation as regards the theories of intertextuality, as well as some treatments and claims of influence, as we shall see below, are such (un)assertive generalisations that can perhaps be best exemplified by "any" in Julia Kristeva's claim that "*any* text is a new tissue of past citations," and Roland Barthes' perhaps 'premature' announcement of the "death of the author" as post-Barthesian treatments of intertextuality came to show.²⁵ Because talented theorists like Barthes and Kristeva are specifically aware of the great mysteries still surrounding language, literature and the mind that generates them, they often make such premises with great reservations, and make them depend on requisites that are often too abstract to make such premises verifiable and dependable in practice. Instead of containing such generalisations and limiting their assertive characters, such provisos make their theories appear like very eloquent literary statements indeed, but hardly efficient as methods of criticism on the other hand. This can be noted in a passage from Kristeva's definition of "intertextuality," a term which she is thought to have coined in the 1960s:

Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks.²⁶

Kristeva's theory is crucial for our subject matter in that it emphasises the centrality of the question of influence in reading literary texts, and because it warns about the complexity of the literary text and of the task of its interpretation. But such an approach to the significance of a literary text and to the notion of intertextuality is more an intervention in linguistics and

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. p. 3 - 4. As Clayton and Rothstein write, "[t]heoretical treatments of intertextuality have all leaned heavily toward the model of substitution, though many practicing critics, perhaps especially Americans, have used the term "intertextuality" in a context of enlargement.

²⁵ See, for instance, Susan Stanford Friedman, "Weavings: Intertextuality and the (Re)Birth of the Author," in Clayton and Rothstein's *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (146 - 81), *op. cit.*

²⁶ Julia Kristeva, "Theory of the Text," quoted in "Intertextuality," a contribution by Christopher Keep, Tim McLaughlin and Robin Parmar in *The Electronic Labyrinth*, URL: <http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0278.html> as retrieved on 3 Dec 2006 00:45:11 GMT.

philosophy than in literature. Such a view of intertextuality is so radical, abstract and 'pessimistic' as to sound like a cynical 'revelation.' It clearly does not provide a practical method of criticism that can be applied to study influence and creativity in Ngugi's fiction.

A very comparable degree of abstractness and radicalism can be noted in Roland Barthes' treatment of intertextuality which is nevertheless one of the most appealing *theoretical* statements on literature.²⁷ To Barthes, as well, a literary work is a body of citations from other oeuvres. As he argues, a "text" is always "made of multiple writings drawn from many cultures and entering into multiple relations of dialogue, parody, contestation."²⁸ Such a measure of absolutism in so dramatically reducing literature's domains of existence and operation is quite incomprehensible,²⁹ the rather for it seems to be at odds with Barthes' own, still very abstract, but perhaps more engaging, definition of "the oeuvre" in *Degré zéro de l'écriture* :

L'œuvre est essentiellement paradoxale (...) Elle est à la fois signe d'une histoire, et résistance à cette histoire (...) Tout le monde sent bien que l'œuvre échappe; qu'elle est autre chose que son histoire même, la somme de ses sources, de ses influences ou de ses modèles: un noyau dur, irréductible, dans la masse indécise des événements, des conditions, des mentalités collectives.³⁰

Barthes' argument that an oeuvre is inexorably made of past quotes is in fact anchored in the principle of "the infinite circularity of codes," which he develops perhaps the most explicitly in his analysis of "Balzacian realism" in *S/Z*. He maintains that what he considers to be the effectiveness of Balzac's realism is a consequence of the fact that it continually refers the reader to "anonymous textual codes that are always already read," and not to "a world outside of literature."³¹ For Barthes, the "'realistic' artist never places reality at the origin of his discourse, but only and always, as far back as can be traced, an already written real, a prospective code, along which we discern,

²⁷ In addition to its contribution in the dramatization of the task of the reader as a crucial agent in defining the meaning(s) and value(s) of the literary text, Barthes' theory of intertextuality has other points of strength, mainly relating to Barthes' views on realism. Perhaps "[t]he [main] power of Barthes' notion of intertextuality," Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein argue, "can be best seen in his discussion of realism in *S/Z*" (Clayton and Rothstein, *op. cit.*, p. 22). Also, the theory would have "a real heuristic or at least iconoclastic value in unsettling customary ideas about the author, the work and the representation of reality" as the same critics further add. *ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁸ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text* 142 - 48, trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 148, quoted in Clayton and Rothstein, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁹ Except in terms of Barthes' intention to make of creative literature a mere division of linguistics by striving to pragmatize, formalize and structuralize it, in spite of his acknowledgment of the difficulty of the task on the other hand.

³⁰ Roland Barthes *Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Paris : Seuil 1953 et 1964, in *Racine*, club français du livre, 1960, chap. III. *Essais critiques*, Seuil, 1963, p. 139, quoted in Christian Achour, *Convergences critiques: Introduction à la lecture du littéraire*, Algiers : OPU, 2005, p. p. 95 - 96.

³¹ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

as far as the eye can see, only a succession of copies."³² He suggests that since this model is justifiable in so far as realism is concerned, it can more easily be applied to the other modes of writing that are less likely to refer us to the extra-textual world: "[t]hus," he writes, "*even* with realism, the codes never stop."³³ If this principle can prove applicable to many writers and oeuvres (as Barthes is thought to have done outstandingly with Balzac), it also provides justification for the argument that Barthes' view of intertextuality is too abstract, and would even be blurred as a general theory. For while it has served Barthes to justify his, and Kristeva's, hypothesis that a text is exclusively made of past quotations from earlier texts, it would powerfully back arguments that this can be true only to the extent that it, at the same time, "highlights the frequent anonymity of the "sources" of intertextual quotations."³⁴

Part of the "radicalism" of Barthes' treatment of intertextuality resides in its very core – that is, in the fact that it "depends entirely on the reader."³⁵ Indeed, one of Barthes' main postulations is that "the reader is *the* space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost," and therefore that "a text's unity lies not in its origin [i.e. the author] but in its destination [i.e. the reader]."³⁶ It can be argued that such a hypothesis would have been much more plausible without such magnification of the role of the reader and total revocation of that of the author in the making up of an oeuvre's significance, and to the degree suggested by his other proclamation that "there is *one place* where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author."³⁷ The significance of a literary oeuvre seems better conceivable – along with the schemes proposed by Roman Jakobson and Mikhail Bakhtin for instance³⁸ – as an outcome of a broader, though more or less efficient, process of communication between the author and the reader – who seem non-dissociable in giving a work any significance. The effectiveness of such a process of communication would depend, as well, not only on the text itself, but also, perhaps inevitably too, on so called 'extra-textual' factors regarding, for instance, the general circumstances of the author at the moment of writing, and of the reader at the moment of reading.

³² Roland Barthes *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, New York: Hill and Wang, 1974, p. 167.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁴ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁶ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *op. cit.*, p. 148.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ For Jakobson's "scheme of communication," see Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," reprinted in *Modern Criticism and Theory – A Reader* (32 -57), London and New York: Longman, 1988, p. 35. For Bakhtin's scheme see, for instance, Christiane Achour and Simone Rezzoug, *Convergences critiques: Introduction à la lecture du littéraire* (1985), Second edition, Alger: OPU, 2005, p. 110.

The "reader," as Barthes sees him/her, remains an indefinite concept, since, as he writes, "the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted."³⁹ Even supposing that Barthes' reader is conceivable as we have argued in the introduction to this Chapter, how can this unknown reader make sense of a text, which is supposed to be entirely made up of citations, if "the citations which go to make up a text are [again] anonymous [and] untraceable"?⁴⁰ Thus, similar to Kristeva's, Barthes' theory helps us to realize the complexity of "the oeuvre," confirms the central role of the processes of influence in literary production, and shows the need for analytic rigor if we are to do justice to literary texts. However, like Kristeva's approach still, it does not offer a practical method of criticism, one that can be applied to Ngugi's fiction as we have seen. As Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein write, "[v]aluable as Barthes' account of intertextuality is for understanding the literary, it does not provide the critic with a particularly effective tool for analysing literary texts."⁴¹

Michael Riffaterre's approach to intertextuality differs from both Kristeva's and Barthes' mainly in "its insistence on a [more] determinate conception of the literary artifact," and thus in its rejection of the paradigm of the "dispersal of meanings through an infinite system of interlocking codes," which,⁴² as we have just noted, is a major shortcoming of Barthes' theory. According to Riffaterre, intertextuality is to be seen as a "constraint upon reading (as a set of restrictions upon the reader's freedom, as a guide for him in his interpreting),"⁴³ and not as an insurmountable hindrance in the way of interpretation. Therefore, the "ambiguity, obscurity, undecidability, unterminacy, unreadability, ungrammaticality" which the former theories seem to consider as intrinsic aspects of a text, exist, to Riffaterre, "only as a stage in the reading process and serve to alert the

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Image-Music-Text* (155 - 64), Trans. Stephen Heath, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 160, quoted in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴¹ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein justify that as follows: "The infinite circularity of codes makes every text, potentially, the intertext for every other text (...) If the codes never stop, then where does one draw the line between relevant and irrelevant references? How can Barthes' reader "without history, biography, psychology" have interests that would supply such a line? This theory makes for a criticism more stimulating than informative, providing of course that the critic has a stimulating mind. In fact, Barthes' reading practice in *S/Z* is less radical than his theory. Culler (...) points out the restrictiveness and insufficiency of the codes with which Barthes enweaves Balzac's narrative, and his interpretive results do not take one further than a highly skilled, subtle formalist might go (...) [Barthes'] radical intertextuality forgoes the possibility of rigour in the discussion of individual texts, so much so that to attempt such a rigorous discussion, he must retrench on the theory." Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴³ Michael Riffaterre, "Syllepsis," in *Critical Inquiry* 6 (1980): 625 - 38, p. 628, quoted in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* *op. cit.*, p. 24.

reader to the presence of an intertext that will resolve the work's difficulties."⁴⁴ Riffaterre's more optimistic, yet not necessarily more dependable, idea that an oeuvre poses problems of interpretation because of the complexity of its intertextual connections, but that such problems are not beyond solution, as well as the "matrix" metaphor he proposes, paraphrased by Clayton and Rothstein below, are applicable to our perspectives on literature, criticism and on the "crises" of influence and creativity. They offer interesting substitutes to the definitive dramatizations of the text's permanent anonymity and of the impossibility of any kind of creativity that is not a function of stringent, yet unidentified, laws of intertextuality such as Bakhtin's, Barthes' and Kristeva's. In all cases, in comparison with Barthes' approach, they seem to put forward a more positive, and a relatively more practical, perspective on the problematic of influence and creativity, not least on how to conceive the relationship between the two notions:

The structure of a work is generated by the expansion of a single word or sentence, which [Riffaterre] calls the "matrix" of the work. Although several works may share the same Matrix, the structure that results from the transformation of this matrix into a poem or novel is unique.⁴⁵

Precisely because it thus allows for more "possibility of rigour in the discussion of individual texts," while not seeming to deny creativity or make it wholly dependent on a purely abstract notion of intertextuality, one can trust in Riffaterre's proposal that a text is likely to have *one* intrinsic significance which he calls "*the* proper interpretation."⁴⁶ Interestingly too, Riffaterre argues that such a "significance" of a text (distinguished from what he calls its "meaning") is to be determined through a more or less unequivocal technique which he calls a "two-stage" reading process.⁴⁷ However, such "significance" remains difficult to find out, even by following Riffaterre's method. Riffaterre's "second, retroactive stage of reading" does not offer definitive solutions as to the exact standards and

⁴⁴ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Michael Riffaterre, "Interpretation and Undecidability," *NLH* 12 (1981): 227 - 42, p. 227, quoted in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 24. The emphasis is mine.

⁴⁷ Here is a summary of Riffaterre's special two-stage reading process provided by Clayton and Rothstein: "[t]he first stage is a naive, "mimetic" reading, in which words signify through their one-to-one relationship with nonverbal referents" (...) This mimetic reading yields what [Riffaterre] calls the "meaning" of a work, the linear word-by-word decoding of the message in accordance with an assumption that language is referential, that words relate directly to things. In the course of this reading, however, one encounters "ungrammaticalities" – difficulties, obscurities, undecidable moments, figurative language – any wording so unacceptable in a mimetic context that it prompts one to look elsewhere for the "significance" of the work, which emerges only in a second "retroactive" stage of reading." Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

operations to be referred to in order to arrive at that (ultimate) "significance." Furthermore, this approach to intertextuality can only be valid if we submit that both the author and the reader are what E. M. Forster would call "flat characters" in the *Drama of Interpretation and Significance*.

Some ideas developed through Jonathan Culler's revisionist reading of Riffaterre's theory more closely pertain to the perspective on influence and creativity adopted in this research. Like Riffaterre, Culler also "argues for the constraining power of intertextuality," but at a time "not so absolutely as does Riffaterre" and by a method which would "restore a [greater] degree of certainty to the act of interpretation."⁴⁸ Indeed, Culler's view of intertextuality has the merits of being both less absolutist and more practical as a method of criticism than Riffaterre's, because "it limits the set of intertexts for an interpretation to those that are either *logically* or *pragmatically* suggested by the text one is studying (resolving one of the problems with [Kristeva's,] Barthes' [and to a lesser extent Riffaterre's] method[s])."⁴⁹ Despite the inevitable superficiality of a 'realistic' theory such as Culler's, of great relevance to us is his proposal that "the act of interpretation" is dependent on "the reader's awareness of conventions, both linguistic and literary," that are responsible for the meanings of works.⁵⁰ And of greater importance still is the fact that such "conventions" should be agreed upon by the readers and the authors. Culler's view of intertextuality is thus consistent with our viewpoint in that it represents a bold step towards the reestablishment of the author in the midst of the influence-intertextuality theory.

Michel Foucault and other epistemologists and/or deconstructionists like Jacques Derrida (but also earlier ones like Frederick Nietzsche), characteristically claim to challenge the "traditional history of ideas,"⁵¹ including the traditional notion of influence. Yet some of Foucault's proposals about intertextuality would bring us even 'closer back' to the notion of influence (at least as it is used in this study). Though he rejects the concept as it was seen "in the past," when "one sought the point of creation, the unity of a work, of a period or a theme," and "looked also for the mark of individual originality and the infinite wealth of hidden meaning,"⁵² Foucault's treatment of intertextuality more resolutely moves towards "the

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 24. According to Clayton and Rothstein, Culler develops these views in his essays "Presupposition and Intertextuality," in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981 (100 - 118); and "In the Pursuit of Signs" in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, *op. cit.*, (18 - 43).

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," Appendix in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Harper & Row, 1972, p. 230, quoted in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁵² *ibid.*

resurrection of the author" inside the theory of intertextuality. To Foucault, "the author" is important, not as 'the person who writes' (that is not as a psychological notion) but as a sort of socio-psycho-cultural concept, as a "functional principle," with a function other than those it is supposed to assume in a psychoanalytic theory of influence such as Bloom's. Whereas most theorists of intertextuality tend either to discard the author or to minimize his/her role as an element in the equations of meaning and interpretation, Foucault, interestingly, (re)integrates the notion into the core of intertextuality under a totally new form -- as an important force in the 'game of power' as embodied by fiction. He considers that the author is an element that plays a decisive part in setting definite borders to the possibilities of interpretation and in hindering "the infinite circulation of meaning." Just as Riffaterre and Culler argue for "the constraining power of intertextuality," Foucault associates the same function with the author. The argument in his essay "What is an Author?" indeed goes in this sense:

[The author] is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction.⁵³

Our adoption of what we have called a "Bloomian perspective" on influence does not mean, on the other hand, that we endorse Bloom's personal, largely idealistic, sometimes mystical, views concerning the nature and origins of literature and the essential nature of influence. We do not fully adhere, either, to the Romantic-and-Judeo-Christian canonical tradition which he represents and seemingly strives to perpetuate, the most overtly through the list of works he proposes as "the Western canon." One of Bloom's central premises, namely that "the meaning of a poem can *only* be another poem," could itself be challenged and in just the same ways as comparable contentions made by theorists of intertextuality are, that is, not just for its declaredly generalising and restrictive, indeed unapologetically assertive, character, but also, and mainly, because of its unreliability as a tool of (practical) criticism, especially in so far as fiction is concerned. As Jay Clayton points out, such a vision of literature "stands at odds with many writers' sense that they are responding to a world outside of textuality," since writers themselves "speak of being true to their subject, of capturing reality, of evoking a way of life."⁵⁴ Many authors, including some of those

⁵³ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" Revised version, Trans. Josué V. Harari, in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (141 - 60), Josué V. Harari (ed.), Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1979, p. 159, quoted in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁵⁴ Jay Clayton, "The Alphabet of Suffering: Effie Deans, Tess Durbeyfield, Martha Ray, and Hetty Sorrel," in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (37 - 59), Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 53.

poets whom Bloom draws on to show that "poetic misprision" is the only factor that is influential in any authentic process of literary creation, would mention other, 'extra-textual,' 'intra-textual,' as well as 'non-psychological' elements as being essential to the exercise of their creative activities.

Among other writers, Eliot and Hardy, for instance, are "conscious of drawing elements of their fiction from their own life and family background" as Clayton notes as well.⁵⁵ This would pertain even to poets like Wordsworth whom Bloom holds to be one of the "greatest" literary figures of all times as a strong "misreader" of Milton in particular. Clayton ironically observes that "despite the numerous literary sources, the actual composition of "The Thorn" [one of Wordsworth's most representative poems]" is simply "prompted by the sight of a stunted thorn encountered on a walk with Dorothy on March 19, 1798."⁵⁶ Indeed Wordsworth himself had to note that his poem "arose out of [his] observing on the ridge of Quantock Hill, on a stormy day, a thorn which [he] had often passed in calm and bright weather without noticing it." He further explains: "I said to myself, 'Cannot I by some invention do as much to make this Thorn prominently an impressive object as the storm has made it to my eyes at this moment?'"⁵⁷

The still excessive "author-centeredness" of Bloom's theory, arguably a result of the impact of the ideas of specific psychoanalysts, thinkers and writers,⁵⁸ is another weakness of his theory. His declared disregard of readers other than himself, and therefore of the important notion of the reader in its broader sense, as well as his neglect of 'non-Western' literatures, would be other noteworthy defects of his indeed more poetic than technical theory of influence – taken *as a comprehensive* one. Our approach to influence is based on an adaptation of many of Bloom's premises with an attempt to steer clear of such flaws, or to consider them with restraint.

*

A suitable understanding of the word *influence* as used in this study also requires an overview of its lineage and a brief critical survey of its treatments. "Poetic influence" – which Bloom eloquently defines as "the *story* of intra-poetic relationships,"⁵⁹ (and which he, from our point of view,

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵⁷ William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads: The Text of the 1798 Edition with the Additional 1800 Poems and the Prefaces*, R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (eds.), London: Methuen, 1965, p. 290, quoted in Clayton and Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, p. 55.

⁵⁸ Mainly Sigmund Freud and Frederick Nietzsche as he himself argues in *The Anxiety of Influence*, as well as Anglo-Saxon Romanticists like Wordsworth and Stevens, and, most of all, Shakespeare as he argues in the same document and elsewhere.

⁵⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, *op. cit.*, p. 5. (Emphasis mine).

less eloquently also calls "poetic misprision,"⁶⁰) – is a relatively novel concept. According to Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, its genealogy would not be traced "much further than the mid-eighteenth century,"⁶¹ though Bloom traces it back to Shakespeare and, speculatively, much further back. According to Clayton and Rothstein, "concern with influence arose with the mid-eighteenth-century interest in originality and genius."⁶² What the two scholars further write indeed points up the narrowness, the highly subjective and strictly evaluative meanings of the traditional view of influence:

For the authors of *Junctures on Original Composition* (1759) and *An Essay on Original Genius* (1767), Edward Young and William Duff, originality was a key to a work of literature and the only true sign of an author's genius. In such a climate, it was only natural for critics, bent on evaluation, to look for influences that lessen an author's claim to genius and for poets, bent on immortality, to guard against such influences by searching for the new in both style and subject matter. Shakespeare and Spenser were commonly praised as "natural geniuses," who, like the primitive poets, imitated nature rather than art. Their art then shed influence in the sense that the word has in Nathan Bailey's *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721): "a flowing into, a sending forth Power of Virtue; the Power of a Superior over an Inferior."⁶³

Importantly, the critics add that the concept "still bears the marks of that origin."⁶⁴ The word as Bloom defines it, however, goes back to Shakespeare, and is much more problematical than in the above. For Bloom, Shakespeare used the word "influence" in "two different but related senses": first, "in the second entrance of the Ghost in the first scene of *Hamlet*", in the sense of "the flowing from the stars upon our fates and our personalities" which, to Bloom still, is "the prime meaning of influence", and, second, "both in the sonnets and in the plays" to mean "inspiration."⁶⁵

And yet, despite its relative novelty, the theory of influence is quite broad and dense, and the particularly sophisticated nature of the works written on it adds to its already complex character. It is the more so when we consider (as we do here) the theories of dialogism and intertextuality either as sequels or *variations* of it. We will therefore not debate over these theories any further. Nevertheless, a brief overview of the fundamental claims of the theory of influence itself is indispensable to sharpen our perspective on

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶¹ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. p. 4 - 5.

⁶³ *ibid.*.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*.

⁶⁵ See Harold Bloom's Preface to his *The Anxiety of Influence*, mainly pp. xi – xiii, for more detail.

what it refers to in this work.⁶⁶ To its theorists, the importance of influence to literature and its relevance to literary criticism are themselves important issues. Hypotheses in this context range from radical views of influence as a trivial – even void – phenomenon and of concern with it as a pointless endeavour, to the opposite conception of it as the most essential drive for writers and the ultimate subject of both literary history and literary criticism. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom quotes the poet Wallace Stevens' assertion that he admits to having "come down from the past" only in the sense that "the past is [his] own, and not something marked Coleridge, Wordsworth, etc."⁶⁷ Stevens indeed emphatically rejects the idea that he may ever have been influenced: "I know of no one who has been important to me. My reality imagination-complex is entirely my own even though I see it in others," says he.⁶⁸ The poet hence suggests that influence should not even be a subject of concern in literary criticism: "there is a kind of critic," he further adds, "who spends his time dissecting what he reads for echoes, imitations, influences, as if no one was ever simply himself but is always compounded of a lot of other people."⁶⁹

For Bloom, however, the example of Stevens not only justifies the fact that "the anxiety of influence cannot be evaded – neither by poets nor by responsible readers and critics,"⁷⁰ but also ideally exemplifies his proposition that poetic influence is basically an "anxiety-principle." In contrast to Stevens, therefore, Bloom holds influence to be so influential in literature as to make it necessary to consider "poetic history" as "indistinguishable from poetic influence." He argues that "strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves."⁷¹ And in the "strong" American poet's – (Stevens') insistence that "poetic influence scarcely exists [at least insofar as he is concerned]" he sees no more than a perfect "illustration of one way in which poetic influence is (...) an anxiety-principle."⁷²

Such divergences can be seen as consequences of variations in the perspectives from which critics, who are conditioned by their diverse formations and drives, consider the notion. For those like Edward Young, William Duff, Nathan Bailey and Oscar Wilde who would strive to justify "a natural hierarchy" of artists by drawing up "a lineage of the great authors," influence is nothing less than a transference of personality from a "precursor" – always seen as the "agent" of influence -- to a subsequent

⁶⁶ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein's *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* is a reference both for its concern with the tracing of the "genealogy of influence" (Clayton and Rothstein, p. 4), and for its pointing up of such controversies.

⁶⁷ Wallace Stevens, quoted in Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, *op. cit.*, p. 6 - 7.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 7

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, (on the book's back cover).

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 5

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 7

author perceived at best as a sort of victim or sufferer, as a reflexive receiver of the influencer's (literary) character, or, worse, as his "disciple" and imitator.⁷³ In its worst adaptations, such a view deems the relationships between the "precursor" and the writer being influenced to be literally an "immoral" master-to-vassal relationship. According to Oscar Wilde for instance:

[T]o influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not natural to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him.⁷⁴

Scholars with more democratic backgrounds and drives would rather share the art historian Michel Baxandall's much more liberal version of influence which would broaden it so much as to "turn the theory (...) on its head,"⁷⁵ and see "the receiving author" not as "patient" but as "agent" in the process of influence.⁷⁶ Baxandall goes so far as to describe influence in its traditional sense as a "curse of art criticism." Despite the excessive liberalism of his definition of influence, which we therefore do not totally identify with, his statement deserves to be quoted at some length:

This is primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient: it seems to reverse the active/passive relations which the historical actor experiences and the inferential beholder will wish to take into account. If one says that X influenced Y it does seem that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than that Y did something to X. But in the consideration of good pictures and painters the second is always the more lively reality (...) If we think of Y rather than X as the agent, the vocabulary is much richer and more attractively diversified: draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, differentiate oneself from, assimilate oneself to, assimilate, align oneself with, copy, address,

⁷³ Such a view of influence – which we do not share -- would for one thing unnecessarily telescope in size and in quality the domain of 'valuable literature.' Even in case there might be any objective reasons to argue from such a strictly evaluative and author-centred point of view (and to disregard the other two areas in which literature operates, namely the text and the reader, this would lead to a reduction of notable authors to unrealistically, that is to the handful "natural geniuses" -- who, "like the primitive poets, imitated nature rather than art," (Clayton and Rothstein, p. p. 4 – 5 for the quotation). Such an approach is therefore at best unfit for the analysis, or even for the evaluation, of literature in the modern sense of the term, and is, more especially, inapplicable to the works considered here as these belong to a realm of literature (modern, modernist, post-modernist and contemporary) which is by definition (both consciously and unconsciously) allusive and intertextual.

⁷⁴ Oscar Wilde quoted in Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Clayton and Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 7

paraphrase, absorb, make a variation on, revive, continue, remodel, ape, emulate, travesty, parody, extract from, distort, attend to, resist, simplify, reconstitute, elaborate on, develop, face up to, master, subvert, perpetuate, reduce, promote, respond to, transform, tackle ... – everyone will be able to think of others. Most of these relations just cannot be stated the other way round in terms of X acting on Y rather than Y acting on X. To think in terms of influence blunts thought by impoverishing the means of differentiation.⁷⁷

If only to avoid a view of it that would seem like an argument in favour of creative stagnation and mediocrity on the one hand, and to evade one which would lead to an unjust limitation of readable literature to a handful writers including perhaps Homer, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Wordsworth and Stevens (as Bloom for instance does) one should regard influence, as we argued in the beginning, from a moderate and integrated perspective.

Thus, the word influence will, on the one hand, be used here to indicate any *proven* impact, of any sort, exerted by an author or a literary work – (or aspects or parts of them) – and that will be variously referred to by terms such as "source of influence," "source of inspiration," "precursor text/author," the "original text/author," the "intertext" the "agent of influence," etc – on another author or literary text or aspects or parts of them. Though they cannot allow for unquestionable inferences, authorial confessions, biographical elements, previous research and comparison seem to be the only available means of bringing such evidence of influence to light. According to the contexts in which it is employed here, influence can have the meaning of palimpsest, inspiration, misreading, intertextuality and dialogism moderately conceived, echo, different forms of intertextual allusion, rewriting, parody, travesty, borrowing, imitation and various types of combinations of these. It can therefore indicate reflexive and barely controllable operations as when it manifests itself as palimpsest, intertextuality, some forms of dialogism and inspiration, and echo. But it can refer to less spontaneous processes as when it is misreading, and deliberate ones as in the cases of allusion, rewriting, travesty, parody, citation, paraphrasing, direct borrowing and simulation.

Influence, as we conceive of it, is sometimes inevitable, but it can vary in kind and degree and can be differently dealt with, and responded to, by authors and readers. It can be characteristic of an oeuvre, or of an author's style and it can be sporadic and minimal. It can be an opponent to creativity as in the case of imitation and borrowing, or when it is manifest that an author makes no, or little, effort to overcome unwanted palimpsests,

⁷⁷ Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1985, p. p. 58 – 59, quoted in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

intertexts and precursors, when the “anxiety of influence” is minimal. But it can designate a driving force for, and/or a marker of, creativity, that is sometimes employed by writers as an innovative technique or part of such a technique as in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland,” Ezra Pound’s “Cantos,” Derek Walcott’s “Omeros” and Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood*. Whenever relevant, influence-intertextuality is used here as a set of constraints upon reading, interpretation and meaning, but, by the same token, as a set of practices that aerate, widen and enrich reading, meaning and interpretation by referring readers to texts and situations beyond the text they are reading. It is seen as a process that sometimes gives a text the quality of a matrix. Influence is, nonetheless, not conceived here in its narrow sense of a mere tool of comparative assessment and of a demonstrator of the existence of some continuum in literary history, but in a sense that is expended just enough to “allow one to shift one’s attention from the transmission of motifs between authors to the transmutation of historically given material.”⁷⁸ Except for its proven plagiaristic forms, influence, as we conceive of it, is open to the existence of infinite possibilities, sorts and levels of creativity.

This brings us to a key element of our hypothesis: the supposition that influence is not always an opponent to creativity, but can – according to cases – supply, mark and even deepen it. From this perspective, literary creativity is definable as the process of bringing into existence new literary texts; that is, texts that, taken as wholes, will be different in some way or other, and to some degree or another, from any previous texts that are thought to have influenced the writers in composing these new texts. Theoretically, this implies the existence, not of two main categories of creative writings as it may be argued – the ‘absolutely creative,’ and ‘absolutely imitative’ – but of types of creative writing that are wide-ranging in style and hovering between these two categories.

We will come back to the concept of creativity in Chapter Five. What is noteworthy at this juncture is that our perception of it is in tune with Harold Bloom’s which, while it argues for the inevitability of influence, does not exclude the existence of literary creativity (as the theories of intertextuality in their strict forms certainly do, at least implicitly). Notwithstanding the restricted character of the list of works which he identifies as the core of ‘the Western canon’ and his strictly intra-poetic view of creativity, Bloom proposes a reasonable solution to tackle two of the most fundamental problems of literary criticism which (solution) is central to this work: on the one hand, an applicable definition of the operations of influence and creativity in relationship to each-other and, on the other hand, fair evaluation of literary works on the basis of that definition. The main standard that he recommends for the assessment of a work’s creativity – and

⁷⁸ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

that a given poet is a "major [literary] figure" – is not their exemptions from influence – the absence of which he considers as impossible in good letters, and as detrimental to literature – but evidence of the authors' "persistence to wrestle with [their] strong precursors, even to death."⁷⁹ Bloom *reasonably* – that is fairly enough – points out that a main mark of a talent's weakness is evidence of his or her acquiescent endurance (either conscious or not) of some idealised precursors' authority on his or her imagination, and not evidence of *deserved* "self-appropriation." This is what comes out of the statement of his concern in *The Anxiety of Influence*:

My concern is only with strong poets, major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death. Weaker talents idealise; figures of capable imagination appropriate for themselves. But nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness, for what strong maker desires the realisation that he has failed to create himself?⁸⁰

Bloom's assumption that "poetic influence need not make poets less original; as often it makes them more original, though not therefore necessarily better" is applicable to the study of modern,⁸¹ modernist, postmodernist and contemporary literature, and more especially to the African literary works that we will consider in this work.⁸²

C. Influence and Creativity in African Literature and Its Criticism

The continuing focus of literary theory and criticism on influence-intertextuality in the last decades confirms that "whether or not we are confronted with an original contribution to literature in spite of the borrowings" is, to all intents and purposes, a fundamental literary question.⁸³ However, a cursory survey of postcolonial literary theory and criticism reveals that the question remains considerably overlooked in African literary studies. Ayo Kehinde's observation, in this context, that "there is a dearth of

⁷⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence, op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸² This is again because these literatures are undeniably and inherently meshed and intertextual, and because we consider that a good theory of influence is one which takes into account the new realities of literature, i.e. one that settles in such realities and not one which advocates literature's adjustment to criticism.

⁸³ Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976, pp. 98 - 99.

studies on the place of the theory [of intertextuality] in the production and criticism of contemporary African fiction” in particular is largely vindicated.⁸⁴ It is not our purpose to point up the reasons for this disregard, but it is noteworthy that a major cause of it would be what seems to be one of African and postcolonial literary theory’s major ills: their characteristic tendencies to be concerned with that which is general and polemical at the expense of that which is specific and technical.

And yet the question of influence and creativity, which is supposed to be a fundamental concern for creative writers in general, also pertains to African writers and writings. There would be *a priori* no objective reason for doubting that the latter “also depend on earlier texts for their themes and styles” as Ayo Kehinde reminds us, or to question the relevance of the theory of influence-intertextuality to the analysis and evaluation of the contemporary African novel (specially), as his study “Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Novel” demonstrates.⁸⁵ In fact, Kehinde could well have argued that African authors and their texts *even more characteristically* depend on earlier texts. The phenomenon of intertextuality is not even alien to traditional African literatures, let alone their modern forms. As Kehinde further writes:

The theory of intertextuality, despite its Euro-western origin, is not entirely alien to African oral literary practice. In fact, African oral literature, among many other features, is marked by its status of non-authorship. That is, more often than not, oral literary genres in Africa are taken as having no individual authors as is the case of written literature. Rather, oral literature is conceived as a communal artifact. It is communally owned and transmitted from generation to generation. In the words of Ruth Finnegan (...), “such literature was, for instance, supposed to be the work of communal consciousness and group authorship rather than ... of an individual inspired artist.”⁸⁶

Because – besides its usual significance as a source of anxiety and a motor of creativity for instance – influence/intertextuality can have other meanings and consequences due to specificities in the African literary context, this

⁸⁴ Ayo Kehinde, “Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Novel,” (Intertextuality and African Literature: Theoretical Issues, p. 374), in *Nordic Journal of African Studies (online)* 12(3): 372–386 (2003), URL:

<http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol12num3/kehinde3.pdf>.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*. See also William L. Andrews’ study, “Inter(racial)textuality in Nineteenth Century Southern Narrative” (298 - 318), in Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein’s *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*. The Andrews’ survey partly “intends to show how a concept of Intertextuality can be applied to southern [particularly Black] writing in its earliest biracial manifestations — before the collapse of slavery.” Though it deals with intertextuality in interracial, mainly Black-American, literature during the times of slavery in the US, the essay is very enlightening on the ways in which the theory of influence-intertextuality can be relevant in the African literary context.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*.

issue is even more crucial, though perhaps more problematic too, in this context than in those of its “Euro-western” counterparts. In the light of the perspective on influence and creativity proposed in the previous section, and alongside a critical survey of the dominant approaches to this issue in the criticism of African literature, we will attempt here to point up the main reasons for such particular importance. In doing so, we will endeavour to lay out our perspective as to the significance of the issue under consideration in the African literary situation, and, more specifically, as regards Ngugi's experience as a novelist.

A major reason that would make the question of influence and creativity particularly essential with reference to the modern African literary context is the highly intertextual character of modern African works, these being produced by authors with assorted linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Abdelwahab Meddeb makes an outstanding allusion to this in “The Palimpsest of the Bilingual: Ibn Arabi and Dante:” “he who does not grasp our allusion,” he writes, “does not understand our expression.”⁸⁷ To a large extent, this is true of literature in general. However, what makes Meddeb's statement so eloquent is that it refers, in its original context, to the inappropriateness of reading by bilingual authors without knowing their intertexts. Indeed, African literary works are not likely to be understood and appreciated without paying close attention to their multifarious webs of palimpsests and intertexts. In any case, a study of the question could *methodically* illuminate their underlying significance, the breadth of their implications, their aesthetic values and their ultimate ‘messages.’

At another level, shedding light on the problematic of influence and creativity in African literature could be of assistance in providing practical and dependable material likely to prove decisive in answering a good many unsolved theoretical issues of importance to it. It could help to provide valuable information as to the attitudes of African writers to the languages and forms of their compositions, and could, by the same token, allow us to understand the genuine nature of African writing. As we will shortly argue, one of the main troubles with providing a satisfactory definition of African literature, for instance, is the barely technical and highly partisan, polemical, conflicting and uncompromising attitudes of the dominant currents of its criticism. But it has to be noted first that criticism's failure to reach a consensual definition of African literature is partially fed by the latter's ‘heterogeneous’ property as a product of more than one culture. In other words, part of the problem of the definition of African literature is objective; it is caused by the assortment and multiplicity of its sources of inspiration and influence. Such a reality in itself is enough to call for

⁸⁷ “*Qui ne saisit pas notre allusion ne comprend pas notre expression,*” dicit Abdelwahab Meddeb, “The Palimpsest of the Bilingual: Ibn Arabi and Dante,” in *Du bilinguisme*, Paris, Denoël, 1985, p. 215. My translation.

meticulous examinations of influence and creativity in reading individual African works.

However, what would urge the need to focus on the question of influence and creativity in these works is also the realities of mainstream African literary theory and criticism. Before elaborating on this point, we would like to specify two important facts. The first of these is that while we will endeavour to clearly point up, as part of our argument in this study, what we consider to be the pitfalls of African criticism because of the attitudes and the dominance of its main currents – namely the colonialist, anti-colonialist and Marxist ones – we would like to make it equally clear that we have no intention to do so, as it might perhaps seem, through the favourite method of those streams of criticism, namely polemics. The second important fact which we would like to specify is that our momentary interest in criticism itself, at this stage of our argument, has no other purpose but to set forth the main reasons which make the question of influence and creativity particularly crucial in the African literary context, and, second, confirm our earlier hypothesis (in the introduction to this Chapter) that good criticism is that which is concerned with literature itself, and not with criticism.

That said, criticism, just like the mass-media, can be an object of propaganda: it could be used either to inform or to mislead. There are good reasons to make one assume that the principal trends of criticism in Africa, in their hankering after the establishment of criteria of classification of African literary works that would cope with ideological rather than literary intentions, have rather played the second role. Unending, byzantine and sterile debates on the questions of the African authors' polyvalent⁸⁸ education, the appropriate languages of African literature, its due literary forms and moods, its due functions, its due ideologies, its due audiences and its due publishers, for instance, have so much prevailed in African critical discussions that it could be thought that African literature is, and is doomed to, chaos. Janheinz Jahn's argument on what would be the main cause of the ideological battles between these critical factions, namely the classification of African literary works, shows how speculative and peripheral to both literature and criticism, the claims of any of these currents to the 'property' of African literature could actually be:

Literature can no longer be classified by language, since European languages and Arabic have spread beyond their traditional areas. But literatures cannot be classified geographically either for geography does not provide literary categories. An African literature which, geographically speaking, would include in one group, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Boers of South Africa, would be bringing together more contrasts than similarities, and would ignore the close relations between Africa and

⁸⁸ Perhaps rather than "*Creole*," "*Métis*," "crossbred" or "hybrid."

the Caribbean, between North African and the Near East. Such a classification pays no regard to culture, history or style, and so has nothing to do with literature./Nor, finally, can literature be classified by the authors' complexions or birth places, which are also categories outside literature. For years, I have been fighting against phrases like 'Negro literature', 'litterature noire,' 'litterature des noirs'; for those who use such terms are expressing a conviction, perhaps unconscious, that the colour of the author's skin is enough to decide the literary family he belongs to.⁸⁹

Nadine Gordimer, in turn, had already in the early seventies proposed a definition of African literature that seems reasonable from every perspective, except by the standards of colonialist, so called Africanist, Negritude and Marxist trends of criticism in their radical forms as we shall explain further. As she writes in *The Black Interpreters*:

My own definition is that African writing is writing done in any language by Africans themselves and by others of whatever skin colour who share with Africans the experience of having been shaped, mentally and spiritually, by Africa rather than anywhere else in the world. One must look at the world from Africa, to be an African writer, not look upon Africa from the world. Given this Africa-centred consciousness, the African writer can write about what he pleases, and even about other countries, and still his work will belong to African Literature.⁹⁰

Thus, even if one has any good reason to submit that literary works have to evolve and belong within a tradition, the major impediment that would stand in the way of the establishment of a 'universally satisfactory' definition of African literature (for instance) would not be the absence of an African literary tradition. It would rather be the absence of adequate strategies, approaches, methods and techniques of investigation of the *literary* nature of such a tradition, that is, of its literary defining elements. Indeed, such a tradition potentially exists insofar as there is a body of works produced by "Africa-centred" authors (in both African and 'foreign' languages, and for all kinds of purposes and audiences) and which is both qualitatively and quantitatively substantial. It even seems to be a promising one in terms of its ability to be perpetuated and enriched as new generations of creative African writers have evolved since Gustavus Vassa, Cyprian Ekwensi, Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, John Pepper Clark, Djibril Tamsir Niane, Camara Laye, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Sembene Ousmane, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ahmadou Kourouma, Ama Ata Aidoo, Jean Amrouche, Mouloud Feraoun, Mohamed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri, Kateb Yacine, Assia Djebar, Peter Abrahams, Nicholas Nkosi, Nadine Gordimer, Okot p'Bitek, George

⁸⁹ Janheinz Jahn, *A History of Neo-African Literature: Writing in Two Continents* (1966), Translated from German by Oliver Coburn and Ursula Lehrburger, London: Faber and Faber, 1968, p. 21.

⁹⁰ Nadine Gordimer, *The Black Interpreters: Notes on African Writing*, Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1973, p. 5.

Lamming, Derek Walcott, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o to mention only a few from the long list of its modern 'founding fathers.' Nor would it be surprising if the next generation of writers such as Ben Okri, Tahar Djaout, Meja Mwangi and Yasmina Khadra are found to be inspired mostly by the work of their African elders.

It follows that a first great challenge that faces African literary criticism even in such tasks as the establishment of a dependable definition of the African literary tradition seems, instead, a process of breaking through the radical critical traditions mentioned above which strive to divert the normal course of African literatures in some direction or another – to force the natural current of African literary history either to “the centre,” “the periphery,” or to some intermediary, or, as in the case of Marxist criticism, class position.⁹¹ A second major challenge of African criticism is the process of getting through the search for the foundations and the defining criteria of African literatures in areas where they are the least likely to be found; that is, mainly outside literature. For, as Janheinz Jahn points out:

Literatures can only be classified by style and by the attitudes revealed: more precisely, by studying the individual works, analysing their styles and attitudes and grouping them accordingly, then fitting them into a tradition of similar styles and attitudes. You cannot hope to place literary works in their right ‘families’ without investigating these features; nor without analysing a particular work can you find out which literature it belongs to.⁹²

African criticism – in spite of many exceptions and of evolving new directions towards a more methodical criticism of individual literary works – has thus far generally opted for either or both of the ventures mentioned above in its quest for the African literary tradition: in general it has looked for it in the wrong areas and has, what is more, often used the wrong methods in doing so. Thus, the reality of African literature is likely to prove other than what the critical mainstream holds it to be. And a comprehensive body of impartial analyses of influence and creativity in African literary works could, again, provide decisive material for an alternative view of what the term “African literature” might duly refer to instead.

To be clear, it would be fallacious to look upon modern African literary works as appendages, footnotes, sub-products or, worse, as clumsy imitations of Western literary works as colonialist criticism tends to do. It

⁹¹ This is often done with considerable disregards of both the art of writing and that of criticism, for in principle “a writer must always be free to write as his inspiration bids him. Historians of literature cannot hold him to a set of rules, and no one should expect them to do this. They will naturally analyse afterwards the style that others have used, and describe those writers’ work accordingly” as Janheinz Jahn also argues. Janheinz Jahn, *A History of Neo-African Literature: Writing in Two Continents*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. p. 21 - 22.

would be, for example, greatly exaggerated to argue, as George Douglas Killam and Ruth Rowe do, that modern African literature is simply a “direct product of colonialism,”⁹³ or, with Adrian Roscoe, that “if an African writes in English his work must be considered as belonging to English literature as a whole.”⁹⁴ John Povey’s contention in the following passage could simply validate Chinweizu’s charging him with “going even further than Roscoe in supplying grounds” for an “expropriative claim.”⁹⁵

When one can readily make cross-comparisons with the work of Achebe and, say, Thomas Hardy or Joseph Conrad, one has the satisfying sense that the African writer can be conventionally set within the context of the much wider field of English language writing :the whole “Great Tradition” of which F. R. Leavis so persuasively writes.⁹⁶

That the history of modern African literature, and works written by African authors, can have a variety of sorts and degrees of affiliation with the languages, literatures, cultures, politics, and ideas from the former colonial countries is an unquestionable reality. But that “African literature” – which would rather be a “direct product” of Africa’s history (of which colonialism is only an episode) – is the result of colonialism, or that it is a sub-category of English literature, are rather unrealistic hypotheses. Indeed, these would prove dramatically reductive of the proportions of African literature and would be results of a ‘historical myopia,’ a failure (not to say refusal) to see age-old existence, and its intrinsic multiplicity, diversity and polyvalence.

However, and partly because of the cultural realities engendered by slavery and colonialism in Africa, influence – under its multiple facets – appears inseparable from African literature. Thus, while they could inform us of the defects of “the Eurocentric view of African literature as an appendage of European literatures,”⁹⁷ the opposite ‘Afrocentric’ view which is represented by Chinweizu *et al* in *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, may prove as objectionable as those of the colonialist critics it strives to discredit and bring into disrepute. Denouncing “the preoccupation of Eurocentric critics with meticulously documenting the European pedigree of African novels,”⁹⁸ for example, is justifiable. Nevertheless, doing so by disregarding these novels’ intertextual connections with European

⁹³ G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe, *The Companion to African Literatures*, London: James Currey, 2000, p. 224.

⁹⁴ Adrian A. Roscoe, *Mother is God: A Study in West African Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974, p. x, quoted in Chinweizu *et al*, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, London: KPI, 1985, p. 8.

⁹⁵ Chinweizu *et al*, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, *ibid.*

⁹⁶ John Povey, “The Novels of Chinua Achebe” (97 – 112), in *Introduction to Nigerian Literature*, Bruce King (ed.), New York: Africana Publishing Co., p. 97, quoted in Chinweizu *et al*, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Chinweizu *et al*, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

literatures is as exaggerated and as reductive of their fields of significance as the claims of their Eurocentric equivalents. Such claims do not reflect the realities of these works. Ngugi, as we shall see, has repeatedly acknowledged his European influences and so have Achebe, Senghor, Ousmane and others.⁹⁹

Apart from thus establishing the criticism of African literature on shaky foundations, and perpetuating negative critical reflexes, such polarised criticism has prevailed in Africa long enough to result in veritable dilemmas as to the significance of African literary oeuvres. It is the more so because it has been accompanied by a notable shortfall in more methodical forms of criticism and critical evaluation. Indeed, some African works are systematically considered as purely experimental and creative while they in fact have different kinds of connections with other literary works, or simply lack originality. Conversely, elaborate African writings with outstanding innovations are catalogued as imitative and uninspired. In many cases, a single piece of writing considered by a group of critics as inventive and original is seen by another as absolutely derivative and plagiaristic. Some of the main examples which would verify these premises are works by highly significant figures such as Camara Laye, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Yambo Ouloguem, Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ben Okri and, last but not least, Ngugi wa Thiong'o who, in addition to their significance as individual writers, are regarded as insignias of the 'literary identities' of African peoples.¹⁰⁰

For instance, Sunday Anozie "imputes the conflicts and supernatural events in Tutuola's *Palm-Wine Drinkard*" to Biblical influence¹⁰¹ while, together with his use of English, the very same elements are often deemed to be unquestionable pointers of Tutuola's creativity. Likewise, Charles Nnolim claims that *Things Fall Apart* "is "modelled on" *Beowulf*," whilst Chinweizu *et al* respond by rejecting the very principle that Achebe's work might be "an (African) epic," and would even deny that *Things Fall Apart*'s more celebrated connections with William Butler Yeats's poem "The Second Coming," Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* could be of any importance.¹⁰² In another instance, Charles Nnolim is persuaded that Achebe displays "faithfulness to the sources," "lifting everything without embellishment," and the use of "printed sources in writing *Arrow of God*."

⁹⁹ See, for example, the chapter entitled "Who Influenced the Writers?" in Phanuel Akubueze Egejuru's *Towards African Literary Independence: A Dialogue with Contemporary African Writers* (71 – 83), Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980.

¹⁰⁰ For instance, Simon Gikandi considers the works of some of these writers as rare examples of experimentation and originality in modern African literature. For detail, see Gikandi's article, "The Growth of the East African Novel" in G. D. Killam's *The Writing of East and Central Africa*, p. 231.

¹⁰¹ Chinweizu *et al*, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

¹⁰² *ibid.*. See also pages 288 and 289 for more detail.

He claims to bring evidence of what he simply holds to be Achebe's plagiarism in his essay "A Source for Arrow of God."¹⁰³ A page later, C. L. Innes responds by claiming the inconsistency of Nnolim's charges, these being, as she writes, "clearly disproved by the very examples compared."¹⁰⁴ Some considerations pertaining to Clark-Bekederemo's worth as a playwright revealed in an article entitled "J. P. Clark: His Significance as a Dramatist," by Albert Olu Ashaolu, illustrate all the more the need to consider the question of influence and creativity in reading African literature closely and without prejudice. Ashaolu notes that Clark's drama which is often regarded, perhaps more than Soyinka's, as some of the most experimental African writing given for instance its extensive drawing on Yoruba masquerading and its invocation of Yoruba mythology in all its depth and complexity, is no less often said to "contain recognisable elements of Greek and Elizabethan tragedy."¹⁰⁵ Hilary Spurling even affirms that John Pepper Clark "makes no attempt to disguise the apparatus of Greek tragedy; if anything, he emphasises it so that we may enjoy his borrowings as old friends in a fresh setting."¹⁰⁶ In contrast, Ashaolu himself is one of Clark's critics who would not read Bekederemo's plays as being *as imitative as they are* "often derogatively branded."¹⁰⁷ Another is Ofori Akyea who considers that "[t]o produce works such as *Ozidi*, it is important to realise that the ingredients of the story grow out of the native soil of the writer."¹⁰⁸ Similar disagreements over Camara Laye's *The Radiance of the King's* affiliations with Kafka's *The Castle*, and Yambo Ouloguem's *Bound to Violence* with André Schwartz-Bart's *Le dernier des justes*, are some other outstanding examples. In effect, because of their, but mainly due to many of their critics', problematical statuses, African writings are mainly read as parts of either of two literary traditions, colonialist or anti-colonialist, primarily depending on which of these critical creeds the critic might belong to. Bu Buakei Jabbi's admonition is not baseless as the field of literary criticism in Africa is teeming with cases which would justify his proposition that

[a] critic better informed in Western literatures than in traditional African forms may see modern African writing as emerging mainly from Western

¹⁰³ See Charles Nnolim, "A Source for Arrow of God," in *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* (219 - 43), C. L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors (eds.), London: Heinemann, 1978.

¹⁰⁴ See C. L. Innes, "A Source for Arrow of God: A Response" (244 - 45), in *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*, *op. cit.*, p. 44. Amusingly perhaps, Innes further adds that Charles Nnolim, "[l]ike Achebe's Ofoedu at the meeting to discuss the road labour, (...) appears to have opened his mouth and let out his words alive without giving them as much as a bite with his teeth." *ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁰⁵ Albert Olu Ashaolu, "J. P. Clark: His Significance as a Dramatist" (177 - 99), in *Theatre in Africa*, Oyru Ogumba and Abiola Irele (eds.), 1975.

¹⁰⁶ Hilary Spurling, "Review of *Song of a Goat*," in *The Spectator*, 21 September, 1965, p. 380.

¹⁰⁷ Albert Olu Ashaolu, "J. P. Clark: His Significance as a Dramatist," *op. cit.*, p. 178.

¹⁰⁸ E. Ofori Akyea, "Traditionalism in African Literature: J. P. Clark," in *Perspectives on African Literature*, Christopher Heywood (ed.), London: Heinemann, 1971, p. 118.

forms; another critic, more sympathetic or nostalgic towards African traditions, may alternatively see things the other way round. And both may fail to realise that their opposed preferences may not exhaust the possibilities.¹⁰⁹

Indeed such opposed preferences do not exhaust the possibilities. Facts revealed by Chantal Zabus' study of treatments of European languages by pioneering figures of African literature in *The African Palimpsest: Indigenisation of Language in the West African Europhone Novel* further demonstrates this.¹¹⁰ To continue with the same representative examples as before, Zabus' suggestions on the relations between influence and creativity in Tutuola's handling of English, for instance, point up two facts of great relevance. First, it provides a sample of the kind of criticism which should prevail in African literary studies. Zabus' analysis outstandingly shows the virtues of a more technical, focused and detailed criticism of African works. For instance, referring to a study of Tutuola's use of English by a native Yoruba linguist, Tutuola's fellow Yoruba linguist A. Afolayan,¹¹¹ Zabus lays out numerous, hidden and complex mechanisms which underlie Tutuola's simultaneous drawing on the English and Yoruba languages in *The Palm Wine Drinkard*. The variety and complexity of these mechanisms as well as the meticulousness with which they are identified dismiss, as merely speculative, claims aiming at the appropriation of Tutuola's language and art by the "Eurocentric" and the "Afrocentric" trends of criticism alike.¹¹²

Furthermore, the sources of influence of modern African literary works are not bound to be exclusively Western, and here is the second major way in which Zabus' inferences about Tutuola's use of language, and her book as a whole, are relevant. Indeed, why should influence and creativity in Tutuola's, or any other African writer's work be examined only in terms of their connections with 'foreign' languages, literary genres and traditions? Why should their drawing on the indigenous languages, orality and African folklore always be seen as markers of African writers' creativity and originality even when they are, as in the instance of Tutuola, sometimes simply "calquing" and "safeguarding" such indigenous elements?¹¹³ Chinweizu *et al* do not seem to take such questions into consideration, when, responding to Sunday Anozie and Charles Nnolim's attempts to "expropriate" *The Palm Wine Drinkard* and *Things Fall Apart*, they declare:

¹⁰⁹ Bu Buakei Jabbi, "Influence and Originality in African Writing" (107 - 23), in *African Literature Today*, 10, p. p. 112 - 13.

¹¹⁰ Chantal Zabus, *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel*, Amsterdam-Atlanta: GA, 1991.

¹¹¹ The essay by A. Afolayan which Chantal Zabus uses is entitled "Language and Sources of Amos Tutuola."

¹¹² See Chantal Zabus, *The African Palimpsest*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 112 - 13.

¹¹³ *ibid.*.

The truth of the matter is that (...) Tutuola's mythic imagination is completely within the Yoruba African tradition. For proof, read D. O. Fagunwa who depicts a similar world but in Yoruba. And Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was, as he himself has often said, a deliberate (and successful) effort to recreate a pre-Westernised African reality, using authentic Igbo characters, situations, values and religious concepts, and bending the English language to express Igbo proverbs and idioms.¹¹⁴

The influence of African writers on other African writers is a reality, especially as "plausible evidence of African sources for African works continues to come to light."¹¹⁵ They are therefore as worthy of consideration as any other types of influence. Bubuaki Jabbi and Ayo Kehinde's respective essays, "Influence and Originality in African Literature" and "Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Novel," are heaving with information on already famous as well as new revelations on what can be called intra-African or Afro-African intertextuality that could corroborate the significance of this aspect of the problematic. Importantly, Kehinde presents Ben Okri as an example of a typical "practitioner" of such intra-African intertextuality. He specifically points to what he calls Okri's "reconstruction" of "thematic and stylistic materials from African oral traditions" and to his "reenactments of myths, legends, riddles, folktales and real events of his society," which, he argues, "reveal him to be a practitioner of intertextuality." He mentions as well significant affiliations of Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* with modern African writings, namely Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana and Jagua Nana's Daughter*.¹¹⁶ Okri's references to previous African writings are substantial enough to make another critic, Biodun Jeyifo, declare that "[i]t is precisely such patterns and configurations of intertextual 'revisions' of previous writers in our modern African and Nigerian fiction that Ben Okri's two published novels so sharply force on our critical awareness."¹¹⁷ Kehinde's essay equally points to Taban Lo Liyong as "another African novelist whose fiction relies heavily on the theory and practice of intertextuality" and whose novels, as he writes, "have an intertextual bond with contemporary African written literature and African oral literary practices." He specifies that "Liyong's short stories are based on

¹¹⁴ Chinweizu *et al*, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 288 - 89.

¹¹⁵ Bubuaki Jabbi, "Influence and Originality in African Literature," *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹¹⁶ Ayo Kehinde, "Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Novel," *op. cit.* He, for example, argues that "Okri's *The Famished Road*, for instance, is connected with and 'revises' some previous texts in African prose fiction (...) The setting of the text (Lagos) intertextually revises the Lagos of Cyprian Ekwensi's novels (*Jagua Nana* and *Jagua Nana's Daughter*)." *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Biodun Jeyifo, "Ben Okri" (277 - 28), in *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature: 1700 to the Present, Volume 2*, Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed.), Lagos: Guardian Books, 1988, p. 277, quoted in Ayo Kehinde, "Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Novel," *op. cit.* See also Olatubosun Ogunsanwo, "Intertextuality and Post-Colonial Literature in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*" (40 - 52), *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 26, No. 1, New Voices in African Literature (Spring, 1995), published by Indiana University Press, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820086>.

Amos Tutuola's example and on his own native Luo tales." Furthermore, there can be very particular kinds of intertextuality such as 'intra-vernacular-language intertextuality' as can be illustrated by Lutz Diegner's study "Intertextuality and the Contemporary Swahili Novel: Euphrase Kezilahabi's *Nagona* and William E. Mkufay's *Ziraili Zirani*." Thus, intra-African, (but also Afro-Caribbean) intertextuality is also a fact that needs to be shed light on, as we shall see in further detail via the cases of Ngugi with George Lamming later on and, in more detail, with Chinua Achebe in Chapter Three.

In spite of their many virtues – mainly their revealing of facts about the issue of influence and creativity in African literature and their pointing to specific cases of influence – comparative discussions of the phenomenon have nonetheless largely subscribed to the polarised logics and reflexes of colonialist and anti-colonialist criticism. True, works by specific writers such as William Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe, Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary, and Albert Camus, as well as by thinkers such as Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon and Jean Paul Sartre on some African writers could be very powerful. It would even be unjustified to deny the fact that works like *Heart of Darkness*, *Mister Jonson*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Tempest* have played important roles in the shaping and development of a substantial section of the body of modern African literature. The centrality of works by Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary and Frantz Fanon as sources of inspiration and as intertexts in the writings of Achebe and Ngugi is recognised. Yet, again, when the impact of these two writers in particular on African literature is mentioned, then it tends to be overestimated. An overview of some of the most celebrated relevant titles can give an idea on such exaggeration: *The Empire Writes Back*, *Africa Writes Back*, *Africa Talks Back*, *African Fiction and Joseph Conrad*, and so forth. S. A. Arab's point of view in "The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel" is very inspirational,¹¹⁸ but it is equally illustrative of the tendency to overvalue Conrad's influence on Anglophone African literature:

Modern Anglophone African literature has been haunted by the shadow of Joseph Conrad; or to put it more forcefully, by that of Kurtz, the emblematic figure of European hegemony, bestriding (...) *Heart of Darkness*, the arch-text of European modernism, but also the pretext/pre-text of much that has been written in the English-language novel of Africa.¹¹⁹

By the same token, the influence of a single chapter – "The Pitfalls of Nationalist Consciousness" – in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* has

¹¹⁸ Professor S. A. Arab's essay, "The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel," is one of the works which have very directly and positively inspired this work, and my interest in comparative literature has very much to do with my attendance of his Magister seminars on the subject during the academic year 2002-2003 at the University of Algiers.

¹¹⁹ S. A. Arab, "The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel" (101 – 108), in *The European Legacy*, N°1, The International Society for the Study of European Ideas, 1996, p. 101.

been, if one agrees with Ngugi's declaration hereafter, so determining in giving modern African literature as a whole its present form(s) and direction(s) as to authenticate Ngugi's hypothesis that "all the literature written by Africans" is "really a series of imaginative footnotes to Frantz Fanon."¹²⁰

The information they provide apart, statements such as those of Arab and Ngugi can stand for two facts of importance. The first of these is the need for approaches to African literature and criticism that would allow for perhaps more 'delicate' inferences *a propos* of African literature. For the variety and originality of the African novel for instance, Ngugi's own fiction as we shall see, are as worthy of note as are its sources of inspiration and borrowings. The second important point which such assertions can raise is to stress the need for exhaustive surveys of African literary works with regard to both their sources of inspiration and their creative, 'autonomous', aspects and that would provide material for such less contentious alternatives. To resist the understandable temptation to view African literature always as 'appendage' and "footnotes" to, or as "product" and sub-product of a tradition, a writer, a work or a chapter in a book (which Arab and Ngugi are not the only scholars to have succumbed to), again meticulous case-by-case examinations of the question of influence and creativity in African literary works would prove enlightening.

D. The Example of Ngugi

Influence and creativity is an essential literary question and, as we have just seen, it is even more crucial in the African literary context. As mentioned earlier, the example of Ngugi is typically representative in this discussion. On the one hand, Ngugi has repeatedly cited sources of influence on his work, and a body of research has been carried out on his indebtedness to some writers, mainly Joseph Conrad. On the other hand, Ngugi has made slogans out of notions which urge the need for experimentation in African literature, and suggest his search for creativity, and thus he calls for the "struggle for cultural freedom," "homecoming," "decolonizing the mind," and "moving the centre". While he has a marked tendency to draw on the works of other writers, creativity is, as he affirms, the essence of his view of art: "I associate my concept of art with creativity, movement, change and renewal," he points out.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Ngugi, *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, London: James Currey, 1993, p. 66.

¹²¹ Ngugi, Interview with Charles Cantalupo (1999), published in, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks* (385 - 98), Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors (eds.), London: James Currey, 2006, p. 390.

True, the two notions need not be mutually exclusive as argued earlier, and, as Ian Sansom puts it, “[t]he use of allusion has a complex relationship to originality: the one does not necessarily exclude the other.” “As the English critic [William] Hazlitt famously wrote of Milton,” Sansom goes on to say, “Milton has borrowed more than any other writer; yet he is perfectly distinct from any other writer.”¹²² Similarly, Harold Bloom argues at length in *The Anxiety of Influence* that the secret of Shakespeare’s “genius” is his dogged struggle with the shadow of Christopher Marlow. And, after all, T. S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland” has been suitably (re)entitled 20th century’s major poem while all and sundry know, and Eliot himself acknowledges, the poem’s enormous indebtedness to James Joyce’s *Ulysses* among a huge number of other literary and art works. The quintessence of *Ulysses* itself – one of literary modernism’s great works – lies in its fundamental reliance on, and creative bringing into play of, ‘bits and pieces’ from prior literary and artistic achievements via palimpsests, allusions, echoes, direct citations, borrowings, and various other forms of influence.

The issue, however, is that while the ‘cases’ of writers such as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound seem definitely ‘settled’ in that fashion; that is by joining at the hip the essences of their work and their artistic merits with what came to be firmly acknowledged as their characteristic ‘genius’ of creating new oeuvres out of old ones, things remain blurred when it comes to the nature of Ngugi’s contributions to literature. Ngugi’s venture is essentially put through conflicting interpretations of many analysts belonging to the categories mentioned earlier. Thus, determining aspects of his fiction, indeed his creative contributions as a novelist, are still to be (re)defined. There is a tendency to assume that Ngugi’s borrowings, whenever they are identified, are doomed to be cases of reflexive imitation and plagiarism. To mention only a few instances, Peter Nazareth seems to conceive of Mugo, one of Ngugi’s utmost character creations, as not much more than a carbon-copy of Conrad’s heroes Razumov and Nostromo (in, respectively, *Under Western Eyes* and *Nostromo*),¹²³ whereas S. A. Arab calls Ngugi Conrad’s “dutiful disciple” for the former’s “direct borrowing” from *Heart of Darkness*.¹²⁴ Even if echoes of his precursors can be perceived in the works Ngugi wrote in Gikuyu as we shall see, Ken Kamoch seems to exaggerate by suggesting that Ngugi fails to come to terms with the influence of the English language even when he writes in Gikuyu. For him, even the original (Gikuyu) version of *Murogi wa Kagogo* (*Wizard of the Crow*) is not innovative enough, at least not from the linguistic standpoint:

¹²² Ian Sansom, “Allusion,” an article in *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia*, 2005.

¹²³ Peter Nazareth, “*A Grain of Wheat*: A Socialist Novel?,” in *Literature and Society in Modern Africa* (Nairobi: EALB, 1972), p. 128.

¹²⁴ Arab, *op. cit.*, p. 103

In "*Murogi wa Kagogo*," right from the first page where Ngugi makes his dedication, he talks about "*humwaka*" (homework). In acknowledgement, he throws in words like "*bamiri*" (family), "*Njanuari*" (January), "*miriniamu*" (millennium). It goes on and on, page after page. It gets bizarre when he talks of "*riyunioni ya bamiri*" (family reunion), "*bathi thibeco*" (special pass), and so forth. You don't have to be a Gikuyu speaker to recognize that this is not Gikuyu. It is Pidgin English. No doubt many other of our languages have fallen into this trap. Apologists of English language claim that our vernacular languages are too superficial to capture modern concepts. Therefore, we are stuck with phonetic monstrosities like "*thekondari*" (secondary), "*thwit*" (sweet), "*borithi*" (police) etc, with which "*Murogi wa Kagogo*" is littered.¹²⁵

None the less, while there is tangible evidence that he has, in effect, borrowed in various ways, not just from Conrad but from different parts of the literary corpus (as will be shown henceforth and in the three subsequent chapters), it is equally beyond doubt that Ngugi has always produced novels of considerable ingenuity and uniqueness. What Kamoch presents as a mere sign of the writer's systematic replication of English words for example, can be seen as a resourceful and original practice. It can be a technique whose aim is not only to achieve a creative effect in this specific novel, but also to contribute to a larger creative enterprise which aims at the revitalization, enrichment and modernisation of the Kikuyu language at large. It is quite enough to justify this to reiterate the well known fact that finding practical ways to rehabilitate and reinvent African languages, mainly Gikuyu, is one of Ngugi's foremost concerns.

About the aspect of influence in Ngugi's fiction, he has three main sets of influence: Anglo-Saxon, Afro-Caribbean and Marxist (each of which can be represented by the case-studies in the three subsequent chapters). Among the Anglo-Saxon novelists who have decisively influenced him, Ngugi cites D. H. Lawrence and Joseph Conrad as the most significant,¹²⁶ and it can be argued, by inference, that behind these two novelists can lie the weight of the whole body of the liberal-humanist tradition in prose-fiction. On several occasions, Ngugi not just acknowledges but extendedly explains how he also learnt the craft of fiction by reading the works of writers such as R. L. Stevenson, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Jane Austen and Shakespeare.¹²⁷ In *The Great Tradition*, F. R. Leavis, argues that Conrad and Lawrence are indispensable links in the chain of what he calls "the great

¹²⁵ Ken Kamoch, "Ngugi and Language", *G21 Global Beat*, URL: <http://www.g21.net/gb21.html>.

¹²⁶ Ngugi, "Interview with Dennis Duerden," in Dennis Duerden & Cosmo Pieters (eds.), *African Writers Talking*, London: Heinemann, 1972, p. 123.

¹²⁷ For instance, about the impact R. L. Stevenson's books have had in shaping his literary imagination Ngugi says: "He is the one who really set my imagination flying and I thought that one day I would like to write stories like those which he himself had written. For instance *Treasure Island* had made a big impression on me and I thought that if ever I got enough education I would like to write a story like that one. That was around 1955," *ibid.*, p. 122.

tradition.” Conrad and Lawrence are, to Leavis, members of a numerically narrow, but substantially cohesive and representative circle of “the great English novelists” whose opuses’ essential common denominator is, as he puts it, the “human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life.”¹²⁸ Even Edward Said would endorse a similar view since he identifies the English novel as an “encyclopaedic cultural form,”¹²⁹ and therefore as a genre whose main generic feature is its reflection of the novelists’ alertness about the richness and variety of life and human experience. Though Ngugi has acquired all sorts of literary elements from English/liberal-humanist novelists, from aesthetic and technical “aspects of the novel” as defined by E. M. Forster for instance, to commonplace literary devices, to very specific philosophies and style and language elements (such as Lawrence’s), it is presumably this other key “aspect of the novel” that he could be said to have essentially learnt from that tradition. From this point of view, Ngugi’s indebtedness to Conrad and Dickens (summarised below), and to Lawrence (studied in Chapter Two), might possibly be expanded to a debt to the English novel altogether, and the liberal-humanist literary tradition more broadly.

That said, the impact of D. H. Lawrence and Joseph Conrad, in particular, on Ngugi seems especially sizeable, profound and lasting. Ngugi’s indebtedness to Lawrence will be studied at length in Chapter Two, and his affiliations with Conrad are pretty much renowned and are even over-documented (and definitely overstated) as we noted earlier.¹³⁰ Therefore, we will not linger on them here except to summarise, and comment on, some treatments of Conrad’s echoes in Ngugi that seem controversial (though we will come back to Ngugi’s relationship with Conrad intermittently in coming chapters, and in some more detail in Chapter Five). Indeed, Conrad has mattered enough to Ngugi for their connection to be ignored in this study. An overview of works on the subject demonstrates that Ngugi has been inspired in several ways mainly by four of Conrad’s novels: *Under Western Eyes*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Nostromo* and *Lord Jim*, especially in composing *A Grain of Wheat*.¹³¹ The impact of Conrad’s oeuvre touches on Ngugi’s style as well as on his ideas. In this respect, Peter Nazareth notes that “Conrad has been a formative influence on several African writers including Ngugi and Achebe; and I would suggest that this is not only an influence in terms of

¹²⁸ See F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition – George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948), London: Chatto and Windus, 1962, p. 10.

¹²⁹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage, 1994, p. 84.

¹³⁰ Some studies on this subject include C. P. Sarvan’s “Under African Eyes,” Ebele Obumselu “*A Grain of Wheat*: Ngugi’s Debt to Conrad,” Ime Ikiddeh’s “Ngugi wa Thiong’o: The Novelist as Historian,” Peter Nazareth’s article “*A Grain of Wheat*: a Socialist Novel?,” S. A. Arab’s “The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel,” and G. D. Killam’s extended comment in the introduction to his work *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi*.

¹³¹ Arab, Killam and Nazareth agree that Ngugi has been inspired mainly by these four novels of Conrad’s.

style but also, because style is inseparable from it, one of vision.”¹³² In turn, S. A. Arab and G. D. Killam note that it is essentially what they respectively call “Conrad’s scepticism” and “Conrad’s questioning attitude” that has been “communicated to Ngugi.”¹³³ Ngugi himself describes his inspiration by Conrad in terms which make it clear that the latter’s impact on him, in those and other respects, is considerable and profound:

With Conrad, I am impressed by the way he questions things, requestions things like action, the morality of action, for instance (...) while he questions man’s ideas and man’s ability to control his destiny, at the heart of Conrad is a feeling that man is great and reading Conrad one feels struck by man’s capacity for bearing suffering, but much more than this, he questions what appears at the surface. He questions what I could call ‘the morality of action’. What is “success” for instance what we could normally call success? What is action? Is failure to make a decision a moral action or not? So you find that some characters in Conrad fail to do something, but failure to do something is a moral decision with Conrad. This kind of questioning has impressed me a lot because with Conrad I have felt I have come into contact with an author whose questioning to me is much more important than the answers which he gives.¹³⁴

While Nazareth and Arab overstate Conrad’s effect on Ngugi’s fiction as said earlier, the two scholars’ respective articles “*A Grain of Wheat: A Socialist Novel?*” and “The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel” shed light on key aspects of this affiliation. Peter Nazareth who has been a “close friend and fellow student of Ngugi at Makerere” observes that “Ngugi chose to study Conrad as a special subject while at Makerere. Such a factor “suggests,” according to G. D. Killam, “an affinity of sensibility.”¹³⁵ Killam reports Nazareth’s saying that “Ngugi learnt a good deal of technique from contemplation of Conrad’s writing, a technique which would sustain the affinity of sensibility.”¹³⁶ Summing up the main points of Nazareth’s argument, Killam points out similarities between *Nostromo* and *A Grain of Wheat*, and between the latter and *Under Western Eyes* and affirms that these similarities are due to influence, and not to fortuitous analogy. He further explains that such resemblances have to do specifically “with structure, with the unifying agency of a more or less central character in a midst of a variety of characters all of whom might be called central character (in *A Grain of Wheat* it is Mugo, in *Nostromo* it is Nostromo, and in *Under Western Eyes* it is Razumov), and with the presence of a variety of levels of

¹³² Peter Nazareth, *Literature and Society in Modern Africa*, Nairobi: EAP Bureau, 1972, p. 5.

¹³³ See respectively S. A. Arab, “The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel,” *op. cit.*, p. 103; and G. D. Killam, an *Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹³⁴ Denis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *African Writers Talking*, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

¹³⁵ Killam, *An Introduction to The Writings of Ngugi*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

irony in the work of each author.”¹³⁷ Killam adheres to Nazareth's contention that Mugo is like Razumov in a “general thematic way,” and assents with the specific facts that:

Both men [Mugo and Razumov] wish to remain uninvolved with people around them but find once they make an act of serious consequence (in the case of each of them the betrayal of a friend which results in that friend's death), they become more and more involved in affairs, recognizing that they have betrayed their own humanity and find that only through confession can they achieve peace of mind, even though this secures their doom.¹³⁸

Substantial as they might be, Ngugi's borrowings from Conrad cannot, from our point of view, be as spontaneous as to constitute what Arab describes as a “typical case of what Jules de Gaultier calls “*literary Bovaryism*” and the comparatists “*direct borrowing*” with all that implies in terms of subservience to the model text.”¹³⁹ However, his somewhat embroidered statements reveal Ngugi's drawing on some specific Conradian elements relating to style, to subject matter, to character and even plot elements and language in *A Grain of Wheat*. In other words, the likenesses between Ngugi and Conrad which Nazareth refers to above and those which Arab enumerates below are, on the other hand, worth discussing:

The liberal humanist is what has inspired Ngugi. Indeed, in spite of the enigmatic quality of Marlow's narrative, the expressionistic descriptions and the symbolic pattern leave no doubt as to Conrad's anti-imperialist stand (...) Ngugi has followed in Conrad's footsteps in his rendering of the emergency period in Kenya. D. O. Thompson is simply Kurtz resurrected; even Kurtz's famous “exterminate the brutes” is here echoed as “eliminate the vermin.” The plot line and the characters of *A Grain of Wheat* have been culled, nearly wholesale, from *Under Western Eyes*. Ditto for the broken narrative, the twin themes of guilt and betrayal and the heavy insistence on the psychopathology of the protagonists.¹⁴⁰

“Conrad”, says F. R. Leavis,

is in certain respects so like Dickens that it is difficult to say for just how much influence Dickens counts (...) Dickens may have encouraged the development in Conrad's art of that energy of vision and registration in which they are akin (...) We may reasonably, too, in the same way see some Dickensian influence in Conrad's use of melodrama, or what would

¹³⁷ *ibid.*.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*.

¹³⁹ S. A. Arab, “The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel,” *op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*.

have been melodrama in Dickens; for in Conrad the end is a total significance of a profoundly serious kind.¹⁴¹

And “in D. H. Lawrence,” he adds, “Dickens is there rather interestingly.”¹⁴² This is to say that, in some way or other, echoes of Dickens as well are likely to be perceived in Ngugi's fiction, at least implicitly. More significantly, this would confirm the validity of the hypothesis that Ngugi is not just indebted to Lawrence or Conrad but more broadly to the literary tradition which they belong to. Anyone who is at all familiar with Dickens would sense in reading Ngugi's novels, his use of some typically Dickensian story-telling procedures, moods and techniques; and even of his embracing of moral stances, and an approach to social criticism, that are reminiscent of Dickens'. For instance, Ngugi sometimes recognizably takes on what Leavis would identify as a “Dickensian melodramatic tone,”¹⁴³ and quite frequently uses Dickensian humour; or, rather, what David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe would call “Dickensian savage half-comic irony.”¹⁴⁴ Ngugi's representations of individuals like Kimeria, Chui and Mzigo in *Petals of Blood*; and Gitutu wa Gataanguru and Kihaahu wa Gatheeca in *Devil on the Cross* for example recall Dickensian “idiosyncratically droll and sardonic caricatures.” Such ‘cartoon-like’ figures serve Ngugi, as they do Dickens, to express particularly powerful feelings towards notions such as hypocrisy, grotesqueness and greed which these caricatures can stand for.¹⁴⁵ Ngugi also uses now and then a recognisably Dickensian metaphorical descriptive method, satire and language. The following passage from *A Grain of Wheat* is one among other Dickensian passages bearing clear marks of the former's biting wit and mocking satire, which one can sporadically meet in Ngugi's fiction. Note that the excerpt's mood and tone as well as the idea it conveys, bring to mind Dickens' amusingly comical and sarcastic delineation of, for instance, young David Copperfield's first school days. The similarities in these and other respects can easily be verified in the passages quoted below respectively from *David Copperfield* and *A Grain of Wheat*:

‘No, Copperfield’, says he gravely, “that's not a dog, that's a boy. My instructions are, Copperfield, to put this placard on your back. I am sorry to make such a beginning with you, but I must do it.’/ With that, he took me down, and tied the placard, which was neatly constructed for the

¹⁴¹ F. R. Leavis, *The Great tradition, op. cit.*, p. p. 29 - 30.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁴³ *ibid.* Leavis uses the phrase to describe Dickens's tone.

¹⁴⁴ David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings*, London: Heinemann, 1983, p. 84.

¹⁴⁵ It is typical and well known of Dickens to create ‘cartoon-like’ stereotypes. It is noticeable, however that while in Dickens's case such a usage is a natural part of his basically witty and satirical *style*, this is not the case of Ngugi. The latter *occasionally* uses such a descriptive approach more as a *technique* to achieve definite purposes. Among these purposes one can cite for instance the balancing of the mainly tragic quality of his stories.

purpose, on my shoulders like a knapsack; and wherever I went afterwards, I had the consolation of carrying it (*David Copperfield*, p. 75).¹⁴⁶

However, after discussing Sunday's incident with the Church elders, he had decided to give the boy a chance to save his soul. The teacher had therefore decided to whip the boy ten times on his naked buttocks in front of the whole assembly – this for the sake of the boy's own soul and of all the others present. After the beating, Kihika would have to say thank you to the teacher and also recant his words of last Sunday (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 87).

There are several other facts which might make one think that Ngugi is in the 'great tradition's' debt. Even *Wizard of the Crow* reminds us of Lawrence, Dickens and Jonathan Swift. As it has been suggested earlier, however, the point here is not to show in full detail the ways in which Ngugi is indebted to all the previously mentioned and other English and Anglo-Saxon writers, but to attempt to exemplify them, to demonstrate the relevance and feasibility of further investigations in this sense, and to draw attention to the importance of bearing in mind such connections in reading his novels. What has been said so far, and our argument in Chapter Two, would perhaps suffice to make it clear that there is room for assuming that Ngugi's fiction is indeed influenced in several ways and to a considerable extent by the literary tradition epitomised by Charles Dickens, Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence. How exactly and to what extent this is the case, are important questions that need addressing through case-by-case explorations.

Ngugi has been influenced in several respects, as well, by modern African and West Indian literatures. Albeit he himself is one of the key figures of African literature, he has been led into that partly by his inspiration by other pioneers of African and Caribbean writing, mainly the work of Jomo Kenyatta, Peter Abrahams, Cyprian Ekwensi, Mugo Gatheru, Chinua Achebe and George Lamming and Frantz Fanon. These writers (but also others like Sembene Ousmane and Derek Walcott), in the main, have inspired him by 'all that is African' and Africa centred in their writings, and have represented for him other models to compete with, to follow and, sometimes, even to impersonate. Ngugi says that he read these writers' works passionately and that these "set his imagination flying."¹⁴⁷ Accordingly, an *a priori* assumption might be made that affinities between Ngugi's and these authors' works may be found at all levels: thematic, stylistic, technical and linguistic. Some of these resemblances could be facts of pure analogy, but many of them have to do with inspiration and influence. Concerning the exact impact modern African literature has had on him, Ngugi had this to say:

¹⁴⁶ See also chapter 5: "I Am Sent away from Home" (62 - 77).

¹⁴⁷ Denis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *African Writers Talking*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

What these [African] writers have done for me in a way that no other English writer could do for me is to make me feel that they were really speaking to me: the situation about which they were writing was one which was immediate to me, and also I found for the first time I was talking with my own people. I was talking with characters whom I knew, in a way, who had agonies which I had seen with our own people in Kenya and at that point I felt that if there could be Africans who could write such stories, I could write as well.¹⁴⁸

Interviewed while at Leeds by Aminu Abdullahi, on the question of whether there were any African authors and works that made a particular impression on him, Ngugi replies that these would be Peter Abraham's *People of the City* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*:

I would say Peter Abrahams, not so much because of his style as the subject matter, and he gave you the feeling that you also could write. After reading him, you felt that he also wanted us to go and write. I read *People of the City*, and I read Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and all these writings were an inspiration.¹⁴⁹

The impact of Chinua Achebe will be considered in detail in Chapter Three. As regards Abrahams, "an important part of his achievement" has been, according to Ruth Rowe and G. D. Killam, "the encouragement and example he provided as one of the first black African writers of the 1950s and 60s to others including Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o."¹⁵⁰ Ngugi says, as we have just seen, that Abrahams influenced him more in matters of theme than of style; he seems to have enthused in him a sense that writing is a moral duty. Therefore, he might have been, by and large, enthused by Abrahams' characteristically open political commitment to the Marxist and black causes, mainly by his Marxist vision of "freedom for blacks from the prison of Western cultural expectations."¹⁵¹ This can be noted in Ngugi's fiction, as an equally distinctive thematic feature of it. Such a commitment is specially found in Abrahams' earliest novels *Song of the City* (1945) and *Mine Boy* (1946). For Killam and Ruth Rowe, these novels of Abrahams' display the latter's "disillusionment with the optimistic vision of a world without colour prejudice where individual freedom takes precedence over politics which characterised the first stage of his career."¹⁵² The

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*. Furthermore, Ngugi reiterates the very same statements in an interview with Harish Trivedi and Wangui wa Goro (2003), published in Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks* (399 - 413), London: James Currey, 2006, p. 402.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁵⁰ G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe, *The Companion to African Literatures*, London: James Currey, 2000, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*.

¹⁵² *ibid.*.

expression of a similar disillusionment with idealistic humanism is equally reflected in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and the subsequent works. Ngugi's comment on Abrahams in "The Writer and His Past," an essay based on a paper which he gave to the Kenyan Historical Association (Nairobi Branch) in 1968, published in *Homecoming*, vindicates Abraham's disillusionment with idealist humanism, and shows his identification with Abraham's later Afro-Marxist vision in *Mine Boy* and *Wild Conquest* (1950):

Peter Abrahams despite his broken vision, broken, that is, because his realism in depicting the social conditions of workers in South Africa fortunately negates his romantic, sentimental vision of a society without colour, has tried to assert the African humanity in face of the Haggardian tradition and naked white racism. The traditional African society in *The Wild Conquest*, the story of the black-white encounter in the 'great' trek, is seen as a complex living organ: its doctors had a knowledge of psychology in the treatment of psychic disorders and disease. The Haggardian savage was thus turned into a modern psychiatrist. In *Mine Boy*, Xuma, the hero, asserts his humanity in the struggle against South African slavery and racist exploitation. Calling on other workers to come out on strike against the appalling working conditions in the South African mines, he shouts: "We are men. It does not matter if our skins are black. We are not cattle to throw away our lives."¹⁵³

This confirms that Ngugi owes his interest in 'Afro-Marxism' partly to Abrahams. Furthermore, it suggests that Ngugi's concern with African history and his drawing on psychoanalysis in his fiction,¹⁵⁴ which seems to be chiefly a result of the influence of Chinua Achebe and Frantz Fanon as we will argue in Chapters Three and Four, can also be due to the impact of this important founding father of modern African literature.

A similar, though not totally identical, kind of interest in politics characterises the work of Cyprian Ekwensi. *People of the City* (1954), which Ngugi cites (above) as a critical source of inspiration of his, is, in fact, significant enough to have established its writer as "the first West African author of a major novel in English and marked an important development

¹⁵³ Ngugi, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Culture and Politics*, London: Heinemann, 1972, p. p. 43 - 44. Further to his discussion of Abrahams in this essay, and to citing him in his interview with Dennis Duerden (*op. cit.*, p. 124) as one of his main African precursors, Ngugi mentions the writer once more, again as being one of his foremost literary influencers, in an interview with Harish Trivedi and Wangui wa Goro in 2003. See "Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Conversation," interview with Harish Trivedi and Wangui wa Goro, 2003, published in Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks* (399 - 413), London: James Currey, 2006, p. 402.

¹⁵⁴ Or, to put it in one word, it suggests that Ngugi owes Abrahams his concern with "the history and politics of race" which, as Killam and Ruth Rowe point out, has been an "increasing concern" of Abrahams.' As they also note such a concern is most noticeable in Abrahams *Wild Conquest* which Ngugi discusses in the above quotation. See G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe, *The Companion to African Literatures*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

in African writing.”¹⁵⁵ This pioneering and stunning success of African literature is about the coming into political awareness of a band leader in an emerging African country. The novel echoes, though somewhat vaguely, General R and Lieutenant Koinandu's experiences, particularly the way they came into politics as well as their situations in the aftermath of Kenya's independence. However, the book by Ekwensi which might have more obviously and more powerfully influenced Ngugi, especially in writing *A Grain of Wheat*, must have been *Beautiful Feathers* (1963). This novel reflects the nationalist and pan-Africanist consciousness of the pre-independence days of the 1950s and shows how the young hero's youthful commitment to his ideals leads to the disintegration of his family. This utterly recalls the time-setting of *A Grain of Wheat* and characters such as Boro in *Weep Not Child* and Kihika in *A Grain of Wheat* whose youthful devotions to the Mau Mau similarly bring calamities on their families. Moreover, all of Mugo, Kihika and Boro would embody, to a great extent, the proverb implied by the title of Ekwensi's novel: “however famous a man is outside, if he is not respected inside his own home, he is like a bird with beautiful feathers, wonderful on the outside, but ordinary within.”¹⁵⁶ Marks of influence of this ground breaking pictogram of African literature on Ngugi's early fiction are likely to be found on other levels.

One East-African intellectual and politician who has certainly profoundly marked Ngugi is Jomo Kenyatta. Echoes of the latter's philosophy, and specifically his nationalist cultural theory, as expressed in the influential *Facing Mount Kenya*, are rather neat in Ngugi's novels, especially the first three. In fact, it would not be so much of an exaggeration to say that Ngugi's (at least early) cultural and literary nationalism is also inspired by Kenyatta's book. In “Towards a National Culture” – one of the essays in *Homecoming* – which Ngugi subtitles “an integral part of the fictional world of *The River Between*, *Weep Not Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*” – he evokes *Facing Mount Kenya* as a “powerful book” and a “living example of the integrative function of culture.”¹⁵⁷ His entire commentary on this document suggests a direct link between *Facing Mount Kenya* and his own ideas as regards Kenya's (and Africa's) cultural distinctiveness and the role of culture in its future self-affirmation, as they emerge from his first three novels. To read *Facing Mount Kenya*, Ngugi says in this article, “is to witness a world with an inner dynamic spirit. It is also an authentic refutation of the missionary condemnation of what they, the demi-gods, thought was savage and dark.”¹⁵⁸ What seems to have impressed Ngugi to the extent of becoming a genuine manifesto for him that is implemented in all his novels is Kenyatta's attitude towards aspects of ‘Agikuyu’ life and, namely, “the aggressive assertion of the

¹⁵⁵ G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe, *The Companion to African Literatures*, op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Ngugi, *Homecoming*, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

primary role of culture in a people's discovery of their identity" with which Kenyatta concludes his book.¹⁵⁹ As he himself says, Ngugi totally approves of Kenyatta's conclusion that "it is the culture which he inherits that gives a man his human dignity as well as his material prosperity" because "[i]t teaches him his mental and moral values and makes him feel it worthwhile to work and fight for liberty."¹⁶⁰ Ngugi's nationalist characters and the largely pro-Mau Mau stances of his stories, regardless of the movement's "tarnished image of primordial brutishness" (about which his stories show, on the other hand, considerable bitterness) put on display his (un)reserved adherence to Kenyatta's theory.¹⁶¹ Actually, though he came into discord with Kenyatta, the President, on the way he had ruled Kenya once in power, Kenyatta's ideas have left an irreversible impact on Ngugi. This impact is powerful enough to be a crucial part of the secret behind Ngugi's auto-proclamation as an indefatigable fighter for Kenya/Africa's cultural and linguistic freedom as reflected in both his theory and art altogether.¹⁶² In "The Patriot as an Artist" in which, as the title suggests, he discusses literary works in terms of their political and nationalist significance, Al Amin Mazrui enlightens us about exact ways in which the links between *Facing Mount Kenya* and Ngugi's novels are to be regarded. For Mazrui, *Facing Mount Kenya* and these novels fall within "the same, basically patriotic literary tradition." What he goes on to say shows that Kenyatta's impact on Ngugi is definitely crucial, and enlightens us more on the ways in which he is echoed in Ngugi's novels:

The theme of Kikuyu self-consciousness and the quest of his people for either collective fulfilment or collective reconciliation are recurrent in Ngugi's fictional works. Ngugi's *The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat* are, in a sense within a tradition which includes Kenyatta's work in the 1930s, *Facing Mount Kenya*. The same factors which exposed a theme of Negritude in some of the postulates of Kenyatta's analysis of the Kikuyu's tribal life also expose themes of cultural nationalism and its clash with modernising buoyancy within Ngugi's works of fiction.¹⁶³

It is enough to have an idea on the significance of the impact of this important Kenyan intellectual on Ngugi to note that he mentions him and evokes his ideas and experience in at least his first three novels. In *Weep Not*,

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*.

¹⁶¹ Al Amin Mazrui, "The Patriot as an Artist," in *African Writers on African Writing*, G. D. Killam (ed.), London: Heinemann, 1973, p. 81.

¹⁶² As he perhaps the most clearly suggests in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi has been disappointed with Kenyatta precisely because he thinks that Kenyatta has betrayed those very ideals that he claims in *Facing Mount Kenya*, which are also those of the anti-colonial struggle in Kenya, the Mau Mau cause, of whom Kenyatta has been yet one of the most prominent and most Charismatic leaders.

¹⁶³ Al Amin Mazrui, "The Patriot as an Artist," *op. cit.*, p. 82.

Child, he is even referred to as a black Moses, and Waiyaki in *The River Between* resembles him, at least “physically,” as G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe note.¹⁶⁴ The experiences of Mugo and Kihika and many of the main characters in Ngugi's later novels also seem to be conceived through a close dialogism with the ideas and experience of Jomo Kenyatta.

Aside from these ‘continental’ African influences, there exists another source of inspiration having played a decisive part in forming and informing Ngugi's fiction: Caribbean literature. On his idea about this literature and its relationship with, and impact on, his own and other African writings Ngugi effectively proclaims that it is very significant:¹⁶⁵

How can we ignore the most exciting literary outbursts in the world today? We forget, or have been made to forget by our literary midwives from Britain, that the West Indies has been very formative in Africa's political and literary consciousness: Marcus Garvey, C. L. R. James Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon: these are some of the most familiar names in Africa.¹⁶⁶

Two West Indian writers seem to have played particularly decisive parts in shaping Ngugi's fiction and his politico-literary consciousness as put on view in his novels. These writers are George Lamming and Frantz Fanon. The influence of Frantz Fanon will be skimmed through below as part of Ngugi's Marxist-Socialist set of influences, and will be more fully studied in Chapter Four which will be devoted to it.

Concerning Lamming, Ngugi gives over two chapters in *Homecoming* – “George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*” and “George Lamming and the Colonial Situation” – (plus frequent invocations of him in other chapters, namely in “A Kind of Homecoming” and “The Writer and His Past”) to discuss/celebrate the achievement of this novelist. These articles are crucial for our point as Ngugi evokes in them his indebtedness to George Lamming, especially his novel *In the Castle of My Skin*, directly and in substantial detail.¹⁶⁷ Ngugi describes the influence of Lamming on him in terms which suggest that it is not very different from that of his African precursors. It relates for the most part, and as expected, to its “Africa centeredness,” to recall Nadine Gordimer's term. Nevertheless, Ngugi focuses on Lamming's communist consciousness, on the communal ideas, the sympathy with the grassroots, and the secularist discourse which he displays. Ngugi gives us a clear idea on how critical Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* in particular has been for him in this and other respects:

¹⁶⁴ G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe, *The Companion to African Literatures*, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

¹⁶⁵ It is noticeable that this connection between continental African literatures and those of the Caribbean, in spite of its significance, is not given much importance in African literary criticism.

¹⁶⁶ Ngugi, *Homecoming*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹⁶⁷ The “willingness” with which Ngugi evokes his debt to Lamming is indeed amazing. See “George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*,” in *Homecoming*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 109 - 126.

I first came into contact with West Indian literature in English by a chance encounter with George Lamming's novel *In the Castle of My Skin*. He evoked through a child's growing awareness a tremendous picture of the awakening collective social consciousness of a small village. He evoked for me an unforgettable picture of a peasant revolt in a white dominated world. And suddenly I knew a novel could be made to speak to me, could, with a compelling urgency, touch cords deep down in me. His world was not as strange to me as that of Fielding, Defoe, Smollett, Jane Austin, George Eliot, Dickens, and D. H. Lawrence. That was in 1961.¹⁶⁸

The effect of Lamming's writings on Ngugi is more than circuitous. For example, Ngugi hints at direct links between *A Grain of Wheat* and *In the Castle of My Skin*. Many details regarding Kihika and the values which he incarnates are 'taken from' Mr Smith, the main protagonist in Lamming's novel. On the whole, the relationships which bind both characters with their fellow people and their symbolic and mythical significance are very similar; Ngugi makes us deduce it easily:

Mr Smith's strength lies in his ability to harmonise these writing views into a vision embodying people's deepest aspirations. To the villagers he is a new Moses leading them to Jerusalem where they can have better houses and permanently own their plots of land; hence they are ready to endure thirst and hunger across the desert.¹⁶⁹

In the same article – "In the Castle of My Skin" – Ngugi also reveals that he owes to Lamming his standpoint on the subject of religion and the anti-Christian stances he sometimes seems to take in his novels:

But apart from its destructive effects on individual lives, Lamming shows how Christian values legitimise colonial authority, spirituality emasculating a whole community. A rejection of Creighton's domination is hence preceded by a questioning rejection of religion and Christian teachings.¹⁷⁰

The two articles devoted to George Lamming in *Homecoming* are oversupplied with revelations of this kind; showing that, here again, we are before a literary figure worth considering in reading the novels of Ngugi.

As to the influence of Fanon, what is important to note about him at this juncture is that he has rather been one of two crucial intellectual as well as literary Socialist/Marxist influences of Ngugi's, together with Karl Marx. "It is Marx who articulates a political and economic philosophy which will suit Ngugi's convictions about post-independence Kenyan development. It is

¹⁶⁸ Ngugi, "A Kind of Homecoming," in *Homecoming* (81 - 95), *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹⁶⁹ Ngugi, "George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*," in *Homecoming*, *ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 120.

Fanon who places the thinking of Marx in the African context,” G. D. Killam argues.¹⁷¹ However, in a letter to his friend Ime Ikiddeh, Ngugi confesses his sympathies with the Marxist idea of “the workers of the world,” while he sees “the experience of the black man as being unique in the world,” as Ikiddeh observes.¹⁷² A passage from that letter supports the claim:

I believe that we as blacks have suffered doubly under colonialism and capitalism, first as part of the working masses and then as blacks. By which I mean that a white worker by the very nature of his position was a beneficiary of the colonialist and racist exploitation of Africa and black people everywhere.¹⁷³

As Killam writes further, it was Fanon more than Marx who could provide an adequate theory to handle the complex combination of Black Nationalist and Marxist sympathies. The book in which Fanon most explicitly promulgates such a theory is *The Wretched of the Earth*. In *Moving the Centre*, the document where Ngugi says that the whole modern African literature is but “a series of imaginative footnotes” to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ngugi illumines us with a useful guiding note concerning the exact way Fanon influenced him as he affirms : “I have always argued that literature written by Africans, and particularly the literature of this period cannot really be understood without a proper and thorough reading of the chapter ‘Pitfalls of National Consciousness’ in Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*.”¹⁷⁴ In the work and chapter mentioned by Ngugi, Fanon articulates his anti-colonialist/nationalist revolutionary theory the quintessence of which Killam sums up well in the following:

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon articulates his philosophy of revolution, a philosophy which derives from his experiences of the Algerian struggle and his work as a psychiatrist. He concludes that the colonial victim can only free himself from oppression by a socialist revolution and that the revolution must be achieved by violence. The instrument of the revolution will not be, as is the case of traditional Marxist thinking, the urban proletariat, but the poor peasants – the wretched of the earth.¹⁷⁵

Killam also helps us define the main perspective from which Fanon’s echoes in Ngugi’s oeuvre should be tackled, and points to exact works by Ngugi in which the neatest echoes of Fanon are the most likely to be found:

¹⁷¹ G. D. Killam, *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁷² Ime Ikiddeh, “Forward” to Ngugi’s *Homecoming*, in *Homecoming*, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Ngugi, *Moving the Centre*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

¹⁷⁵ Killam, *An Introduction to The Writings of Ngugi*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

The force of the statements extrapolated by Kamenju ^[176] from Fanon apply not only to *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* (novels written after Ngugi is said to have been introduced to Fanon), but to *The River Between*, *Weep Not Child* and to some of the short stories as well. The connection between the latter two novels and Fanon's prescriptions are plain when one considers this statement from *The Wretched of the Earth*.¹⁷⁷

This idea certainly "finds its way into the imaginative evocation of Kenya" in several forms in at least *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*.¹⁷⁸ But, as Killam adds further, affinities between the two authors would go far beyond such a generality:

The analogies within Ngugi's work are plain enough. His principal theme is concerned with the legitimate aspirations of the peasantry, from which stock all Kenyans come. Peter Nazareth identifies three specific circumstances which Ngugi treats in the novels: first the historical setting which deals with the social situation in the round; secondly, the psychological situation of people which he calls a psychological sub-text; and, thirdly, an enquiry into whether there is any hope that any of the scared souls may regain their holds.¹⁷⁹

As far as the impact of Karl Marx's thought on Ngugi's fiction is concerned, G. D. Killam writes:

Ngugi's Marxism in terms of his presentation of the plight of the peasantry in contemporary Kenya is a straightforward thing. By some commentators it is seen as both naïve and out of date. There are peasants: they need to be looked after. And they are betrayed by their own kind, who have assumed station of a new bourgeoisie.¹⁸⁰

So much has been said about the influence of Marxism on Ngugi's fiction, which is indeed considerable – though definitely problematic – that the latter is unjustly labelled a Marxist writer.¹⁸¹ Emmanuel Ngara's *Art and*

¹⁷⁶ The statements by Kamenju to which Killam makes allusion are the following: "In the colonial countries, the spirit of indulgence is dominant at the core of the bourgeoisie; and this is because the national bourgeoisie identifies itself with the 'Western bourgeoisie' from whom he has learned his lesson.' It follows that the western bourgeoisie along its path of negation and decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention (...) it is already senile before it comes to know the petulance, the fearlessness or the will to succeed of youth." G. D. Killam, *An Introduction to The Writings of Ngugi*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 12 - 13.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*. The expression is Killam's, not the idea.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*.

¹⁸¹ Such a point of view seems inaccurate because Ngugi's fictional discourse is characterised by an equally remarkable liberal-humanist appeal, on the other hand. See Salah Kaci-Mohamed, "Western Ethics and Aesthetics and the Discourses of Liberation in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*,

Ideology in the African Novel, Simon Gikandi's *Reading the African Novel*, David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe's *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings*, Al Amin Mazrui's article "The Patriot as an Artist" among other studies endorse this view. Even David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe affirm that "there is no doubt that Ngugi has been influenced by radical socialist thinking and is familiar with Marxist theory." They even go as far as to say that

Right from Ngugi's earlier writings such concepts as a people's government, the power of the proletariat, mass-controlled means of production and distribution and the need for egalitarian social services are the implicit premises of his fiction. In the latest period his entire thinking and writing are cast in the mould of anti-capitalist revolutionary doctrine.¹⁸²

I had already made comparisons between Ngugi's writing, especially *Petals of Blood* and Marx and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party* with inferences on Ngugi's influence by this document in particular in my MA thesis.¹⁸³ Thus, I will not dwell on this in this study.

What is noteworthy at this point concerning Ngugi's relationship with classical Marxism is that his links with *creative* socialist literature – or socialist art – in particular still requires a definition. Comparisons of Ngugi's novels and those of writers such as Emile Zola, Leo Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Sholokhov and Gorky, especially from *A Grain of Wheat* on, could prove interesting and promising. Certainly, Ngugi's fictional discourse and aesthetic approach display his endorsement of elements from the Marxist philosophy, but, more importantly, his work also displays his influence by the styles and techniques of imaginative socialist literature. In all cases, there is evidence that Ngugi has read and been enthused equally by writers such as Zola and Tolstoy to such a point that these too may well have had tremendous effects for some of his works. Resonances of these socialist artists are to be sought in *Petals of Blood* mainly, but not exclusively:

In an interview given at about the time of the publication of *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi acknowledges again his debt to the neo-romanticism of D. H. Lawrence and the questioning attitude of Joseph Conrad. But he says now that he feels more drawn towards Tolstoy and Zola. He says: 'If I was to start writing all over again, I would write like Zola and not like Lawrence.' The statement is interesting in light of the response of one interviewer in *The Nairobi Sunday Times* to *Petals of Blood* where he says *Petals of Blood*

Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross," MA thesis, University of Algiers, 2005, for an argument in this sense.

¹⁸² David Cook and Michel Okenimkpe, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

¹⁸³ Salah Kaci-Mohamed, *Western Ethics and Aesthetics and the Discourses of Liberation in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's A Grain of Wheat, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross*, *op. cit.*. See Chapter Two in particular.

makes 'an addition to the proletarian novel,' and compares Ngugi's achievement to that of Zola.¹⁸⁴

Because of its priority, but also for methodological reasons,¹⁸⁵ we have however chosen to consider the impact of Frantz Fanon in this study as an example of Ngugi's Marxist set of influences, hoping that it could encapsulate to the utmost possible degree the main aspects and areas of this other crucial set of influences of Ngugi's.

*

Though Ngugi's novels are thus comparable to the works of other writers, they are *necessarily* different from them in several ways still. I say "necessarily" because Ngugi's fiction grows, first and foremost, in cognitive, imaginary, geographical and historical backgrounds that are different from those of these writers. On the whole, the creativity of Ngugi's writings is definable – as in the case of any other creative writer – as all that can be considered as the product of his imagination, and all that can mark his craftsmanship and artistic sensibility. In his instance specifically, it can be argued that it lies, *inter alia*, in the possibly unique way in which he deals with his inspirations and layers of palimpsest, juxtaposes contradictory literary streams; draws on multiple languages, ideas, devices and patterns and threads out of them indeed harmonious, stylish and extremely sensitive stories. It can be said that in doing so he even demarcates himself from the kind of modernism that is associated with Joseph Conrad, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot, as we shall try to demonstrate in Chapter Five. In fact, his oeuvre, essentially eclectic in vision and technique, is not likely to belong to any particular literary stream, not even to one like modernism that has nonconformity to traditions for tradition. It would be the more so because Ngugi simply seems to have modernism among his palimpsests, and would rather struggle with its influence in a way that makes his work appear rebellious even on the non-conformism known to modernism. Ngugi is likely to prove a tradition for himself, a *Mzee* (Elder) of fiction of a distinguished sort, and a *Mwalimu* (Master) of the African novel with ways of handling the word and the pen that are proper to himself.

In effect, Ngugi has embarked since his beginnings as a novelist on an enduring quest for creativity. The results of such search exceed the immediately traceable linguistic, formal, stylistic and thematic devices implemented in *Matigari*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow*. True, in the

¹⁸⁴ Cook and Okenimkpe, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

¹⁸⁵ A comprehensive study of all of Ngugi's influences seems feasible, but would require a long time and several volumes. It is simply not possible to do so immediately. The best that this aspect of our study can aspire to achieve, in this specific respect, is to exemplify Ngugi's three sets of influences.

latter works, the use of 'orality', for instance, in a way which "maintains its life and vibrancy," becomes an important "highlighter of a first rank boldest kinds of literary testing" as Alamin Mazrui and Lupenga Mphande point out.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, creativity characterises each of Ngugi's novels. For example, such an original way of incorporating "fragments from the oral literary tradition" is commonly found in all his fiction, including *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*; and it has contributed, together with other innovations (studied in Chapter Five), in giving his narratives their particular nuance and distinctive accent.¹⁸⁷

Be that as it may, and in spite of his influences, therefore, one can remark that Ngugi's fiction is innovative in several ways. Even when Ngugi borrows, now and then, bits and pieces from other works, he tends to do it, as we shall see, in a way which is proper to him, and as part of literary endeavours that seem essentially creative. Ngugi seems to borrow only to produce a sublimating fiction that is, in the main, not reflexively derivative or imitative. His experience certainly reflects definitions of art and of the world, and an artistic temperament, which appear very special in spite of his numerous influences, and, often, thanks to such influences. One is the more impelled to say so because his career is one of permanent change and conscious innovative anxieties and achievements which, while they still require definition, cannot be denied. Despite the borrowings, and the differences in language, structure, style, vision and artistic elaboration between the different sets of his novels and between his individual novels, it can be assumed that Ngugi's fiction as a whole bears his own "very distinct signature."¹⁸⁸ The general creative aspect of Ngugi's oeuvre, one can submit, is definable as a changing synthesis of well definite styles and visions derived from the various backgrounds mentioned earlier melted with linguistic, stylistic as well as thematic experiments, which make his novels appear elaborate, very refined and finally 'his own'. Still, only a closer investigation of his novels in comparison with those of his precursors is likely to determine the degree of validity of such a hypothesis.

In the following chapters we will endeavour to carry out such an investigation. We will, therefore, attempt to provide a critical answer to the following questions: how does Ngugi's fiction convey meaning in relation to other texts, and how does it convey meaning outside of intertextuality? Also, can Ngugi's fiction be rightfully said to be creative while referring – consciously and reflexively – to other literary and extra-literary material? In other words, is Ngugi's juxtaposition of literary devices and paradigms

¹⁸⁶ Alamin Mazrui and Lupenga Mphande, "Orality and the Literature of Combat: The Legacy of Fanon" (229 – 248), in *Critical Essays on Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, Derek Wright (ed.), New York: GK Hall, 2000, p. 231.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Cook and Okenimkpe, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

inspired by the “great tradition,” oral and written African and Caribbean literatures, socialist literature and elements from the extra-literary world an only-one-of-its-kind literary achievement, or are his narratives imitations of prior achievements relieved by no creative effort? This requires further investigation of the subsequent two sub-questions: on the one hand: what are the major ways in which Ngugi is influenced by other writers? On the other hand: in what ways, and to what extent, can his novels be considered creative in view of these influences? Through the examples of D. H. Lawrence, Chinua Achebe, and Frantz Fanon, identified as particularly representative ones, Chapters Two, Three and Four will be devoted to the first question; Chapter Five will deal with the second one.

Chapter Two

The Impact of D. H. Lawrence

A. The Story of a Kinship

Ngugi's fiction is, in part, an outcome of the influence of Western – mainly Anglo-Saxon – writers. Ngugi acquired the rudiments of "the craft of fiction" by reading, either as part of colonial school curricula or out of his personal choosing, the writings of R. L. Stevenson, William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Jane Austin, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Matthew Arnold, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, William Blake, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and, last but not least, D. H. Lawrence. He himself argues that some of these works had a powerful impact on him;¹ and, in practically all his books of essays and in many of his interviews and lectures, he suggests that his imaginative writings as well as his theories on culture, literature and language are developed in very close dialogical and intertextual relationships with them. Though to varied degrees and in ways that differ from one of his novels to another and from a set of them to another, all Ngugi's fiction, from *Weep Not, Child* to *Wizard of the Crow*, echoes such a background.²

Ngugi's most thorough acknowledgment of his influences remains perhaps the one he made in his interview with Dennis Duerden in 1964.³ Asked then whether he would agree that his earliest novels are beholden to "two sets of influences," "one from African writers and one from English

¹ See, for example, Ngugi's interview with Dennis Duerden: Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *African Writers Talking*, London: Heinemann, 1972, p. p. 122 - 24 in particular. Moreover, Ngugi suggests that the influence of this English background on him (and on other African writers) is tremendous and enduring:

I was definitely a product of the Horton-Asquith model, as were indeed nearly all the pioneering writers of the fifties and sixties. They were products of the English Department and often their initial inspirations were triggered by the admiration or disagreements with the models they read (...) A cursory glance at some of the early titles of African fiction tells the story. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and also *No Longer at Ease* from Yeats's *Second Coming* and Eliot's *Journey of the Magi*. The title of my own first published novel, *Weep Not, Child*, was taken from Walt Whitman. And I am sure that within the narratives or poetry it is possible to hear echoes of Thomas Hardy, Dickens, D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound (...) But here I am not so much concerned with the impact of the models as the language in which we produced our reaction to those models.

Ngugi, "Europhonism, Universities and the Magic Fountain: The Future of African Literature and Scholarship," *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 31, N° 1, 2000, p. p. 1 - 11.

² Special focus, however, will be put in this chapter on *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* for two main reasons. The first is that most of the relevant studies deal with Lawrence's influence in Ngugi's earliest novels – *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* – while the question of whether these influences persist or not in his later novels in English has remained unexplored. The second reason is that, though *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow* also echo Lawrence and as we shall see, these will be focused upon in the chapters devoted to Ngugi's African influences (Chapter Three), and to the original aspects of his fiction (Chapter Five), in view of their experimental character.

³ Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *op. cit.*, p. p. 121 - 24.

writers," Ngugi answers in the affirmative.⁴ Among the English novelists who have influenced him, he cites D. H. Lawrence and Joseph Conrad as by far the most significant.⁵ Critical discussions have tended to linger on his indebtedness to Conrad, while they have underrated that of Lawrence. Yet the latter is definitely one of the authors that mattered most to Ngugi, and it is to him more than to Conrad or any other European writer that he seems mostly indebted.⁶

The existence of a relationship of influence between Ngugi and Lawrence has not escaped the attention of critics. George Douglas Killam's reference to Ngugi's debt to the "neo-romanticism of D. H. Lawrence,"⁷ and David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe's assertions that "places and peoples and ideas are inter-fused" in Ngugi's works "in a manner reminiscent of Lawrence's fiction" are knowledgeable statements on this relationship.⁸ However, the question remains generally neglected, and the relatively few studies devoted to it are usually limited to an observation of general reverberations of Lawrence in Ngugi's early writings – most often in his earliest short stories and first two novels *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*. Much of the relevant critical material consists of all-purpose statements on the English background of Ngugi's debut in literature of the kind Simon Gikandi makes here:

Of the many writers he read as an undergraduate at Makerere University College (...) the ones who influenced his art most were modernists like D. H. Lawrence who "had a way of entering into the spirit of things," and Joseph Conrad who impressed the young writer by his mastery of "the morality of action" and the representation of human suffering.⁹

Yet one of Ngugi's most comprehensive statements on the ways in which he read and responded to Lawrence suggests that his indebtedness to this author is of great importance:

I discovered D. H. Lawrence and again his way of entering into the spirit of things, as it were influenced me quite a lot (...) I felt with D. H. Lawrence, although the situation, the geographical situation and even the moral situation he is writing about are in some ways remote to me, that he is able to go into the spirit of things. You know I felt as if he was entering into the soul of the people, and not only the people, but even of the land,

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 123.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. p. 123 – 24.

⁶ Hence the choice of Lawrence, rather than Conrad or any other Anglo-Saxon writer, as a main sample of Ngugi's English influences.

⁷ G. D. Killam, *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi*, London: Heinemann, 1980, p. 17.

⁸ David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings*, London: Heinemann, 1983, p. 193.

⁹ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature), Cambridge UP, 2000, p. 249.

of the countryside, of things like plants, of the atmosphere (...) when I am reading D. H. Lawrence I feel the spirituality of things very near me as if I am touching the very spirit of things.¹⁰

This declaration urges us to consider Lawrence's influence on Ngugi from a specific angle: within the framework of Lawrence's "way of entering into the spirit of things." The phrase might seem vague, but in fact it is extremely intense and revealing. It suggests that, coming upon Lawrence, Ngugi makes a decisive discovery: he falls upon *the* English writer with a mixed cognitive orientation which is akin to his own, at once spiritual and rational, Christian and pagan, idealistic and pragmatic worldview.¹¹ As his statement also implies, Ngugi has been inspired principally by what can be described as Lawrence's response to, and imaginative incarnation of, a dual consciousness derived from his English education on the one hand and, on the other hand, his renowned leaning toward primitivism about which Harry T. Moore tells us:

So far as primitivism is concerned, it should be remembered that Lawrence was a man disgusted with the mechanism of civilisation, a man who would not have used its instruments as even the most mystical Nazis have done. His extolling of "blood knowledge" was not an advocacy that what he called "mind knowledge" should be annihilated; on the contrary, he merely felt that civilisation had gone too far in the direction of cerebral activity and needed a strong dose of its opposite to help restore the balance.¹²

The literary outcome of Lawrence's concern with the "restoration of the balance" between "blood knowledge" and "mind knowledge" is his development of a singular form of transcendentalist romanticism based on a highly aesthetic fusion of mysticism, twentieth-century realism and nineteenth-century naturalism,¹³ which has provided both a philosophical and aesthetic model for Ngugi.

¹⁰ Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *op. cit.*, p. p. 122 - 124.

¹¹ It is noteworthy that most of the Western writers who seem to have mattered for Ngugi, including Conrad and Lawrence but also transcendentalists like Whitman, Blake and Melville, are 'the most African of British Writers;' i.e. those among them who are particularly interested in the mystic side of the world, and in so called primitive and Oriental cultures. That Ngugi dialogises oppositionally with writers like Shakespeare, Defoe, Conrad and Cary is a widely documented fact. In contrast, Lawrence's (as well as Blake's and Whitman's) impact on Ngugi is of a 'positive' type in the main as we shall see here. There is no wonder about Ngugi's identification with Lawrence, since the latter's response to the divide between what he called "the (pragmatic) North" and "the (mystic) South" seems genuinely conciliatory; and this is the position which Ngugi seems to have chosen in reaction to his own dual condition as a "child of [the same] two worlds."

¹² Harry T. Moore, *D. H. Lawrence: The Man and His Works*, Trenton, London, and Sidney: Forum House Publishing Company, 1969, p. 207.

¹³ For more detail on the origins of Lawrentian Romanticism, see Harry T. Moore, *ibid.*, p.45.

The following comparison of their major novels aims to demonstrate that important artistic and visionary elements of Lawrentian romanticism are reverberating, in several ways, in Ngugi's fiction.¹⁴ Ngugi has repeatedly stated that Lawrence's impact on him has remained engraved in his imagination so that "echoes" of Lawrence's works can be perceived at least in the novels he wrote in English.¹⁵ But as we shall equally notice Ngugi has continued to undergo Lawrence's influence in writing his Gikuyu-language fiction, the main area of intersection being again a system of thought and a way of writing that dispose with the gap supposed to separate what is perceptible and expressible from what is hidden and ineffable. In *D. H. Lawrence: The Man and his Work*, Harry T. Moore, basing himself on a foundational study of Romanticism by René Wellek, maintains that the first of "three important criteria of Romanticism in general" is "imagination for the view of poetry;" the other two criteria being "nature for the view of the world," and "symbol and myth for poetic style."¹⁶ Moore asserts that all of these factors "figure importantly throughout Lawrence's work".¹⁷ Some of Lawrence's novels like *The Plumed Serpent* and *Sun* are "almost pure romanticism" as the same scholar specifies.¹⁸ But, on the whole, Lawrence differs from the 'conventional Romanticists' principally in that his drawing on the element of imagination is unique, a point made in the same study.¹⁹ Understanding how Lawrence employs each of Wellek's three elements of Romanticism is necessary to understand how and to what extent Lawrence's way of "entering into the spirit of things" is echoed in Ngugi's fiction. The

¹⁴ We have no direct evidence as to what exact works by Lawrence could have particularly influenced Ngugi. However, the quintessence of Lawrence's discourse and style can be represented by the works that are generally considered as his most representative ones, namely *The Rainbow* and, more particularly, *Women in Love*. For example, Professor N. J. Roberts, an Emeritus Professor of English literature from the University of Sheffield, asserts (in a conversation I held with him on March 3rd, 2008, at the same University) that these two novels could represent the main "core" of Lawrence's writings, and that they are characterized by a "much more individual style" in comparison with Lawrence's other writings. It is therefore mainly these works that will be used as study-samples in this chapter. And, as we shall see, their comparisons with Ngugi's novels reveal striking analogies. Nevertheless, as Lawrence's way of writing changes to some measure at some point in his career and becomes more markedly mystical and fabulous, this category of his writings is also represented here -- chiefly by *The Plumed Serpent*, a work which is again often held to be the one that best exemplifies his 'fabulist' works. Other important works by Lawrence, notably *Sons and Lovers*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Mornings in Mexico*, *Sun*, *Twilight in Italy*, and some of his poems will also be referred to as well as (potential) precursor works of Ngugi's.

¹⁵ However, even the works written in Gikuyu, especially *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*, have blatant Lawrentian textures as we shall see.

¹⁶ H. T. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.* This is so much the case that Jacqueline Gouirand argues that they are comparable to "fables" -- "Nouvelles que l'on peut assimiler à des fables: *Sun* et *The Man who died*", she writes. See Jacqueline Gouirand, *D. H. Lawrence et le monde méditerranéen*, in *Cycnos*, Volume 7, published online on 6 June 2008, URL: <http://revel.unice.fr/cycnos/index.html?id=1155>.

¹⁹ H. T. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

impact on Ngugi of the Lawrentian approach to the other two elements can be deferred, so as to elaborate first on the more fundamental point of Ngugi's indebtedness to Lawrence's half-mystic-half-naturalistic imagination.

B. A Lawrentian Imagination for a View of Fiction

Lawrence often resorts to a fantastic working of imagination which resembles that of traditional Romanticists even in works that are close to naturalism like *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Thus, "in the actual working of ideas, [he] often came close to Romanticist imaginative usage" as Moore points out.²⁰ He especially does so in his most fabulist stories like *The Man who Died*, *Mornings in Mexico*, *Sun* and *The Plumed Serpent*. The latter would be the best instance of a work by Lawrence which is "almost pure Romanticism" for its broad and perhaps conformist reliance on a gothic imagination as it is particularly "full of the elements of mysticism and strangeness which are predominant in the "Gothic" aspects of that movement."²¹ Nevertheless, unlike the archetypal Romanticists, Lawrence is not exactly an 'escapist;' that is, he does not rely on this type of imagination to evade reality or to seek a surrogate for it in some utterly otherworldly settings. Although, in the vein of the Romanticists, he would employ imagination "as an important intuitional force",²² this remains for him basically a means to communicate a vision of what he firmly believed to be *earthly* realities. In this context, Moore notes the difference that for the traditional Romanticists imagination was "perhaps a nobler instrument than it was to Lawrence: with them it was a means of getting in touch with a higher reality," while "the fulfilment Lawrence came to seek in his "dark gods" was not a higher reality but rather another reality."²³ If anything can allow Lawrence to dig so deep in reality as to give the impression he is taking us near the "spirituality of things" that Ngugi talks about, it would be above all such an imagination fed by an insightful endeavour, and a desire, to "apprize us of the eternal distinction between the soul and the world," to put it in Ralph Waldo Emerson's words.²⁴

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ R. W. Emerson, *Nature* (1836), published in George McMichael *et al*, *Concise Anthology of American Literature*, second edition (445 – 472), Macmillan: New York and London, 1985, p. 466. Though Lawrence has a singular, hardly synthesizable, philosophy, Emerson's postulate could best capture the core of it: "[p]hilosophically considered, the Universe is composed of nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name Nature." *ibid.* The capitalization in this footnote is in the source.

An important way in which Lawrence "enters into the spirit of things" is characterisation. Out of his belief that the traditional concept of "character" misrepresents the reality of human life, namely that it is a more obscure notion than what is embodied by usual types of characterization, Lawrence creates, in effect, a specific kind of character. True, his protagonists, as he himself asserts, range between "the old stable ego of character of *Sons and Lovers*" and the "other ego according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through (...) allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense (...) to discover are states of the same single radically unchanged element of [his] character in *Women in Love*."²⁵ In both cases, however, the writer lays primary stress on the spiritual sides of the characters, or, to be more exact, on perpetual movement and change in their identities, and on interplay and complementarity between their physical and spiritual components. The effect this produces is always a sense of his striving to represent "the human soul in flux" and to reveal 'shadowy zones' of human nature and show them as irrefutable parts of its reality. This is certainly what James Wood means when he writes:

Lawrence is famous for his desire to capture the ineffable, to put into words the shifting ecstasies, both negative and positive, of the human soul in flux. His reputation for "obscurity" is founded on such efforts. But at bottom he is an extraordinarily acute noticer of the world, human and natural.²⁶

The resulting examples of characterisation testify not only to Lawrence's ability to perceive and render what is most deeply set within the human self, but also convey – through their liveliness, and through the specific processes by which they are developed throughout the narratives – an original discourse about human nature and life that is scarcely paralleled in vitality, intensity and perhaps – ironically – in veracity.

In *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, 'people' are represented with this kind of emphasis on what Wayne Templeton calls "states of estrangement,"²⁷ and with such an insistency that they would have been, without Lawrence's genius, implausible as novelistic characters. Instead of being so, however, they put forward an elaborate and interesting perspective on humanness by drawing attention to ignored, unexplored, or simply out-of-sight – but not unfamiliar – features of it. Consequently, in Ken Knabb's words, they stand out "lit by a light not of this earth and at the same time completely of this

²⁵ *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 198; quoted in F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition – George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948), London: Chatto and Windus, 1962, p. 24.

²⁶ James Wood, "Heavenly creatures," in *The Guardian* (Online), Saturday March 10, 2007, URL: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/mar/10/fiction.dhlawrence>.

²⁷ See Wayne Templeton, *States of Estrangement: The Novels of D.H. Lawrence, 1912-1917*, Whitestone, 1989.

earth."²⁸ To Lawrence, such features are so crucial as to be no less than manifestations of Man's, and life's, vital essence(s). Thus, characters like Rupert Birkin and Hermione Roddice are more than just harmonious assortments of physical portraits, selected words, and – elaborately as their psychological conditions are treated – mental profiles. To say who exactly characters like Hermione and Rupert are, material and psychological lexis alone might prove unsatisfactory. The consciousness about such characters the reader is likely to finish with would go far beyond syntheses of their corporal and mental traits because Lawrence endows them with *spiritual* dimensions as *central* constituents of their identities.

Through this approach to characterisation Lawrence seeks to provide us with a consciousness of something definitely intuitive but not alien to us. He aims at stirring in us a feeling akin to what he believed to be our 'instinctive awareness' of the (human) *soul*. In "Class-room," for instance, Hermione's "state of estrangement" does not suggest a neurotic condition in the clinical sense of the term – not even a subconscious state in the strictly Freudian meaning. It rather puts forward something like an 'evil' variation on her own self.²⁹ In the same sequence, and elsewhere in the story, Birkin equally goes through states that are too baffling to be duly expressible in a rigorously scientific terminology. For example, at some point in the story he simply ceases being a visible being and becomes, in the narrator's words, just a "passionate voice speaking." Such descriptions can be seen as part of what E. M. Forster calls "the usual stuff in the novelist's stock," that is as metaphoric renderings of particularly emotional but finally normal human behaviour. But even from this perspective, the recourse to metaphor itself as well as a selective use of trope to render atmosphere, setting, action, language, mood and tone – suggest in unison a spiritual point of view about human nature:

He looked at her in mingled hate and contempt, also in pain because she suffered, and in shame because he knew he tortured her. He had an impulse to kneel and plead for forgiveness. But a bitterer red anger burned up to fury in him. He became unconscious of her; he was only a passionate voice speaking (*Women in Love*, p. 57).

Likewise, in the language used to describe Rupert as seen by Ursula in the same scene, every limit between the physical and hidden sides of the man is expunged. And, in Ursula's mind at least, the one is an indispensable foil for the other:

²⁸ See Ken Knabb, *The Relevance of Rexroth* (1990), Chapter 2: "Magnanimity and Mysticism," Reprinted in *Public Secrets*: Bureau of Public Secrets, PO Box 1044, Berkeley CA 94701, USA; URL: <http://www.bopsecrets.org/PS/rexroth2.htm>. Extracted 2 July, 2008.

²⁹ See the chapter entitled "Class-Room" (p. p. 49 - 60), in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (*op. cit.*).

Ursula was watching him as if furtively, not really aware of what she was seeing. There was a great physical attractiveness in him – a curious hidden richness that came through his thinness and his pallor like another voice, conveying another knowledge of him. It was in the curves of his brows and his chin, rich, fine, exquisite curves, the powerful beauty of life itself. She could not say what it was. But there was a sense of richness and of liberty (*Women in Love*, p. 59).

Though, paradoxically perhaps, Ngugi can seem less acutely interested in such numinous dimensions of Man and character, and this even in his fantastic Gikuyu-language works, he has a very similar approach to humanness and characterisation in general. Better, he is sometimes so reminiscent of Lawrence in this respect that one could assert that what has just been said about Lawrence's characterisation could also stand as a reasonable comment on Ngugi's perspective on human beings, and on his own way of creating protagonists. There is indeed a similar kind of mysticism about Ngugi's heroes, namely Waiyaki in *The River Between*; Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child*; Mugo, Kihika, Gikonyo and Mumbi in *A Grain of Wheat*; Karega, Abdulla, Wanja and Munira in *Petals of Blood*; Wariinga and Gatuiria in *Devil on the Cross*; Matigari in *Matigari* and Kamiti in *Wizard of the Crow*. What is more, as in the case of Lawrence's heroes, this does not detract from their lifelikeness.³⁰ Despite his commitment to realism, Ngugi's typical characters are always endowed with metaphysical dimensions, either allusively or literally. Waiyaki's father in *The River Between* is a good example of a character with an obvious metaphysical dimension. As for Waiyaki himself, his spiritual makeup is suggested with just the measure of subtlety with which Lawrence typically presents similar aspects of his protagonists. The Gikuyu situation in the next depiction of Waiyaki for example should not cause us to overlook the Lawrentian mould in which the portrait is cast:

The knowledge that he had in him the blood of this famous seer, who had been able to see the future, filled him with an acute sense of wonder (...) For the first time, Waiyaki felt really frightened. Unknown terror gripped him. He fought with it (...) Waiyaki felt as if a heavy cloud was pressing down his soul and he felt a strange sensation of suspension in his stomach (*The River Between*, p. p. 22 - 3)

More generally, this attitude can be seen in Ngugi's propensity for subjecting his protagonists to a thorough treatment, not just physically and

³⁰ If these "obscure" sides of Ngugi's characters can be explained within the African supernatural thought-system which Ngugi does not ignore, it should be seen, from our point of view, as part of his endeavour to represent the mystery of human existence as a whole in a way which is akin to that which Lawrence strives to capture partly through characterisation.

morally, but also spiritually. He depicts his protagonists deeply 'from within,' in a manner which suggests that he is indeed trying to "enter into" their "souls." Not infrequently, though not as keenly and as elaborately as Lawrence does, he too takes his readers into extensive and profound explorations of his characters' 'other', unrevealed, multiple and shifting selves in order to give expression to what is supposed to be these characters', and life's, secret and energetic qualities. This makes them, like Lawrence's characters, indefinable in technical terms (as opposed to the symbolist, mythological or religious language used in his novels), as it places some of their aspects and behaviours beyond rational interpretation. Similar to the main characters of *Women in Love* or *The Rainbow*, there is an assured spirituality about Mugo, for example, – something that makes him range between states of holiness and evil – and which, instead of dehumanising him or alienating him from the reader, makes him look remarkably 'real'. This is due to the fact that the limits between the physical and 'numinous' levels of imagination are often non-existent in Ngugi's portrayal of characters such as Mugo, in the same way as they are overlooked (or transcended) by Lawrence as we have seen through the examples of Hermione, Rupert and Ursula. Passages like the following one, scattered all over Ngugi's novels, can exemplify this:

Mugo lay on his back under the shade of a Mwariki and experienced that excessive contentment which one feels during the noon rest from toil. A voice then, he always heard voices whenever he lay on his back at rest, told him: something is going to happen to you. Closing his eyes he could feel, almost touched the thing, whose form was vague but, oh, so beautiful (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 125).

As with Lawrence's Hermione, such a depiction may attest to a pathological condition comparable to hallucination, schizophrenia, or "neurosis", as David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe think with reference to Mugo.³¹ Nevertheless, the logic of Ngugi's stories urges us to seek beyond such psychiatric notions and psychopathologies to grasp them, seeing that – despite the influence of Frantz Fanon to which we shall return in detail in a coming chapter – he intends not only to deal with mentally alienated characters from a medical point of view.³² It is characteristic of all Ngugi's main characters to pass, at least occasionally, through such 'unexplained' states of mind while they remain mentally 'healthy' people. Lawrence argued that "[e]very man who is acutely alive is acutely wrestling with his own

³¹ David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe write that "certainly Mugo is mentally ill, and we are given detailed insights into his childhood as the origin of his neurosis" (Cook and Okenimkpe, *op. cit.*, p. 73).

³² *ibid.* Cook and Okenimkpe's own further stipulation that Mugo's "neurosis" "does not exonerate him" would nullify their earlier hypothesis that he is simply "mentally ill" if we consider that Ngugi's intention is to represent Mugo's neurosis for the sake of representing it.

soul,"³³ and the point is that Ngugi's main characters are typically "wrestling with their own souls;" and, rather than alienating them, this brings forth all their vim and vigour as imagined replicas of human beings.

Moreover, Ngugi's protagonists usually appear in such weird conditions after they are pressured by intense emotions, or when they undergo stern emotional and physical experiences. It is most often the case when they are exhausted, when they feel excessive contentment or – even more typically – when they are in love. This makes their portraits as ordinary people acceptable by the standards of realism while it conveys a sense of their estrangements and their spirituality. Though he is also interested in rendering the impacts of various kinds of pressures on people at the mental level, Ngugi's ultimate purpose is not to render these impacts. He uses them as parts of a profound quest which is the pointing up of the spirituality of people and things, and the 'bridging of the gap' between the 'natural' and the 'mystic' states of his characters so that they could look, like Lawrence's, complementary in their shifting identities. From this point of view, the other main characters in *A Grain of Wheat*, notably Mumbi, Gikonyo, Kihika, Karanja and John and Margery Thompson all replicate the kind of characters imagined by Lawrence.

The same can be said of the major characters of *Petals of Blood*, mostly Wanjia, Munira, and Abdulla who are subject to descriptions which suggest strangeness and multiplicity. In such junctures, Ngugi proceeds with delicacy corresponding to Lawrence's, using contexts and techniques (studied below) which are able to keep their personalities within the limits of what can be accepted even by readers who would seek a high degree of pragmatism. Below, even if we read for realism, we are likely to admit that Wanjia's curious behaviour is true to life while the writer cautiously handles what Lawrence would have identified as a typical case of a manifestation of "dark gods."³⁴

She [Wanjia] ended on a kind of savage screaming tone, as if she was answering doubts inside her. Karega sensed the doubt and now looked at her more intently. There was a hardness on her face that he could not now penetrate. He felt the needle-sharp ruthless truth of her statement: eat or you are eaten (*Petals of Blood*, p. 327)

³³ *The Guardian* (Online), Saturday June 14, 2008, URL:

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,,2285537,00.html>
guardian.co.uk, Guardian News and Media Ltd., 2008.

³⁴ The concept of "dark god," often associated with Lawrence, "embodied all that had been repressed by late civilization and the artificial world of money and industry" as Kerry Bolton points out. See Chapter 1, in K. R. Bolton, *Thinkers of the Right: Challenging Materialism*, Luton, England: Luton Publications, 2003, published as an e-text, by the author, as "D. H. Lawrence," Counter-Currents Publishing Ltd, 2010; URL: <http://www.counter-currents.com/2010/09/d-h-lawrence>.

Sometimes such conditions are more than just obliquely hinted at (as both Lawrence and Ngugi typically, though not exclusively, do). For instance, Abdulla has about him a sort of aura – a suggested hidden energy, and an oddity, which we are made to detect from the beginning through his unexpected and fortuitous cursing of Joseph, for example, or, more constantly, through the immense incongruence between his puny physique and his huge mental dispositions. Ngugi maintains the impression that this character has sides that are more than ordinary, and that he is a 'changing' individual. And, as just as he seems to "continue revealing newer and richer aspects of his personality" to the people in the convoy, so he does to us as readers (*Petals of Blood*, p. 134). In the sequence where he shoots antelopes with a catapult – an event which the narrator suitably refers to as "a magic act in a dream" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 138) – Abdulla's 'invisible self' and his 'secret power' are no longer hinted at; they are literally affirmed. We are prompted to believe that it is with reason, after such a show of prowess, that Abdulla is called a "very extraordinary being." His depiction in the same scene, if again it could be seen as a figurative description of an actually 'ordinary' Abdulla, is evocative not only of Lawrence's approach to characterisation, but also of his hypothesis that a human being is best conceived as a changing combination of multiple selves: "Abdulla stood in the same position, now transformed in their eyes into a very extraordinary being whom they have never really known. Immobile like a god of the plains, Abdulla still rested his eyes on the distant hills which for years had been a home to him" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 139).

The attribution of features of this type to human beings may also be viewed as a Homeric, or simply Africanist, rather than a Lawrentian procedure. But in the case of Ngugi's English-language novels at least, they are more likely to be consequences of Lawrence's influence. This is not only in view of Ngugi's declaration on his inspiration by this characteristic of Lawrence's style, but also of the fact that it is a distinguishing quality of Lawrence – perhaps more than any other novelist – to use such a mindful and affirmed interest in sudden and complete ego-alterations as parts of otherwise realistic portraits. As we have already argued, Lawrence normally does so most overtly in his fable-like works but remarkably he also does it in all his works. Abdulla's representation reminds us of the way in which Lawrence in *Women in Love* renders Birkin's fascination with Ursula's father. There we are prompted to marvel with Birkin "how curious it was that this was a human being!" (*Women in Love*, p. 246). Furthermore, Lawrence more than sporadically associates what he called "dark secret power[s]" (of Gudrun in *Women in Love*, p. 248), "demons" (of Gudrun in *Women in Love*, p. 246), and "possessed voices" (of Gudrun in *Women in Love*, p. 248) with his characters. He even redundantly uses adjectives like "strange," "mystic," "unreal," "mysterious," "undiscoverable" and "obscure," to compare them to gods, angels or spirits. Lawrence's works are crammed with such

terminology and with comparisons, metaphors and protracted descriptions which weigh humans against such mythological and 'acausal' beings. As we progress in *Women in Love* we might be surprised no less at the frequency of such cases than at the insistency with which we are pushed to notice them. An excellent example is the sequence in "Sunday Evening" where, to Ursula (contemplating her husband and son), "Billy seemed angelic like a cherub boy, or like an acolyte, Birkin was a tall, grave angel looking down to him" (*Women in Love*, p. 227). Just like Abdulla, the latter "was motionless and ageless, like some crouching idol, some image of a deathly religion. He looked round at her, and his face, very pale and unreal seemed to gleam with a whiteness almost phosphorescent" (*Women in Love*, p. p. 227 - 28). Readers are given further occasions to notice Abdulla's states of estrangement and changes, one of which is the following: "A change came over his voice, over his face, he was more introspective and now there was no foolery or bitterness in his tone, and they listened as yet another Abdulla emerged before their very eyes" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 285.)

Compared with Abdulla, Munira's demeanour and personality seem even more continuously 'out of the ordinary.' His more unwarranted than justified fear and loneliness, his transmutation into a religious fanatic, and his unexpected burning of Wanjia's whorehouse with its occupants inside are excellent examples of Ngugi's view of human nature as enigmatic and variable. But it is Wanjia who best points up the author's eagerness to illumine alternative elements of humanness in *Petals of Blood*. In effect, Wanjia changes so often, and so suddenly, that one cannot help thinking of her as a byword of Lawrence's idea of Man as "ever-shifting mixture of multiple selves." She is the epitome of a character with an "ego according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable," as she undergoes "allotropic states which it needs a deep sense (...) to discover are states of the same single radically unchanged element," and thus her portrait conforms to Lawrence's definition of his own protagonists. Looking at "Wanjia's utter transformation" at some stage of the story, Abdulla thinks of her as "a kindred spirit" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 201). In the following, caught in an "intuitional state of mind" indeed, Wanjia cannot fail to remind us of these Lawrentian concepts:³⁵

Suddenly she felt lifted out of her own self, she felt waves of emotion she had never before experienced. The figure began to take shape on the board. It was a combination of the sculpture she once saw at the lawyer's place in Nairobi and images of Kimathi in his moments of triumph and laughter and sorrow and terror – but without one limb. When it was over, she felt a tremendous calm, a kind of inner assurance of the possibilities of a new kind of power (*Petals of Blood*, p. 338).

³⁵ See Lawrence's definition of his own characters in D. H. Lawrence, *Letters, op. cit.*, p.p. 35 - 36.

Most of the excerpts noted thus far could as well illustrate Ngugi's adoption of the Lawrentian method of conveying this vision of human nature and reality. The two writers bring into play identical techniques for the purpose of achieving truthfulness and reliability, that is, to keep their characters' portraits credible in such circumstances. It seems obvious that both writers endeavour to strike a balance between straightforwardness and subtlety in depicting these situations. At the level of language, this is to be seen in their coincident uses of comparisons and metaphors which point at peculiar facts, but are tempered with alleviating adjectives and/or adverbs. In the case of Lawrence, phrases and sentences such as "**like some crouching idol**", and "his face, *very pale and unreal* **seemed to gleam with a whiteness almost phosphorescent**" illustrate this (*Women in Love*, p. p. 227 - 28). One can observe the same procedure in Ngugi's sentences, as in "She ended on **a kind of** *savage screaming tone, as if she was answering doubts inside her*" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 139); and "she felt a *tremendous calm*, **a kind of** *inner assurance* of the possibilities of a *new kind of power*" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 338). Equally noteworthy is the writers' parallel tendencies to assume inquisitive and curious, moods and tones when dealing with these situations. These characteristic moods and tones, which can also be noticed in any of the previously quoted passages, allow both writers to bring the reader to a borderline between fantasy and reality, to better compel him/her to the reality of mystery and sanctity and convey a sense of their proximity to us.

More generally, and for the same purpose – rubbing out the confines between reality and fantasy in relation to the characters' portraits – Ngugi uses the same imaginative scheme as Lawrence. As hinted at before, Ngugi relies on extreme emotions and sensations: fear, jealousy, fury, happiness, ecstasy, love and infatuation – and often on mixtures of these feelings – to shed light on his characters' weird aspects and offer them as lifelike. Like Lawrence, he is predominantly interested in characters that are potentially sensitive and who, furthermore, give an impression of psychological fragility. They always seem apprehensive, anguished or obsessed. In the case of Lawrence, Hermione, Rupert, Gerald, and any of the protagonists in *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* and *Sons and Lovers*, are good instances; and all of Mugo, Kihika, Munira, Abdulla, Karega, Wanja, Wariinga, Gatuiria, Kamiti and Nyawira illustrate this as regards Ngugi. Though they remain within the limits of mental normality on the whole, both authors' main characters seem to suffer from psychological pressures and complexes. With Lawrence, the psychological problems the characters often endure are the oedipal complex (as in *Sons and Lovers*) or sexual obsession (as in *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*). As far as Ngugi's characters are concerned, they usually look as if they suffer from inferiority complexes, anguish, different kinds of phobia, feelings of culpability and stress. In short, in both cases, characters are often emotionally overwhelmed (and often physically too). In this fashion Ngugi (in the way of Lawrence) predisposes us to accept the

eccentric behaviour of his protagonists, while he leaves us without commonsensical explanations as to the primary causes of these reactions.

In the course of their narrations, both authors furthermore submit their characters to severe experiences such as betrayal, fear, overwhelming sexual desire, social and material misery, etc., so that they seem even more vulnerable than they already are, and *desperately* trapped. The writers hence, by design, leave us curious about the strangeness of the characters at the same time that they make sure they press us enough to admit that these estrangements are natural. Typically, this happens only when the characters seem to have reached the limits of their natural abilities, when their passions and emotional confusions culminate, that the authors will have them behave in these perplexing ways. They, in other words, exploit such delicate moments of reality to capture reactions that seem incomprehensible by logical analysis. At such junctures (which are very frequent), Ngugi, just like Lawrence, strives to draw the readers' attention to small details like changes in the characters' features – often in their eyes and voices – through language, tones and atmospheres that suggest idiosyncrasy and mystery. It is only 'when appropriate', as it were, that they refer to them or to their actions as "strange," "inhuman," "unnatural," "extraordinary" and so on. In brief, Ngugi's general strategy in highlighting a character's obscure and spiritual features is the same as Lawrence's: to work on catching it, in Alexandra Leggat's words, "not in a state of intellectual lucidity but in one of intuitional reasoning."³⁶

One can easily notice how this process functions in Ngugi's earlier novels, those written in English. In *A Grain of Wheat*, one of the most expressive cases would be Mumbi and her reaction when Karanja announces to her the news of Gikonyo's return from detention. Gikonyo's state after years of confinement, considered in relation to his overall experience, also provides an excellent illustration of Ngugi's use of the same approach, method and techniques described here:

He [Gikonyo] blankly started into the wire one evening, and with sudden excitement, wanted to cry or laugh, but did neither. Slowly and deliberately (he stood outside himself and watched his actions as from a distance) he pushed his right hand into the wire and pressed his flesh into the sharp metallic thorns. Gikonyo felt the prick into the flesh, but not the pain. He withdrew the hand and watched the blood ooze; he shuddered and enjoyed a strange exhilaration (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 109).

The section where Mugo, in an instant of mental collapse, confesses to Mumbi the onerous secret of his betrayal of Kihika is equally illustrative. A quotation from that sequence fosters the hypothesis of Ngugi's borrowing

³⁶ Alexandra Leggat, "My Love Affair with D. H. Lawrence," quoted in *The Danforth Review* (Online), URL: <http://www.danforthreview.com/features/essays/dhlawrence.htm>

from Lawrence's character-making schemata, as noted above. Notice, additionally, how once more the language – mainly the adverbs and adjectives – and the emphasis Ngugi puts on the changes of voice and on other physical manifestations (in the emphasised parts) put across specifically Mugo's ego-alteration:

'You want me to do that?' He asked, raising his voice. *The change of voice, like a groan from an animal about to be slaughtered*, startled her. 'Yes,' she assented, fearfully. 'I wanted to live my life. I never wanted to be involved in anything. Then he came into my life, here, a night like this, and pulled me into the stream. So I killed him.' 'Who? What are you talking about?' 'Ha! ha! ha! *He laughed unnaturally*. 'Who murdered your brother?' 'Kihika?' 'Yes.' 'The Whiteman.' 'No! I strangled him – I strangled him –' 'It is not true – *wake up Mugo* – Kihika was hanged – listen and stop *shaking so* – I saw his body hang from a tree.' 'I did it! I did it!' Ha! Ha! Ha! That is what you wanted to know. And I'll do it again – to you – tonight.' She tried to cry out for help, but no voice would leave her throat. He came towards her, *emitting demented voices and laughter* (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 180).³⁷

In a similar scene in *Petals of Blood*, Wanjia's behaviour under corresponding circumstances exemplifies Ngugi's recourse to the same scheme. Our suspicion of an enigma surrounding her personality is confirmed; and as with Mugo, Gikonyo or Abdulla, this takes place when her plight reaches a peak. In this example, the pressures are caused by a consuming feeling of guilt that has crippled Wanjia's consciousness since she threw her child in a latrine, her sterility ever since, the long social quandaries she has been submitted to, and, last but not least, her unfortunate love experience with Karega:

She stood up and faced him, *hatred in her eyes, anger in her voice, proud in her bearing*. 'No ... It is not true, I've tried to fight them, the only way I can. What about you? What I am you made me. You went away, you went away. I pleaded with you, shed tears, but you went away and now you dare blame me.' Then *as suddenly her voice changed and she spoke softly*. 'I have been so lonely ... so lonely. This wealth feels so heavy on my head. Please stay tonight ... just tonight, like in the old times...' Yet *again she changed* and this time *she cried out to beyond Karega*, beyond, a *savage cry* of protest: 'Oh, it's not true. It's not true. I have loved life! Life! Life! Karega give me life... I am dying ... dying...and no child...No child!' (*Petals of Blood*, p. 327).³⁸

Returning to Lawrence, the next passage from *Women in Love* is not the only one able to show the similarity between Ngugi and Lawrence from the

³⁷ Emphasis mine.

³⁸ Emphasis mine.

point of view of their concordant reliance on behaviour provoked by an extreme circumstance to show the lifelikeness and prevalence of idiosyncrasy. This specific instance illustrates Lawrence's exploitation of Hermione's *normal* state of exhaustion to expose (her) *anomalous* responses. And, as we have just seen with Wanja, it also shows how Lawrence scrupulously pre-meditates Hermione's odd comportment. Prior to, and during this scene, she is submitted to enormous charges of ardent feelings of different kinds: envy and hatred (of Ursula), passionate and sickly love and desire (for Birkin) added to her habitual self-consciousness so that she maps onto Lawrence's plan of spelling out the mysteriousness of human nature. These powerful and conflicting sentiments disable Hermione's self-control. The result is a queer sequence of behaviour in response to which the reader is not only expected to wonder at Hermione's "convulsed movements" and repetitive voice "changes," but also to acknowledge them as deviant but factual:

"Yes," she said. There was *a look of exhaustion* about her. For some moments there was silence. Then pulling herself together with a *convulsed movement*, Hermione resumed, in a *sing-song, casual voice* (...) They thought she had finished. But with a *queer rumbling in her throat* she resumed, "Hadn't they better be anything than grow up crippled, crippled in their souls, crippled in their feelings – so thrown back – so turned back on themselves – incapable –" *Hermione clenched her fist like one in a trance* – 'of any spontaneous action, always deliberate, always burdened with choice, never carried away.'/Again they thought she had finished. But just as he was going to reply, she *resumed her queer rhapsody* – 'never carried away, out of themselves, always conscious, always self-conscious, always aware of themselves. Isn't anything better than this?' (*Women in Love*, p. 55).³⁹

Elements relating to the characterisation of *Devil on the Cross* could be seen as replications of Lawrence in the same way. Wariinga's Gatuiria's tragedies are those of African individuals brought up in the principles of pragmatic and materialist culture, on a quest for spirituality in his pagan origins. They are balanced between [the] two civilisations, and none of the various phases of evolution they undergo reflect settled identities: they always seem to be in an in-between location, and therefore in perpetual states of *dédoublement* and flux. Their situations are comparable to, say, Kate's in Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*, who experiences a similar phenomenon caused, in her case, by "the irrationalism associated with (...) organic culturalism" in Mexico and her refusal to "return to the ostensible safety of "civilization"" in her native country.⁴⁰

³⁹ Emphasis mine.

⁴⁰ Jad Smith, "Völkisch Organicism and the Use of Primitivism in Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*." (Republished by permission of *D.H. Lawrence Review* 30:3, 2002), URL: www.eiu.edu/~agora/Dec03/JSmithall.htm.

Like Wanja, Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross* has an obscure nature. She could be seen as a tormented soul, perhaps not in an obviously Lawrentian way, but at least in one which shows that the influence of Lawrence's imagination is still at work in Ngugi's handling of characters. Likewise, the final image of the ideal Wariinga we are presented with is one of "the mind, body, and soul," reflecting again a point of view of an author who disapproves of materialist civilization, but does not reject it altogether. Moreover, Ngugi deals with at least three 'different Wariingas,' and the movements from one to another are too abrupt to be satisfactory in terms of coherence in character development. The dreamy young Wariinga, completely transformed, becomes a depressed adolescent whose soul is haunted with images of her weakness and inferiority, and is obsessed with whiteness and Christianity. The latter, in her turn, metamorphoses into a half-human and half-goddess subtly but firmly suggested, like Wanja, to be healed of "demons" that used to 'inhabit' her body, mind and soul, to put it all in Lawrentian language. The narrator points out that Wariinga is "transfigured body and soul" after the Devil's Feast (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 225). In the same event, Ngugi tells us she "went over the details of all that happened to her since her dismissal," and "felt as if all those things had happened to somebody else many years ago"; yet, "not even two days had passed since then" (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 183). Following this stream of thought, and remembering the "stranger" and "the watchman who had rescued her from the wheels of the train"; Wariinga has an irrational vision of reality that could easily be seen as a sign of Ngugi's ongoing indebtedness to Lawrence's power of imagination and characterisation. Wariinga's exclamations "[w]hat a coincidence that Muturi and the watchman were one and the same person! Who was Muturi? An Angel in rags? Could he be the Angel who had rescued her from the bus in Nairobi?" might well be perceived as resonances of an ongoing propensity to disregard the limits between the 'causal' and 'acausal' dimensions of the protagonist (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 183).

In another instance, Ngugi endows Wariinga with more than can be expected from a human being and a character in the customary senses. Indeed the description is evocative of Lawrence, given the fact that it starts with facts that could be seen by an eye other than Lawrentian as banal and ordinary and finishes in something mythical and magnificent. Here Wariinga, a commonplace woman, is elevated, through a fusion of Gatuiria's and the griot's viewpoints, to a "goddess of beauty and elegance" in the same way as, for instance, Birkin and his son are elevated in a previously quoted passage:

Wariinga was dressed the Gikuyu way. A brown cloth, folded over a little at the top, had been passed under the left armpit, the two ends gathered together and held at the right shoulder by two flower-shaped safety pins, so that her left shoulder was bare. The cloth was long and fell to her ankles; its edges were held together on her right side with safety pins (...) As she walked, Wariinga appeared to be the child of beauty, mother of all beauties, just created by the creator of twins, elegance and beauty (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 242).

Though Wariinga has allegorical functions that serve more overtly political, namely Afro-nationalist and pro-Marxist, and perhaps even ultimately different purposes than the exploration of obscure corners of life of the genre aimed at by Lawrence, this does not exclude the possibility of the dramatisation of one side of her personality in the style of Lawrence.

Unlike *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow* are perhaps as passionately romantic and prophetic as *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*. Anders Breidlid's contention that "Ngugi's emphasis on art's and literature's function [in *Matigari*] may in some way seem to contradict Ngugi's own development from *A Grain of Wheat* to *Devil on the Cross*" is justifiable, and is applicable to *Wizard of the Crow* as well.⁴¹ Regardless of their groundbreaking characteristics, these novels are able to display marks of a fundamental shift back to the more noticeably Lawrentian way of writing of Ngugi's beginnings. They transcend "the orbit of the Marxist, Materialist discourse of *Devil on the Cross*" and *Petals of Blood*, and propagate "a utopia which is based on what one could call an 'ethical universal'."⁴² The notions of human and spirit are merged in connection with the identities of Matigari and Kamiti by engaging the same old "holistic way of approaching the world" that Ngugi implements in his earliest works, and an awareness that is as much simultaneously set in "heaven and earth."⁴³ One cannot even affirm whether he is a man, a spirit, or both; and the character is rather more sophisticated than to be simply compared to epic heroes like Achilles, Ulysses or D. T. Niane's Soundjata.⁴⁴ Kamiti seems even closer to

⁴¹Anders Breidlid, "Ngugi's *Matigari*, a Non-materialist Discourse and Post-modernism." *The Australian Journal of Trans-national Writing*. Flinders University, URL:

<http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/humanities/exchange/quodlibet/>.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ André Brink, "Interrogating Silence: New Possibilities Faced by South African Literature," in Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (eds.), *Writing South Africa: Literature, apartheid and democracy, 1970-1995*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998; p. 25. Quoted in Anders Breidlid, *op. cit.*. The words are Brink's, not the idea.

⁴⁴ Matigari is hardly like Soundjata – Djibril Tamsir Niane's *Soundjata: An Epic of Old Mali* – who can be considered as a typical African epic-hero. The latter is magical in the immediate sense of the word. Matigari, on the other hand, is better conceivable as an ordinary man whose metaphysical aspect is more figurative than real, brought to the fore by the use of myth, symbol and other Lawrentian techniques of moving to and fro between a character's body and soul. Matigari is not a Ulysses-like protagonist as well. Unlike Matigari, Ulysses is very near to being *literally* a demi-god, and is quite unconceivable as a modern novelistic character.

Lawrence's characters than Matigari is; in all cases, the divide between the "body" and the "soul" is equally ignored in his case, and the interplay and unity between the two notions are emphasised with reference to him with a frankness that is arguably unparalleled in Ngugi's fiction as a whole.

In some measure, this could even be true of the "ogres" – the capitalist – imperialist protagonists. It is true that they are reminiscent of Dickensian characters, or those of other African writers like Tutuola's, for example. Still these figures have Lawrentian textures, as they remain nearer to being common human portraits with strange aspects, "evil" souls and more or less episodic manifestations of "dark gods," than to wholly fabulous creatures of the kind one encounters in African and non-African fables, myths and epics. One can think of them as a type of simplified Lawrentian protagonist because it is obvious that Ngugi does not depict the paranormal aspects of these protagonists for their own sake, but keeps imagining convincing portraits of characters presenting phenomenal aspects though remaining within the limits of realism.

*

Ngugi's adoption of a Lawrentian imagination can also be seen and sensed through a number of thematic considerations, namely in the centrality of the theme(s) of love and sexuality in his novels. It must be noted first that Ngugi's fiction in general focuses on intense emotional experiences such as sexual desire and love. Actually, the theme of love is so imperative for Ngugi as to make his stories readable as romances or love stories comparable to those of Lawrence. The concept of love, conceived, as with Lawrence, in symbiosis with sexuality occupies a central part in almost the totality of Ngugi's fiction. What is more, it is "treated with Lawrentian intensity" as David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe note.⁴⁵ And, as in Lawrence, these notions are not only treated as parts of the plots but also as examples of the complicities between the visible and the obscure sides of reality.

True, sex sequences are relatively fewer in Ngugi's works – and are even non-existent in *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari* – and some of their diverse metaphoric meanings are more immediately political, or even different from Lawrence's. Sequences such as the one involving Gikonyo and Mumbi in *A Grain of Wheat* have regional levels of significance that may overshadow their Lawrentian textures and implications. At the mythological level, for instance,

⁴⁵ Commenting on to the union of Karega and Wanja in *Petals of Blood*, Cook and Okenimkpe affirm that it is "explored with Lawrencean intensity." David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

the scene refers to the Gikuyu myth of origins, i.e. to the genesis of the Gikuyu people; therefore one of its key functions is to justify Kenya's belonging to that people. Also, at a more directly ideological level, it signifies hope for the birth of a new peasants-and-workers' Kenya nation. Such agencies – usually put in the foreground by Ngugi's critics – may indeed conceal their Lawrentian implications.

Some of the most obvious resemblances between Ngugi and Lawrence from the point of view of the treatment of the theme of love are their concurrent beliefs in the mysteriousness of the concept, or, to be more precise, in its tenure of some great and unexplained power. Indeed, as with Lawrence, love constitutes a major driving force for Ngugi's main characters, notably in *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, and even in *Devil on the Cross*. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Gikonyo is totally conditioned by his devotion to Mumbi, and his repetitive symbolic deaths and resurrections all depend on the fluctuating states of their relationship. The significance of love for Gikonyo and Mumbi is not in the least different from its meaning to, say, Kate and her two lovers Ramón and Cipriano in *The Plumed Serpent*. Gikonyo's confession to Mugo "[i]t was like being born again (...) I felt whole, renewed (...) Before, I was nothing. Now I was a man" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 97) alludes very directly to Kate's proposition concerning female power over men, and vice versa. It even seems to be a replica of Kate's thought that

Alone, she was nothing. Only as the pure female corresponding to his pure male, did she signify (...) To a great extent this was true, and she knew it. To a great extent, the same was true of him, and without her to give him the power, he too would not achieve his own manhood and meaning. With her or without her, he would be beyond ordinary men, because the power was in him. But failing her, he would never make his ultimate achievement, he would never be whole. He would be chiefly an instrument (*The Plumed Serpent*, Chapter 24).

The same is valid for Karanja whose major decisions, including that of becoming a home guard, are taken with regard to the possibility of winning Mumbi's attention or disarming her, and of Mugo whose resolution to confess the 'un-avowable' secret of his treason of Kihika is made under the effect of the same woman's charm. Even Kihika's becoming a Mau Mau fighter has much to do with Wambuku who seems to be a source of encouragement for him, since "Kihika's face" would "brighten" "at the sight of Wambuku" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 88). Wambuku's and Njeri's deaths are, on the other hand, results of their romantic devotion to Kihika. In *Petals of Blood* equally, the characters remind us of Lawrence's in their fixations and dependence on love and sexuality. Munira is simply hypnotised by his infatuation with Wanja, and Abdulla does not seem to do much better since his actions too are remarkably controlled by the same kind of drives towards

the same woman. He, for instance, systematically resumes cursing Joseph as soon as he hears of Wanjia's decision to quit Ilmorog. The significance of love for Karega (a remarkably romantic character indeed) is even greater as we can find out through Ngugi's especially powerful rendering of his double-romance with Mukami and Wanjia. Ditto with *Devil on the Cross* where love and infatuation arguably constitute the origins of many of the characters' actions, decisions, and changes – notably those of Gatuiria, Wariinga and the Rich Old Man.

What is more important here, however, is not so much Ngugi's resemblance to Lawrence in terms of focusing on this theme, or even on its significance as a drive for human behaviour, as the ways in which it illustrates Ngugi's indebtedness to Lawrence in terms of an imagination rooted in both "the world and the soul." In Lawrence's works, love is equally seen as an extremely powerful drive and temptation; but, more importantly, it is conceived as an edifying and sacred phenomenon. It is an archetype of a fact which – at the level of clichéd reality at least – seems wholly physical, while its 'essential nature' is bewildering in itself, and is illustrative of obscure corners of life of the kind discussed earlier. Because it involves physical entities – human bodies – while it stirs observable and yet phenomenal reactions, sexuality is used by Lawrence as an essential part of an overall imaginative scheme designed to explore and render "the microcosm." The sexual event in itself becomes both an exemplifier, and an inseparable part of a comprehensive imaginative structure whose ultimate agency is to put on view powers "that [move] the inner universe and [stir] mysterious, unknown, uncontrollable forces within us", to put it in William Johnston's words.⁴⁶ What the latter goes on to say sharpens the point:

Whatever way we envisage it, the microcosm or inner universe is investigated by psychologists and explorers in consciousness from Jung to Aldous Huxley and from D. H. Lawrence to Timothy Leary. What precisely it contains we do not yet know but one thing is clear: the deep forces of the so-called unconscious are profoundly stirred by love. Love of man for woman or of woman for man, love of mother for child or child for mother – this is the power that moves the inner universe and stirs mysterious, unknown, uncontrollable forces within us.⁴⁷

The self-same idea is conveyed by Ngugi via the narrator's description of the consequences of Karega's union with Wanjia in *Petals of Blood*:

But he is light, buoyant within. He feels in himself the power of an immense dewy down over Ilmorog. How is it that a certain contact with a woman can give one so much peace, so much harmony with all things,

⁴⁶ William Johnston, *The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978, p. p. 32 - 33.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*.

can open up this sense of immense promises and a thousand possibilities? He tries to sleep. His body is ready. But the mind races on, sailing swiftly but gently on low waves of memories of flesh in flesh. He is aware that he has only uncovered the first layer of a great, infinite unknown and unknowable, and yet he feels that he has known Wanjia all his life, that what has gone before has a logic and a rhythm inevitably leading him to that moment of candour in the flesh. He tries to fathom out this link, this inner continuity, but the thread is lost in a distant mist surrounding his childhood (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 234 - 35).

Ngugi's characters are not conditioned by love in the strictly psychosexual sense associated with Freud: as Lawrence does, he brings us to wonder not only at the hugeness of love's power over them but also at the mysteriousness of its nature and origin. In this way, love functions with Ngugi, as well, as part of an imaginative scheme whose purpose is to "capture the ineffable," and to reconcile the world and the spirit. Love is, to Ngugi too, an archetype of a whole range of phenomena which are empirically incomprehensible, and only approachable through such particular means.⁴⁸ Many of the passages quoted thus far from both writers' novels show that both Ngugi and Lawrence explore the obscure constituents and behaviours of their characters most often through this theme. A sense of incredulity is created in the readers by both writers precisely by the practice of drawing attention to the irrepressible powers of love – more notably of sexuality – before, during and after physical contact.⁴⁹ Thus, Ngugi reveals the power of love and sexuality and their ability to exemplify the existence of what Lawrence variously termed "old blood," "dark gods," and "vital flames" inside us. Also, both writers exploit the very moments of love-making to sustain their concordant outlooks on identity as a something changeable by making the most of the 'transformative potential' of love. They stress the quick shifts in the characters' egos, from states of apparent self-control and self-consciousness, to ones of complete sublimity provoked by lovemaking. So far as Ngugi is concerned, the syndromes are due to what he very intuitively calls "the power of united flesh" (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 229 - 30). This idea, which is fundamental to him, reoccurs in almost all his works. But it is perhaps most deliberately developed in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*, and again a good illustration is the description of Karega's and Wanjia's communion:

She nestled closer to him, wanting to assuage him, to fight the enemy of life in that voice. Her warmth gradually powered his lungs ribs: life quickened in him. He felt this sharp pain of death-birth-death-birth and

⁴⁸ Other such means include "language, sleep, madness, dreams, sex." Emerson argues that these phenomena are "not only unexplained but also inexplicable." Emerson, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

⁴⁹ It is noticeable that, with both authors, the concept of love is fused with that of sexuality; that is to say, the attraction between the lovers is inseparably physical and abstract.

he tightened his left hand round her right hand fingers. He felt the prolonged shivering of her body thrilling into him, and now it was he who wanted to cry as he remembered Mukami (...) He felt the tip of his blood – Warmth touch her moistness and for a second he was suspended in physical inertia. Then she cried once, oh, as he descended, sinking into her who now received him in tender readiness (...) And she clung to him, she too desiring the memories washed away in the deluge of a new beginning (...) and suddenly it was she who carried him high on ocean waves of new horizons and possibilities in a single ... of lightning illumination, oh the power of united flesh, before exploding and swooning into darkness and sleep without words (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 229 - 230).

Lawrence had correspondingly declared such "ultimate and triumphant experience[s] of physical passion" equally powerful, mysterious and as vital; so much so that he compares them to some "spell of life" which is as "inevitable as death." Hereafter, lovemaking makes Birkin realise a variation on his own self, while readers are invited to contemplate a typical imaginative incarnation of his hypothesis on the multiplicity and flux of a single individual's ego:

He changed, laughed softly, and turned and took her in his arms, in the middle of the road (...). Then suddenly, to show him she was no shallow prude, she stopped and held him tight, hard against her, and covered his face with hard fierce kisses of passion. In spite of his otherness, the old blood beat up in him. /'Not this, not this,' he whimpered to himself, as the first perfect mood of softness and sleep-loveliness ebbed back away from the rushing of passion that came up to his limbs and over his face as she drew him. And soon he was a perfect hard flame of passionate desire for her. Yet in the small core of the flame was an unyielding anguish of another thing. But this also was lost; he only wanted her, with an extreme desire that seemed inevitable as death, beyond question. /Then satisfied and shattered, fulfilled and destroyed, he went home away from her, drifting vaguely through the darkness, lapsed into the old fire of burning passion. Far away, far away, there seemed to be a small lament in the darkness. But what did it matter? What did it matter, what did anything matter save this ultimate and triumphant experience of physical passion, that had blazed up anew like a new spell of life. 'I was becoming quite dead-alive, nothing but a word-bag,' he said in triumph, scorning his other self (*Women in Love*, p. 218).

In the course of such sequences, we are continually brought to meditate as to how such apparently purely physical interactions can generate such profound and radical transformations in the very identities of people. It is essentially the huge potentiality they represent in this sense – their intrinsic ability to incarnate ego-alteration, and the phenomenal aspects of natural/physical entities – that seem to make of these relationships, to both Lawrence and Ngugi, privileged areas of exploration and representation. It

would be inaccurate to conceive their concerns with love and sexuality otherwise, and James Wood's comment on Lawrence, in the same context, is largely applicable to Ngugi: "[p]opular myth holds that Lawrence's prose is mimicking sexual desire or sexual activity; but it would be more accurate to say that for Lawrence all life possesses a findable ecstasy which, for many of us, is only discovered during sexual rapture."⁵⁰

C. Nature for a View of the World

The presence of nature in Ngugi's works, especially after *Petals of Blood*, is neither as persisting nor as vital as it is in Lawrence's. It may even be argued that in some of Ngugi's novels, "attention to landscape results less from the literary influence of D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, and George Lamming, than from the sacred values associated with a particular soil" as Oliver Lovesey writes.⁵¹ But it is no less noticeable that, wherever nature is referred to in Ngugi's novels, it generally operates in ways which closely approximate its functions as appears in Lawrence's writings.

H. T. Moore asserts that "Lawrence lived through nature as fully as any of the Romantics," and "felt himself deep inside nature, so deep that he could speak contemptuously of the feeling for nature held by Rousseau and Chateaubriand as a kind of misdirected intellectualism."⁵² This gives a good idea of how central nature was to Lawrence and to his approach to literature. In a doctoral dissertation which "examines the uses of nature in the major novels of D. H. Lawrence from *Sons and Lovers* to *The Man Who Died*," M. E. Tanger, from Purdue University, identifies as follows nature's main agencies in Lawrence's fiction:

Lawrence uses nature both as a character in itself and as an essential element in the creation of his "other" main characters. As well as acting in the Wordsworthian fashion as mentor and nurse, nature is capable of functioning as both mirror (reflector) and/or lamp (contributor).⁵³

These agencies are all primordial in Ngugi's novels. Sometimes – as in *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child*, and some sections of *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, and *Matigari* – when Ngugi describes landscapes, his moods indicate nostalgia and optimism, and his tones become both solemn and

⁵⁰ James Wood, "Heavenly creatures," *op. cit.*

⁵¹ Oliver Lovesey, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Postnation: The Cultural Geographies of Colonial, Neocolonial, and Postnational Space. Modern Fiction Studies (MFS)* - Volume 48, Number 1, Spring 2002, p. p. 139-168, (e-text), URL: muse.jhu.edu/journals/modern_fiction_studies/v048/48.1lovesey.html.

⁵² H. T. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵³ Marilyn Elaine Tanger, (Abstract to) *Romantic Nature in the Major Novels of D. H. Lawrence* (PhD Thesis: Purdue University: 1981). Quoted in Purdue e-pubs, URL: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/dissertations/AAI8123714/In>.

serene, as if he himself is seeking solace in moments totally devoted to the natural world, away from the tragedies he is recounting, inviting us, by the same token, to join in such brief 'escapes.' So while this happens comparatively rarely, nature can be a protagonist in Ngugi's works also. Extensive descriptions of nature as the following, from *Petals of Blood*, are not very prominent in Ngugi's fiction (even if shorter ones are scattered all over his seven stories). Moreover, when they occur, these may have pointedly African textures and very specific symbolic implications which will be elucidated later. None the less, they do illustrate Ngugi's use of nature as "a character in itself":

There was something about harvesting, whether it was maize or beans or peas, which always released a youthful spirit in everyone. Children ran about the fields to the voices of women raised to various pitches of despairing admonition (...) Sometimes the children surprised a hare or an antelope in a lair among the ripened crops: they would quickly abandon whatever they were carrying and run after the animal the whole length of Ilmorog (...). Even old men looked like little children, in their eyes turned to the fields: only they tried to hide their trembling excitement as they carried token sheaves of beans to the threshing-ground (...) Women winnowing beans in the wind was itself a sight to see: sometimes the breeze would stop and women would curse and wait holding their wicker trays ready to catch the breeze when it returned (...) Later it was the turn of the cows: they were left loose to roam through the harvested fields of maize: they would run about, tails held up to the sky, kicking up dust with their hind legs, their tongues reaching out for the standing feed of maize. Sometimes the male would run after a young female, giving it no rest or time to eat, expecting another kind of harvest (*Petals of Blood*, p. 204).

Nature's roles as a "mentor" and a "nurse" are manifest in Ngugi's works in the fact that, to many of his characters, the natural world is indeed a source of delight, healing as well as of inspiration. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Gikonyo, Mugo and Margery Thompson best typify this. For Gikonyo, nature is such a mediator and stimulant that the very "touch of wood always made him want to create something" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 79). Nature is even more significant with Mugo: it is in turn a "nurse," a "mentor," a "mirror" and a misleading "lamp." Mugo's asylum from a community whose communal values he emphatically declines is a certain rapport he entertains with "the soil." "There was for him," Ngugi tells us, "solace in the very act of breaking the soil" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 8). In the process of regenerating dry grains buried in the ground – in the sprout of the ensuing plants and their emergence from inside the earth – Mugo sees hope of his own self-reinstatement: "to bury seeds and watch the green leaves heave and thrust themselves out of the ground (...) these were all part of the world he had created for himself and which formed the background against which his dreams soared to the sky" (*A grain of Wheat*, p. 8).

Mugo's "unconscious relationship with nature" flawlessly fits, as well, with Tanager's elucidation of nature's agency as a "reflector" (or mirror) in Lawrence's narratives, namely with the principle that

In a character's unconscious relationship with nature, his true unconscious self is laid bare; that is, in comparison with nature's vitality and completeness, the character shows himself to be equally or potentially as vital and complete, or else he is revealed as unsubstantial – perverting or denying the life-force within him.⁵⁴

In opposition to the cooperation of the different elements of the natural cycle, which Ngugi highlights as an unchallengeable law (in the coming passage for instance), Mugo definitely appears to "pervert or deny the life-force within him" by his resolute egocentrism. His egotism – despite its predictability in view of his troubled childhood – contrasts with the mutuality of all the elements of the landscape. The necessity and harmony of the links between these elements (between "the sun," "the plants" and "the soil;" between the latter, the "dewdrops" and "the leaves;" and even between all these elements and Mugo's own body and *subconscious* self) coalesce to show that Mugo's determination to "live and die alone" is an erroneous idea. His "disturbance" of nature as he "turns the soil over in the bare and weedy patches between the plants" and "disturbed the plant stems" contradict his hankering to be "left alone":

Light on the sweating body made the skin gleam brown. The crops – young maize plants, potatoes, beans, peas – opened out and spread their leaves to the sun. Mugo used a small jambe to turn the soil over in the bare and weedy patches between the plants, his fingers to earthing up the crops. As he disturbed the plant stems, the dewdrops on the leaves would break and melt away. The air was fresh and clear and sharp. The field around, all covered with green things – long, wide leaves hiding the dark earth – appeared beautiful to look at. The sun became increasingly hotter; the moister on leaves evaporated; leaves dropped, so that at noon the greenness had waned, slightly ashy, and the fields appeared tired (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 119 - 120).

By such close-ups on his relationship with the natural environment, Mugo's "unconscious self is laid bare," and he is revealed not "equally or potentially as vital and complete," but definitely as "unsubstantial" in comparison with its regulations. Mugo is a neat case in which "a character's direct contact with natural phenomena can result in the bringing to consciousness of his deepest life urges and desires and illuminating them for the reader and often for the character himself".⁵⁵ In other words, nature also functions as

⁵⁴ *ibid.*.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*.

"lamp"/"contributor" with reference to him. This can be exemplified by the writer's expression of Mugo's "dreams" of rebirth and self-fulfillment through the (already mentioned) metaphor of vegetation's nascence out of 'dead' grains 'buried' in the soil, for instance.

The depiction of the Thompsons' dwelling place is another example of Ngugi's drawing on landscape as a nursing element, and a mirror of the characters' inner selves. Like Mugo, Margery finds refuge from her failure to fit into the environment in Kenyan, and from her affective frustrations, in the cultivation of gardens of flowers and roses:

A neatly trimmed hedge of cider shrub surrounded the bungalow. At the entrance, green creepers coiled on a wood stand, massed into an arch at the top and then fell to the hedge at the sides. The hedge enclosed gardens of flowers: flame lilies, morning glory, sunflowers, bougainvillea. However, it was the gardens of roses that stood out in colour above the others. Mrs Margery Thompson had cultivated red roses, white roses, pink roses — roses of all shades. Now she emerged from this garden of colour and came to the door. She was dressed in thin white trousers and a blouse that seemed suspended from her pointed breasts (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 36).

Because of the erotic implications of its symbolism and, also, because it refers us to Margery Thompson's sexual fantasies in relation to Karanja and to her affair with Dr Van Dyke, nature functions as an 'enhancer' to let us know about the inner side of her personality. It brings to light her underlying *libertine* temperament and innermost sexual desires. Since it is reported through a synthesis of the narrator's and Karanja's consciousnesses, the same excerpt contributes to the disclosure of Karanja's erotic obsessions as well.

The references to nature decrease both in volume and function in Ngugi's Gikuyu novels, particularly in *Devil on the Cross*. Though nature is more present in *Petals of Blood* than in the earlier novels, it is practically absent in *Devil on the Cross*, and receives relatively little treatment in *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*. Nevertheless, while in the first three novels the natural world is approached romantically and in a way that is faithful to Lawrence's practice, in *Petals of Blood* the use of nature is resolutely submitted to an Africanist perspective and to the Marxist slant of the novel. Thus while the references to nature in *A Grain of Wheat* reflect the writer's romantic tendencies by making it assume the same roles as in the novels of Lawrence, in *Petals of Blood* when nature is not seen as a source of local (Kikuyu, Kenyan, African) and Marxist symbols, it generally reflects the difficulty of the social, political and climatic conditions in Ilmorog. Except for some instances relating to Munira and Karega mainly, nature is only rarely used in the Lawrentian way. It hardly reassures or guides the characters (and the readers); its main role is neither to reflect the alertness of

their consciousnesses in comparison/contrast with nature's perfection, nor to illuminate us as to their inmost realities as is the case in the previous novels. In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi refers himself to nature chiefly to stress the changes in seasons and show how this affects the social and material situations of the protagonists, or to provide a metaphoric treatment of the fluctuations of hope and despair traversing Ilmorog. Ngugi so rarely stresses nature's effects on the individual's moods that it seems to have little relationship with the lives and identities of the characters.

The scene where Munira takes his pupils to the fields to teach them the secrets of "fertilisation" is an exception. It is a rare but outstanding instance where Ngugi uses nature in the Lawrentian manner – here, mainly as "mirror and contributor." In this scene nature is used again as a device to spotlight the inaccuracy of Munira's social non-commitment. One can see that Munira's subconscious self is uncovered so that, in front of natural facts (like the red bean flower with "petals of blood") suggesting the primacy of "things of blood," and the need for sacrifice for life to flourish, he sounds morally more worthless than his own primary school pupils. Nature, in this example, contributes to displaying the factual error of Munira's belief in the existence of, and focus on teaching, "pure facts" – pure colours, numbers, scientific knowledge. It emphasises his refusal to see the essence of things epitomised by the 'flames of life' supposed to be within flowers, and even within colours. Simultaneously, it brings to our consciousness Munira's deepest desires and drives, not least his power-illusion, blood-phobia and sex-addictedness:

So within six months he came to feel as if Ilmorog was his personal possession: he was a feudal head of a big house or a big mbari lord surveying his estate, but without the lord's pain of working out losses and gains. The goats lost and the young goats born. When the rains had come and the seeds sprouted and then, in June, flowers came he felt as if the whole of Ilmorog had put on a vast floral-patterned cloth to greet its lord and master./He took the children out into the field to study nature, as he put it. He picked flowers and taught them the names of the various parts: the stigma, the pistil, pollen, the petals. He told them a little about fertilisation. One child cried out:/Look. A flower with petals of blood./It was a solitary red bean flower, in a field dominated by white, blue and violet flowers. No matter how you looked at it, it gave you the impression of a flow of blood. Munira bent over it and with a trembling hand plucked it. It had probably been the light playing upon it, for now it was just a red flower./There is no colour called blood. What you mean is that it is red. You see? You must learn the names of the seven colours of the rainbow. Flowers are of different kinds, different colours. Now I want each one of you to pick a flower ... Count the number of petals and pistils and show me its pollen .../He stood looking at the flower he had plucked and then threw the lifeless petals away. Yet another boy cried:/I have found another. Petals of blood – I mean red ... it has no stigma or pistils ...

nothing inside.'/He went to him and the others surrounded him:/'No you are wrong,' he said, taking the flower. 'This colour is not even red ... it does not have the fullness of colour of the other one. This one is yellowish red. Now you say it has nothing inside. Look at the stem from which you got it. You see anything?'/ 'Yes,' cried the boys. 'There is a worm – a green worm with several hands or legs.'/'Right. This is a worm-eaten flower ... it cannot bear fruit. That's why we must always kill worms ... a flower can also become this colour if it's prevented from reaching the light' (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 21 - 22).

From a more general perspective, the passage reminds us – and not only through its language and symbolism – of the primacy for Ngugi of "blood consciousness" over "mind consciousness" as embodied in his treatment of nature.

Matigari also displays a Lawrentian style in its relatively few references to nature. It emphasises the idealistic personality of Matigari himself, and the prophetic tone and mood of the griot who narrates his legend. By the same token, it shows the continuity of the effect of Lawrence's style on Ngugi in its interaction, in practically the same ways as in the English-language novels, with the characters' bodies and souls. The novel's opening forcefully – literally as well as figuratively – puts us in this perspective, pushing us to conjure up Lawrence's style:

He walked along the banks of the river. Then suddenly he saw what he was looking for: a huge Mugumo, a fig tree, right in the middle of a cluster of other trees. It was remarkable for its very wide trunk, and its four roots were visible, with one jutting out from the middle, and three others sticking out at the sides (...)/He went down to the river and bent down to wash his face and hands. So chilly! It reminded him of the other waters in the past which had been just as cold. He remembered how, then, they had sung throughout the night in the open air.

If only it were down,

If only it were down,

So that I can share the cold waters with the early bird (*Matigari*, p. p. 3 - 4).

The use of nature the Lawrentian way is not difficult to perceive in a passage such as this one. For example, there is no doubt that the character is seeking solace and support in nature, since he is "looking for" a tree, the "Mugumo." This *search* for the sacred tree suggests, in several ways, the character's seeking for support and comfort in this natural element. At the level of plot, the tree provides a physical landmark, an ideal place for Matigari to hide his AK 47, other weapons and ammunition for future use. The search for the tree is also a search for a symbolic landmark, the Mugumo being an important reference in the Kikuyu mythology, indeed a symbol of their identity, which Matigari defends and seeks to restore. The

fig tree, Ngugi suggests, will symbolically 'look after' the means of the struggle for the dignity and welfare of the Kikuyu/Kenyans (Matigari's weapons); it will *support* Matigari and his companions in their combat for the safeguard of Kikuyu/Kenyan people's common values and collective identity. At the symbolic level still, Matigari's hunting for "the fig tree," at the beginning of the story, suggests his quest for spiritual reference and force, or simply for a spiritual rebirth, necessary for him to face the challenges of his new journey. The fig tree symbol, as we shall see in the next section, stands for this in both Ngugi and Lawrence's narratives. This, and other details such as the character's washing in the river, shows that nature functions as a mentor with reference to Matigari here, a function which is prevalent in Lawrence's work as noted.

The fact that the character finds what he seeks (the fig tree) by following the river is also significant as it shows that nature also provides guidance for the character. It also directs readers by informing them about the character's experience and by contributing to reveal his innermost personality to them. The way Matigari reacts to his contact with water – the fact that he finds the water "so chilly!" – suggests that he is in disharmony with nature at this point of the story. This can be explained by his social and revolutionary inertia, or his decision to cease the revolutionary combat for a while. Nonetheless, this contact with water (and the river) stands for the beginning of the process of the reestablishment and continuance of the revolutionary struggle in post-independence Kenya which the narrative speaks for. By fighting to restore social justice, Ngugi suggests, Matigari is working to reinstate a lost harmony with nature by the same token. The statement "if only it were down, so that I can share the cold waters with the early bird" validates this; it anticipates the narrative's point that the struggle for the establishment of social justice is also a combat for the restoration of Man's harmony with Nature.

As is the case with Mugo and Munira, Matigari's contact with the natural world at this early stage of the story does not show him as consistent with nature's regulations; he seems rather deficient in comparison with nature's perfection here. Ngugi suggests that the restoration of the harmony between nature and his hero, and of this hero's perfection in comparison with it, is a wish and a project the success of which depends on the outcome of Matigari's struggle for the restoration of social justice in the rest of the narrative. In the end of the story, we are told that Matigari and Guthera's bodies just fade away in the river, and become one with nature, indicating that, once the revolutionary struggle is resumed, Matigari achieves perfect symbiosis with the laws of nature.

D. Symbol and Myth for Narrative Style

The highly symbolic and mythological quality of *Matigari*, as shown above, paves the way to deal with the third and last element of Romanticism which Ngugi shares with the Romantics, the Symbolists and the Modernists in general – and with Lawrence in particular: a writing style hinging on symbolism and myth. With Lawrence specifically, Ngugi shares the same approach to the use of these two elements, and has sometimes directly borrowed symbols and myths from him. This is not surprising when we know that, through symbol and myth, Lawrence "sought to convey very personal, irrational, and dream-like states of consciousness," and that this is essentially what has inspired Ngugi.⁵⁶ Heavy reliance on "metaphorical language" seems to be the most adequate means – perhaps the only effectual one – "to approximate, or symbolize, an eternal essence of being" that is "abstracted from the scope of the five senses" which is their common obsession.⁵⁷ By definition, symbolism and myth correspond to such a quest.⁵⁸

It has to be noted first that to establish with scrupulous thoroughness Ngugi's indebtedness to Lawrence in this sense is a complex operation and this for two major reasons. The first is that the metaphors used by Lawrence are very numerous, and often too private and too sophisticated to be identifiable by less than a Lawrence specialist, especially since the concepts of symbol and myth are themselves so complex that they seem to defy satisfactory definition. As Jacqueline Gouirand tells us, as far as symbol is concerned: "Il est difficile de dégager et de définir le symbole, et la seule voie possible est de s'effacer devant sa puissance."⁵⁹ Things become still more convoluted as we come to examine Lawrentian symbolism in particular. At any rate, the term is definitely an integral part of Lawrence's obscure and mystic approaches to the world and to literature. To him, though the textual function of symbol is definitely clear, its sense and power are past rational explanation, since, as he declares in *Apocalypse*, "The power

⁵⁶ Thomson Gale, a part of the Thomson Corporation. <http://www.bookrags.com/> *BookRags*, "Symbolism Study Guide: Introduction." *Lit Guides* (online website). *BookRags and Gale's For Students Series*. 2005-2006 studyguidesymbolism/intro.html.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Here is the definition of symbolism by a serious online "Symbolism Study Guide": "The symbolists sought to convey very personal, irrational, and dream-like states of consciousness, relying heavily on metaphorical language to approximate, or symbolize, an eternal essence of being that, they believed, was abstracted from the scope of the five senses. These literary ideals developed as a reaction against the dominance of positivism, which emphasized rational thought, objectivity, and scientific method." From this angle, symbolism (and myth as well) as we shall see shortly copes with Lawrence's and Ngugi's philosophical and aesthetic schemes (*ibid.*).

⁵⁹ Jacqueline Gouirand, "Lawrence et D.H. le monde méditerranéen- Le symbolisme solaire dans la fiction des années 20," in *L'Appel du Sud dans la littérature et la culture anglaises au XXe siècle* - | - janvier 1991. *At Revel* revues électroniques de l'UNS – plate-forme pépinière.
URL: <http://revel.unice.fr/cycnos/document.html?id=1155>.

of the symbol is to arouse the deep emotional self and the dynamic self beyond comprehension".⁶⁰ The second difficulty is the probability that Ngugi's interests in symbolism and myth are due to the influence of Romanticists, Symbolists and Modernists other than Lawrence. The influence of writers like Whitman, Blake, Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, and the whole Symbolist and Modernist movements on him is substantial in this connection, if only because Ngugi has used quotations from these writers as epigraphs in many of his writings. But it is likely, on the other hand, that it is through Lawrence that Ngugi discovered such writers, at least as far as symbolism is concerned – Lawrence himself having particular connections with the same Symbolists, Modernists and Romanticists Ngugi often cites and quotes for his epigraphs. For Whitman and other Transcendentalists such as Blake, Melville, Emerson and Poe have been significant precursors to Lawrence in philosophy as well as in style, specifically from the point of view of symbolism and myth. Ngugi may well have read Blake through Lawrence, since Blake is among the writers who had mattered most to Lawrence as H. T. Moore points out.

On the subject of symbol and myth in Lawrence's work, Moore notices that "[t]he third criterion [of Romanticism] Wellek speaks of, "symbol and myth for poetic style," is also applicable to Lawrence."⁶¹ *A propos* of his resemblance with the French symbolists, Moore loosely notes that "a similarity of method between his work and some of that of the Symbolists may be discerned in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*."⁶² He further explains that the "similarity of method" has to do with the correspondence of Lawrence's symbology with his (Moore's) definitions of both symbolism and the Symbolist movement. These definitions are useful to understand Lawrentian symbolism:

Symbolism is a post-Romantic revolt against materialism and naturalism in which the vision of the poet discerns, through "universal analogy", the most deeply hidden secrets of nature./The symbols the poet uses in this process are his own mystical or metaphysical response to life; the symbols are private rather than public – they are not usually comprehensible at once or without a special study of the poet, and some of them remain inscrutable. They are never simple, as when a flag represents a country or white stands for purity, and they are not even like the more complicated but understandable symbols of writers such as Dante. The symbols of the poets belonging to this movement suggest or intimate rather than reveal. They often have the illusive quality of music, and they often have that blending of the scenes, technically known as synaesthesia, which Baudelaire's famous sonnet suggests. The method is an intuitional one, an intuitional way of knowing: the poet seeks to express his inner experience

⁶⁰ D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, Mara Kalnins ed., Cambridge UP, 1980, p. 78.

⁶¹ H. T. Moore, *D. H. Lawrence : The Man and His Work*, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁶² *ibid.*

in new and exact metaphors and symbols, and when one of these is a dominant element in a work of art, that work of art is truly *symboliste*.⁶³

Thus, in general, Lawrentian symbolism in the two works mentioned by Moore above, and indeed in his other important works, is not sharply different – "in method" – from that of the *Symbolists*. Yet in Moore's definition the originality of the symbols and of the contexts in which they operate is a defining feature of the movement. From this perspective, Lawrence's procedural resemblance to the *Symbolists* in no way negates his specificity in terms of the purposes of his symbols. This is to say that Lawrence's symbolism remains considerably special in spite of the influence of the *Symbolists*. "Lawrence," Moore adds, "in *The Rainbow*, in some of the early "Look We Have Come Through!" poems, and in *Women in Love* often writes in this way [i.e. in the way of the Symbolists]"⁶⁴ but not without the crucial proviso that he "does not in any period belong even remotely to any movement [symbolist or not], and he has little resemblance to any other author [symbolist or not]."⁶⁵ Therefore symbolism remains one of the most significant aspects of Lawrence's work, and the use of symbols proper to him is a pointer of his individual style. This is certainly the case in latest novels like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and in 'fables' such as *The Plumed Serpent*, *The Man who Died* and *Sun* (in addition to the three works just mentioned by Moore.) This, with regard to much of what has already been said on the nature of the connections between Ngugi and Lawrence, allows us to suggest that the analogies in terms of symbolism explored hereafter are the result of Lawrence's, rather than of any other writers', influence.

In fact to the four roles of nature in Lawrence's major works identified by M. E. Tanager must be added the central part it plays as a source of symbols. In addition to his notable reliance on Christian symbolism and other types of metaphors such as colour symbolism, nature-symbolism seems to be the axis around which Lawrence's imagery turns. And even if all five basic elements – light, water, soil, fire, and air – as well as a multitude of items from the animal and vegetal worlds – are utilised, if one has to identify one main and most distinctive Lawrentian symbol this would be light – more specifically the sun. According to Jacqueline Gouirand, Lawrence became especially fascinated with this image since he discovered the notion of the "flux" as a result of his reading Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* (in 1915). The sun, indeed omnipresent in Lawrence's fiction, holds an increasingly central position in the works he wrote during and after his journeys "to the south" – Italy, New Mexico, and Mexico – where his contact with their 'primitive' populations made him resolutely turn to pagan symbols such as blood and the sun. His discovery of the Inca and the Maya

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. p. 130 - 131. *Italics in the source.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 131.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 130.

civilisations intensified his interest with "sun-symbolism" in particular. Such an attention is plainly reflected in all of *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, the collection of poems *Look! We Have Come Through*, and mostly in *The Lost Girl*, *Sun*, *The Plumed Serpent*, *Mornings in Mexico*, *The Young Girl and the Gipsy* and in a great number of his latest short stories and poems.

What Gouirand says in her analysis of the significance of the sun and on "sun-symbolism" in Lawrence's late fiction is enlightening. In "*D.H. Lawrence et le monde méditerranéen: Le symbolisme solaire dans la fiction des années 20*," the scholar shows that Lawrence's use of this image is rooted in the fact that, for him, it rationalizes his 'primitivist' philosophy. Gouirand points out that, for Lawrence, the sun stands first and foremost for the inconsistency between the "Northern" and "Southern" worldviews. The notion incarnates most of all Lawrence's rejection of a "Northern" culture which he believes tragic and erroneous in essence, and his identification with the opposite, pagan view of the world. Their disparate conceptions of the sun – this fundamental element of nature and life everywhere -- not only embody the absolute discrepancy Lawrence discerned between the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized,' but also rationalize his positioning himself with the 'uncivilized':

In the North, man tends instinctively to imagine, to conceive that the sun is lighted like a candle, in an everlasting darkness and that one day the candle will go out, the sun will be exhausted... Hence to the Northerner, the phenomenal World is essentially tragical, because it is temporal and must cease to exist (...) But to the Southerner, the sun is so dominant, that if every phenomenal body disappeared out of the universe, nothing would remain but bright luminousness, sunniness. The absolute is sunniness.⁶⁶

The symbol of the sun provides Lawrence with an excellent way of capturing an idea which is fundamental to his intuitive thinking which is the existence of an essential unity – or a spiritual unanimity of essence – between all the elements of the cosmos. Part of this vision of things is his belief in the kinship between the hub of the sun and the human core, more exactly in the communication between the sun and human blood. This is plainly expressed in *Apocalypse* where he writes: "There is an eternal correspondence between our blood and the sun."⁶⁷ Such an idea is central, as Gouirand suggests, in all the fiction he wrote after *Sons and Lovers*.

Tout ce que représente l'Italie: le soleil, la beauté naturelle, et son caractère primitif, a non seulement revitalisé Lawrence, mais a été l'une des causes importantes de l'évolution de sa fiction après *Sons and Lovers*.

⁶⁶ D. H. Lawrence, "Flowery Tuscany," in *Phoenix*. London: Heinemann, 1936, p. 57.

⁶⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

Par une connaissance toute intuitive, Lawrence atteint les racines mêmes de la réalité du tempérament italien et c'est en artiste qu'il l'appréhende.⁶⁸

An excerpt from *Twilight in Italy* in which he describes an Italian lying in the sun indeed puts forward, more than a vital intimacy, a genuinely sensual sun-human relationship:

In the sunshine, he basks asleep, gathering up a vintage into his veins, which in the night-time, he will distill into ecstatic sensual delight, the intense white-cold ecstasy of darkness and moonlight, the raucous, cat-like, destructive enjoyment, the senses conscious and crying out their consciousness (Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy*).

Both the symbol and the principles it embodies for Lawrence are taken on, either resolutely or with little modification, in Ngugi's earliest works – mainly in his first short story "The Fig Tree," and in *The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat*. As with Lawrence, the sun has assuredly close connections with, and tremendous effects on, the landscape, animals, and the characters. It acts both physically and spiritually on them and serves to convey a sense of intimate, harmonious and powerful communion felt by the protagonists 'in their flesh and blood.' Thus, in *The River Between*, one can read for instance: "when the sun rose and hit the ground and goats scratched themselves against the wall, Waiyaki went to the back of the hut, and let the rays fall on his neck," and (as for the Italian laying under the sun in *Twilight in Italy* for example), "[t]he burning" is "pleasant", even ecstatic, for the goats as well as for Waiyaki (*The River Between*, p. 13). Whenever they are exposed to "sunshine" – and they often do – Ngugi's characters would also "gather a vintage into [their] veins, which [they too] will distill into ecstatic sensual delight." It is the case with Mugo who experiences an "excessive contentment" in his 'body and soul', i. e. of an inseparably spiritual and physical kind, after a day's exposure to the sun:

On this day he had tied his shirt, unbuttoned, to the waist, so that the collar and the sleeves brushed against his calves and the back of his thighs as he bent over the crops. The sun burnt the bare black torso pleasantly. Light on the sweating body made the skin gleam brown. The crops – young maize plants, potatoes, beans, peas – opened out and spread their leaves to the sun (...) The sun became increasingly hotter; the moisture on leaves evaporated; leaves dropped, so that at noon the greenness had waned, slightly ashy, and the fields appeared tired. Mugo lay on his back under the shade of a Mwariki and experienced that excessive contentment which one feels during a noon rest from toil (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 119 - 120).

⁶⁸ Jacqueline Gouirand, *op. cit.*

These sun-men affiliations are figuratively – but also, in some cases, factually – sensual and organic in Lawrence's works. They are genuine regenerative relationships which epitomize (and are epitomized by) his enthrallment with spontaneous renewal and resurrection, which he also typifies through human sexuality and all sorts of regenerative phenomena. The elations many of Lawrence's heroines feel under rays of the sun exceed expressions of the agreeable effects of "mere heliotherapy," and are clear allusions to the "regenerative function of the sun."⁶⁹ They are finally outcomes of "authentic sexual encounters" with the sun.⁷⁰ This is most markedly the case in works like *Mornings in Mexico*, *The Fox*, and mainly *Sun*. Gouirand has more to say about this:

Non seulement elle [Juliet, l'héroïne de *Mornings in Mexico*] participe d'une nouvelle religion qui l'éloigne des autres, abolissant en elle l'être social, mais elle a la révélation d'une authentique rencontre sexuelle. Ce type de rencontre où l'acte s'accomplit par la médiation du regard apparaît à plusieurs reprises dans la fiction lawrencienne (on évoque en particulier la rencontre de March avec le renard dans *The Fox*). Dans le cas de *Sun*, les rayons du soleil font office de regard. L'union avec le soleil est consommée.⁷¹

A passage from *Sun*, in effect, validates this claim:

By some mysterious power inside her, deeper than her known consciousness and will, she was put into connection with the sun, and the stream flowed of itself, from her womb. She herself, her conscious self was secondary, a secondary person, almost an onlooker. The true Juliet was this dark flow from her deep body to the sun (*Sun*, p. 500).

In *The River Between*, this agency of the sun is put in the foreground. C. B. Robson notes it when, analysing the impact of the sun on Waiyaki and the goats (in the just quoted passage from *The River Between*), he writes: "[h]ere not only we can visualise the hut surrounded by the goats but experience the feel of sun warming the earth, stirring life anew."⁷² "The Fig Tree," Ngugi's first short story, is a perfect example in which the sun has exactly the same significance. As with Lawrence's Juliet, its union with Ngugi's heroine is an authentically fertilizing one. It so dramatically lights up her spirits that it brings her to some cosmic level of consciousness (or maturity) which alters her decision to flee her husband's household. The sun makes her realise her femaleness, by reminding her of a reproductive faculty she seems to have forgotten, or to have never really been aware of prior to this event, and

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, ("La fonction régénératrice du soleil").

⁷⁰ *ibid.*.

⁷¹ *ibid.*.

⁷² Clifford B. Robson, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979, p. 3.

reveals to *her* her bond with the cosmic whole. Mukami's relation to the sun is no less "authentically sexual" than in the case of Lawrence's heroines:

The sun was rising in the east and the rich yellowish streaks of light filtered through the forest to where Mukami was sitting, leaning against the tree. And as the straying streaks of light touched her skin, she felt a tickling sensation that went right through her body. Blood thawed in her veins and oh! She felt warm – so very warm, happy and light. Her soul danced and her womb answered. And then she knew – knew that she was pregnant, had been pregnant for some time.⁷³

The idea of the perpetual renewal of life itself – powerfully epitomised in a Lawrence love poem by a "flower that dies, and opens a different bud," is without doubt an obsession to both writers, and is more generally reflected by a common symbology (Lawrence, "Lies about Love").⁷⁴ The symbol of the "Rainbow" in the so-entitled novel by Lawrence, which stands for the restorability of life and the indestructibility of its essential unity, is closely paralleled by the symbolism of the titles of Ngugi's novels. The "petals of blood" and the "grain of Wheat" in the so entitled stories are of the same (religious and cosmic) symbolistic family as the "rainbow." Better, while it is generally accepted that "the grain of wheat" of Ngugi's novel is taken straight from the Bible, it might well have been inspired by Lawrence's bringing into play of the same biblical verse in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Here is the passage where Lawrence refers to the verse in question:

She [Connie] wanted to forget, to forget the world, and all the dreadful, carrion-bodied people. 'Ye must be born again! I believe in the resurrection of the body! Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it shall by no means bring forth. When the crocus cometh forth I too will emerge and see the sun!' In the wind of March endless phrases swept through her consciousness.⁷⁵

In some cases, Ngugi seems to have directly borrowed some personal Lawrentian symbols. One of these is "the fig tree," a motif which Lawrence has used more than once and which appears in at least four of Ngugi's works: "The Fig Tree" itself, *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child* and *Matigari*,⁷⁶ though the same tree is a sacred symbol in Gikuyu mythology as well. Ngugi's short story "The Fig Tree" as a whole is an imaginative postscript to

⁷³ Ngugi, "The Fig Tree," a short story published in *Origins East Africa, A Makerere Anthology*, David Cook (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. p. 75 – 76, also published as "Mugumo" in Ngugi's *Secret Lives*, Heinemann, 1975, (p. p. 2 – 8).

⁷⁴ The full stanza is: "Yet we reiterate love! love! love! / as if it were a coin with a fixed value / instead of a flower that dies, and opens a different bud."

⁷⁵ D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (E-text), Chapter Eight.

⁷⁶ See, for instance, *The River Between*, p. 15, *Weep Not, Child*, p. 14, and *Matigari*, p. 3, and p. 175. The fig tree also comes as "*mugumo*," the Gikuyu name for the fig tree, in Ngugi's stories.

verses from a poem by Lawrence which Ngugi uses as an epigraph in the same story. An examination of this symbol and its implications in Ngugi's story show that the latter is principally fascinated by Lawrence's picturing of the paradigm of renewal, and more particularly the auto-regenerative power of life. The fig tree is for both a wonderful and extremely optimistic metaphor for the unconquerable character of such a power: "Great complicated, nude fig-tree, stemless flower-mash,/Flowering naked in flesh, and giving off hues of life./There was a flower that flowered inward, wombward; /Now there is a fruit like a ripe womb."⁷⁷ The fig-tree motif comes once more in Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*, where we can read:

Was it true? Was she nothing, nothing, by herself? And he, alone, failing his last manhood, without her was he nothing, or next to nothing? As a fig tree which grows up, but never comes to flower.⁷⁸

The developments of Ngugi's ideology and his approach to literature embodied in *Petals of Blood*, and the 'epistemological break' materialized in his Gikuyu works brought him to lessen, but without putting an end to, the use of such symbolism in these works. The Lawrentian approach to symbol has continued to be ubiquitous and to play a corresponding role in these works; and the sun, in particular, is an important symbol in these works as well. In *Petals of Blood*, it can still suggest a fundamental power and spirituality akin to those it does in the earlier novels – even though it is much more *pragmatically* employed. One can read, for instance: "[e]very day they all waited for the rains, or a change in the sun. They all waited for something to happen. But every morning they woke to wind and dust and dazzling sun"(*Petals of Blood*, p. 75) and observe that the sun has lost practically nothing of its vigour and agency for power. It still can be viewed as a symbol of organic unity between people and nature. It still "shimmers," though, now, "it almost blinds the eye to look" as Njuguna comments, "vaguely pointing to the sun-backed land"(*Petals of Blood*, p. 75). Still, in *Petals of Blood* the sun can also be identified as a curse – a mocking, almost malevolent force. It is an indicator of the material and spiritual droughts in Ilmorog – and one of the main conspirers against the Ilmorog peasants and workers. It is part of the apocalyptic design and setting of the novel, just as it is in *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*.

In reality, even in Ngugi's earliest novels, the sun has never been a supreme symbol, or even an only central one, as it is in Lawrence's post-1915 works. It has always been used in tandem with other "natural forces" – particularly *the soil*. Ngugi seems to have always been specially ensnared with the soil as a symbol. Patrick Williams, among other critics, explains the

⁷⁷ Ngugi, "The Fig Tree," *op. cit.*, p. 70. D. H. Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent* (E-Text), Chapter 24 ("Malintzi").

⁷⁸ D. H. Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent* (e-text), Chapter 24, "Malintzi."

genesis of Ngugi's interest in the notion of land as a potential and powerful symbol in terms of its vitality as a pivotal concept in the Gikuyu philosophy of life. Williams points to the fact that "Ngugi frequently reminds readers in his early novels" of "the special, indeed spiritual, status of their relation to the land, given by God to their ancestors Gikuyu and Mumbi."⁷⁹ However, Ngugi seems to use the soil just the way Lawrence uses the sun – perhaps the more so because land seems to be to the Agikuyu just what the sun is for the so-called primitive cultures that inspired Lawrence – mainly those of rural Germany and Italy, and of the Maya and Inca peoples. The point can be supported by C. B. Robson's observation that:

Ngugi points to the importance of land (...) when he says, 'It is more than the material; it is not just because of its economic possibilities, it is something almost akin to spiritual.' This sense of an underlying order not only strengthens the bonds between people of the community but also links man to a cosmic pattern.⁸⁰

If, however, the soil's substitution for the sun can be thought to mirror an attempt at a demarcation from Lawrence in this respect, it can equally be a sign of the perpetuation of his influence. In fact, although the soil does not seem to be as central as the sun in Lawrence's work, it is an important element for him still; it is an integral part of his mystical philosophy and primitivist imagery as Jad Smith asserts. The latter argues that Lawrence was inspired by German "*völkisch* organicism" which "tends to privilege irrationalism above reason, the countryside above the city, "rootedness" within the landscape above "urban dislocation," and the wholeness of organic culture above the fragmentation of mechanistic civilization." As he explains, the soil is a central element of that philosophy:

In *völkisch* ideologies, the soil constitutes a source of "primitive energy"(...) The *Volk*, who "come down to the present from a far and distant past," have remained tied to the soil of their native land, refusing to abandon traditional culture in the name of "progress"(...) They alone have maintained an organic connection with the mysterious energies of the natural world, and this symbiotic relationship with nature and, more specifically, with the German landscape has produced a desirable and "genuine" character in the simple, decent, and earnest *Volk*, who for *völkisch* ideologues embody the true spirit of Germanness.⁸¹

In this view of things, the soil, it is clear, signifies just what it signifies for the Gikuyu and for Ngugi.

⁷⁹ Patrick Williams, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o – Cotemporary World Writers*, Manchester UP, 2000, p. 2.

⁸⁰ C. B. Robson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁸¹ Jad Smith, *op. cit.*.

Furthermore, if Lawrence has chosen the sun as *the* natural force to incarnate the inexorableness of rebirth and the sureness of cosmic union, in Ngugi's novels – up to *Petals of Blood* at least – the soil often replaces the sun in playing just such roles. Indeed, for Ngugi, “the soil, which in the traditional view was always seen as a source of creative life and fertility” is also a symbol of a source of hope that will “unite” at least the different races living in Kenya.⁸² In his interview with Dennis Duerden, and on “this sort of theme of identification with land” which is indeed “quite a strong one” in all his works,⁸³ Ngugi's full argument leaves no room for doubt, neither about the spirituality of his view of the soil nor about his resemblance to Lawrence in that respect:

I know that the land, the soil has got a lot of effect on the people who come to Kenya, those people who have lived in Kenya, both African and European – I do not know very much about the Asian community, but I think they are also affected by the land. It is more than the material; it is not just because of its economic possibilities, it is something almost akin to spiritual.⁸⁴

Understandably, this led Duerden to discern a link with Lawrence as, in reaction to Ngugi's answer above, he comments: “I think it makes it easier to understand why you find this kind of kinship with Lawrence. I mean this sort of identification between the people and the land and some kind of natural forces.”⁸⁵

An examination of its implications in Ngugi's works confirms the fact that land, as a key Ngugian symbol, is a sort of parallel to that of the sun in the Lawrentian symbology at least in so far as his English-language novels are concerned. Indeed it allows us to notice that land stands for a union between man and nature, which is vital and indivisibly spiritual and organic. By a notably regular reference to Gikuyu rituals such as circumcision, clitoridectomy and other forms of blood sacrifice for instance, “the connection to the land” is “made physical” (recalling Lawrence's protagonists' relationships with the sun).⁸⁶ Garry Gillard's statement validates this in the case of Waiyaki in *The River Between*:

Another sacred place in *The River Between*, and one which is central to the work, is the initiation grove, where Waiyaki and Muthoni are both circumcised, and where he and Nyambūra meet. The connotation with the soil is established at the moment of the symbolic operation: “Blood trickled

⁸² Ngugi, *Homecoming*, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁸³ Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *African Writers Talking*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 123 - 124.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*.

⁸⁶ Patrick Williams, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

freely on to the ground, sinking into the soil. Henceforth a religious bond linked Waiyaki to the earth.⁸⁷

In *A Grain of Wheat*, we are similarly "reminded of Gikonyo's vision of Mumbi amongst peas and beans," for example, and are invited to "appreciate the sense of unity and harmony."⁸⁸ Gikonyo's rapport with the soil and its products – mostly wood – is euphoric as well: "[h]olding a plane, smoothing a piece of wood, all this sent a thrill of fear and wonder through the young man. The smell of wood fascinated him;" and at some juncture he no less significantly feels "*in love* with all the earth." The fuller depiction of Gikonyo verifies Ngugi's adoption of Lawrence's conception of people not as individuals but as variations on a universal self, while it shows the character's strong and pure relationship with the earth:

He felt free. Everything, Thabai, the whole world was under the control of his hand. Suddenly the wave of power broke into an ecstasy, an exultation. Peace settled in his heart. He felt a holy calm; he was in love with all the earth (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 81).

This brings to mind the scene, in *Women in Love*, where Birkin, naked, communes with the earth through sensual contact with it. Such a vital link between men and the soil is so critical to *A Grain of Wheat* that it lies in hindsight of the various discourses of the story, including the nationalist and socialist ones. Even *Uhuru* is represented as both a substantive and abstract fruit of a contact of a (re)productive kind between the Gikuyu soil and its martyrs. The metaphor is prominent in the writer's account of Waiyaki's putting to death:

Later, so it is said, Waiyaki was buried alive at Kibwezi with his head facing into the centre of the earth (...) Then nobody noticed it; but looking back we can see that Waiyaki's blood contained within it a seed, a grain, which gave birth to a movement whose main strength thereafter sprang from a bond with the soil (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 12).

What further sustains this is that, alternatively, the absence of such an organic and productive "bond with the soil" – or failure to achieve harmony with it – is a simile for pretence, incoherence and falsehood. This is pointed out in practically every sentence in Ngugi's representation of Mugo's relation with his *shamba* in the subsequent passage for instance:

In the shamba, he felt hollow. There were no crops on the land and what with the dried-up weeds, gakaraku, micege, mikengeria, bangi – and the

⁸⁷ Garry Gillard, *Formal Aspects of Fictive Narrative in Africa* (E-text). Chapter 2: "Spatial aspects — *The River Between*." URL: <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~gillard/AfrNarr/ch2.html>.

⁸⁸ C. B. Robson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

sun, the country appeared sick and dull. The jembe seemed heavier than usual; the unfinished part of the shamba looked too big for his unwilling muscles. He dug a little, and feeling the desire to pass water, walked to a hedge near the path (...) He raised the jembe, let it fall into the soil; lifted it and again brought it down. The ground felt soft as if there were mole-tunnels immediately below the surface. He could hear the soil, dry and hollow, tumble down. Dust flew into the sky, enveloped him, then settled into his hair and clothes. Once a grain of dust went into his left eye. He quickly dropped the jembe in anger and rubbed his eye which smarted with pain as water tossed out from both eyes. He sat down: where was the fascination he used to find in the soil before the emergency? (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 6).

The same applies to the relationships between the (Kenyan) soil and the European characters. Some of these, most outstandingly Dr Van Dyke, are simply deprived of the final contact with the Earth through interment. Van Dyke is killed by a train and Ngugi suggests that his soul is thirsty for such a bond; it is thus left eternally unfulfilled and tormented, absurdly crying and "haunting" the place. The rest, out of place in Kenya's land, are finally 'rejected by it' as a human body would reject an alien transplanted organ.

In *Petals of Blood*, a symbolism of this kind is not missing, though it is definitely less prominent and less resolutely Lawrentian. One can note that the soil, just like the sun and other natural forces, becomes in this novel an accessory element used to emphasise the low spirits and the poor social conditions of Ilmorogans. During the periods of drought that they go through, the soil is sometimes pointed to as nothing especially sacred, but rather as a source of annoyance. This is so much the case that the idea of concord between people and land is, in one instance, ironically associated with Munira's futility and lack of sense. To his remark that "a group of old women raising dust as they ran from a pursuing lusty young man sun toward thin old rain with a tiny head and spindly legs" are "one with the soil," Wanja sarcastically retorts "one with the dust, you mean?" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 75). Generally, both the soil and the sun seem to have ceased being symbols of sacred life-forces in the romantic sense, and denoting the spontaneity of procreation and the unison and synchrony of the universe in the Lawrentian sense. Sometimes, the writer seems even to make ironic allusions to the Lawrentian philosophy and symbols in this novel:

Wanja enjoyed their gossip about everything: form the dirty clothes they had to wash for men, to the love making habits of their men. Wambui said: 'Why mine once came back from Ruwa-ini or wherever he works and found me in the shamba and imagine, he wanted it there in the shamba, on dry maize-stalks under the shade of a moiriki shrub (...) and there he was sweating out his power (...) and he would not heed my protests and well (...) that's were that rogue of mine, Muriuki, was conceived ... on a maize stalk under the sun.' 'I bet you did not mind it

much, seeing that one is also thirsty under this hot sun,' another retorted, and they all laughed (*Petals of Blood*, p. 74).

One possible explanation of this can be the Marxist design of the story. This seems at times so radical and dominant that Ngugi seems to have turned into a convinced materialist. Yet another explanation might be his growing pragmatism, so much so that sometimes he seems to embrace a Darwinist⁸⁹ instead of a romantic point of view. This is patent when he tells us that even "the children" who "surprised a hare or an antelope in a lair among the ripened crops" would "quickly abandon whatever they were carrying and run after the animal the whole length of Ilmorog, shouting: Kaau.. Kaaau ... catch ... catch it ... catch meat," as if Wanja's slogan "eat or you are eaten" is *the* logic of the story (*Petals of Blood*, p. 204).

Yet again, the part of the story where Munira takes his pupils to study outside class could show the permanence of Ngugi's reference to soil-symbolism in a similar way as before. The "petals of blood" themselves – flowers of hope and symbols of the rekindling and exuberance of life – are again fruits of the productive encounter between the soil and the seeds contained in the blood of its (now betrayed) martyrs. Wanja's decision to spend a hard-won fortune to save her grandmother's land is equally emblematic of the sacredness of land for Wanja and her fellow villagers, and indeed for Ngugi as well. Ngugi even keeps reminding us of the unity between land and man through an incessantly suggested oneness of their destinies under a sun (that is now simply "heartless" to them all). Like the emaciated and undernourished Ilmorog peasants, its "scraggy earth" is "waiting to be saved from a heartless sun by rain that may never fall" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 75). Wanja's recovery of her fine spirits and ability to bear children is paralleled by the soil's recuperation of its fertility, and simultaneous with the hope of the upturn of Kenyan peasants and workers' for a new and better life through the reclamation of their land. In the following quotation, Ngugi displays again irony over the Lawrentian philosophy and its pictograms – "God-sun," and other elements of nature, except the soil indeed:

The sun sent direct waves of heat and exaggerated brightness that almost blinded the eye to look. The wind would suddenly whirl dust and rubbish into the air as if sending an offering to God-sun: but as suddenly the wind dust-storm would subside and the rubbish would fall disconsolately to the ground as if the offering had been found unacceptable. The peasant farmers of Ilmorog felt this headache giving heat-rays on their dry skins, saw the little furious whirling of dust and rubbish and retreated to the verandas of their huts: in the fields were no more green umbrella leaves of mwariki to give shade and shelter. Still they went to the shambas not

⁸⁹ Because he suggests, in some instances in this novel in particular, his belief in the accuracy of the 'law of the jungle,' that is "the survival of the fittest."

because there was any weeding and breaking of the earth to do but simply because they were attracted to their shambas as a moth to light. They could not help it (*Petals of Blood*, p. 79).

This is to say that the notion of soil seems, on the other hand, to have remained as critical in *Petals of Blood* and the subsequent works, as G. D. Killam claims. Killam's argument reasonably implies that the soil – in the spiritual and symbolic (Lawrentian) senses we have been highlighting – remains so imperative for Ngugi as to underlie its often overstressed function as a patriotic and Marxist symbol in Ngugi's latest narratives:

As with all Ngugi's writing the question of the ownership of the land is at the core of these latest works [i.e. *Petals of Blood*, *I Will Marry When I Want*, and *Devil on the Cross*], land is life to the pre-colonial African community; and as that community is systematically alienated from the land it becomes the source of wealth – in the form of labour – for the foreign coloniser and subsequently for his neo-imperialist African heirs. The alienation of the generality of the people from ancestral land is a central theme in these later works and subsidiary themes lead to or flow from relations and speculations of characters to and about the land.⁹⁰

*

A profuse use of myth is the other major common denominator of Ngugi and Lawrence, and their bringing of this literary factor into play matches up, again, in both nature and purpose. The likeness in the quality of the myths used by the two writers resides in their common references to both Christian and pagan mythologies, as well as in their concurring tendencies to blend both sets of mythology in "created myths." Like Lawrence, Ngugi intensively draws on the "Christian typological tradition" and "its complex iconography;" and just as "all of Lawrence's major novels are in a sense allusions to Revelation" so are Ngugi's writings references to the Bible, mainly the book of Genesis.⁹¹ His biblical design being akin to Lawrence's, he too employs "an enormous range of motifs from both the Old and New Testaments." Besides, Ngugi often refers to the same biblical stories used by Lawrence summarized here by James Wood:

Lawrence's biblical scheme allows him to draw on an enormous range of motifs from both the Old and New Testaments - the Lord appearing in the burning bush; Noah's Flood and the rainbow that God hangs in the

⁹⁰ G. D. Killam, *The Writing of East and Central Africa*, London: Heinemann, 1984, p. 134.

⁹¹ Maria Dibattista, "Review of Virginia Hyde's *The Risen Adam: D.H. Lawrence's Revisionist Typology* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1992)." Article Archives, URL: <http://www.articlearchives.com/humanities-social-science/religion/1030258-1.html>.

sky as his covenant that he will never destroy mankind again; Moses and the Promised Land; and the promise of the renewal of the spirit held out by Jesus in the Gospels and especially by the writer of the Book of Revelation.⁹²

Whole chapters of the Bible being re-written in them, Ngugi's novels look like adaptations of biblical stories. They are all to be read as reproductions of biblical events in contexts other than their original ones, with black protagonists in place of the initial white (or brown) protagonists. The basic Christian story to which Ngugi refers time and again is one which Lawrence also uses repeatedly: "Moses and the Promised Land." The tale of the Jews in ancient Egypt and their journey towards "the promised land" is an allegorical background to Ngugi's fiction up to *Matigari* at least. The hardships of individuals, families and communities in all six novels are closely assimilated to the plights of the children of Israel in Misri. The renaissance of the Jewish people by Jehovah's order, their Journey towards Jerusalem under the leadership of Moses, Jehovah's promise of their Salvation, and a whole range of details and symbols relating to this story are dependably used as similes for many of the real and imagined tragedies Ngugi recounts. The main plots of *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari* – all evocative of solemn, shattering and long-lasting journeys of persecuted people on the way to (divine or fateful) promises of deliverance – can be read as only nuanced variations on this biblical account. In *Matigari*, the hero preaches that "our country is truly as dry as this concrete floor. Our leaders have hearts as cold as that of Pharaoh (...) They cannot hear the cry of the people," revealing that the writer has remained loyal to his preferred metaphor (*Matigari*, p. 53).

Furthermore, echoing "Lawrence's interest in charismatic types (Adam, Samson, David)," ⁹³ Ngugi evenly compares his characters to Jewish and Christian prophets – often to Adam, Moses or Jesus Christ [Waiyaki and Njoroge to Moses; Mugo to Moses, Jesus and Isaac; Kihika to Moses and Jesus; Gikonyo to Adam; Munira to Jesus and to Moses, Matigari (comparable to Moses and to Jesus)] and to other biblical figures. (The heroines in *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, for instance are reminiscent of Marry Magdalene, who becomes one of Jesus' companions in the New Testament). In *A Grain of Wheat*, Mugo presents obvious resemblances with the prophet Moses. Physically, both are tall, strong and handsome, and though bordering on the general features of their fellow people, they are both outstanding characters. Both of them are orphans brought up by their potential enemies, both are exiles, both killed a man (or were forced to do so). Both are saved from death several times: (the baby

⁹² James Wood, *op. cit.*.

⁹³ Maria Dibattista, *op. cit.*.

Moses miraculously escapes death decreed by Pharaoh on newborns, then in the Nile, and on a third occasion when he slays an Egyptian officer. Likewise, Mugo is spared by fatality first when he intervenes to take Wambui out of a British soldier's beating (just like Moses), and when he survives torture in Rira; and "in his miraculous escape from death" he saw "the guiding hand of fate (...). 'Thereafter, as a chief, he would [like Moses] lead his people across the desert to the New Jerusalem" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 134). Still through Mugo, Ngugi also evokes the prophets Jacob, Esau, Abraham and Isaac (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 197), and Judas who betrays Jesus to the Roman emperor who orders his Crucifixion.

Several other characters either identify themselves or are branded by the community, the narrator, the writer or the readers – as Christian figures. For example, whenever he brings them into play (and he often does), Ngugi suggests that Mau Mau leaders such as Waiyaki wa Hinga, Harry Thuku and Jomo Kenyatta, are recorded in the Kenyans' collective memory as black (Christian) prophets. Thus "in Harry Thuku," Ngugi tells us, "people saw a man with God's message;" and, like the children of Israel, they "swore they would follow Harry through the desert. They would tighten their belts around the waist, ready to endure thirst and hunger, tears and blood until they set foot on Canaan's shore" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 12). Even Kihika is endowed with visionary features and with a messianic role as he oscillates between a Christ and a Moses figure (though at times he is also a Ghandi, a Waiyaki, a communist leader, and a supporter of Nietzsche's ideas). While he declares that he himself and everybody else are "Christs," the verses he highlights in his Bible are from the Old Testament and reveal that the mission he conceives for himself is that of a 'black Moses.' The same scheme is carried out in the first two novels through characters like Waiyaki, Njoroge, and Boro; in *Petals of Blood* through Munira, Karega, and Wanja; and in *Devil on the Cross* through Wariinga. In the latter novel and in *Matigari*, the epic heroes Wariinga and Matigari have prophet-like statures as well; while the antiheroes are conceivable basically as imagined replicas of Lucifer.

Ngugi must have followed in Lawrence's footsteps also in that he too "does not only refer to conventional mythology alone," particularly to "Christian figures," but also to "created mythology such as Blake's".⁹⁴ In the short stories – "The Return," "The Village Priest" and "The Fig Tree" and in the first three novels, he fundamentally relies on a synthesis of the Gikuyu myth of origin (that of Gikuyu and Mumbi) and the Judeo-Christian myth of creation (that of Adam and Eve). The same pattern reoccurs as a more or less central mythological parallel in the subsequent novels. Indeed the tragedies of Ngugi's novels are all one way or another emphasised by unconventional "blending of the Gikuyu religious myth with that of

⁹⁴ H. T. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. p. 45 - 6.

Christianity."⁹⁵ In this manner, Ngugi's fiction not only echoes the crucial Lawrentian attitude which Virginia Hyde and Maria Dibattista refer to as his reliance on "unorthodox confluences of pagan and biblical imagery?"⁹⁶ but also his fascination with a specific kind of image, namely his interest in conciliating allegories of creation.⁹⁷ It is finally both remarkable and ironic that just as Lawrence progressively turned to the construction of his own myths (his latest works like *The Plumed Serpent*, *Sun, Mornings in Mexico*), Ngugi is equally determined not to write 'conventional fiction' anymore, and to be engaged in producing myths, epics and fables like those of Waringa in *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*. We shall return to this in detail in our study of the way Ngugi draws on the oral African background as part of our study of the creative aspects of Ngugi's work in the last chapter.

Concerning the similarities in their usages of mythology, the roles of myth in both authors' works make no notable exceptions on the whole to the main function of myth abridged by Wole Soyinka here: "[T]he drama of the gods," says Soyinka, serves to move "directly from the apparent to deeper effects within the community."⁹⁸ This is an exercise which is cherished by both novelists as we have seen. Notwithstanding whatever differences exist as to which borrowed or invented myths are brought into play by both authors – thus, "whatever deity is involved" in their myths – an "intelligent communication of what is indeed pure essence" is always the most authoritative point of any myth used by Ngugi or Lawrence.⁹⁹ The "pure essence" that Lawrence and Ngugi both strive to communicate through mythology is, it seems, a modernist version of the old romantic worldview which tries to reconcile the material and the spiritual worlds. Mythology is, for both, an important tool to express such a perspective on the world, and a manner of bringing the reader from a state of "mythologizing literature" to one of "demythologizing myths."¹⁰⁰

Expectedly, such thinking is generally conceived of not only as ambivalent, but also as being anchored in a "dualistic," and essentially religious vision made of a blending of Christian and non-Christian logics. Their works' dialogic engagement with the Bible is not necessarily a sign of commitment to the Christian doctrine as such. It might be the opposite,

⁹⁵ W. J. Howards, "Themes and Development in the Novels of Ngugi," in *The Critical Evaluation of African Literature* (Rev), 1973, p. 98, quoted in C. B. Robson, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o, op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁹⁶ Maria Dibattista, *op. cit.*.

⁹⁷ Lawrence is renowned for drawing on specific myths like "The Fall" for instance.

⁹⁸ Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, Cambridge UP, 1976, p. 5.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ "Faire passer le lecteur de la 'mythisation du récit' à la 'démithologisation des mythes.'" Laurent Angard, "Le hors-sens de la vérité: mythe et littérature," *Acta Fabula*, Vol. 7, No 6, Novembre-Décembre 2006, URL: <http://www.fabula.org/revue/document1744.php>. Angard here is quoting Thierry Goater in Sophie Marret and Pascale Renaud-Grosbras, *Lectures et écritures du mythe*, Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006, p. 223.

since it can be argued with Thierry Goater that they aim to reverse the very logic of these myths. Goater sees in *Women in Love* for instance "the reversal of the logic of the Biblical myth" and merely a product of a process of "emergence of a mythic character in writing."¹⁰¹ Paraphrased below, T. R. Wright in *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible* makes a similar interpretation of the relationship between Lawrence's works and the Bible in general. For him the "inter texts between the Bible and Lawrence's own writing," show that his reworking of biblical myth is "critical"— even "parodist":

The Bible, as [Wright's] book demonstrates, plays a key role in nearly all D. H. Lawrence's work. It supplies not only the inspiration but on occasion the target for his parody. In *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible*, Terry Wright establishes that Lawrence was familiar with the modernist critique of the Bible by higher critics and by anthropologists of religion. He also argues, however, that Lawrence's playful reworking of the Bible, like that of Nietzsche, anticipates postmodernism. After considering the extraordinary range of Lawrence's reading and the inter texts between the Bible and Lawrence's own writing, Wright engages in a theoretically informed but clear exploration of the textual dynamics of his writing. Lawrence's writing is seen to reveal a prolonged struggle to read the Bible in a much broader spirit than that encouraged by orthodox Christianity.¹⁰²

A review of Ngugi's novels and criticism reveals that he uses the Bible for the same purposes. His association of the Bible with Munira's inconsistency in behaviour in *Petals of Blood*, and his repeated use of an upturned version of the myth of Crucifixion (first as Kihika's rallying call in *A Grain of Wheat*, and as the very logic and presumption of *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow*) are very persuasive points of argument in this sense.

Nevertheless, Ngugi and Lawrence's dependence on Christian typology – Christian mythology and symbolism, in particular – is conceivable as mark of the same universalist thinking, as well as a sign of the fact that such thinking remains a version of Christianity. Wright's claim that Lawrence's writing reveals "a prolonged struggle to read the Bible in a much broader spirit than that encouraged by orthodox Christianity" is also applicable to Ngugi's fiction. As far as Ngugi is concerned, I have argued in my master's dissertation that some of Ngugi's most important works can be read as pro-Christian, specifically in view of his intensive and quite faithful use of Christian mythology. In the same way – and because of a similarly disproportionate drawing on Christian mythology and symbolism – Lawrence came to be seen as a Christian writer, in spite of the fact that most critics agree on the ambiguous aspect of his attitude and on the duality of

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*. Angard writes: "[Thierry Goater] voit dans ce roman [*Women in Love*] le renversement de la logique du « mythe biblique » et l'émergence d'un « caractère mythique de l'écriture »." Laurent Angard, *op. cit.*.

¹⁰² A review of T. R. Wright's *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible* by the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, URL: <http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=0521781892>.

his religious philosophy as we have just seen. In *The Risen Adam: D.H. Lawrence's Revisionist Typology*, Virginia Hyde (while aware of the mixture of the intertextual and dialogic relations between Lawrence's works and the Bible), traces back his dedication to the "typological tradition" to the influence of his Christian education. She traces such an "engagement" back "to the Protestant hymns of his youth, and, more interestingly, to [his] youthful apprenticeship in painting, copying the biblical scenes of such Tuscan masters as Giotto and Fra Angelico."¹⁰³ Even "some of Lawrence's most puzzling representations (such as the "six wings of bliss" that attach to Will Brangwen's soul, which may have been suggested by a medieval drawing of the cherubim with six wings whose opinions were inscribed with mystical attributes)" might have been inspired by such a formation since these "found a particularly fertile sourcebook" in works like Katherine L. Jenner's *Christian Symbolism* (1910)," as the same critic informs us.¹⁰⁴

Hyde's division of the agencies of "the language of types" – of which myth is a fundamental constituent – will help us to study the resemblances with Ngugi from the point of view of the implications of Christian mythology (and associated myths) at more specific levels. She distinguishes two main sub-functions of Christian typology when it is used in works of art in general. It works as 1) "a vehicle of social satire," and 2) as a tool "to further the ultimately millennial expectations of the "realist" sickened by modern life and searching for a way to communicate Salvationist hopes."¹⁰⁵ Hyde acknowledges "both attitudes in Lawrence's writing."¹⁰⁶ Thus, the story of, say, Gudrun and Gerald in *Women in Love* which is likely to have "Loki, the Evil One of Scandinavian mythology" as a "mythological framework," could serve to show how these two roles are played.¹⁰⁷ Though what point exactly Lawrence is making in this parallel is not clear, Moore suspects he uses it to criticize the conspiracy of European capital, industry and art against human welfare, that is as part of the novel's "trenchant critique of modern civilization – portraying industrialism as a primary source of social fragmentation and of cultural decay" and expression of "a nostalgia for more organic ways of life" to put it in Jad Smith's words.¹⁰⁸ As to the "Salvationist hope," it is conveyed through a convoluted interweaving of the experiences of Loki, Christ and Gerald with psychological affliction and death. Such inferences are to be made on the basis of the outcomes of the

¹⁰³ Maria Dibattista, *op. cit.*.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*. Dibattista (Princeton University) reports Hyde's argument that "the language of types can be enlisted in the service of parody or irony, that is, as a vehicle of social satire, or it can be deployed to further the ultimately millennial expectations of the "realist" sickened by modern life and searching for a way to communicate Salvationist hopes."

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*. Agreeing with Hyde, Dibattista adds: "to Hyde's credit she acknowledges both attitudes."

¹⁰⁷ For more detail on the myth in question as well as the analogies with Gerald and Gudrun's story, see H. T. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁸ Jad Smith, *op. cit.*.

experiences – mainly the deaths – of all three figures – Loki, Jesus and Gerald as, considered simultaneously, they powerfully hold out promises of the resurgence of life under healthier forms.¹⁰⁹

To these functions of Lawrence's myths one must add their significant aesthetic effects. The combination of the Scandinavian legend with the story of Christ above may be an allegorical equivalent to more than one plotline, and can convey more than one idea. It can have such or farther-off ethical implications, Lawrence's exact point being too complex to be closely followed, as Moore admits. "[T]he breadth of his engagement with the typological tradition and its complex iconography" render the ideas behind Lawrence's mythological references inevitably "baffling," and has in effect resulted in many of his images remaining thus "unidentified."¹¹⁰ Nevertheless – and notably on account of the compactness and profoundness which it suggests – the primary and final effect of Lawrence's mythology is aesthetic. What Moore further adds about this seems appropriate:

We cannot follow too far whatever Lawrence may have had in mind [in his drawing on the myth of Loki], but it is possible that he was using rather loosely the symbolism G. B. Shaw found implicit in Wagner's musical version of the myth, the symbolism of modern capital and industry. Certainly there is much about capital and industry in *Women in Love*, and it binds together the two characters – Gerald the entrepreneur, and Loerke, the artist who makes his work subserve industrial needs. But whatever effects Lawrence did or did not strive after, the mythological parallel faintly apparent in the story helps to produce an unusual suggestion of Heldstod, hero's death, that has an almost symphonic force.¹¹¹

It is therefore the "symphonic force" which his myths grant his narratives that seems to matter most with Lawrence. Bearing this and Lawrence's famous slogan – "art for art's sake" – in mind, it can be stated with James Cowan that he ultimately "identifies with Melville, who was for him an example of the 'true artist' as myth-maker, reconciling the Christian and the pagan consciousness in an organic symbolism rooted in unconscious [therefore, by definition, unintelligible – but poignant] experience."¹¹² Even as the 'secrets' behind the myths are (perhaps purposely made) impenetrable, and partially down to this, their symphonic roles are beyond question.

¹⁰⁹ See H. T. Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 139 - 40, for detail on these inferences too.

¹¹⁰ Maria Dibattista, *op. cit.*

¹¹¹ H. T. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

¹¹² From an anonymous online document in Penn State Press, 820 N. University Dr. USB1, Suite C, University Park, PA 16802, reviewing James Cowan's *D. H. Lawrence and the Trembling Balance*, URL: <http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/0-271-00692-7.html>.

E. M. Forster would be of this view since, for him, what is meant by Lawrence's mythical and symbolic scenes is trivial before the melodic effect they produce. To Forster, it is the shrewd way he works with myths and symbol that is remarkable (by making his style "prophetic"). His comment, in *Aspects of the Novels*, on one of Lawrence's archetypal symbolistic passages – the sequence in *Women in Love* where Birkin throws stones at a moon's reflection in a pool – perceptively points this out:

The prophet [that is, here, Lawrence] is irradiating nature from within, so that every colour has a glow and every form of distinctness which could not otherwise be obtained. Take a scene that always stays in memory: the scene in *Women in Love* where one of the characters throws stones into the water at night to shatter the image of the moon. Why he throws, what the scene symbolises is unimportant. But the writer could not get such a moon and water otherwise; he reaches them by his special path which stamps them as more wonderful than any we can imagine. It is the prophet back where he started from, back where the rest of us are waiting by the edge of the pool, but with a power of recreation and evocation we shall never possess (...) What is valuable about him cannot be put into words: it is colour, gesture and outline in people and things, the usual stock-in-trade of the novelist, but evolved by such a different process that they belong to a new world.¹¹³

Dedicated to the Lawrentian approach to literature, Ngugi frequently resorts to the "power of recreation and evocation" which myth possesses to grant expressive force and poignancy to ideas that are essential to his philosophy, as well as to carry out aesthetic plans. The visions that his mythological allusions project, and the artistic power exuded by his myths, are both akin to Lawrence's. Ngugi uses myths both to sustain ideas that he regards as particularly important, and often to put across the "neo-romanticist" concerns he shares with Lawrence. This contributes notes of solemnity and poignancy to the atmospheres of his novels, and prophecies that are very evocative of Lawrence. In a simplified definition, Ngugi affirms that myth is a kind of wanton embroidery whose role is to put into words the "reality and essence" and the "essential truth" in connection with a given fact. Regardless of its simple character, the statement suggests that the writer's intents from drawing on myths are, as in the case of Lawrence, both functional, as suggested by the expression "conveying the essence and reality," and technical, or artistic, as signified by "exaggeration":

I am fascinated by how myths are made and how they grow. A person witnesses an event, say a car accident. In order to convey the essence and reality of the horror to another who was not present, he exaggerates. The recipient of the slightly exaggerated adds his own exaggerations when

¹¹³ E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). London: Penguin Books: 1990, p. p. 130 - 31.

telling the story to somebody else. And soon the story becomes almost larger than the actual event but it retains the essential truth.¹¹⁴

The way Ngugi uses Christian mythology (as well as Christian symbolism) has a flavour of Lawrence's approach to it both from the ethical and aesthetic standpoints. It works, as with Lawrence, both as "a vehicle of social satire" and a way to express "Salvationist hopes" reminiscent of those which Lawrence expresses. Ngugi must have followed in Lawrence's footsteps in "taking advantage of the depth of the religious feeling" inherent in Christian myth to give his tales a profundity of mood and meaning, plus a "prophetic" tone. The latter had declared that he was "primarily a passionately religious man" and that "his novels must be written from the depth of his religious experience".¹¹⁵ Similarly, Ngugi had perhaps suitably described himself as a "deeply Christian" writer, and has often been called "a religious" one, because of his concerted drawing on Christianity. Ruth Rowe and G. D. Killam have this to say on this subject:

Ngugi described himself as "deeply Christian when" he wrote his first few novels, under the name of James Ngugi, and he admits that he was attempting in these books to strip off the trappings of western culture from Christian doctrine in order to see how Christianity might be combined with the indigenous belief.¹¹⁶

Brendon Nicholls also notes that Ngugi's writings are "often religious in tone," including *Wizard of the Crow*. To the question of knowing whether Ngugi could be categorised as a religious writer, Nicholls replies:

Both Christian and Gikuyu cosmologies are at work within the novels. We only have to look at a figure like Waiyaki in *The River Between* to see both forms of belief pattering him. In *Devil on the Cross*, we still see the influence of Christian imagery and mythology, even though Ngugi is writing in *Detained* that he is no longer religious at that point. And of course Kamiti in *Wizard of the Crow* seems very conversant with Buddhism! So yes Ngugi's thought is often religious in tone.¹¹⁷

All of Ngugi's novels can confirm the fact that he has, in the vein of Lawrence, opted for Christianity as that "urgently needed something" to

¹¹⁴ Ngugi, *Interview in The Litblog co-op*, (<http://lbc.typepad.com/blog/>) "Ngugi wa Thiong'o In His Own Words," Feb 07, 2007, URL:

http://lbc.typepad.com/blog/2007/02/qa_ngugi_wa_thi.html

¹¹⁵ D. H. Lawrence, *Letters, op. cit.*, p. 190.

¹¹⁶ G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe, *The Companion to African Literatures*, London: James Currey, 2000, p. 248.

¹¹⁷ Salah Kaci-Mohamed, (unpublished) "Interview with Brendon Nicholls," University of Leeds, 25 March 2008.

make his narrative mood "deep and sincere."¹¹⁸ They all echo the 'restorationist' paradigm that F. R. Leavis summarises as the "obligation of speaking for life and growth amid all this mess of destruction" which he holds to be the "spirit of all [Lawrence's] work".¹¹⁹ The self-same search constitutes one of Ngugi's obsessions, and can easily be seen as the "spirit" of his work as well. His fiction, not unlike Lawrence's, is inhabited by "the idea of bringing life out of the noxious, poisonous and chaotic situations" in which their stories are correspondingly located; though, as Ngugi says, "the geographical contexts are different." From the earliest short stories, to *Weep Not, Child* to *Wizard of the Crow*; Ngugi's stories are veritable hymns for resurrection, for the rebirth of new lives and "new worlds" out of (African) physical and spiritual wastelands.

So far as their functions as "vehicles of social satire" are concerned, it is first noticeable that the myths brought into play by Ngugi could seem to pose less intricate problems in this sense. They all enclose overt political (regionalist, nationalist, or Marxist) messages that could appear simple and self-evident. When Ngugi regularly alludes to the Gikuyu creation myth for instance, he often does so in contexts, and in such a way that might give the impression that his point is only to justify Kenya's belonging to the Agikuyu. Some readers would even sense chauvinistic intents comparable to those of Zionism on the part of Ngugi:

Tied to the theme of salvation is that of Zionism. The children of Israel in Ngugi's world are descendants of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the Agikuyu people. Their name is derived from the old man, Gikuyu, their fore ancestor. Ngugi dramatises the group belief and the community history of his people. For some non-Gikuyu, this has looked like a form of tribal bigotry on Ngugi's part.¹²⁰

If an understanding of the points of Ngugi's mythological references requires more meditation, such readings are telling on a misleading ideological forthrightness which such references can display. Indeed the writer's references to this specific cosmogony can be regarded as a device that helps to articulate or sustain an anti-colonialist political stance, and to get across the local beliefs inherent in it. Yet, what Ngugi's reference to the

¹¹⁸ Lawrence, *Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 8. Here is Lawrence's full statement: "I know how hard it is. One needs something to make one's mood deep and sincere. There are so many little frets that prevent our coming at the real necked essence of our vision. It sounds boshy, doesn't it? I often think one ought to be able to pray, before one works- and then leave it to the Lord. Isn't it hard, hard work to come to real grips with one's imagination — throw everything overboard? I always feel as if I stood necked for the fire of almighty God to go through me — and it's rather an awful feeling. One has to be so terribly religious, to be an artist."

¹¹⁹ F. R. Leavis, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹²⁰ Chris Wanjala, "Kenya: Is It Politics Or Myth?," *The Standard (online)*, 8 September 2002. *The East African Standard*, Distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com), URL: <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200209110051.html>>.

Gikuyu original myth best shows in fact is the often unnoticed puzzling involvedness of his approach to mythology. Akin to Lawrence's, Ngugi's mythical parallels testify to his consciousness of things that are greater, more essential and more inaccessible than the kind of intention stated above. They express no matter-of-fact knowledge. The origins and the definitive significance of something like the Gikuyu cosmogonic myth is itself subject to uncertainties among Kenyans themselves, historians and anthropologists; and its grasp would rather depend on how a given reader or critic can respond to it and to the entire story in which it operates.¹²¹ If we read Ngugi's stories as regionalist or patriotic and black-consciousness ones we are likely to see the myth in question and whatever other myths referred to – Biblical, pagan or mixtures of both – merely as aesthetic and ideological agents of such discourses. If we read these stories as humanist and Universalist artworks, we are then more likely to look at Ngugi's reference to the same myths as more complex allegories of the unity of the whole human race.¹²²

That said, what Ngugi seems to aspire to through mythology is ultimately to provide readers with a consciousness of the world, and with sensations (but not with immediate knowledge). In the processes of the merging of the myths with the real, historical and fictional worlds of his narratives, and through their tropes, he would inculcate us – ultimately – a sort of awareness that life has got one source and one essence, and that these are near, and not alien, to us and yet are beyond expression. They are best approachable through such processes. This stirs in us, in turn, sublime sensations: inspirational emotions similar to those provoked by music – mainly polyphonies – choreography, and other such forms of art. Like Lawrence's, Ngugi's ultimate mythological and symbolic references are impenetrable, because they are deployed in complex structures which aim to

¹²¹ The main ambiguity surrounding the Gikuyu cosmogonic myth is whether or not it really originates from the pre-colonial native population. The controversy is summarized in the following comment from "Ngugi and the World of Christianity: a Dialectic," published in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (online): "Ngugi wants the reader to connect the biblical creation myth with phrases like, 'People saw this and were happy' (p. 1), describing how life began, as compared to Genesis: 'God saw it and it was good'. Thus, the fundamental beliefs of the Gikuyu are described in a typical Christian manner, with Murungu being fashioned on the Christian God, and Gikuyu and Mumbi on Adam and Eve. Even the Gikuyu wise men of old are described in the fashion of the biblical prophets, right down to the concept of preaching in the wilderness. The stories may be different, but the ideology is the same, thus raising the question: have the Gikuyu myths evolved from the people, or has there been an imposition of the Christian interpretation?" *Journal of Asian and African Studies* ...

¹²² Ngugi has deplored accusations of "Kikuyu-centrism" and chauvinism set against him by former colleagues at the Literature Department, University of Nairobi, in the preface to his prison memoir *Detained — A Writers's Prison Diary* (London: Heinemann, 1981). (See p. p. xxii – xxiii, in particular). In "Section One: Prison Notes," in the same document, he quotes, for one of the epigraphs to that part of the diary, verses from the icon of Palestinian patriotic (and humanist) poetry, Mahmud Darwish, namely a poem of his called "The Music of Human Flesh"). Ngugi, *Detained, op. cit.*, p. 1. A "Zionist" writer would not have done so.

represent things that are spiritual, and therefore ineffable. They are parts of very cleverly conceived, primarily aesthetic, schemes the ultimate points of which are, as with D. H. Lawrence, to help reveal "hidden waves that come from the depths of life" and strive to "transfer them" to an "unreceptive world."¹²³

¹²³ F. R. Leavis, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

Chapter Three

Ngugi's Indebtedness to Modern African Literature: The Example of Achebe

Looking at Gikonyo, you could not believe that he was the same man whose marriage to Mumbi almost thirteen years before angered other young suitors (...) Now for years after returning home from detention, Gikonyo was one of the richest man in Thabai. He had recently bought a five-acre farm plot; he owned a shop (...) and only the other day he had acquired a second hand lorry for trading. On top of this, he was elected the chairman of the local branch of the movement, a tribute, so people said, to his man's spirit which no detention camp could break. Gikonyo was respected and admired as a symbol of what everyone aspired to be: fiercely independent, bending all effort to success in any enterprise (Ngugi, A Grain of Wheat, p. 18).

Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two intertribal wars. And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered (Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 6).

A. On the Question of Analogy

The existence of analogies between African literary works has been noted by scholars and cannot be denied. The influence of some outstanding African writers on others is a crucial aspect of the African literary continuum. A case in point is the strong impact of Achebe's texts on other African writings, notably those of Ngugi. In this chapter, we will argue that the affinities between Ngugi and Achebe, seen through our comparison of their respective novels, are essentially results of Achebe's influence on him. This calls for the rejection of the idea that the resemblance between the two novelists' works could be a fact of pure Analogy, to which task we will therefore devote the introduction to this chapter.

Even though African literature borrows part of its criteria from its European and American equivalents, it is a fact that it has many idiosyncrasies. And in spite of considerable differences in the styles and typical subject matters of the various African novelists and between their respective works, African fiction has several aspects in common. Even if John Reed overstates these analogies, his point is not totally unfounded:

The rise of nationalism, the process of decolonization, developments in the new governments, the tensions before and after independence between the tribal and the national, between the traditional and the modern, throughout the whole of Africa – it is not a single continuous story, but very similar stories told over and over again (...) In the new states of Africa young novelists write about their own separate societies, their own people and their own experience, but all with very much the same set of stories to tell. And when the realities of one place bear so close a family resemblance to the realities of another, the novels that arise out of these will tend to fall even closer together.¹

It can be thus argued that the similarities between African novels have to do with literary analogy, for it is not totally inconceivable that similar extra-literary conditions of writing may result in similar literatures. And, as suggested by John Reed many reasons exist that would make African authors more predisposed than their counterparts in other settings to write about the same subjects and with similar styles.

The argument in Claude Wauthier's *l'Afrique des africains: inventaire de la Négritude* also runs like this, and, furthermore, defines main thematic and stylistic analogies of modern African writings.² Contemplating modern

¹ John Reed, "James Ngugi and the African Novel," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. 1, 1965 (116 – 21), p. 117.

² Claude Wauthier, *l'Afrique des africains: inventaire de la Négritude*, Paris: Seuil, 1964.

(mainly Francophone) African literature in comparison with the literatures of other peoples who have undergone the experiences of slavery and/or colonialism, Wauthier identifies what he considers to be the main reason for the emergence of prominent and large-scale affinities in the literatures of these peoples. It is, according to him, a fact proven by its recurrence in history that “peoples” who went through such subjugating experiences, and “who aspired to their liberations,” “seek to reaffirm their originalities in the field of letters and arts.” It is, to Wauthier, mainly such a quest that would have resulted in the analogies of the literatures of formerly subjugated peoples.

For Wauthier, the modern African experience in literature is not an exception to this ‘rule,’ and it has been, moreover, marked with “a very original seal” in this respect as he argues:

Si l’ Afrique n’a pas failli à cette constante qui fait qu’un peuple qui aspire à sa liberté cherche à réaffirmer son originalité dans le domaine des lettres et des arts, il n’en reste pas moins que l’expérience Africaine dans ce domaine a été marquée d’un sceau très original.³

While he notes that “besides a “committed” literature, there are also “protected,” or conformist and “neutral” literatures” in Africa, Wauthier sustains that it is the “political committedness” of African literature that is both its main common criterion and its key distinctive trait: “[l]e premier caractère commun aux uns et aux autres [écrivains africains] est leur engagement politique, pour la plus grande part d’entre eux tout au moins.”⁴ Wauthier specifies that the political engagement of modern African literature has taken the form, not only of aspiration for self-assertion,⁵ but also of an exceptionally fervent and prevalent expression of a desire to do so – a “black Narcissus” literary phenomenon, to put it in his words. According to Wauthier, this ‘literary narcissism’ manifests itself in the authors’ very attitudes to the literary fact – that is, in their idea(s) of what literature is, or should be – and is determining of the general common characters of their works both thematically and stylistically. He notes three major ensuing common traits of modern African prose; first, an “interpenetration of literature and human sciences;” second, concern with Africa nearly as a unique subject of writing and, third, “the hero,” whenever there is one, is nearly always a black person.⁶

There is a consideration which may seem to back up Wauthier’s hypothesis with particular force, namely the fact that the affinities of

³ *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵ As in the cases of the literatures of peoples with similar experiences such as those of the USA, Canada, Australia, India and Ireland, for instance.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. p. 17 - 18. See details on these analogies, as well, on the same pages.

modern African literary works, specifically in the three general respects he identifies, could be explained as results of phenomenal analogy. This is the fact that affinities in those three respects pertain to literary works from linguistically, geographically, and ethnically different areas of Africa. The three major points of analogy brought up by Wauthier apply indeed to Francophone as well as to Anglophone African literatures, for instance, and are certainly characteristic of African literatures from North to South and from East to West, and even from outside the continent. Comparisons of works by writers who have normally no relationships with each other – apart from coinciding biographical elements, and their writing at about the same periods – and who are more likely than not to have read each other's works – show affinities in the general respects stated by Wauthier. It may, in effect, seem striking how any of Mouloud Feraoun's novels *Le fils du pauvre*, *Les chemins qui montent*, and *Jours de Kabylie* resemble in those and other, more fine-grained respects, any of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God* for instance. The example is outstanding because there are marked affinities between those works by Achebe and Feraoun in terms of the correspondences of their ethnographic, sociological, autobiographic and 'strictly literary' elements. Furthermore, those works display the same kind of political engagement, partly through "heroes" that are Africans in all cases. On the other hand, these analogies could hardly be explained by the influence of any of the two authors on the other. Other examples can be mentioned: comparisons of novels by any of the Algerian writers Rachid Boudjedra, Tahar Djaout, Mohamed Dib, Kateb Yacine and Mouloud Mammeri with those of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and of the novels of Mammeri and those of Achebe, can lead to the same kind of conclusions.

In view of these facts one should always be aware of this phenomenon in comparative studies of African literary works. However, such high degrees of resemblance, and the frequency and regularity of the recurrence of the analogies, make one think that, except for rare possible cases, analogy in African literature cannot possibly be the fact of pure literary happenstance. Analogy is, by definition, a sporadic and unsystematic phenomenon, and the affinities between African oeuvres are generalised, very frequent and outstanding. These affinities could not possibly be simply consequences of likenesses of the political situations of the societies, the coincidence of the "epochs" in which the individual African writers have been writing their works, nor even of some coinciding biographies of these writers altogether. In principle creative writers should not be conceived as a standardized and like-minded group of 'automats' who would have similar literary responses to similar extra-literary contexts. The causes of the analogies should therefore be sought beyond (phenomenal) Analogy. And cogitation on the modern African literary experience leads, in effect, to the conclusion that they are not the results of Analogy.

What could better explain both the analogies in African literature themselves and their systematic occurrences – that is their neatness and (the regularity of) their repetition – is essentially the processes of influence, which are far more systematic. They are mainly the results of dialogic and intertextual processes more precisely. It is, first and foremost, the cultural and intertextual relationships which African literary works certainly entertain with similar colonial cultures and, more specifically, colonial literatures that would explain such analogies. It is, more exactly, the fact that many of these works are partly conceived by their writers as literary responses to the colonizers' like-minded cultures and literatures, precisely to these literatures' typical mistreatments of the autochthonous cultures and people that would explain at once the analogies and their fastidiousness.

Ngugi's argument that Achebe's novels (in West Africa) are responses to a "typical Crusoe blind to the possibility that Friday could be a complex being with a complex culture" also applies to Feraoun's fiction (in North Africa), for instance, and, indeed, to Ngugi's own fiction (in East Africa).⁷ Just as an important aspect of Achebe's novels is their being set in direct dialogues with novels by Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary and other British writers, so are Feraoun's with Albert Camus', André Gide and of other writers of "*l'Ecole d'Alger*" in literature. It is, in other words, both nearer to African literary realities, and, at any rate, more relevant from a literary point of view to think of the similarities between these works, first, in terms of their being corresponding "answer[s] to years of Christian bigotry and Crusoe's naïve view of Friday" conveyed by aspects of the discourses on colonialism and otherness of works by Joseph Conrad and 'French Conrads' such as Albert Camus, than as facts of pure literary hit and miss.⁸

None the less, even the similarities of the works of their respective colonialist influencers could not, for themselves, explain the analogies of the writings of the influenced African writers. So to be more exhaustive on this point one could assume the following: in addition to rare possible cases of pure Analogy, it is, in part, the similarity of the "African palimpsests"⁹ of African writers, on the one hand, and the dialogic and intertextual affiliations which their works commonly entertain with the colonizers' and/or the ex-colonizers' similar colonial literatures, on the other, that would cause such neat and large-scale analogies in African literature. African writers are, as Wauthier and John Reed argue, perhaps more predisposed to create similar works than their counterparts in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, the phenomenal nature of Analogy and the cultural and literary realities in Africa suggest that these affinities are most of the time

⁷ Ngugi, "Chinua Achebe: A Man of the People" (279 - 82), in *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*, C. L. Innes and Berth Lindfors (eds.), London: Heinemann, 1979, p. 279.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ The notion of "palimpsest" is Gerard Genette's (in his work *Palimpsest*), and the "African Palimpsest" is Chantal Zabus's adaptation of Genette's term (in *The African Palimpsest*, *op. cit.*).

effects of the workings of influence, rather than of pure, or phenomenal, analogy.

In many cases, as in the one we will be considering in this chapter, it is mainly the influence of African writers on other African writers that justifies the analogies. In fact, the particularity of the African context which John Reed and Claude Wauthier talk about – the moral and political particularity and emotional intensity of the African historical, geographical and ethnic contexts – has indeed provided a most suitable environment for the emergence of analogous African literatures as they argue. But this is mainly true because this context formed an ideal climate for inter-African literary influence to emerge, and to take unusual proportions. The high literary quality, the emotional poignancy, the publicising and the successes at personal level achieved by extremely charismatic – indeed inspiring – intellectuals and writers such as Leopold Sedar Senghor and Mouloud Mammeri in ‘Francophone Africa,’ and Peter Abrahams, Jomo Kenyatta, Cyprian Ekwensi, Amos Tutuola and, last but not least, Chinua Achebe in ‘Anglophone Africa’ have greatly inspired many of the other African writers, including some of the pioneers who wrote in the same period as, an after, them. These include talented writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Ben Okri, Meja Mwangi, Kateb Yacine, and Tahar Djaout to mention only a few. And, as inspiration involves either a desire to ‘imitate,’ or to outdo, the influencer, yet always a desire to achieve something of the same essential nature as the influencer’s achievement, the influenced African writers either simply followed in the footsteps of their precursors, or competed with them in terms of artistic excellence and creativity. Insofar as Anglophone Africa is concerned, specific writers like Peter Abrahams, Amos Tutuola and – above all – Chinua Achebe became icons and genuine schools of African poetics and ethics, and literary landmarks to many of their contemporaries and successors.

If one has to retain only one such iconic figure of (Anglophone) African literature – both for his symbolic significance and for the powerful impact his achievement has had on other African writers – this writer would be, without doubt, Chinua Achebe. Achebe is the first Anglophone African writer to be widely published – to have achieved real international fame for the excellence and originality of his work in general and *Things Fall Apart* in particular. This particular significance of Achebe is acknowledged by his literary supporters and detractors alike. His supporters would agree with “[t]he Igbo praise-singers in his novels” who would say that “this man went to the land of spirits and wrestled the hydra-headed spirit to the ground and returned home unscathed!”¹⁰ Simon Gikandi even wonders if Achebe did

¹⁰ David Kaiza, “Achebe – Why He Was No Literary Genius,” *The East African* (Nairobi), 25 February 2008, distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com), URL: <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200802251873.html>.

not “invent” modern African culture altogether.¹¹ His detractors would certainly not deny one of his most vehement questioners, David Kaiza’s statement that there simply was a void in world literature in general before Achebe, which he took the initiative of filling by submitting *Things Fall Apart* to Heinemann. Achebe is no less significant and particular than to be *the* author who, by the same token, set the cornerstone to the new kind of writing which was to become known as (modern) African literature altogether. In the words of David Kaiza, yet in “Achebe-Why He Was No Literary Genius”:

A void had been identified, and once Achebe took a step to fill it, a torrent of talent flooded the Heinemann offices – Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Okot p’Bitek, Ayi Kwei Armah. For the publishing world in general, it was as if a new world had been discovered and colonised. African literature introduced an entirely new, exciting language and narrative to world literature.¹²

No wonder therefore if Achebe is found to have had a decisive impact on other Anglophone African writers – or on ‘the rest’ of them, one might say –, and it is not without reason that he “has been called the father of African literature, while later writers have been described as the “sons of Achebe.”¹³ His influence alone would explain many of the analogies in Anglophone African fiction, not least those identified by Claude Wauthier. And, as Ernest Emenyonu points out, “Chinua Achebe’s remarkable influence on contemporary African literature is as much in the establishment of the art of the African novel in his fiction as it is in the articulation of African poetics and aesthetics in his extra-fictional pronouncements.”¹⁴ As we shall see in the rest of this argument, this applies, to a considerable extent, to the novels of Ngugi.

¹¹ See Simon Gikandi, “Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture,” *Research in African Literatures* – Vol. 32, No 3, Fall 2001, p. p. 3 - 8.

¹² David Kaiza, *op. cit.*.

¹³ *ibid.*.

¹⁴ Ernest Emenyonu, quoted in David Kaiza, *op. cit.*.

B. Influence as Inspiration and 'Transplantation' of Elements of (Hi)Story: Ngugi's Indebtedness to Chinua Achebe

That Chinua Achebe has influenced Ngugi is an undeniable fact, as the latter himself wholeheartedly recognises. Certainly, Ngugi "holds" Achebe "in great awe,"¹⁵ and the latter has been, before anything else, one of his main sources of inspiration. Even in one of his most recent declarations, he still affirms that "Chinua Achebe is a very inspiring person."¹⁶ What he goes on to say confirms our previous point that such an inspiration has to do first with Achebe's 'particular status' as a founding father of modern African literature in English. He declares that Achebe inspired him precisely because he is part of "that generation that put African writing in English on the world map," and that, "unlike others, he was the founding editor of the Heinemann African Writers Series."¹⁷ It is, first, "in that capacity," Ngugi affirms, that Achebe

had a big impact on African writing in English as a whole. In my own case, he was the one I first showed the manuscript of *Weep Not, Child*, which he sent to Heinemann, also his publishers. So, he had that impact on my own work, particularly *Weep Not, Child*.¹⁸

Achebe's impact on Ngugi's fiction as a whole – not just *Weep Not, Child* – is tremendous, and certainly goes beyond inspiration. Despite their being contemporaries, and pioneers of African literature both – and in spite of many disparities in their respective achievements – Achebe was simply a 'teacher' of literature to Ngugi (as the latter also suggests above). Indeed, Ngugi has been influenced by Achebe in general as well as in very specific ways. He has assimilated Achebe's teachings on the nature and function of African poetics in his essays, lectures and other declarations, has adopted Achebe's typical themes, and has borrowed from him elements of characterisation, methods and techniques of writing, and language by which Achebe typically embodies those teachings in his own fiction. Ngugi has, in fact, "transplanted" Achebe's history, as well as story-telling elements of all

¹⁵ Henry Akubuiro, "How Chinua Achebe Inspired Me," *Daily Sun – Voice of the Nation-Literari* (Online), 4 June 2006, URL:

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/literari/2006/jun/04/literari-4-06-2006/001.htm>.

¹⁶ Ngugi, quoted in Henry Akubuiro, "How Achebe Inspired Me," *op. cit.*, URL:

<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/literari/2006/jun/04/literari-4-06-2006-001.htm>.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

sorts into his own fiction as we will attempt to demonstrate. And – as with D. H. Lawrence – these Achebean elements are to be found in *all* his fiction.

Before exploring the more specific ways in which Achebe's work is reflected in Ngugi's novels, it has to be noted first that the crucial point of similarity between the two novelists is their sharing the view that African fiction is primarily art, before even being "applied art," and this in spite of the pointed functional, or didactic, aspects of their respective works. The artistic dimension of their creative work is often disregarded, as critics tended to read both writers as if they were primarily historians, anthropologists, sociologists and political activists. Yet the worth of their achievements is principally artistic, and both are skilled novelists who conceive of themselves as "above all serious and dedicated artist(s)."¹⁹ Important as their works' preoccupation with the African setting, which we will be highlighting in parts of our argument, it should be seen as part of that broader – human and aesthetic – concern. And, as George Douglas Killam notes with reference to Achebe's novels,

[t]o interpret Achebe's work as mere explanation of the Nigerian scene, either that of his grandfather's or his own generation, is to mistake his intention and his achievement. It is true that the novels reveal the destructive consequences of the rule of the colonial period. But these are not displayed for their own sake. They are there because they arise out of and reflect to a sensitive mind a manifest indifference and practice which mirrors life itself.²⁰

The same is true of Ngugi, whose view of the fundamental role of a creative writer is the following:

¹⁹ George Douglas Killam, *The Novels of Chinua Achebe*, London, Nairobi and Ibadan: Heinemann, 1969, p. 12.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1. Killam could have more accurately called Achebe's attitude an artist's "honesty" or "objectivity" instead of claiming his and every other artist's "indifference," though. Furthermore, such "indifference," if conceivable at all, is definitely not that "manifest" in all cases. The argument by Achebe by which Killam sustains his claim justifies the rest of his contention, however:

The writer in our society should be able to think of these things [the causes for and implications of many kinds of different actions in the contemporary scene] and bring them out in a form that is dramatic and memorable. Above all he has a responsibility to avoid shoddiness in his work. This is very important today when some publishers will issue any trash that comes out of Africa because Africa has become the fashion. In this situation there is a real danger that some writers may not be patient enough to pursue excellence in their work (...) African societies of the past, with all their imperfections, were not consumers but producers of culture. Anyone who reads Fagg's recent book *Nigerian Images* will be struck by the wealth and quality of the art our ancestors produced in the past. Some of this work played a decisive role in the history of modern art. The time has come once more for us, artists and writers of today, to take up the good work and by doing it we will enrich not only our own lives but the life of the world.

Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," *Nigeria Magazine* No. 81, June 1964, p. 160.

A writer has to function as a writer first and foremost. Whatever else he does, like going to parliament, becoming a leader of a liberation movement, a trade unionist, or any other thing, those things are important, but they are not necessarily his function as a writer.²¹

This faithfulness to the view of art – African or not – primarily as art – even if such art has an undeniable didactic dimension in the literary visions and works of both –, as well as creative effort to fit this didactic element with their creative enterprises, is, one has to clearly point out, the most crucial elements which Ngugi shares with, and must have learnt from, Chinua Achebe.

That said, Ngugi has been influenced by Achebe in more specific ways as we have noted. We cited in Chapter One a declaration by Ngugi, in an interview with Aminu Abdullahi, in which he explains the ways in which the impact of his African precursors are different from the ways in which his European and American precursors influenced him.²² It is important to briefly return to that declaration to determine the specific impacts of Chinua Achebe on Ngugi's fiction. In that interview, Ngugi affirms that Achebe and other African writers "set his imagination flying," by making him "feel that they were really speaking to [him]." By "him" Ngugi certainly means *himself* as an individual, or a general reader. Yet he also means "him" as an *African* reader. This suggests, for one important thing, that Ngugi's literary predilections, as a reader, are not Western literary works, even though he certainly read more widely in that field – however either selectively (as with Lawrence, Whitman, Blake, and Zola), 'neutrally' (as one can suppose he would read a writer like Jane Austen) or from critical stances (as he certainly read some of Daniel Defoe, Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary's works). Ngugi certainly liked the universal, aesthetic as well as thematic, aspects of these works, and has been greatly and positively inspired by both such aspects as we have seen through the example of D. H. Lawrence. But Ngugi's phrase clearly suggests that he felt more comfortable with reading African literary works, and therefore that his preferences, as a reader, went to the works of his African precursors – Achebe in pole position. This is extremely important because it shows that, although the influence of Western literature on Ngugi is significant, it is relatively minor in comparison with the impact modern African literature has had on him, at least at the psychological level. Saying that he felt, as a reader, that only African writers were speaking to him means that, as a writer, he was less concerned to write in the typical styles and about the usual themes of Western writers than to write like Chinua Achebe. For, by assuming that his African precursors are

²¹ Ngugi, quoted in Henry Akubuiro, "How Achebe Inspired Me," *op. cit.*, URL: <http://www.snunewsonline.com/webpages/features/literari/2006/jun/04/literari-4-06-2006-001.html>

²² See p. 47 of the present work.

addressing themselves to him, both as an individual and as an African individual, Ngugi also draws attention to the fact that their Western counterparts²³ were not doing so.

Ngugi is, moreover, largely justified in thinking and feeling this way. In effect, European writers, including D. H. Lawrence, would hardly ever have meant to address themselves to readers outside their cultural frameworks, certainly not to African readers. In many examples, they have even shown more or less debatable lack of sympathy in writing about Africa and its peoples when the latter have been among their thematic, or aesthetic, concerns. This might seem an exaggerated interpretation of such a little phrase by Ngugi, and yet it insinuates that while (having) to read Western literary works has certainly had a significant impact on his work, and has perhaps been beneficial to him in as many positive ways in which literature as an art and a human activity can be, it is nevertheless something of a humiliating experience for him (from the time that these writers are, at their best, not 'talking to' him as he says).

Ngugi's phrase also implies – or confirms, if need be – the author's view of African literature as *equally* literature, but as one which is rather adversarial to its Western parallels. By the same token, it informs us that such a view of African literature (in opposition to Western literature) springs, at least partly, from his reading of Chinua Achebe. The phrase provides the fundamental reason why Ngugi conceives of African literature in this way: while he associated Western literatures with feelings and ideas of injustice – (personal, racial, colonial and social, one can assume) – and humiliation (again both at the personal and collective-identity levels), reading Chinua Achebe stirred in him opposite ideas and feelings. Because Ngugi, as a reader, therefore normally as a writer too, simply *identifies*, one can say wholeheartedly, with Achebe, there would be no exaggeration in assuming that his vision of literature is, fundamentally, literature as it is 'taught' by, and embodied in the novels of, Chinua Achebe.

What Ngugi says next, in the same interview, provides further evidence of this, and information on more specific aspects of Achebe's impact on his work. Ngugi explains his feeling that African writers are "speaking to him" first by his identification with "the situation about which they were writing" which, he says, he felt "was immediate to [him]." Second, he explains it by his feeling that he was talking with "characters whom [he] know[s]," and who had "agonies which [he] had seen with [his] own people in Kenya."²⁴ The implications of such details are crucial for the rest of our argument. They are critical and varied enough to allow us to submit the following: the

²³ These include writers such as D. H. Lawrence, Walt Whitman, William Blake and Herman Melville, whom he was interested in mainly because of the keenness of their (spiritual/primitivist/Romantic) philosophies and art to the African view of the world, and/or have treated "primitive" cultures sympathetically as we argued in Chapter Two.

²⁴ Denis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

African contexts in which Ngugi's novels are set so far, their concern with themes relating to Africans and Africa in the first place, the African identities of the overwhelming majority of their characters (as well as their representation of white characters as negative stereotypes), their African language elements, rhythms, moods and tones, and Ngugi's drawing on the African oral background may all well be consequences of Ngugi's resolution to "speak to" African readers above all. That is to say, they are very likely to be a direct result of his reading previous African literature. As we shall see in Chapter Five, much about Ngugi's novels shows that he has his own ways of drawing on such elements of modern African literature. Furthermore, his drawing on these elements can sometimes be explained in terms of Analogy, of the influence of the oral tradition, and even by the influence of writers other than Achebe (such as Jomo Kenyatta, Frantz Fanon, George Lamming and Peter Abrahams). However, Ngugi's declarations leave little doubt that his choice to use 'conventional' aspects of modern African literature is stirred by his reading of Chinua Achebe in the first place. Thirty years after his interviews with Dennis Duerden and Aminu Abdullahi, Ngugi reiterates the same views in another interview with Harris Trivedi in 2003, vindicating all the more our claims here:

English literature is a great literature and the English language carries many important critical and intellectual traditions. So to come into contact with English is to come into contact with something both negative and positive, and the positive has as much to offer as any product of any other language. There are many great English writers – Conrad, Jane Austen, Shakespeare, Dickens, George Eliot – and that tradition is very important. But nevertheless, important as it is, it does not really reflect the human condition as expressed in the actualities of my history, of my culture and of my environment. It was really when I came into contact with novels written by African writers – Peter Abrahams, Chinua Achebe – I am thinking of the work of George Lamming – that I felt that he was reflecting a world which was familiar to me. He was talking about a colonial world and the colonial world was really my world, I was a product of that world, and this recognition was very, very important to me.²⁵

Although Achebe has also influenced Ngugi considerably in matters of characterisation as we shall attempt to demonstrate afterwards, (as well as in style and language), his direct impact on Ngugi is visionary and thematic. Ngugi's discussion of Achebe's work in an essay entitled "Chinua Achebe: A Man of the People" which he wrote in 1966, that is around the period in which he had been composing his first three novels, suggests it. In that essay, Ngugi interprets Achebe's first four novels – *Things Fall Apart*, *No*

²⁵ Ngugi in an interview in 2003 with Harris Trivedi and Wangui wa Goro entitled "Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Conversation," published in Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors (Eds.), *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks* (399 - 413), London: James Currey, 2006, p. 402.

Longer at Ease, *Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People* – in terms of their thematic significance, confirming that he has learnt from Achebe the importance of “speaking to” Africans, but also that he learnt from him ‘what to tell them.’ Ngugi reveals, in the same essay, an unreserved agreement with Achebe’s main creeds, including his argument in favour of a didactic character for African fiction. But he mainly reveals that he agrees with Achebe on the necessity, primacy and urgency of treating specific themes, or, rather, on the primacy of one major theme which they both identify as being *the* fundamental one, and *the* one to be “taught” by African fiction. This theme is African history.

C. Achebean Historical Elements in Ngugi's Fiction

The primacy of the theme of African history to both Achebe and Ngugi is beyond question: they obviously have a common ‘obsession’ with the African past. Achebe famously insists that this is “the theme to be disposed of” before turning to any others, and conceives of his work *partly* as a sort of work of memory.²⁶ Like Frantz Fanon, for example, he notices that the worst problem which the modern African person suffers from is a loss of his “senses of dignity and self-respect,” and that the origin of this “trauma” is to be found in the (colonial) past. If the African person is to be healed of this trauma, Achebe believes, an adequate understanding of what happened to him/her in that past is necessary and urgent. He insists, as well, that the realities and images of the pre-colonial African person, and, more broadly, those of life in the pre-colonial African past, have been oversimplified and misrepresented by the – ‘scientific’ and imaginative – literature written about Africa by non-African writers.²⁷ The dearth, say the absence, of more

²⁶ Achebe quoted in G. D. Killam, *The Novels of Chinua Achebe*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

²⁷ The unfaithfulness of colonialist literature and many other writings on Africa is largely documented. As regards imaginative literature, see for example Achebe’s *Hopes and Impediments* (mainly, but not only, the essay on Conrad), Ngugi’s *Homecoming*, *Decolonising the Mind* and *Moving the Centre* (in particular), Ezekiel Mphahlele’s *The African Image*, and the Chapter entitled “Foreign novelists on West Africa” (17 - 25), in Emmanuel Obiechina’s *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novels* (Cambridge UP, 1975). Such oversimplification and distortion of the images of Africa, or simply neglect of serious study of Africa’s history, are not just characteristic of the discourses found in works of fiction often cited in discussions of this kind of issues, but of most of what is written on Africa, including its history, by non-Africans altogether. Katie Crone-Barber argues that neglect, oversimplification and distortion of the image of Africa actually never really ceased:

The other response to my question of why African history isn’t more popular is simply that Africa is on the periphery, and therefore so is its history. We are surrounded by the symbols of World Wars, and the influence of European history on our everyday lives is hard to deny. In comparison, Africa is far removed. With so few personal connections and few connections in general, it is perhaps unsurprising that people are

truthful (written) records of the realities of those men and life, at least up to the period in which Achebe has been writing the novels he set in the past,²⁸ helped to establish those distorted images of Africa, even to African themselves, as (the only) 'truths' about Africa. This has contributed, he notices, not only in presenting false – exceedingly negative and only stereotypical – images of Africans and Africa in the West, but also in undermining all the more the modern African person's senses of self-esteem and self-confidence. They have deepened his "inferiority complex" and "neurosis," as Frantz Fanon would say.²⁹ It is mainly these facts that justify Achebe's belief that the priority for enlightened and educated Africans in general – *including creative writers* – is to help African people to recover their "senses of dignity and self-respect":

This is my answer to those who say that a writer should be writing about contemporary issues – about politics in 1964, about city life, about the last coup d'état. Of course these are all legitimate themes for the writer but as far as I am concerned the fundamental theme must first be disposed of. This theme – put quite simply – is that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless, but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self respect. The writer's duty

somewhat apathetic. What we do see of Africa in the news is rarely encouraging: civil wars, famine and poverty are a perpetual blight on the continent. If this is all there is now, then common perceptions of Imperialism seem validated. What purpose could there be in studying victims of racism and circumstance?"

Katie Crone-Barber, "What's Wrong with Africa?" Edited by Liam Geoghegan. Additional Research by Ellie Veryard. In *New Histories, The Free Online History Magazine*, URL: <http://newhistories.group.shef.ac.uk/wordpress/wordpress/?p=651>. 18 April 2010. Magazine Basic theme designed by *Themes by bavotasan.com*, powered by WordPress.

²⁸ In fact even today, in 2010, such dearth is still so much noticeable as to make Katie Crone-Barber wonder "why don't people care about Africa's history? I was somewhat disheartened when I searched through the University bookshop to discover only one, not very academic, book on African history. Why is it that there are shelves and shelves stacked with Soviet history, books on every aspect of the Second World War, the Spanish Civil War, the Tudors even, but for me there is only *A Very Short Introduction to African History*?" A few exceptions include John Reader and his important work *Africa-A Biography of the Continent* and Ryszard Kapuscinski, a Polish journalist, who, as Crone-Barber notes, "wrote about African affairs for almost four decades." One of Achebe's main points, as we will argue, is to do a work of memory on Africa which is of the same kind Kapuscinski does in *In The Shadow of the Sun*, "the memoirs of his time" in Africa, which, in Crone-Barber's words, "portrays Africa in a refreshing light. Although not technically a history book, it provides an insight rarely given by professional historians into the daily lives of Africans from every walk of life. He shows that while there is rampant poverty, there is also culture and pride and strength in these peoples. The humanity he describes is not so different from our own, and you will find yourself connecting with these people, willing them on and hoping for the best." Crone-Barber, *ibid.*

²⁹ Frantz Fanon typically uses these terms in both *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* to refer to the post-colonial psychic condition of the ("colonized") African person.

is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. There is a saying in Ibo that a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them.³⁰

It is not so much his faith in some absolute and permanent necessity, and perhaps not even in the possibility, of the commitment of art (in the way a radical Marxist writer for instance would see this commitment) as the priority of the struggle for things as fundamental for human beings as their senses of dignity and self respect that explains Achebe's conviction that imaginative writers have to partake of that struggle. As he argues in another place, "[a]n African imaginative writer who avoids writing about the socio-political issues of his country would end up completely irrelevant like the absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames."³¹ In this struggle for dignity, Achebe has reason to believe that the depiction of African history is the primary priority for an African novelist:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfection – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them. Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. 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 exclusive.³²

Out of the self-same idea and intention – the struggle for the "decolonisation" of the African mind from the alienating effects and legacies of colonialism by means of art – Ngugi develops a nearly identical point of view about the importance and priority of the theme of (African) history. He, too, maintains that "the writer's subject matter is history."³³ Like Achebe, as well, Ngugi insists on the priority of this subject for African novelists. In *Writers in Politics*, he seems even more resolute than Achebe as to the relevance of the task of the work of memory for a creative writer, the novelist in particular:

Literature has often given us more and sharper insights into the moving spirit of an era than all the historical and political documents treating the

³⁰ Achebe, quoted in G. D. Killam, *The Novels of Chinua Achebe*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

³¹ Achebe, "The African Writer and the Biafran Cause," quoted in G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe, *The Companion to African Literatures*, London: James Currey, 2000, p. 224.

³² Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays – 1965 – 87*, Heinemann International, 1988, p. 30.

³³ Tim Woods, *African Pasts – Memory and History in African Literatures*, Manchester UP, Manchester and New York, 2007, p. 79. Woods is paraphrasing Ngugi's argument in *Writers in Politics* (1981), p. 72. Similarly, Simon Gikandi notes that Ngugi's "primary topic is history." Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (2000), *op. cit.*, p. 14

same moments in a society's development. The novel in particular, especially in its realist critical tradition, is important in that respect: it pulls apart and it puts together; it is both analytic and synthetic.³⁴

Accordingly, he too has, in 'Tim Woods' words, "made of [African] history, and the exploration of [that] history a principal feature of his critical realistic fiction."³⁵

Ngugi's concern with this theme certainly originated in the influence of writers and thinkers other than Achebe – mainly Jomo Kenyatta, Peter Abrahams, George Lamming and Frantz Fanon, as noted previously.³⁶ The theses developed by these and other such thinkers (another is Fanon's teacher,³⁷ Aimé Césaire, for instance), their analyses of colonialism and slavery, and of the impacts of these events on the psyche of the modern African person largely intersect with Achebe's discourse on the subject.³⁸ These thinkers and writers all urge the need for the African person to struggle to recover his lost dignity, and suggest that to achieve any success in this respect it is necessary to define and treat the origins, and not the symptoms, of his "neuroses," to put it in Fanon's term. Indeed, all these thinkers make points on the importance of the 'analysis of the past' in any

³⁴ Ngugi, *Writers in Politics*, p. 72, quoted in Tim Woods, *op. cit.*.

³⁵ Tim Woods, *op. cit.*, pp. 79 - 80.

³⁶ Ngugi owes this interest in history to a multitude of other writers and thinkers, including non-African ones. His argument about the importance of the past for the work of imaginative writers, and African writers in particular, in his essay "The Writer and His Past," in *Homecoming*, suggests that this interest is rooted in ideas of Aristotle, the work of T. S. Eliot, and the historical novel, mainly the work of Tolstoy – particularly *War and Peace* – and Sholokhov –especially *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Ngugi also suggests in the same document that the impact of "the West Indian novel" in general which, he notes, "is in part preoccupied with a general quest for roots" (*Homecoming*, p. 40) is crucial in the same respect. Once more, he refers to George Lemming in particular, here namely to his essay *The Pleasures of Exile*, and cites Orlando Patterson's novel *An Absence of Ruins*, and V. S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* as cases in point. Concerning African writers, Ngugi discusses, as part of his argument in the same essay, the work of Peter Abrahams, namely his novels *The Wild Conquest* and *Mine Boy*, and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People*. But his analysis makes it clear that, in terms of "restoring "the African character to his history," the impact the work of Chinua Achebe has had on him is outstanding. For more detail about the importance of the influence of Achebe himself and of writers and thinkers other than Achebe on Ngugi in this respect, see in particular Ngugi's essay "The Writer and His Past," in *Homecoming*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 39 - 46.

³⁷ At the *lycée* Schoelcher, Fort-de-France, Martinique.

³⁸ For example, Frantz Fanon's objective in *Black Skin, White Masks* is not in the least different from Achebe's. Fanon sets forth his point in that book as follows: "What I want to do is help the black man to free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment." Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann, London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1968 (originally published as *Peau noir, masques blancs*, Paris: Seuil, 1952), p. 30. In his turn, Fanon is inspired by Aimé Césaire in writing *Black Skin, White Masks*. The book begins with epigraph from Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme*, namely the following: "I am talking of millions of men who have been skilfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement." *ibid.*, p. 9. The chapter entitled "The So-Called Dependency Complex of Colonized Peoples," in the same essay by Fanon, also starts with a citation from Césaire's *Et les Chiens se taisent*. *ibid.*, p. 83.

efficient process of,³⁹ and struggle for, 'healing' the African person from the internalised "inferiority complex," to borrow again Fanon's word, which was created in him/her by his/her (former) enslavers and colonisers, and which cripples his/her abilities and shackles his/her constructive energies. Thus, and because there is no doubt that Ngugi has read those works as well, and that they have had a great impact on him, it has to be noted that his interest in Kenya/Africa's past(s) should not be seen as an effect of Achebe's influence alone, tremendous and particular as this influence is. It should rather be seen as a culmination of his own individual efforts and reflections on the question in the midst of the remarkable influence on him of these and similar writers altogether.

It needs to be pointed out at this juncture as well that, in spite of their common and characteristic interest in Africa's past(s), a number of important differences are noticeable in Ngugi's and Achebe's imaginative treatments of this/these past(s). For example, the periods of African history that the writers are typically concerned with and the geographical settings from which that history is considered are different. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, which particularly influenced Ngugi in so far as the theme of history is concerned, Achebe is interested in the pre-colonial and the early colonial periods, and principally in the Ibo tribe. In contrast, Ngugi is mainly concerned with a more recent past, and specifically in the period of the Mau Mau war and its aftermath in the Kikuyu area and Kenya though he also strives to link these periods with Kenya's remoter, colonial and pre-colonial pasts in all his stories.

Also, when Ngugi deals directly with the pre-colonial period, he depicts it mainly as mythical, or, at least, he endows it with a pointed mythical dimension whereas Achebe's pre-colonial past is represented with more realism, though he too now and again alludes to Ibo mythology, includes romantic passages and brings into play romantic techniques.⁴⁰ It is as if, for Achebe, it is self-evident that Africa's history began before colonialism, while things are more problematic when it comes to Ngugi's vision and treatment of that history. For Ngugi, it seems, Africa/Kenya's history has existence and meaning only if it is seen as one of anti-colonialist and, more generally, anti-imperialist and class-based struggle. Put otherwise, the world of Achebe's "ethnic" novels at least – those which have influenced Ngugi in so far as the theme of African history is concerned – is definitely Africa's

³⁹ Fanon advocates on the other hand a rebellion on that past to overcome the trauma, nevertheless. Ridding himself of the burden of his/her tragic past, Fanon argues, will allow the black/colonised person to make a "tabula rasa" that will be the platform for a new, 'virgin' departure of this man. In the concluding chapter in *Black Skin, White Masks*, he points out: "I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists in introduction invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself." *ibid.*, p. 229.

⁴⁰ By Romantic technique we mean mainly Achebe's occasional references to symbol and myth and use of nature in order to sustain his (essentially realistic) narratives.

pre-colonial past itself, and which he depicts from an 'eclectic,' but mostly liberal, point of view. In contrast, one of the many worlds of Ngugi's novels is the anti-colonial struggle as it took place in Kenya, depicted from an equally 'eclectic,' but more problematic,⁴¹ though perhaps principally revolutionary, standpoint. Tim Wood's definition of Ngugi's typical relation to Africa's past – though such a definition is questionable in that it disregards the important fact that the relevance of Ngugi's vision of Africa's history should be considered in the light of his influence by the Marxist view of history – is relevant to our point. Wood considers that that relationship does not seem as intimate and "genuine" as it is in the case of Achebe's first three novels:

In narratives that bear witness to the contested historical experience of Kenya since the 1920s, Ngugi has constantly probed the ethical problem of how the novelist can represent history without compromising it or becoming imprisoned within the past (...) Ngugi seems to be constantly separated from that past: he writes from the position of one who remembers the recent African past vividly, but he does not seem to be connected to this past except through its remembrance and – ultimately – its representation in narrative.⁴²

Wood's comment seems to be directly inspired by Simon Gikandi's analysis of the representation of Kenya's/Africa's past in Ngugi's fiction. Gikandi's argument offers explanation of the ambiguity that characterises Ngugi's "version" of that past:

Even as the novelist draws on his own subjective experiences to invest his version of the past with moral authority, the astute reader cannot fail to notice the gap that separates him from his past. Ngugi writes from the position of one who remembers the recent African past vividly, but he does not seem to be connected to this past except through its remembrance and – ultimately – its representation in narrative. If Ngugi's works seem to be driven by an ardent desire for the historical, it is because history (...) seems to be blocked by the narratives designed to represent it. This blockage comes from two sources: first, the events which Ngugi considers to be central to his own understanding of Kenyan history – land alienation, colonial terror, and nationalist resistance (...) – were until the publication of his work, considered to be absences, voids, or silences. Secondly, because Ngugi was a student in a privileged colonial school and university college when the events he remembers took place, he was never part of their immediate context. He was connected to the drama of history

⁴¹ "More problematic" in matters of the possibilities of ideological and philosophical interpretations it allows.

⁴² Tim Woods, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

through his family and class, but separated from them through his colonial education.⁴³

Other critics even perceive an antagonism in the two novelists' perspectives – including on African history – in view of what they think to be Ngugi's resolute Marxism (or what they call his "radicalism") on the one hand, and Achebe's pure liberalism on the other.⁴⁴ Florence Stratton's point via her comment on an argument in C. L. Innes' analysis of Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* is an extreme example of this:

As C. L. Innes indicates in her discussion of *Anthills*, Ngugi is one of the implied literary antagonists in Achebe's novel, which, through the character of Ikem, who had himself once been a proponent of Marxism, offers what he calls a "new radicalism," from the perspective of which he views the practice of "heap[ing] all our problems on the doorstep of capitalism and imperialism" as absurd and irresponsible. He also ridicules "[t]hose who would see no blot of villainy in the beloved oppressed nor grant the finest glimmer of humanity to the hated oppressor"(100), and condemns Marxist revolutionary theory as presumptuous and narrowly dogmatic in its self-assured prescriptions.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the influence of Chinua Achebe is tremendous, and exceptional, in this respect. This is made clear by Ngugi in at least two essays in which he discusses/celebrates Achebe's works, namely "The Writer and His Past" and "Chinua Achebe: A Man of the People." Ngugi's recurrent argument about the priority of history for the work of the novelist shows that, like Achebe, he conceives of his creative enterprise largely as a work of memory. In "The Writer and His Past," his point recalls Achebe's striving to "sensitively register (...) his people's history" through fiction: "The novelist," he writes, "is haunted by a sense of the past. His work is often an attempt to come to terms with 'the thing that has been,' a struggle, as it were, to sensitively register his encounter with history, his people's history."⁴⁶ Ngugi's expression "to come to terms with the thing that has been" even literally recalls Achebe's idea that Africa's past is "the theme

⁴³ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o, op. cit.*, p. p. 7 – 8. For more detail on Ngugi's typical attitude to history see the same document, Chapter I, pp. 3 – 8 in particular. See also James Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*. London: Pluto Press, 1999, in particular the chapter entitled "Ngugi's Concept of History," p. p. 1 – 15.

⁴⁴ From our point of view, as well, there is no doubt that Ngugi has Marxist influences and leanings while Achebe has a leaning to liberalism. But what these critics deem to be the simple and pure opposition between Achebe's and Ngugi's perspectives is in fact only an alleged difference in their neither totally liberal nor Marxist philosophies. Ngugi and Achebe refer themselves to an equally complex blending of both these ideologies, various variations on them, Christianity, plus a basically Africanist perspective that is *the* central 'ideology' of both.

⁴⁵ Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 164.

⁴⁶ Ngugi, "The Writer and His Past," *op. cit.*, p. 40.

to be disposed of.” While he shows, in the same essay, scepticism towards the representation of African history in Peter Abrahams’ works, he displays total agreement with Achebe’s attitude to the subject. He notes for instance that, in contrast to Abrahams’ characters, Achebe’s characters “live in history – yet they are not mere cogs in the machine – because they (the Okonkwos and Ezeulus) are the makers of history.”⁴⁷ Also, Ngugi’s first two novels and part of *A Grain of Wheat* were written before he came across Frantz Fanon and George Lamming,⁴⁸ and while Achebe’s influence and fame were at their apogees. Furthermore, critics such as Douglas Killam, Leonard Podis and Yakubu Saaka, think about Ngugi’s interest in the past as a consequence of Achebe’s influence. For example, Podis and Saaka write, in “*Anthills of the Savannah* and *Petals of Blood*: The Creation of a Usable Past,” that the “influence of the works of Chinua Achebe on those of Ngugi wa Thiong’o dates back to the early 1960s when Ngugi, in the wake of *Things Fall Apart*, recognized in Achebe a great novelist who had set about reclaiming the African past.”⁴⁹

Even Ngugi’s concern with the Mau Mau and the post-independence periods of Africa’s history may be associated with the influence of Achebe’s ideas about the role of the African novelist “as historian,” and this in two distinct ways. The first is that Ngugi may have chosen to write about those particular periods as part of a design to further the task Achebe has started, by dealing with periods of Africa’s history that are subsequent to those Achebe had ‘documented’, as it were, and in regions of Africa other than those Achebe had written about. This can, therefore, appear as a sign of his common interest with Achebe to provide Africa with a comprehensive and trustworthy written history within the limits of fiction. It could, in other words, be regarded as a result of the influence of Achebe’s teachings on the necessity for African writers to adhere to his cause, and join in the struggle for an objective and detailed written African history through imaginative literature to which he had laid the foundation. The second way in which Ngugi’s concern with Kenya’s/Africa’s relatively recent and specific past can be seen as a consequence of Achebe’s influence, is that Ngugi has also been influenced in writing some of his latest works – namely *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow* – by Achebe’s works which are set in the post-independence period, namely *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. And, as we shall see later on in this chapter, Achebe’s representation of African history, especially in the colonial period, is not free from ambivalence, even if such ambivalence is not as remarkable as it is in

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴⁸ Ngugi encountered the works of both Lamming and Fanon by 1967, while he was at Leeds studying for an MA.

⁴⁹ Leonard A. Podis and Yakubu Saaka, “*Anthills of the Savannah* and *Petals of Blood*: The Creation of a Usable Past,” in *Challenging Hierarchies: Issues and Themes in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Leonard A. Podis and Yakubu Saaka (eds.), New York: Peter Lang, 1998, p. 291.

Ngugi's case. After all, "the distinction between history and fiction is itself paradoxical," since "the narrativization of history is," in the end, "engendered by the author's desire to go beyond simple historicism," as "numerous advocates of the 'new historicism' have argued."⁵⁰ Thus, even what could appear as blatant points of divergence, are likely to be merely nuances concealing some of the most essential convergences in the two novelists' 'versions' of African pasts.

Ngugi's analyses of Achebe's first four novels – *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People* – in "Chinua Achebe: A Man of the People" shows that he read, interpreted and appreciated these novels chiefly in terms of their historical significance. His interpretation of them reveals that it is indeed their focus on African history, as part of the struggle for the "recovery of dignity and self-respect," that first mattered about them for Ngugi:

In 1964 Mr Chinua Achebe told a conference on Commonwealth Literature at Leeds that part of his business as a novelist was to teach, to re-educate his society out of their acceptance of racial inferiority. "Here, then," he said, "is an adequate revolution for me to espouse – to help my society regain its belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-denigration."⁵¹

A comparison of Ngugi's novels with those of Achebe – mainly *Things Fall Apart* – from the point of view of their treatments of African history confirms these premises, and highlights specific ways in which major elements of Achebe's treatment of this theme are "transplanted" into Ngugi's fiction.

*

It is common knowledge that Achebe's "ethnic novels"⁵² – mainly *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* – have a pointed historical dimension. Achebe's treatment of the theme of African history aims, on the one hand, to show Africans "what they lost." And, "what they lost" is, in the logic of these novels, the definitely not perfect, but not merely "dark" and "savage"

⁵⁰ The idea and the quotations are Simon Gikandi's. See Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o, op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵¹ Ngugi, "Chinua Achebe: A Man of the People," *Homecoming* (51 - 54), London: Heinemann, 1972, p. 51. Ngugi mentions the same idea in "The Writer and His Past": Achebe in fact is very explicit about his intentions as a writer. He sees his task as helping his society to regain its belief in itself and to put away the complexes of years of denigration and self denigration," he writes. Ngugi, *Homecoming, op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵² The term "ethnic novels" is used by G. D. Killam and Rowe to indicate the "category" of Achebe's novels set in the Ibo context, i. e. *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* (and to distinguish them from the other "category" of what they call Achebe's "national" novels, i. e. the three other ones. G. D. Killam and Ruth Rowe, *The Companion to African Literatures, op. cit.*, p. 2. The term is use in the same sense, and for the same purpose, whenever it appears here.

pre-colonial world of their ancestors and, with that, their “senses of dignity and self respect.” By the same token, the plots of these novels – especially *Things Fall Apart* – are designed so that they *demonstrate* that “what happened” to them is a tragic “falling apart” of that world and, with it, those senses of dignity and self-respect. As we shall see hereafter, *Things Fall Apart* insinuates that that collapse was made possible by shortcomings in the traditional African cultures, but that it was mainly a consequence of colonialism; that is, the colonisation of Africa is shown as the moment “when the rain began to beat” Africans. Achebe fully exploits “the art of fiction,” as he conceives of it, in this intention. Nevertheless, his favourite method is an almost strict truthfulness to both history and realism, or, to put it in one term, to historical realism.

Thus, on the one hand, Achebe's depiction of the Ibo pre-colonial past points up serious imperfections in that past, including ‘defaults of culture.’ He underlines the violence and stiffness of some Ibo mores and customs, the narrow-mindedness and abuses of some of their own priests and other people of authority and, generally, the fact that they suffered from taboos. The writer points to the fact that a society in which a tragedy like that of Ikemefuna, provoked by a specific practice of a belief, and which has various forms of human sacrifice as a normal feature – including the rejection of twins, ostracism and body-mutilations – is far from being a perfect one. His depiction of Ikemefuna's putting to death is the apogee of Achebe's intransigence as to his acknowledgment of the “imperfections” of the African past he depicts – in this case, simply the cruelty of some of its aspects.⁵³ Other serious defects of these societies that Achebe typically highlights are polygamy and patriarchy. Of the many instances where polygamy and patriarchy are put into question in his work, his depiction of Okonkwo's household provides the most detailed example. “Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children” (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 10), the narrator tells us from the beginning. And we are given an opportunity to verify this practically on every occasion in which Okonkwo's compound is described. In his reference to the experience of Nneka, Achebe's criticism of ritual violence, polygamy and patriarchy goes so far as to suggest that it is these weaknesses, and not the power of colonialism, that made possible the colonisation of traditional African societies:

Nneka had had four previous pregnancies and childbirths. But each time she had borne twins, and they had been immediately thrown away. Her husband and his family were already becoming highly critical of such a

⁵³ See Achebe's poignant account of Ikemefuna's tragedy and execution, *Things Fall Apart*, Chapter Seven, p. p. 45 - 54.

woman and were not unduly perturbed when they found she had fled to join the Christians. It was a good riddance (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 136).

However, the pre-colonial African world which Achebe depicts is neither as simple nor as “savage” as to be merely cruel or dangerous. The worth of that world, Achebe insists, does not so much lie in its originality as it does in its complexity. Achebe points to its cultural and human diversity and complexity, and presents it simply as a world of humans – not an “Eden,” and not a “heart of darkness.” That world is made interesting because the complexities of human nature, human communities and of life in general are shown to apply to it in their entirety. There are important differences between the collective worldviews and the cultures of the peoples of Umuofia and Mbanta for example. For one notable difference, while Umuofia (the community of Okonkwo’s father) gives priority to the worship of the god Chukwo – “Chukwo is supreme” is Umuofia’s creed – Mbanta (symbolically, Okonkwo’s mother’s fellow people) gives supremacy, not to Chukwo (though the supreme god in Mbanta as well), but to mothers and women: “Mother is supreme” is Mbanta’s slogan, and the female deity, “Ani,” the earth goddess, seems to prevail there.⁵⁴ Human diversity is pointed up in Achebe’s novels through the difference, again often the contrasts, in the personalities of his characters. The contrasts between Unoka and Okonkwo, and between the latter and Nwoye are not just significant but very symbolic in this respect. They suggest divergence in mentality not only between members of the same village, as is suggested via the other pointed contrast between Obierika and Okonkwo, but also between a father and his own son. Furthermore, as we shall see in more detail in our comparison of characterisation in Ngugi’s and Achebe’s novels in the coming section, Achebe strives to show that such differences in people’s personalities in traditional African societies are natural – they depend on natural processes – and are not just historical fact. They are determined, as anywhere else, on the workings of psychology *as defined by Sigmund Freud*, as we shall see in our comparison of characterisation in Ngugi’s and Achebe’s fictions in the last section of the present chapter. M’hamed Bensemmane’s argument in “Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*: Narrating Leadership and Social Order” corroborates our point as it suggests that the “counter-discursive agency” in *Things Fall Apart* lies not so much in its “eulogy of the ancestral way of life,” but in its criticism of the “Manichaeian approach of Empire” by pointing up the complexity of that

⁵⁴ For more detail on these beliefs see, for instance, M’hamed Bensemmane’s study “The Role of Supernatural Beliefs in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*,” published in *Langues et Litteratures*, Algiers, OPU, 1990, p. 29 – 39.

way of life.⁵⁵ Further to those just outlined, Bensemmane illumines other crucial aspect of that complexity:

[B]eyond his eulogy of the ancestral traditional way of life, Achebe has taken the challenge in his work to address the complexity of Ibo social structures, because, as he insists, "Africa is very complex" (...), and to disclose some important problems relating to internal cohesion and the seeming "democracy" with which Ibo affairs were conducted.⁵⁶

But while thus presenting a generally realistic picture of Umuofia, Achebe exploits every opportunity offered by fiction and history to show that Umuofians had, moreover, "a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty" as he claims in one of his essays.⁵⁷ Thus, except for violent and other negative practices of the kind we mentioned earlier, usual human vices and other "imperfections," he makes sure that the world which he describes does not look "savage" or sad but remarkable, beautiful and happy in spite of those imperfections. It is significant in this respect that Umuofia is presented to us as being one of the most belligerent of the other communities he depicts or mentions. Umuofia, Achebe suggests by this, does not stand for the 'best' but rather for some of the 'worst' traditional African communities; it is the nearest to the kind of African tribes depicted as "hearts of darkness" in Western literature.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, he endeavours to demonstrate that many of the fundamental principles and social mechanisms even in a community of "warriors" such as Umuofia, and that most of the men who lived there, were in reality positive and valuable, at least ordinary, by all human standards.

Indeed there is more to please than to appal readers about Umuofia and its inhabitants: it is in general a peaceable, well-ordered and, in the main, prosperous and *happy* society. To successfully present it as such, Achebe relies primarily on realism. His realistic depiction of the *egwugwu* ritual-masquerade in Chapter Ten (*Things Fall Apart*, p. p. 63 - 67), for example, obviously aims to demonstrate that traditional Ibo rituals are not mere superstition, but practices which are rooted in pragmatic ideas and which have, furthermore, practical social and judiciary purposes. Despite the importance of the ceremony from the spiritual point of view, Achebe

⁵⁵ M'hamed Bensemmane, "Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: Narrating Leadership and Social Order" (75 - 90), in *Al Adab Wa Lugbat*, N° 3, June 2008, p. 77.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Achebe, quoted in G. D. Killam, *The Novels of Chinua Achebe*, *op. cit.*, p. 8

⁵⁸ It is equally significant in this context that "Umuofia" is Igbo for the "people of the forest." For an excellent argument in this context, see Victor S. Alumona's "Portrayal and Criticism of Culture and Societal institutions in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Journal on African Philosophy*: Issue 3, 2003. See in particular, the section entitled "The Irony of the Name Umuofia."

focuses on its pragmatic significance, suggesting that only children in Umuofia believe in *egwugwu*. As to the grown up people of Umuofia, it is for them – he insinuates – an occasion for meeting, settling matrimonial and other judiciary matters, learning and having fun. The *egwugwu* scene shows, among other things, how the Ibo conceived of justice, having an acute sense of equity and not just a faint perception of judiciary practice. In *Chapter Two*, where he deals with the conflict between Umuofia and Mbaino, Achebe shows that pre-colonial Umuofia had simple but efficient and egalitarian systems of social organisation and government. For example, the decision to “despatch an ultimatum to Mbaino” is taken by the people gathered in the market place, after their summoning, with their participation and only with their approval. The meeting in the market itself looks like an archaic form of parliament or legislative body.⁵⁹ Equally, Achebe reveals that Umuofia, although the strongest and one of the most quarrelsome among the other communities he mentions in the story, privileges peace and considers violence as a necessary evil – and war a last remedy – in settling its conflicts with other clans. Despite its ‘military’ and ‘intellectual’ supremacy – “Umuofia was feared by all its neighbours” because it “was powerful in war and magic, and its priests and medicine-men were feared in all the surrounding country” (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 9) – it does not wage war on Mbaino directly. It tries first a ‘peaceful’ arrangement of its disagreement with its people and indeed succeeds in getting at that. And, as the narrator tells us, Umuofia would, as a rule, never fight “what the Ibo call a fight of blame.” In other words, it would never go to war, unless the war was justified and necessary: “in fairness to Umuofia it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just” (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 9). The “week of peace,” also called the “sacred week,” implies that peace is simply sacred in Umuofia.

The pre-colonial African communities that Achebe describes are also depicted as having cultures based on lofty values, even though some of these values resulted in negative rites and traditions. Some of the principles which Achebe emphasises are dignity, love of justice, honour, courage, individual achievements, respect of ancestry, sacrifice, eloquence, modesty, sharing, mutual help, and, notably, a very strong sense of communal interest. And when these values may appear incomprehensible or questionable by given standards – like respect of ancestry and sharing – Achebe does his best to introduce us to the positive philosophies behind them and their good intentions. Achebe points out that the members of these communities had, for instance, a very pointed sense of eloquence by emphasising the proverbial and metaphoric qualities of their speech and conversations. He also shows that they had literature and art through his frequent references to

⁵⁹ See the scene in question, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 8.

fables, and other forms of art like music (through Unoka and Okoy), songs and masquerades such as the *egwugwu*.

In order to make sure that the images of the past communities he presents us with look ultimately positive, Achebe now and again departs from realism, and draws on romanticist procedures. These consist in the main of nostalgic narrations on aspects of life in that past, like those relating to his depictions of Unoka and Nwoye, and in bringing into play nature, symbolism and myth. There is also a tendency to romanticise in his depictions of wedding (and even death) ceremonies, and of the new *yam* and *egwugwu* festivals. The narrator says, for example, that “the New Yam Festival was an occasion for joy throughout Umuofia” and rather romantically elaborates on this point.⁶⁰

Despite differences between the two novelists, most of which we outlined earlier, the past Ngugi deals with is very similar to that which Achebe depicts. As is the case in Achebe's ethnic novels, mainly *Things Fall Apart*, the pre-colonial African communities Ngugi presents us with in his first three novels and – to a lesser extent – in the succeeding ones are societies with “imperfections.” The pre-colonial Rift Valley in *The River Between*, old Thabai in *A Grain of Wheat*, and old Ilmorog in *Petals of Blood* – those of the “elders” of the books mainly – are not without faults, though these do not seem as ‘serious’ as those in Achebe's stories. The shortcomings of Ngugi's (past and immediate) African communities are furthermore of the same kind as those Achebe typically deals with: in general *violent* practices which are often symbolised in Ngugi's novels by female circumcision, and, again like Achebe, and no less typically, through polygamy and patriarchy.

The question of clitoridectomy is central in *The River Between*, and, ultimately, its treatment may well provoke in readers feelings of repulsion, and discomforts of the same kind as those Achebe's depictions of the human and blood sacrifices in *Things Fall Apart*. To some extent, the example chosen by Ngugi is more problematic than those Achebe uses: violent and tragic as it is, clitoridectomy is not as wholly cruel a practice as the twin-throwing and the other human sacrifices of *Things Fall Apart*. The symbol is in itself not as wholly tragic as the ‘murders of children,’ so to speak, of *Things Fall Apart*. What is more, it is possible to argue that Ngugi's aims by dealing with such practices are not totally the same as Achebe's. Achebe's narration of the tragedy of Ikemefuna and his repeated references to twin-throwing obviously convey his ‘acknowledgment’ that some pre-colonial African societies suffered from serious and definitely unjustifiable flaws. They leave us in no doubt that Achebe is not only opposed to such practices but also to the intolerant and inflexible aspects of the philosophy

⁶⁰ See Achebe's indeed nostalgic description of the Feast of the New Yam, *Things Fall Apart*, p. p. 26 - 27.

which such practices spring from and stand for. By contrast, Ngugi's position towards clitoridectomy and the violent rituals that it symbolises in *The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat* is certainly problematic. If he too is, from our point of view, critical of this practice in particular and of 'cults of violence' in general, his position is far less overtly expressed than Achebe's. Ngugi's intention seems not so much to underscore the violence of these practices as to draw attention to the complexity of the cultural situations and identity issues created by colonialism in Kenya and Africa, mainly by the missionaries' ventures to demonize and ban such rituals.⁶¹

Nevertheless, if only because one of the novel's heroines, Muthoni, *dies* of the complications of clitoridectomy, while the latter is relatively rarely a fatal operation, Ngugi suggests, in *The River Between*, that 'it would have been preferable' that the otherwise beautiful philosophy of the Agikuyu did not involve such violence. While we are made aware of the great importance of such sacrifices and 'body mutilations' to the Agikuyu, and are introduced to the elaborate and good-intentioned philosophy behind them, we are no less made to deplore Muthoni's death as a result of her circumcision and, accordingly, regret the violent nature of such rituals and their tragic effects on individuals. Because Achebe suggests that human sacrifices and blood rituals were not generalised in traditional African communities and that, where they exist(ed), they were doomed to disappear while Ngugi depicts them as inseparable parts of the Gikuyu philosophy of life, we are, in the case of Ngugi, additionally impelled to regret that these practices are such crucial parts of the pre-colonial world he evokes.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, the classroom argument between young Kihika and his teacher does exemplify again the complexity of the identity and cultural crises created by colonialism and the dangers of assimilation, but it also takes a critical position towards Gikuyu traditional practices and values symbolised, here again, by female circumcision. Though we rather sympathize with Kihika and give him reason for putting into question the odd logic of his assimilated teacher and his abuse of his authority as a teacher,⁶² Ngugi's position on female circumcision remains, to say the least, ambiguous. Yet it is extremely significant that the defence of female circumcision and the 'values of the past' which it incarnates are taken by a child. In addition, this child's subsequent choice of violence as a means of

⁶¹ Ngugi's puzzlement is comprehensible. Though a cruel practice, clitoridectomy is, more than an important tradition, a symbol which really encompasses – in the story as well as in reality – the whole, and not just part, of the Gikuyu identity and view of life. It is a cornerstone of their self-definition. An uncircumcised Gikuyu female (still considerably nowadays) simply has 'nothing to do' with the Agikuyu. The significance of this operation, one can propose for comparison, is at least as significant for the Agikuyu as male circumcision is to the Muslim and, to a lesser extent, to the Jewish, peoples for instance.

⁶² The teacher recalls the false devotion and excess of zeal of some Christian converts in Achebe's stories – precisely the son of the priest of the "sacred python" who captures, kills and eats the sacred snake to show his devotion to the missionaries.

liberation, his violent speeches, actions, zeal and personal motivations as a Mau Mau are first sketched through his reaction in that episode. Kihika's point is not that clitoridectomy should not be banned because it is a positive practice, nor even because of its importance to the Gikuyu as the argument should have been if Ngugi was favourable to this practice. His point is that "the Bible does not say so," that it does not forbid female circumcision, which suggests more the child's devotion to the Bible than his conscious attachment to the ancestral traditions of his fellow people. This, in turn, suggests at least Ngugi's reticence regarding female circumcision as such and the whole issue of violence in traditional African contexts which it partly stands for.

Ngugi's depictions of polygamy and patriarchy in a way that is equally reminiscent of Achebe's representation of the same "imperfections" of the African past are obvious in *A Grain of Wheat* and the later novels. In *A Grain of Wheat*, he provides an extremely vehement critique of polygamy through Karanja's father, for instance, whose view of matrimony and treatment of his wives and children recall Okonkwo and his household. Karanja's troubled personality and disreputable behaviour as an adult find explanation in his being brought up in a polygamous household. Polygamy, Ngugi suggests in this example, is founded on a traditional conception of matrimony and of gender relationships in general that are erroneous and oppressive. The way he tells us about Karanja's birth clearly bears an attack on polygamy and more broadly on the traditional(ist) conception of matrimony and family relationships, presenting them as repressive of women and children alike:

It was never easy to tell the relationship between Karanja and his mother. She was the third of the four wives that Karanja's father had acquired by paying so much bride price in goats and cattle. He acquired them, yes, and then left them to their own resources. He built his hut a mile away from his wives, maintaining equidistance in emotions and help from each of the wives and their children. He visited each woman in turn, sprung a child at her and then retired to his hut. Wairimu's children died at birth; Karanja was the sole survivor, the only living evidence of her man's surprise visit to her bed (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 220 - 221).

From this standpoint, and while they inform us of the prejudices of the colonists concerning the characters of native people and their ignorance of native cultures, even Margery Thompson's "favourite question to Africans," "how many wives do you have?", and, more particularly, her question to Karanja, "when will you buy a wife?", are, offensive as they are, parts of this critique. Margery is shown as tactless for asking such questions, and for thinking so poorly about Africans, but Ngugi tells us that she started doing so only "the day she discovered her latest cook had three wives" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 38). While Ngugi makes us realise that polygamy was not a

generalised practice in traditional Africa, as he suggests through Mumbi's parents for instance,⁶³ these examples illustrate very well the writer's view of polygamy, as in Achebe's novels, as one of the greatest shortcomings of traditional African societies.

Ngugi's fiction provides a critique of patriarchy more broadly, a reality which Achebe deplores in his stories as we have seen. In *A Grain of Wheat*, this critique can be exemplified by Gikonyo's relationship with Mumbi after his return from detention, and through the dramatisation of Mumbi more generally. Gikonyo's 'post-detention' treatment of Mumbi – his permanent anger and silence, his beating her and even the words he uses with, and to refer to, her – again literally recall Okonkwo's tyrannical 'rule' of his compound. The following passage is a good example of this; it reminds us of Achebe's critique of both polygamy and patriarchy through his depictions of Okonkwo's relationship with Ekwefi in particular, since he would even barely talk to his other wives:

When Gikonyo came home in the evening, Mumbi could tell that he was in a bad mood. First he did not talk to her. This was not unusual. Then, when she gave him food, he only glanced at it once and then continued staring at the wall. Again this was not unusual. But it was the way he was breathing, as if suppressing a groan, which convinced her that something had happened. Though scared of him, of his moods, she could not help but probe into his affairs. "What is the trouble?" She asked with submissive concern. "Since when did I start discussing my affairs with you?" He answered (...) "Mugo was here today" (...) "What!" he shouted at her as if she was responsible for Mugo's actions. She did not answer. "Have you no ears? It's to you that I am speaking" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 162).

Gikonyo's threats to Mumbi and the words he uses for that – "shut your mouth woman" (*Grain of Wheat*, p. 163), and "I'll make you shut this mouth" (a little later in the same scene, p. 163) – definitely bring to mind Okonkwo's warnings to Ekwefi as well as the vocabulary he uses with her in similar situations. Though the state of affairs is not exactly the same, the scene as a whole seems to be an adaptation of a specific scene in *Things Fall Apart*, one in which Achebe dramatises one of Okonkwo's shows of manliness in order to reveal to us the tragic consequences of his obsession with virility on his wives and children:

Okonkwo, who had been walking about aimlessly in his compound in suppressed anger, suddenly found an outlet. "Who killed this banana tree?" he asked. A hush fell on the compound immediately. "Who killed this tree? Or are you all deaf and dumb?" As a matter of fact the tree was

⁶³ Kihika's father is monogamous, and he and his wife married out of romantic love, Ngugi suggests.

very much alive. Okonkwo's second wife has merely cut a few leaves off it to wrap some food, and she said so. Without further argument Okonkwo gave her a sound beating and left her and her only daughter crying (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 33).

In both scenes the husbands are in a state of suppressed anger, are looking for an outlet, and so provoke the wives. In both cases as well the wives 'dare' to riposte with sarcastic comments which suggest their husbands' lack of virility, and, in both, this provokes unprecedentedly violent reactions from the husbands. In reaction to Ekwefi's "murmuring" "something on guns that never shot" after being beaten in the above, Okonkwo misses killing her (shooting her with a gun). Likewise, to Mumbi's remarks "what sort of a man do you call yourself? and "have you no manly courage to touch me," Gikonyo calls her a "whore" and beats her for the first time (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 163). Furthermore, in the two scenes the wives are beaten in the presence of their only child and, in both, child and mother are left crying. Finally, in both scenes the violence is rather knowingly caused by wives in distressed situations due to the husbands' ignorance and ill-treatment of them. Though Gikonyo's disappointment is understandable in view of Mumbi's adultery, his abuses are not. His reaction testifies to his markedly patriarchal mentality which is comparable to that of Okonkwo and which, just like his wife's disloyalty, can only be deplored.

As Achebe does through Ekwefi, it seems plain that one of Ngugi's main intentions from his depiction of Mumbi's predicament is to put patriarchy into question, and present it as one of the most deplorable legacies of the past. The conversation between Mumbi (who epitomises the present, and the future prospects of the 'feminine condition' in Kenya) and her mother (who symbolises the past) – when the former goes back to her parents as a result of the above – clearly points this up, even if it seems to pay tribute to the women of the past for their patience with their husbands and total devotions to their households. The very strong last sentence in that argument, particularly, gives us an idea of Ngugi's intransigence when it comes to the critique of patriarchy and to the necessity for African women to break free from the patriarchal legacies of the past. It is noteworthy that, very critical of patriarchy as he too is, Achebe would not go this far:

"The women of today surprise me. They cannot take a slap, soft as a feather, or the slightest breath, from a man. In our time, a woman could take blow and blow from her husband without a thought of running back to her parents." "Don't you care about me anymore? I cannot stay in his house again. Not after what he said – I cannot, I cannot." "Ssh! Don't you talk like a foolish woman." "No, mother, if you don't want me in this hut, tell me at once, and I with my child will go to Nairobi or anywhere else. Yes, I'll go back to that house. I may be a woman, but even a cowardly bitch fights back when cornered against a wall" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 176).

In *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi provides an even more vigorous critique of patriarchy through the experiences of Wanja, Wariinga, Guthera, and Nyawira, and through satirical comments on the family lives and affairs of the representatives of the “petty-bourgeoisie” in these novels. He also makes allusions, in these novels, to the nefarious consequences of polygamy, in much the same way as in *A Grain of Wheat*. The quandaries of all four female characters are results of male tyrannies over them in societies dominated by men, and whose patriarchal values are, indeed, legacies of the pre-colonial past. His portrayal of women in general, and of these three female characters in particular, provides occasions for Ngugi to point to negative traditional attitudes. The portraits of these women, as with Ekwefi in *Things Fall Apart*, may even be seen as challenges to traditional settings depicted as quite inconsiderate of, and even hostile to, women. As Cook and Okenimkpe point out with reference to Wariinga, “Ngugi gives Wariinga the opportunity to remind us that the underestimation of women is indigenous,”⁶⁴ and, in *Petals of Blood* and *Matigari* Wanja, Guthera and other females are also given such an opportunity. On the other hand, the “petty-bourgeois” of Ngugi’s stories are made detestable because they are, on the one hand, inheritors of what he depicts as the worst Western ways. However, they are no less made despicable for being worthy heirs of what he suggests as the worst values and practices of the pre-colonial past of Africa.

In *Petals of Blood*, still, we can even find instances where Ngugi criticises more fundamental aspects of native culture, such as superstition as he does more openly in the previous novels. The degenerate image of the occult priest Mwathi wa Mugo whom Ngugi portrays “with a rare double-edged irony, ambivalence and scepticism which call into question the validity of fundamental metaphysical beliefs of the Ilmorog villagers, perhaps of Africa at large,” is a rare, but outstanding, example of this.⁶⁵ It is noticeable, however, that, in *Petals of Blood* and the subsequent novels, Ngugi rather tends to avoid dealing directly with such more questionable traditions such as clitoridectomy, probably because of his intention to present, in these novels, an image of the African pre-colonial past that is more polished and idealised. He continues, however, to make allusions, here and there, to the negativity of those traditions, typically through passages like the following one from *Petals of Blood* where he suggests that Karega’s personal tragedy is, much as in the example of Karanja in *A Grain of Wheat*, partly an outcome of both polygamy and patriarchy:

⁶⁴ David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe, *Ngugi wa Thiong’o: An Exploration of His Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁶⁵ Cook and Okenimkpe, *ibid.*, p. 93.

It was at Elburgon that his father and mother quarrelled. She complained about her triple duties: to her child Ndinguri; to her husband, and to her European landlord. She was expected to work on the European farms; to work on her own piece of land; and to keep the home in unity, health and peace. At the same time she never saw a cent from her produce. Usually her husband would take it and sell it to the same European farmer, their landlord, who fixed his own buying price: and her husband, in turn, gave her only enough to buy salt. She rebelled: she would not work on the settlers' farm for nothing and she demanded a say in the sale of her produce. / He beat her in frustration. She took Ndinguri and ran back to Limuru where she begged for cultivation rights from Munira's father. At first brother Ezekiel had refused. But looking at her eyes, he had felt a sudden weakness in the flesh and he had allowed her to build a hut, but he made sure she built where he could visit her without being seen. She had refused him, all the same (...) She had briefly returned to her husband in Elburgon who had now added a Nandi bride to his others. The reconciliation was good for only one month and the same pattern of quarrels reemerged. She ran away again but Karega was the product of that brief union (*Petals of Blood*, p. 58).

The critique continues in the Gikuyu novels. As in *Petals of Blood*, polygamy, ill-treatment of women, and chauvinism are associated with the representatives of the "native bourgeoisie," the anti-heroes in these works. In *Wizard of the Crow*, for instance, they are associated with figures like Sikyokuu, the most unscrupulous among the Ruler's ministers, and with the Ruler himself. The following illustrates this:

For some days, the Ruler would not receive Sikyokuu, who became so worried that he took steps to stave off the impending explosion. He began by sending his first wife by night to plead for him. The Ruler ignored her. Sikyokuu then sent the second wife. The Ruler ignored her. Sikyokuu sent his much younger third wife. The Ruler ignored her. Finally he sent his two daughters. It was only then that the Ruler softened and he started to see Sikyokuu again, but then only to vent his anger on the hapless minister (*Wizard of the Crow*, p. 23).

Conversely, courtly love, monogamy, courtesy towards women and respect of the feminine gender are associated with the virtuous male characters, or male heroes, of these novels including Karega, Gatuiria, Matigari and Kamiti.

His treatments of clitoridectomy, polygamy and patriarchy may suffice to show how the writer admits, depicts and exemplifies the "imperfections" of the pre-colonial African past in Achebe's way. There is one more important point to be made concerning this similarity, however. Like Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*, Ngugi makes allusions to the necessity of moving towards better conditions, ones in which Africans realise the realities and worth of their pasts and strive to perpetuate with pride its positive philosophies, but in which there would be no place for

such “imperfections.” Both writers suggest a necessity for improvement, as it were. And both of them do so partly through their trust in (colonial) education. For, while one of Achebe's main concerns in *Things Fall Apart* and the subsequent two novels is to show that societies such as Umuofia have always been progressing across time – mainly before colonialism – and that these societies were naturally predisposed for this and ‘from within’, he, at the same time, shows ‘secret’ hopes, through the example of Nwoye for instance, that colonial education could foster the mechanisms and quicken the processes of that progress.

Similarly, Ngugi clearly suggests the necessity of progress through colonial education in *The River Between* and, mainly via Njoroge's experience, in *Weep Not, Child* as well. In spite of the series of disillusionments this character undergoes during his scholarship because of dramatic realities created by colonialism, we are nevertheless made to follow with hope his educational prospects. His disappointments and disillusionments are made to be ours as well. Ditto with Kariuki in *A Grain of Wheat* and Joseph in *Petals of Blood*. Mumbi's psychological and Wanja's material supports of Kariuki and Joseph in their educational undertakings suggest their, and Ngugi's, faiths in a possible emancipation of African women, for instance, through education. The educational prospects of these characters could, on another level, also be understood as sources of hopes of an “African renaissance,” more generally, which Ngugi sees in this (colonial) education. Yet, we know well that such an education negates traditional African values and practices such as clitoridectomy and polygamy. The experiences of these characters, namely the expectations of progress which their educations epitomise recall those of Nwoye and one of Akunna's sons in *Things Fall Apart*. The latter, “one of the great men in the village,” Achebe tells us, “had given one of his sons to be taught the white man's knowledge in Mr. Brown's school” (*Things Fall Apart*, p.160). It is also the case of one of Ezeulu's sons in *Arrow of God*.

On the other hand, Ngugi, too, never goes so far in depicting the imperfections of the past of Africans as to present us with “savage” or “uncivilised” pre-colonial societies. As in *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugi's past African societies are different from, but are similar in fundamental nature, and equal in complexity, to any other past and present human communities. Though he may seem to sing the virtues of pre-colonial Kenya/Africa – especially in the Gikuyu novels – the pre-colonial African societies Ngugi suggests or describes have pointed specificities indeed – both positive and negative – but are of as much complexity as human communities always are. Like Achebe's, they are complex and they display human and cultural diversity, for instance, though this complexity and diversity are, given that pre-colonial settings are not the focal areas of depiction in his novels, more often suggested than highlighted as is characteristically the case in *Things Fall*

Apart.⁶⁶ In *A Grain of Wheat*, the contrasts between the personalities of Karanja's and Kihika's fathers, on the one hand, and of their households and their views of domestic affairs on the other, are good examples of this. The contrasts, differences and nuances in the personalities of the other elders of the story such as Witherero (Mugo's aunt), Wangari (Gikonyo's mother), Wanjikũ (Mumbi's mother), and Wambũi and Warui also suggest character diversity in the old – early-colonial and pre-colonial – Thabai and Rift Valley.

Ngugi devotes a chapter wholly to Wambũi and Warui, in addition to the various passages which involve the elaborateness of their personalities and highlight their and their forefathers' psychological complexities and differences. This chapter and these passages emphasize and exemplify the common sense, the introspectiveness, the high standards of reasoning, the critical minds and the individualities of these epitomes of traditional African men and women. This, in turn, implies the complexity of the societies which they belong to, and even of the remoter communities which they originate from. Wambui's state of mind, in part of the last paragraph of the chapter devoted to her and to Warui, illustrates this:

Wambũi sat on and watched the drizzle and the gray mist for a few minutes. Darkness was creeping into the hut. Wambũi was lost in a solid consciousness of a terrible anti-climax to her activities in the fight for freedom. Perhaps we should not have tried him, she muttered. Then she shook herself, trying to bring her thoughts to the present (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 239).

This scene might recall Okonkwo's attitude and mindset following his involvement in the execution of Ikemefuna. It may also bring to mind Obierika's more characteristically analytic mind, or Ezeulu's introspective nature. Furthermore, Ngugi also suggests the naturalness and perpetuation of this human complexity and diversity in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence Africa. And, like Achebe, he does so by applying psychoanalytic, precisely Freudian, principles to the African milieu and to the configurations and development of his characters in general as we shall see in our comparison of the writers' attitudes to characterisation later on in this chapter.

Yet again, Ngugi is not different from Achebe in that there is more to appeal to us about the African (pre-colonial) past he deals with or makes references to, than to disappoint us. In fact, even the effects which the gravity of defects of the traditional African communities which he mentions have on us are brought to their minimum by Ngugi – again through a procedure which Achebe also brings into play in *Things Fall Apart*. Indeed,

⁶⁶ Hence this other difference: while one of Achebe's main concerns is to bring evidence of such diversity, this diversity is equally insinuated, but seems to be treated as a matter of fact by Ngugi.

Achebe does not deny nor even strive to justify practices which he, as we have seen, admits are unjustifiable, and which he deliberately deals with and criticises. Yet he obviously strives to control the impacts of these practices on the images of Africa and Africans he presents, and on the readers' judgments of them, mainly through his focus on the capacities and dynamics of progress and on the cultural and human diversity underlying the African societies he depicts. Thus, if human sacrifices are frequent in Umuofia, they are normally less frequent in Mbanta, and even in Umuofia itself they were doomed to disappear. To this end, Achebe keeps suggesting that Umuofia is a society with dynamic structures and progressive predispositions, in general, and one which values peace so much so that he makes us think that these practices were doomed to disappear. There is even a clear allusion to this in an elder of the community, Nwakibie, telling Okonkwo: "it pleases me to see a young man like you these days when our youth have gone so soft" (*Things Fall Apart* p.16). This means, in addition, that nonviolent and, depending on different readers, not necessarily "effeminate," people represented through characters like Nwoye are not 'isolated cases,' but rather represent a majority in Umuofia. Such characters stand for other facts (like the diversity of human characters in pre-colonial Africa), but they, and their experiences, mainly represent the potential for change towards more tolerance that is inherent in even the less liberal African societies before their colonisation occurred. Furthermore, the experiences of such characters provide instances not only of the mechanisms by which such change occurs, but also of the inevitability and naturalness of such change. Achebe also suggests that improvement has always characterised these communities since, for instance, Nwoye's grandfather (and, again symbolically, Okonkwo's own father), Unoka, is also a peace-lover, a romantic artist and an "effeminate" person perhaps even by European standards. Other elements which exemplify the idea that pre-colonial Umuofia was well headed for better conditions include the allusions to this ideas which Achebe makes in the following passage:

Ogbuefi Ezeudu, who was the oldest man in the village, was telling two other men who came to visit him that the punishment for breaking the peace of Ani had become very mild in their clan./'It has not always been so,' he said. 'My father told me that he had been told that in the past a man who broke the peace was dragged on the ground through the village until he died. But after a while this custom was stopped because it spoilt the peace which it was meant to preserve.'/ 'Somebody told me yesterday,' said one of the younger men, that in some clans it is abomination for a man to die during the Week of Peace.'/ 'It is indeed true,' said Ogbuefi Ezeudu. They have that custom in Obodoani. If a man dies at this time he is not buried but cast into the Evil Forest. It is a bad custom which these people observe because they lack understanding. They throw away large numbers of men and women without burial. And what is the result? Their

clan is full of the evil spirits of these unburied dead, hungry to do harm to the living' (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 23).

Also, if Umuofia is definitely a patriarchal society, its women could hold important positions and authority, as epitomised by Chielo, and can be free-thinking as suggested by Ekwefi's bold attitudes. In Mbanta, Uchendu reminds his nephew Okonkwo that "mother is supreme," which is why his exile must take place in his mother's town.

In the same way, Ngugi strives to bring to a minimum the impacts that the superstitions and other deficiencies of the pre-colonial worlds he deals with and suggests can have on our judgments of them, and he does so equally through allusions to their potential for, and predisposition to, progress. The metaphor of "the Movement" could be a good example of this. One of the several instances in which Ngugi uses this term, the obviously Achebean Chapter Two in *A Grain of Wheat*, shows that it does not only refer to the history of anti-colonial resistance and struggle, but also indicates an older, broader and continual dynamic of change and resistance against all forms of injustice and oppression, be they internal or external to Africa, and that is inherent in the African areas that he depicts:

Nearly everybody was a member of the Movement, but nobody could say with any accuracy when it was born: to most people, especially those in the younger generation, it had always been there, a rallying center for action. It changed names, leaders came and went, but the Movement remained, opening new visions, gathering greater and greater strength, till on the eve of Uhuru, its influence stretched from one horizon touching the sea to the other resting on the great Lake (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 10).

Later in the same chapter, and while he continues to lay the emphasis on the inherence of that dynamic of progress and resistance to all forms of oppression in African societies, Ngugi seizes the opportunity to moderate the effects of his critique of patriarchy in these societies by bringing to our attention – and not without humour – the fact that Kenya knew periods of matriarchy as well in its history. Matriarchy is, of course, as objectionable as patriarchy and the example also alludes to this. Also, the quotation refers to a myth and not to an established fact of history. It is none the less illustrative of our point here:

Nevertheless, his [the white man's] words about a woman on the throne echoed something in the heart, deep down in their [the Agikuyu people's] history. It was many, many years ago. Then women ruled the land of the Agikuyu. Men had no property; they were only there to serve the whims and needs of the women. Those were hard years. So they waited for women to go to war, they plotted a revolt, taking an oath of secrecy to keep them bound each to each in the common pursuit of freedom. They would sleep with all the women at once, for didn't they know the heroines

would return hungry for love and relaxation? Fate did the rest; women were pregnant; the takeover met with little resistance (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 10 - 11).

More generally, however, this past is always depicted so as to inspire pride, and not shame or indifference, to Africans. The implementation of the past in Ngugi's fiction takes place through several processes. Often, it is treated directly, through the numerous historical accounts and passages included in the stories. Typically too, the past is often symbolised and evoked by "an elder" – such as Wambũĩ and Warui in *A Grain of Wheat*, Nyakinyua and the other elderly people of Ilmorog in *Petals of Blood*, the old man from Nimuru in *Devil on the Cross*, the griots in both *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, Matigari himself, and the very funny aged man introduced in the beginning of *Wizard of the Crow*. Also, it is usually reincarnated by a 'present-day' character, as in the cases of Kihika in *A Grain of Wheat* and Abdulla and Karega in *Petals of Blood*, and other such allegorical characters. But whatever the technique by which it is brought into play, the past of Ngugi's fiction is, as in Achebe's novels, always far from being "one long night of darkness" to recall Achebe's famous words. On the contrary, it is mostly made of constructive and lofty values and is, again as with Achebe, generally a prosperous and joyful past. Here again, it is worthy of note that Ngugi does not emphasise the worth of that past with as much focus, detail and historical/anthropological rigour as in Achebe's "ethnic" novels. He does not, for instance, insist on 'bringing evidence' that the traditional African societies had democratic institutions, or to elaborate like Achebe on the different structures and philosophies of those societies for instance, though these and such facts may be implied, alluded to or stated in Ngugi's novels as well. If Ngugi elaborates on anything about the social, political and economic mechanisms and structures of organisation of, or inherited from, traditional African communities, the focus is less on proving the existence and laying stress on the value of such structures and mechanisms, and more on pointing up the fact that they spring from a communalist view of the world (as opposed to one based on private enterprise) as part of his anti-imperialist and socialist philosophical tendencies. Generally speaking, when it comes to dealing with the virtues of the African past, Ngugi, unlike Achebe, tends to affirm or to "tell" us about them rather than to "show," or bring detailed evidence of them as Achebe typically does in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.

But the high values of the African past – communal and individual alike – which Ngugi affirms or highlights, are practically the same as those of Achebe's Umuofia for instance. Some of these include dignity, love of justice, love of peace (in spite of acknowledged sporadic tribal conflicts and violent rituals), reverence of warfare, courage, individual achievement, honour, endurance, respect of ancestry, sacrifice, sharing, eloquence, etc. In

The River Between, Ngugi celebrates pre-colonial values such as honour, dignity, love of peace (despite sporadic violence) throughout the story, not least in the above passage for instance. The following excerpt, one among several in the same novel, which narrates the achievement of one of the heroes of “the history of the movement” shows, precisely, how Ngugi points at courage and dignity as ancestral African values in the same way as Achebe does in *Things Fall Apart* by portraying Okonkwo as a distinguished and generally “respected” person (despite his defects) in view of his intransigence over these and such values “revered” in traditional African communities. Like Okonkwo, Kamiri, Mugo and Wachiori became legends of their land because of their outstanding attachment to these values, including, in this example, exceptional senses of dignity, courage and sacrifice in inter-tribal conflicts as well as in the anti-colonialist resistance:

Another was Wachiori, a great warrior, who had led the whole tribe against Ukabi, Masai. As a young man he had killed a lion by himself. When he died, at the hands of a straying white man, he left a great name, the idol of many a young warrior (*The River Between*, p. 3).

These lofty values of Africa's pre-colonial past are incarnated by Ngugi's most positive and constructive characters whether they belong to the past as in the above, symbolise it, or strive to safeguard, perpetuate and reinstate its positive values. Better, in Ngugi's novels, a character is often made positive precisely because s/he incarnates, and/or believes in, or simply because s/he respects these (positive) values of the past. On the other hand, characters like Karanja, Munira and the representatives of capitalism in Ngugi's novels are made unworthy of respect because they lack or ‘betray’ these values. As with Achebe, Ngugi often depicts these positive values of the African pre-colonial past partly through the experiences and sayings of the elders and through their stories about the past. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the mentality of elders like Nwakibie also may stand for defects such as inflexibility, close-mindedness, hegemony and opposition to progress, but generally they stand for wisdom, eloquence and other such virtues. So do the personalities and deeds of the elders of Ngugi's stories. Sometimes these characters seem archaic, obstinate and excessively conservative while they generally embody the same notions of courage, endurance, eloquence, and wisdom that their equivalents in Achebe's novels symbolize. In fact, even their flaws – typically archaism and lack of flexibility – are not necessarily presented to us as some serious and inexcusable faults, as Ngugi often makes of his depictions of them occasions for humour. Wambui's statement below is a good example of this: “The children of these days,” she began. Have you lost all shame?” Just because the white man tells you so, you would actually touch your mother's (...) the woman who gave

you birth?" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 19 - 20). Another working example is this one from *Wizard of the Crow*:

A man raised his hand and Machokali quickly beckoned him to come over to the microphone. The man, clearly advanced in years, leaned on a walking stick as he pushed through the crowd. Two police officers ran to him and helped him toward the microphone near the platform. Age was still revered in Abruria, and the multitude waited for his words as if from an oracle. But when the old man began to speak it was clear that he had difficulty in pronouncing Swahili words for the Ruler, *Mtukufu Rais*, calling out instead *Mtukutu Rahisi*. Horrified at the Ruler's being called a Cheap Excellency, one of the policemen quickly whispered in the old man's ear that the phrase was *Mtukufu Rais*, or *Rais Mtukufu*, which confused him even more. Coughing and clearing his throat to still himself, he called out into the microphone, *Rahisi Mkundu*. Oh, no, it is not Cheap Arsehole, the other policeman whispered in the other ear, no, no, it is His Holy Mightiness, *Mtukufu Mtakatifu*, which did not help matters because the old man now said, with what the old man thought was confidence, *Mkundu Takatifu*. At the mention of "His Holy Arsehole," the multitude broke out in hilarious laughter, which made the old man forget what he had wanted to say, and he stuck religiously to the phrase *Rahisi Mkundu*, which made Machokali quickly signal that he be removed from the microphone (*Wizard of the Crow*, p. 18).

And because, like Achebe, Ngugi realises the 'limits' of realism⁶⁷ even when it is combined with "objective correlatives,"⁶⁸ he too sometimes leaves aside his realistic mood and draws on romanticism in depicting the African past. In the same way as Achebe, he at times makes nostalgic accounts of that past, reminding us of the romantic passages in *Things Fall Apart*. Some of these passages can be read as lamentations of the "falling apart" of worlds of "innocence" and spirituality that passed away. Passages such as the following one, from *The River Between*, are obviously Achebean in many ways. But there is a particularity about such passages – which are to be found in all seven novels by Ngugi – which makes them ideal exemplars of our point here. This consists of the fact that they exemplify Ngugi's recourse to 'Achebean romanticism' to highlight the happiness of life in pre-colonial Africa and shed light on the noble values of its inhabitants, while they seem to be summaries of the world Achebe describes in the first part of *Things Fall Apart*, which Ngugi inserts into the body of his own fiction:

⁶⁷ Because the interpretation of a realistic discourse depends on the standards by which a given reader is predisposed to understand or interpret that discourse.

⁶⁸ Eliot's famous idea of "objective correlative," which is this: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art," Eliot argues, "is by finding an objective correlative (...) a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion such that when the external facts (...) are given the emotion is immediately evoked." T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920), 7th edition, 1950, p. 100.

The ridges were isolated. The people there led a life of their own, undisturbed by what happened outside or beyond. Men and women had nothing to fear. The Ukabi would never come here. They would be lost in the hills and the ridges and the valleys (...) and so the country of many ridges was left alone, unaffected by turbulent forces outside. These ancient hills and ridges were the heart and soul of the land. They kept the tribe's magic and rituals, pure and intact. Their people rejoiced together, giving one another the blood and warmth of their laughter. Sometimes they fought. But that was among themselves and no outsider need ever know. To the stranger, they kept dumb, breathing none of the secrets of which they were the guardians. *Kagutui ka Mucii gatihakagwo Agoni*; the oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers (*The River Between*, p. 3).

The two novelists' treatments of the pre-colonial African past have similar purposes. The main didactic purpose of both writers is, as has been suggested from the beginning, to show their African readers the reality and value of their pasts so that they understand "what they lost," and to help them "recover their lost senses of dignity and self-respect." Their second shared purpose is to respond 'adequately,' that is as persuasively as possible, to accusations about the "savagery" and "darkness" of Africa and, thus, to help 'correct' the distorted images of Africa and Africans presented in Western literature and media, and this too has been hinted at earlier. The third major purpose shared by Ngugi and Achebe, is the use of such a depiction as *part of a method whose aim is to discredit colonialism*, so as to show African readers "what happened to them" and "when the rain began to beat them."

Presenting images of the past that look both realistic and positive could have been enough to achieve these three objectives. Ngugi could have chosen to write about the African past in the manner of Amos Tutuola or Djibril Tamsir Niane, in *Soundjata: an Epic of Old Mali*, for instance, and he could have achieved all three purposes.⁶⁹ Yet, he has chosen to write about the African past in the manner of Achebe, that is both by suggesting a glorious pre-colonial African past through an "analytic" and "synthetic" approach to it, on the one hand, and through a direct treatment of the tragedy of its destruction by colonialism on the other hand. And his treatments of the question of colonialism, are, again, very reminiscent of Chinua Achebe.

⁶⁹ Although the historical context of Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* is ambiguous, it is clear that the writer is evoking the pre-colonial past of Africa.

D. The Anxiety of Colonialism

Indeed a crucial marker of Ngugi's concern with Africa's history – and a critical element of his resemblance to Achebe in this respect – is his involvement with the question of colonialism as a 'sub-theme' of African history. Like Achebe, Ngugi does not only deal with colonialism as a central subject, but also dramatises its nature, its reality, its methods, and its repercussions for Africa. As is characteristically the case in *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugi often highlights the subtle processes by which the colonisers made contract with, and then destroyed, traditional African worlds. Some African writers, like D. T. Niane and Amos Tutuola are also greatly concerned with African History, as noted before. But these writers seem to have a vision of that history which is different from Achebe's and Ngugi's – mostly in that they rather disregard the question of colonialism, or, at least, avoid direct engagement with it. Works like *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, *Jours de Kabylie* and *La colline oubliée* convey no less than *Things Fall Apart* pointed senses of loss in their rendering of African pasts. But they do this simply by depicting, glorifying or mythologizing those pre-colonial pasts – and in almost complete disregard of the event of colonialism. Other works like Nkem Nwankwo's *My Mercedes is Bigger than Yours*, Sembene Ousmane's *Xala*, Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and, to a considerable extent, *The Healers*, Tahar Djaout's *Les vigiles* (and *Les chercheurs d'os* to a lesser degree) depict colonial or post-independence African societies again without any noteworthy references to colonialism; and yet, they too definitely suggest the responsibility of colonialism in the chaotic post-independence situations that they dramatise. In contrast, there is no novel by Achebe or Ngugi where colonialism is not a central topic. This can be explained by the two writers' belief in the necessity of maintaining a minimum degree of forthrightness in showing Africans "what happened to them" and "when the rain began to beat them." But there is no doubt that, unlike those other writers, both Ngugi and Achebe display, in doing so, an "anxiety of colonialism":⁷⁰ they not only dramatise, but also typically problematise this question and its effects on the near past and on the present of Africa, as if Africa were, for them, unthinkable without colonialism.

An "anxiety of colonialism" – even when it manifests itself as an intention to convey an anti-colonialist discourse, as it is the case in the work of both novelists – involves, more than an awareness, an *acknowledgment* of the problematic nature of colonialism. It means, more precisely, a consciousness of the difficulty of providing a clear and definitive answer to

⁷⁰ In the same way as authors experience the "anxiety of influence" (to recall Harold Bloom's term and concept).

the question of whether colonialism has been negative or positive in Africa. From our point of view, the problematisation of colonialism which the novels of both writers always mirror certainly makes ambiguous their discourses on colonialism in these novels. Nevertheless, it is clear that Ngugi's 'wish' is, like Achebe's, that such problematisation can contribute to discredit colonialism on realistic bases, by striving to make such problematisation plausibly point out colonialism as the main trouble with Africa and the principal cause of its underdevelopment.

Thus, faithful to realism and to historical reality still in tackling this question, both writers give at least an impression of the 'debatability' of the idea, and of some aspects, of colonialism. In the novels of both, colonialism might seem to have had positive moments, and/or even what could have been, had things taken different turnings, its positive aspects. Achebe – mainly between Chapters Seventeen and Nineteen in *Things Fall Apart* – certainly conveys this impression with remarkable objectivity and sophistication by his problematisation of the encounters between Umuofians and the missionaries and between their respective cultures. He captures the event in all its complexity (and absurdity). Thus, on the one hand, he makes colonialism look as if it has a constructive side, by making certain aspects of the culture of the missionaries contrast favourably with the negative aspects of the local culture(s). He makes us see that tragedies such as those of Ikemefuna, the twins (and their parents) and Unoka would not have happened under the "white man's" rule – oppressive and cruel as this rule proves to be in other ways. The missionaries have certainly offered at least a momentary refuge and '(better) lives' for the persecuted or – in the logic of Umuofians – for the "weak," the "outcast," the "evil-carrying" and the "sick" folk of Umuofia. More broadly, they are shown to offer occasions for "native" people to consider superstitions and taboos of their own culture and to realise what Achebe certainly depicts as the defects of this culture as we have already seen. For an increasing number of them, these missionaries give reasons to renounce their original culture altogether, some by joining the missionaries, and others by refusing to resist their presence amongst themselves. The following quotation from chapter seventeen, illustrates this in detail:

Every clan and village had its 'evil forest'. In it were buried all those who died of the really evil diseases, like leprosy and smallpox. It was also the dumping ground for the potent fetishes of great medicine-men when they died. An evil forest' was, therefore, alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness. It was such a forest that the rulers of Mbanta, gave the missionaries. They did not really want them in their clan, and so they made them that offer which nobody in his right senses would accept./"They want a piece of land to build their shrine," said Uchendu to his peers when they consulted among themselves. "We shall give them a piece of land." He paused, and there was a murmur of surprise and

disagreement. "Let us give them a portion of the Evil Forest. They boast about victory over death. Let us give them a real battlefield in which to show their victory." They laughed and agreed, and sent for the missionaries, whom they had asked to leave them for a while so that they might 'whisper together'. They offered them as much of the Evil Forest as they cared to take. And to their greatest amazement the missionaries thanked them and burst into song / "They do not understand," said some of the elders. "But they will understand when they go to their plot of land tomorrow morning." And they dispersed. / The next morning the crazy men actually began to clear a part of the forest and to build their house. The inhabitants of Mbanta expected them all to be dead within four days. The first day passed and second and third and fourth, and none of them died. Everyone was puzzled. And then it became known that the white man's fetish had unbelievable power. It was said that he wore glasses on his eyes so that he could see and talk to evil spirits. No long after, he won his first three converts (*Things Fall Apart*, p. p. 107 - 108).

The example of Nwoye is particularly significant in this context. The boy's rejection of the cruel practices of the clan may convey Achebe's own disapproval of some Ibo customs and cohere with his opinion that colonisation brought some benefits to his people. Nwoye's attitude illustrates the writer's ambivalence with reference to colonialism. This conversion to Christianity does not necessarily mean that colonialism is justifiable – as Achebe emphasises, for instance, Nwoye's young age and the personal character of this conversion, certainly not that the Christian logic sounds commonsensical to him as the next excerpt clearly points up. However, it is tremendously significant that, having to choose between the "mad logic of the Trinity" and the violence of native rituals, he opts for Christianity. His dramatisation as a whole and, particularly, Achebe's account of the causes of his conversion, constitute, in all cases, the apogee of the problematisation of colonialism in *Things Fall Apart*:

It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul- the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within the hymn poured into his parched soul. The words of the hymn were like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry plate on the panting earth. Nwoye's callow mind was greatly puzzled (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 106).

Apart from these ambiguities, Achebe's verdict on colonialism is a very critical one. One might even assume that what appears as the writer's statements of recognition of some positive aspects, or moments of positivity, of colonialism and Christianity, are, in reality, parts of a technique

whose aim is to denounce colonialism with the highest possible degree of realism and efficiency (by critically and imaginatively considering all aspects of the question) as noted above. Achebe knows well that he would have sounded merely idealistic, radical or simply polemical – and therefore non-persuasive in his imaginative condemnation of colonialism – had he avoided giving us such ‘proof of honesty’ in dealing with colonialism. To avoid idealism and polemics, and accordingly achieve a maximum degree of persuasiveness, Achebe always opts for subtlety and realism, even as one of his main didactic intentions is to denounce and deconstruct the colonialist ideology. His depiction of the African past as positive is an objective in itself, but it is also part of this strategy of achieving efficiency in condemning colonialism. Such a detailed and well informed depiction dismisses the colonisers’ claim that pre-colonial Africans suffered from “savagery” and “darkness” and the ‘rest of the thesis’ which they typically use to give the colonial enterprise a moral cover by presenting it as a necessary, ‘humanitarian,’ intervention. By pointing up, as natural, the humanity, the complexity, the diversity, the dynamics and potentialities of progress, as well as the sophisticated and happy sides of the pre-colonial African communities, Achebe also aims at invalidating all claims that these societies *needed* colonialism. The rest of the strategy consists in an again primarily realistic denunciation of colonialism itself, by *demonstrating* how, for purely pragmatic – economic and expansionist – goals, it actually destroyed the world of remarkable harmony, spirituality and happiness he describes in part one of *Things Fall Apart*, and replaced it by the mere chaos of the rest of the story, and the rest of his novels.

This direct denunciation of colonialism in *Things Fall Apart* is carried out through two interrelated procedures. The first consists of dismissing colonialism’s claims to morality by uncovering the reality behind ‘the mask’ of “the mission.” Thus, the writer, first, portrays the missionaries as men of great hypocrisy. They are represented as people who pretend to preach the word of God and a message of love, while their real “mission,” Achebe suggests, is to pave the way to expedition whose aim is to hold power in Africa and to act to the profit of Britain alone, regardless of the means. The main question that the nuances between the (one must say merely stereotypical) portraits of Mr. Brown and Reverend Smith raise is which of them has been the worst for Umuofians; that is, who is the best server of the austere, high-handed and oppressive colonial administration of the story. Despite the inoffensive appearance of Mr. Brown and of his method of “dealing with natives,” the only real difference between him and the more overtly harmful Reverend Smith is one of method. Also, Achebe depicts the logic and religion of the missionaries as absurd by universal, and not just by local, standards. The adjectives “mad,” “crazy” and “lunatic” which Umuofians use to describe the missionaries do not merely stand for a difference of the “white man’s” reasoning from theirs, but rather for their

realisation of a genuine inconsistency in this white man's discourse. The debates between Mr. Brown and Akunna over religion reveal Akunna's religious philosophy and his reasoning as far less abstract, and much more accurate and practical, and therefore more honest and closer to common sense, than Mr. Brown's. The latter, having "learnt a good deal about the religion of the clan" from those conversations "came to the conclusion that a frontal attack on it would not succeed," suggesting a dogmatic quality in his religion and a confrontational nature to his 'logic' (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 130). Furthermore, Achebe emphasises the exploitative and the expansionist designs behind the "mission" as the narrator suggests in, among numerous passages, the following one:

The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price (...) And even in the matter of religion there was a growing feeling that there might be something in it after all, something vaguely akin to method in the overwhelming madness (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 128).

This is further confirmed by the narrator who finally tells us that the missionaries were simply backed by "the administration" (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 130).

The second procedure by which Achebe condemns colonialism is a still tactical, but rather more direct denunciation of the colonial administration and its ideology. Achebe simply points out the cruelty of the colonial administration itself and the immoral ways of its agents. The violent practices of Umuofia, somewhat 'justified' by adverse circumstances, prove benign in comparison to colonial violence. The best example, here, is the incident where soldiers massacre a whole village – Abame – to revenge one "white man" killed in that tribe. Achebe offers this as a contrast to Ikemefuna's tragedy. Cruel as it is, Ikemefuna's sacrifice is a consequence of a peace agreement between Umuofia and Mbaino following an arbitrary murder of a "daughter of Umuofia" – Ogbuefi Ezeudo's wife – in Mbaino. While this sacrifice is thus an outcome of Umuofia's effort to avoid greater violence and preserve peace – while it is capable of a much bloodier act of "revenge" – the colonial administration systematically exterminates a whole population to revenge its "white man." *Things Fall Apart* ends on a symbolic statement which suggests the cynical character of colonialism as an ideology. It points up the "superiority complex" of the colonisers, to borrow again from Frantz Fanon, mainly their characteristic lack of consideration for the colonised "other."⁷¹ The last paragraph of the story captures the arrogance of colonialism, its institutions and even the most 'enlightened' of its typical agents:

⁷¹ We will come back to the question of the typical state of mind of the typical coloniser from a psychoanalytic standpoint in detail in Chapter Four.

The Commissioner went away, taking three or four of the soldiers with him. In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilisation to different parts of Africa he had learnt a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting down a dead man from the tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book which he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* (*Things Fall Apart*, p. p. 149 - 150).

Ngugi has a similar discourse on colonialism, and has recourse to the same strategy in denouncing this event and system, even if he brings into play additional and more direct procedures to do it, especially in *Petals of Blood* and after. His treatment of colonialism, mainly in the first three novels, is, as in *Things Fall Apart*, markedly realistic. In these novels, mainly, colonialism itself – not just Christianity – is equally problematised and is depicted with an Achebean faithfulness to historical reality and to the style of realism. But, again as with Achebe, this problematisation appears, first and foremost, in his attitude towards Christianity's basic teachings, which are treated, not just similarly, but even more pointedly than in Achebe's work, rather favourably. Indeed in these three works specifically, Christianity appears to offer an alternative to the flaws of the indigenous Kikuyu culture such as female circumcision and patriarchy, in the same way as it appears to contribute a remedy to the same kind of problems as in Achebe's work. What is more, while Ngugi sheds light on the tension between Christianity and indigenous beliefs he, still more obviously than Achebe, tends to look at the relationship between them from a conciliatory, rather than confrontational, position. For such a conciliatory tendency is also conceivable in Achebe's work – as one can ultimately deduce from the conversations between Akunna and Mr. Brown for instance, and, more generally, from Achebe's rather Christian conception of the notions of "good" and "evil" – even if this attitude is not as typical of him as it is of Ngugi.

African history itself, which is partly depicted by reference to Kikuyu mythology, is associated with Christianity in Ngugi's work as a whole. The Kikuyu are said to have their own cosmogonic myths and an ancestral history, and yet these are blended with their Christian parallels. The Kikuyu deity Mwenanyanga is referred to as a parallel to the 'Christian God'; the

putative parents of the Kikuyu are parallels to Adam and Eve; and the Christian notions of prophet and “saviour” are applied to Kenya’s legendary heroes and icons, and to the fictional heroes of the novels as we saw in Chapter Two. The Kikuyu people are presented to us as they actually see themselves, that is as Kikuyu in descent but deeply Christian in faith and Ngugi hardly shows any notable objections to, or claims to change, such a reality. The reader feels, on the contrary, that Ngugi is ultimately unable, or simply unwilling, to conceive of the Kikuyu view of the world as being as different from that of Christianity as to be antagonistic to it. Ngugi certainly problematises Christianity in these novels so much so that its presence in Africa appears, as in *Things Fall Apart* and the rest of Achebe’s work, as a complex issue and not simply as an unwanted, alienating foreign religion.

Ngugi’s problematisation of colonialism with an Achebean objectivity in these works can also be seen in his attitudes to questions which are directly related to colonialism, for instance colonial education and the Mau Mau war. These can be seen as parallels to themes which Achebe uses to problematise the question of colonialism, such as the clash between the white man and the “natives” in *Things Fall Apart*.⁷² Ngugi’s treatment of the question of education is indeed very problematic. Even if he raises issues about the cultural dangers which colonial education represents, his attitude to it remains ambiguous. As we have suggested earlier, this position hardly goes beyond ironic satire of the missionary school rather puzzlingly charged with the intention of eradicating Kikuyu traditions. But, generally speaking, it is in education of the kind brought by the missionaries that Ngugi sees the hope for the “salvation” of the Kikuyu. In his first three novels at least, he seems to agree with an education which means, in Wole Ogundele’s words, “formal acquisition of the colonizer’s values, truths and ways through and in his language.”⁷³ And yet, in the same scholar’s terms, “its acquisition undermines nationalism’s avowed project of cultural recovery and authenticity.”⁷⁴

The same is true of Ngugi’s representation of the anti-colonialist struggle, which he develops on the basis of a point of view which, in some instances at least, seems closer to a liberal and non-violent one, than to one which is favourable to any kind of ‘justifiable violence.’ Simon Gikandi’s assumption about Ngugi’s attitude to “Mau Mau” in *Weep Not, Child* and the earlier works is justifiable:

⁷² The Mau Mau insurrection, the historical context of both *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*, involves a (re)encounter between colonialism and the local African cultures and populations which is of the kind, and can be seen as a historical repetition in a different place in Africa, of the initial encounter between the two cultures which Achebe deals with in *Things Fall Apart*.

⁷³ Wole Ogundele, “*Natio*, Nation and Postcoloniality: The Example of Ngugi,” *Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Texts and Contexts*. Charles Cantalupo (ed.), Trenton (N. J.): Africa World Press, 1995, p. 120.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

In Ngugi's earlier works including *Weep Not, Child* and some of the early stories collected in *Secret Lives*, "Mau Mau is not defined in terms of heroism or patriotism, but by fear and doubt. The dominant images in these works are of shadows, darkness, and death (...) In these early works, "Mau Mau" is not an unequivocal figure of insurgency, but a source of an intense moral dilemma.⁷⁵

To a considerable extent this is also true of *A Grain of Wheat*. To illustrate this, it is enough to note that the images of the British military (the colonial administration more generally) and the Mau Mau revealed in the novel appear both negative. Both sides of the Mau Mau war are involved in brutalities that can stir up disapproval. On the one hand, Ngugi tells us that the colonial authorities use callous methods to intimidate an already martyred population and force them to co-operate with them. We are told that arbitrary sequestrations, hideous detention conditions, random executions and physical and moral torture are methods that the colonial administration commonly has recourse to in order to repress the Mau Mau revolt. On the other hand, Ngugi shows disagreement with the violence of the Mau Mau by stressing Kihika, General R, and Lieutenant Koinandu's violent characters, the violence of their speeches as well as of their actions.⁷⁶ Furthermore, it is also suggested that these main representatives of both the British administration and the Mau Mau are driven not by some coherent or unquestionable collective ideals, but primarily by personal motives. In *A Grain of Wheat*, for example, Thompson is motivated by a prospect of promotion, and the physical liquidation and decapitation of Muniu – Kihika's teacher – are presented as acts of personal revenge by Kihika. Ngugi's setting of the colonial administration in comparison and contrast to the Mau Mau definitely recalls the drama of the encounter between the British and the Ibo in Umuofia. Just as Achebe does through similar comparisons and contrasts in *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugi makes us think, in the first three novels, that there are reasons to conceive of colonialism as a debatable question.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, Cambridge UP, 2000, p. p. 27 - 28.

⁷⁶ Here is an example of the way Ngugi condemns Mau Mau violence in *A Grain of Wheat*: "he [Rev. Jackson] was among the first group of Christians to be killed (...) his body was one morning found necked with pangas into small pieces. His house and property were burnt to charcoal and ashes. His wife and younger children were not touched. But they were left without a home" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 85). Actually, Ngugi's initial position towards the Mau Mau was not unconditionally favourable to the movement. This is shown in some of his early extra-literary declarations. For instance, in the interview with Denis Duerden in January 1964, he affirms: "I think the terrible thing about the Mau Mau war was the destruction of family life, the destruction of personal relationships (...) and above all these things, the terrible fear under which all these people lived." See Ngugi, "Interview with Denis Duerden," *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁷⁷ The ideal that brought Thompson to Africa is "the development of a great moral idea" which "must surely lead to the creation of one British nation embracing peoples of all colours and creeds based on the just proposition that all men were created equal" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 54), which is a rather positive idea.

In *Petals of Blood* and the Kikuyu novels, Ngugi does not give so much impression that he is 'making concessions' to colonialism. He obviously makes frontal attacks on colonialism and imperialism and, unlike Achebe, very frequently resorts to slogans in doing so, although it would be a mistake to see the use of these slogans as a result of an intention to do mere propaganda. But there are several considerations which make his attitude towards colonialism appear still problematic in these novels, especially in the more 'conventionally imaginative' parts of them. One of the most important of these elements is again the ambiguity which arises from his treatment of Christianity. "In *Petals of Blood*," as David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe note, "no single direct word of criticism is expressed against Christianity or even against Rev. Jerrod or Waweru." Ngugi is "satisfied with an ironic demolition of the exponents of Christianity," and "it is the tone and context alone that remind us of Ngugi's antagonism to (at best) the irrelevance and (at worst) the hypocrisy of alienated Christians," as they explain.⁷⁸ Several considerations could even be seen as clues of an authorial point of view partly derived from Christian doctrines, mainly morals of the Book of Exodus. For example, the plot of the novel is conceived as a parallel to the journey of the Jewish people towards Jerusalem in the Bible. Also, Wanjia's 'wrong doings' – mainly her prostitution and her throwing her child in a latrine – are allowed to be perceived as 'sins' (not just as immoral doings) and her hardships and sterility seem to be consequential Divine punishments. Her recovery is suggested as a consequence of "purification" by fire in the arson of her brothel; only after that event does she regain the ability to bear children. The burning of the whorehouse itself is described by the narrator as if it were an act of redemption in the religious sense: "cleansing the whole mess" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 316). Kimeria, Mzigo and Chui's eliminations by the 're-converted' Munira may simply suggest that an alternative of salvation for Kenya and the world could come from Christianity. Thus, even in a novel partly written against colonialism and imperialism like *Petals of Blood*, Christianity appears, as in *Things Fall Apart*, as a debatable issue and as a possible alternative out of the plight of Ilmorogans, just as it is for Umuofians.

While Ngugi condemns colonialism, neo-colonialism, capitalism and imperialism with even more clarity, and presents the Christianisation of Kenya/Africa as part of these systems in the Kikuyu novels, his attitude towards Christianity in particular is still confusing. In *Devil on the Cross*, mainly, while the title itself suggests an intention to demonise conventional Christianity, the novel, more obviously than any of Ngugi's other novels, not only centres on the dichotomy "good" versus "evil", but also presents a

⁷⁸ Cook and Okenimkpe, *op. cit.*, p. 104. There is a degree of exaggeration in this claim, nevertheless. There are facts pertaining to Ngugi's discourse in *Petals of Blood* which indicate his direct criticism, not only of Christianity but religion at large. See Salah Kaci-Mohamed, *Western Ethics and Aesthetics (op. cit.)*, Chapter Two, p. 89, for an expanded argument in this sense.

conception of this dichotomy which is in accordance with the Christian philosophy of it. Indeed, good and evil are strictly associated with “God” and “Satan” (and the “Devil”) in this novel. The “people” are simply the “clan of God” and the “imperialists” are the “servants” and “Angels” of Lucifer (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 63). As ever in Ngugi’s fiction, while the epitomes of “evil” are all hypocrites whose behaviours do not reflect Christianity’s ‘real’ morality, the heroes and the other ‘good’ characters of the novel are not agnostics or animists, for instance, but ‘genuine’ Christians. The heroine herself is Christian, once a devout and a regular churchgoer, and later a sort of virtuoso and ‘saviour’ to whom “*truth*” is revealed by mysterious voices in the way of prophets in the Bible. Towards the end of the story, her prayer for Wangari and Muturi could show that her Christian faith has never really dimmed, not even after the “Devil’s Feast”: “‘Amen,’ Wariinga says with all her heart” (as a reaction to Gatuiria’s expression of his hope to see their two friends “released on 12 December”) (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 232). Cook and Okenimkpe assimilate Wariinga to Christ:

Wariinga plays the part of Christ in her temptation by the Devil, explicitly in her cry “get three behind me, Satan” (...) she takes over Christ’s role as a man and eliminates any suggestion of God head in doing so. But she thereby identifies herself with Christ’s moral position. In her mythical role, Wariinga totally rejects the materialistic worldly wisdom of Satan’s proposals as adamantly as does Christ in the New Testament.⁷⁹

A similarly puzzling attitude towards Christianity is displayed in *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*. The impact of such a reliance on Christian morality and Christian myth and symbol in *Devil on the Cross*, and in the rest of Ngugi’s fiction, is so important as to justify Jeni Williamson, Happy Hinman and Lanelle Williamson who, paraphrasing Christine Loftin, argue that: “the emergence of Christian metaphors in post-colonial Kenya can blur the message of the stor[ies] and distract from Ngugi’s authorial intentions.”⁸⁰ And this is just the effect that Achebe’s treatment of Christianity in *Things Fall Apart* has on the writer’s “authorial intention.”

An undeniable intention of Ngugi’s is yet – not unlike Chinua Achebe – to denounce colonialism with as much efficiency as possible. When there is

⁷⁹ Cook and Okenimkpe, *op. cit.*, p. 132. The critics argue that the inversion of the myth of the Crucifixion suggested by Ngugi’s title does not automatically mean the inversion of the main morality behind the myth: “We must not imagine that Ngugi is trying to invert morality in placing Satan on the Cross in Christ’s place. He is not saying that Satan is his Christ, but rather that whatever they may pretend, it is the Devil whom the capitalist power magnates and their entourage really worship. The message is plain enough to anyone who thinks clearly about it.” *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Christine Loftin, “Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s Visions of Africa,” *Critical Essays on Ngugi wa Thiong’o*, Derek Wright (ed.), *op. cit.*

ambiguity as in the cases mentioned above, this should rather be seen, in fact, as with Achebe, as parts of Ngugi's efforts to imagine "objective correlatives" that would help to point up colonialism, with as much success as possible, as the main cause of the troubles of Kenya/Africa and of the plight of Africans. Even if one sets apart the propagandist formulations which characterise his fiction after *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi, too, always presents a positive picture of the pre-colonial Kikuyu world both to inspire pride about that past, and as part of a strategy of denunciation of colonialism which is very akin to the one Achebe uses. Indeed, one of the most important points of resemblance between Ngugi and Achebe as far as their treatments of African history is concerned is their simultaneous dealing with the "falling apart" of traditional African societies, while stressing colonialism as the main cause of their collapse. In effect, Ngugi narrates the disintegration of the traditional Kikuyu community in a manner similar to Achebe, though not with as much depth and emphasis. Accordingly, in spite of its problematisation, colonialism, even as suggested by the realistic narratives of Ngugi's fiction, always emerges as a tragic happening and an unscrupulous ideology. Apart from problematic questions of the kind cited above, colonialism in Ngugi's fiction is, as in Achebe's, generally synonymous with disingenuousness, exploitation and oppression and is by far more oppressive for Kenyans than the "imperfections" of the pre-colonial period.

In his condemnations of colonialism, Ngugi too typically highlights the hypocrisy of the missionaries themselves, of their post-independence heirs and of their methods, and underlines the decisive role they played in paving the way to colonialism as well as their and colonialism's purely utilitarian goals. Thus, even in his earliest novels where he shows considerable leanings towards Christian and liberal humanist values, one could discern an anti-colonialist point of view expressed, typically, in passages such as the following from *Weep Not, Child*:

Every race had their country. The Indians had India. Europeans had Europe. And Africans had Africa, the land of the black people. (Applause). Who did not know that all the soil in this part of the country had been given to Gikuyu and Mumbi and their posterity? (More applause). He [Jomo Kenyatta] told them how the land had been taken away through the sword (*Weep Not, Child*, p. 57).

In *A Grain of Wheat*, where colonialism is more problematised than in any of the other novels, similar passages expressing an equally obviously anti-colonialist stance, are very frequent, and such problematisation can from a certain point of view contribute to foster that anti-colonialist stance by giving it an honest character and undertone. One can see that John Thompson's dream to see British ideals globalised had already started to

take form and to become a reality before his arrival in Kenya. But, without the idea that “men were created equal,” that reality is worse than merely problematic. The novel shows how the idea which brought Thompson to Kenya proved fallacious and naïve since, when it came to its embodiment on the ground, what happened is simply the opposite of what he was dreaming of as a young man. The only concrete reality of colonialism is, we are told, a devastating assault on Kenya that is exactly like the one that takes place in Umuofia. For Ngugi, as well, the colonisers – with the missionaries in the lead – showed great hypocrisy and malice. As in *Things Fall Apart*, we can read in *A Grain of Wheat*, that the ‘white man’ went to Kenya “clutching the book of God in both hands” (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 10), and that “soon people saw” that he had “imperceptibly acquired more land to meet the growing needs of his position” (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 11). And, again, when the people protested, “they saw a long line of red soldiers, who carried not the Bible, but the sword” (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 12).

Furthermore, colonialism is, as is also typically the case in *Things Fall Apart*, charged with the acculturation of the people and the deracination of their identity. Kihika’s teacher, although a Kikuyu, persists in arguing against female circumcision even as he is brought evidence of his mistake over the position of the Bible concerning circumcision of the flesh. Like the converts of Umuofia, the teacher’s reaction is due to his being brainwashed through missionary education whose real objective, we are brought to understand, is not even to “assimilate” natives or give them an empirical education. In agreement with Achebe, but also, and mainly, with Frantz Fanon here, Ngugi hints that the objective of such an education is to train disciples and docile servants of colonialism who, like the converts of Umuofia, would assimilate, and apply blindly, what(ever) the colonisers teach them and, on the other hand, repudiate their own culture and identity, and contribute as well in making their fellow people do so.⁸¹ And D. O. Thompson’s diary, and his attitudes towards natives more broadly, obviously echo those of the District Commissioner and his ideas about natives as depicted in the last paragraph of *Things Fall Apart*.

Except for ambiguities and issues of the kind mentioned earlier, in *Petals of Blood* and the Kikuyu novels Ngugi obviously launches *frontal* attacks on colonialism, showing an authorial attitude which is still ‘Achebean’ in its opposition to colonialism, but which demarcates itself from Achebean subtlety and method. This, and imperialism more generally, is held to be the direct and original source of all Kenya/Africa’s colonial and post-independence troubles. The tragedies of post-independence Kenyan and African workers and peasants with which the novels deal are shown as natural results of colonialism (and “neo-colonialism”). In *Petals of Blood*, the

⁸¹ We will return to the question of Western education and the “native intellectual” in detail in the next chapter.

hardships of post-independence Ilmorogans and Kenyans we are presented with are consequences of a “foreign rule policed by colonized black skins” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 4). As in *Things Fall Apart* and Ngugi's earlier novels, the colonisers came for the ends, and used the methods, specified by the narrator in the following for instance:

Zen's children in Royal hunt for the seat of the sun-god of the Nile, scouts and emissaries of Genghis khan, Arab geographers and also hunters for gold and ivory, soul and gold merchants from Gaul and from Bismarck's Germany; land pirates and human game hunters from Victorian and Edwardian England driven (...) more often by mercenary commercial greed and love of the wanton destruction of those with a slightly different complexion from theirs (*Petals of Blood*, p. 68).

Moreover, the narrator condemns those he calls “our present day historians, following on similar theories yarned out by defenders of imperialism” who, for him, “insist that we [Africans] only arrived here yesterday” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 67) or deny that Kenyan people had always resisted foreign control and exploitation, echoing again Achebe's teachings and fictional embodiments of these teachings. Colonialism and neo-colonialism are associated with, and epitomised by, the worst figures of the story such as the Ironmongers, Fraudsham, Chui, Kimeria and Ezekiel. More importantly, colonialism is – as in *Things Fall Apart* – presented as the destroyer of a pre-colonial Ilmorog depicted, in turn, as a far better and happier community than that it became after colonialism. Like Achebe, Ngugi obviously laments “those days” “before the first European foreigner pitched his tent in Africa's soil” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 120) before “evil walk[ed] across [African's] lands” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 121); and when “there were no vultures in the sky waiting for the carcasses of dead workers, and no insect-flies feeding on the fat and blood of unsuspecting toilers” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 121). For, like pre-colonial Umuofia, the narrator suggests,

Ilmorog, the scene of the unfolding of this drama had not always been a small cluster of mud huts (...) It had its days of glory: thriving villages with a huge population of sturdy peasants who had tamed nature's forests (...) and brought forth every type of crop (*Petals of Blood*, p. 120).

Ngugi does not merely allude to the dangers of colonial education as is rather the case in the earlier novels. Here he overtly states these dangers and elaborates on that. Through the portraits of academics like the Ironmongers, Cambridge Fraudsham, Chui, Mzigo, Munira, Karega and Joseph – the writer traces the history of colonial education in Kenya, shows an unfavourable position towards its Western orientation, and proposes an alternative to missionary education and its post-independence perpetuation. The narrative begins and ends on notes of hope for a better future based on

education, showing that Ngugi still has faith in learning as a motor of change in Kenya/Africa. However, unlike in *A Grain of Wheat*, the education he advocates is not of the 'formal' colonial type. The education in which Ngugi shows hope in *Petals of Blood* is one which would play a leading role in getting the people out of the mess which resulted from the kind of society and system of government established by the missionaries and colonialism.

As for missionary education, in particular, Ngugi's position is rather clear; he simply castigates the missionary school through his depiction of the Ironmongers, for instance. Rev. Ironmonger – who definitely recalls Mr. Brown in *Things Fall Apart* – is, in appearance, a “gentle old man who looked more a farmer than a missionary headmaster” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 28). Yet like Mr Brown, he and his wife have been, as their name suggests, agents of an unhurried but destructive activity which consists in the annihilation of the Kikuyu identity. Ngugi satirises the Ironmongers for being the ‘parents’ of the ‘Chuis’ of Africa, who, like Muniu in *A Grain of Wheat*, are indoctrinated African teachers in post-independence Kenya, and who work to perpetuate colonial injustice. The Ironmongers have a marked preference for Chui – “probably,” as the narrator sarcastically tells us, “the son they had never had” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 28) – over the other children. Though Chui was nicknamed both “*Shakespeare*” and “*Joe Lewis*” by his school-mates, the Ironmongers called him Shakespeare but “*never Joe Lewis*” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 28). This shows the race-conscious and assimilationist purpose of the kind of education they represent. Ngugi conveys a particularly unsympathetic feeling towards these persons and expresses a position that is simply hostile to the institution they epitomise when he tells us that, in the end, “the Ironmongers retired to their home somewhere in England *to wait for death*” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 28).⁸² He also satirises the Ironmongers’ successor, Cambridge Fraudsham, whose creed in education can be encapsulated in Senghor’s sentence “assimilate don’t be assimilated.”⁸³ Like Fanon, Ngugi insinuates that the objective of such an education is the nurturing of subservience, self hatred and mutual suspicion in order to create in the children a “desire to be suddenly white” and “to marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness(...) grasp white civilization and dignity (...) and make them theirs.”⁸⁴ In short, Ngugi is able to show that an imperialist school like that of Fraudsham aimed to form people who, like the converts in *Things Fall Apart*, are ‘black like coal’ made

⁸² Mr Brown’s life comes to the same ending. The emphasis in the quotation is mine.

⁸³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, published in 1984 as a preface to Leopold Sedar Senghor’s *Anthology of Negro and Malagasy Poetry in the French language* (p. 22), quoted in S. B. Diagne’s “Africanity as an Open Question,” published in *Identity and Beyond: Rethinking Africanity*, S. B. Diagne (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁸⁴ Frantz Fanon quoted in Henning Melber’s “Beyond Africanity? – An Introduction,” published in *Identity and Beyond: Rethinking Africanity*, S. B. Diagne (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

to be 'white like Milk.' This is what we understand when we read a passage like the following:

[H]e [Cambridge Fraudsham] had firm notions how an African school had to be (...) the school did not want to turn out black Europeans but true Africans who would not look down upon the innocence and simple ways of their ancestors at the same time, we have to grow up strong in god and the Empire (*Petals of Blood*, p. 29).

Besides, Ngugi expresses an anti-colonialist point of view in his depiction of the Mau Mau movement in *Petals of Blood*. Except perhaps for Ezekiel's right ear (cut by the Mau Mau) – which, moreover, the story presents as a deserved punishment – there is no suggestion that Mau Mau violence was offensive and extreme as is the case in the previous novel. In all cases, colonialism and its agents are so reviled in this novel that any violence against them would seem legitimate. Instead, events such as the "shooting dead" of Ole Masai (*Petals of Blood*, p. 138), the "hanging" of Nding'Uri (*Petals of Blood*, p. 242), his laying "somewhere in a common grave," "in a mass grave" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 221) and Abdulla's crippled leg are stressed as great losses. These are depicted as facts of the arbitrary violence of those to whom the book refers simply as the "*European butchers*" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 313). Besides, all Mau Mau fighters are portrayed in positive terms. Abdulla, who had known both men, describes Oli Masai as "a remarkable man" and Nding'Uri as "the bravest of them all," "unwept, unavenged (...) the unknown, unsung soldier of Kenya's freedom" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 221). As to Abdullah himself, he is presented as a living prototype of a valiant freedom fighter and eye witness of colonial and neo-colonial injustices, and portrayed almost as a faultless figure of virtue. As they exemplify Ngugi's departure from Achebean subtlety in reproving colonialism and its institutions, these and similar considerations (with which the novel is teeming) illustrate very well Ngugi's anticolonialist stance in spite of the ambiguities in his discourse considered previously.

In *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, regardless of the ambiguities arising from the same kind of considerations as those cited above, the author not only displays elements of an anticolonialist point of view but advocates a "return to the sources," i.e. a modern Africa inspired from the pre-colonial African view of the world. This is a discourse which denounces colonialism and proclaims that there is no other way out of Kenya's and Africa's problems, of the post-independence predicaments of their peoples, but reconciliation with their pre-colonial cultures and self-perception. This implies, above all, a reunion with their languages, cultures, traditions and history (immediate and remote), and work for the renaissance of Kenya/Africa based on the values of their pre-colonial past. More clearly and confidently than in any of his previous novels, Ngugi proclaims, in short, what he had called in *Homecoming* "the restoration of the African

character to his history.”⁸⁵ Arguably, the Gikuyu novels really strive to embody in their form, language and content the desire of “homecoming” formulated in that collection of essays. If these novels show an opposition to colonialism which is partly carried out still with reference to Achebe’s method, a condemnation of the missionaries and colonialism with realism, they, on the other hand, distinguish themselves from Achebe’s typical treatment of colonialism. They blend Achebean subtle method, that we just explained, and Fanon’s forthright method (as will be explained in the next chapter) to express disapproval with both colonialism and “neo-colonialism.”

D. ‘Transplanting the Minds’: Achebean Character Schemata in Ngugi’s Characterisation

Ngugi greatly resembles Achebe in terms of characterisation as well. He seems to have adapted major aspects of the characterisation of *Things Fall Apart*, principally, and to have made of some of these aspects permanent features of his own characterisation. While his resemblance to D. H. Lawrence in this respect is sited at the spiritual level as we have seen in Chapter Two, his resemblance with Achebe in this same respect is to be found at relatively more immediate and more varied levels. In fact, it is noticeable in two broad areas. The first area is the general, or *schematic*, design of characterisation. Indeed, both novelists rather obviously establish character schemata based on divisions of characters into the same – ethnic, gender, age and social – groups. Moreover, these groups are divided into (and intersect in) functional – stereotypical and symbolic – subcategories that are again analogous in the writers’ respective novels. Furthermore many of the individual figures within these subcategories have, in turn, important aspects in common.

The second major area in which Ngugi’s characterisation bears a close resemblance to Achebe’s is the configuration of the characters *from the psychological point of view*.⁸⁶ The analogy from this standpoint can be summarised as, first, a remarkable common interest in the psychological dimension of character, plus a scrupulous application of some of the main postulates of psychoanalysis – namely “the personality theory” – to their characterisations in general, and to define the psychological identities of their individual characters. These psychological postulates are so crucial, to

⁸⁵ Ngugi, *Homecoming*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁸⁶ While it is generally accepted that Ngugi’s interest in the psychological dimension of character, mainly in the first four novels, results exclusively from the influence of European modernists, mainly Conrad, it might very well be a consequence of Achebe’s influence in the first place as we shall see. This is not to say that the influence of Conrad and other European modernists like Joyce and Eliot on both Achebe and Ngugi is trivial.

both writers, as to delineate the quintessence of their attitudes to characterisation. They are used consistently to give coherence to the behaviours of their characters as well as to their relationships with the other characters.

We will, hereafter, approach the characterisation without lingering on the illustration of the resemblance of the writers' character schemata, because it seems fairly obvious, and we will elaborate more on the psychological delineations, less immediately perceptible and perhaps more important. First, however, it is important to briefly consider a number of points that can be raised with reference to Ngugi's resemblance to Achebe as far as their schematic divisions of characters and their stereotypical and symbolic functions are concerned. The first important point that can be raised in this context is that, while both of them always bring into play female and white characters as well as characters from both the upper and lower social classes – besides the main, male-black, character-groups which receive most of the writers' attention –, a number of differences are noticeable in their treatments of each of these groups of character. For example, it is clear that Ngugi elaborates far more than Achebe does (at least in his first three novels) on female characters and, particularly in *A Grain of Wheat*, on white characters as well. While critics, feminists mostly, have objected to both writers' treatments of women,⁸⁷ Ngugi certainly provides more extensive dramatisations of women than can be found in any of Achebe's novels, including *Anthills of the Savannah*. There is little room for comparison between the two in terms of the number of female characters and the spaces

⁸⁷ In the case of Achebe, one of the most vehement feminist critiques of his work is the writer Rose Ure Mezu. In one essay, "Women in Achebe's World," she simply calls him a "sexist." This is because Ure Mezu feels that "Achebe's sexist attitude is unabashed and without apology. Unoka, Okonkwo's father, is considered an untitled man, connoting femininity (20). Coco-yam, of smaller size and lesser value than other yams, is regarded as female. Osgo has taken no title; and so, in a gathering of his peers, Okonkwo unkindly tells him, "This meeting is for men" (28). Guilt-ridden after murdering Ikemefuna, his surrogate son, Okonkwo sternly reprimands himself not to "become like a shivering old woman" (72) – this he considers the worst insult. Fleeing after the murder, Okonkwo has no other refuge than his mother's town, which, of course, has to be called Mbanta – "small town" – which I read as being opposed in Okonkwo's thinking to the rugged, wild, violent, strong, masculine connotations of his Umuofia (meaning "children of the forest"). Such excessive emphases on virility, sex-role stereotyping, gender discrimination, and violence create an imbalance, a resultant denigration of the female principle." Rose Ure Mezu, "Women in Achebe's World," in *The Womanist* (online), The Institute for African-American Studies, 1995. As for Ngugi, his feminist questioners include Florence Stratton. In *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (*op. cit.*), Stratton feels, for her part, that Ngugi creates "a gendered theory of nationhood and of writing, one that excludes women from the creative production of the national polity or identity and of literary texts. Instead, woman herself is produced or constructed by the male writer as an embodiment of his literary/political vision [...]. So constructed, woman is defined as her body, as her sexuality: she is an ideal virgin-mother figure and/or a prostitute, 'Madammadonna', 'a barmaid farmer' (p. 51)." I have quoted Stratton, here, in Roos Bonnie's "Re-historicizing the conflicted figure of woman in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*," *Research in African Literatures* (online), June 22, 2002. Bonnie, in turn, is criticising what she considers to be Stratton's unfair indictment of Ngugi.

they devote to them in their novels. Except for Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah*, and, to lesser degrees, Elewa in the same novel and Ekwefi, Ezinma and Chielo in *Things Fall Apart*, there are hardly any fully-developed female protagonists in Achebe's fiction. By contrast, Ngugi's fiction as a whole gives considerable attention to the female gender and women's experience, and shows marked elaboration and care in treating it. *Devil on the Cross* is outstanding in this sense since it is the first of Ngugi's novels to include a plain heroic character,⁸⁸ and it is significant to our point here that this first plain hero of Ngugi's is a heroine. Furthermore, Wanja and Mumbi in, respectively, *Petals of Blood* and *A Grain of Wheat* are no less fully-fledged than any of the main male characters of these stories.

Nonetheless, on the one hand, Achebe is so neglectful about female characters as to receive the label "sexist" from radical feminist critics such as Rose Ure Mezu.⁸⁹ We have seen previously how Achebe condemns patriarchy. Furthermore, only a radical feminist reader would look at a character like Ekwefi, for instance, as a "flat" or as a negative one. Achebe actually devotes two chapters to her and Ezinma in which he depicts her personality in considerable depth and relates her experience, what is more, on a poignant tone and, indeed, an obviously sympathetic attitude towards her. This is a 'privilege' which Achebe gives to none of his other major male and female characters. There is no doubt that Ekwefi presents a respectable image of (African) women, and that she is an epitome of a dynamic and courageous female personality and a symbol of female influence, and of the prospects of female emancipation, in pre-colonial Africa. Achebe tells us, for example, that she leaves her first husband and "came to live with Okonkwo" simply because she preferred him to the former, and that she was ready to break a great taboo of Umuofia's – that of entering Agbala's shrine – if she sensed that her daughter was in danger in that shrine. And her character, as an individual, and her relationship with Okonkwo are quite elaborately handled from the psychological point of view as well. In the scene in which Okonkwo beats her in a moment of fury (studied previously),⁹⁰ she shows not only courage but also much moral-fibre, great love for her husband and compassion towards him. While she could keep silence like the other wives, she prefers to give Okonkwo "the outlet" he was seeking by 'letting him' give her "a sound beating." In radical psychoanalytic terms, that is called "masochism," but in plain social and romantic terms that is an outstanding proof of selfless love and compassion as just noted.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Unlike the novels Ngugi wrote in English, his Gikuyu novels do have plain heroes and heroines indeed.

⁸⁹ See Rose Ure Mezu, "Women in Achebe's World," *op. cit.*

⁹⁰ See p. 146 in this study.

⁹¹ Okonkwo and Ekwefi seem to be very devoted to each other indeed. That is not surprising when we know that her suggested 'masochism' 'fits with' Okonkwo's suggested 'sadism.' If

Similarly, Ezinma is a bold and congenial child, a female with a 'strong personality' who is loved by all. Even Okonkwo could not help displaying his affection towards her. When she caught *iba* (fever) he simply puts aside his usual machismo and just "cooks" some herbs to prepare her a medicine. And, though a symbol of religious abuse, Chielo is a charismatic character, the epitome, on the other hand, of an 'active' traditional woman with one of the highest positions of authority in Umuofia. Furthermore, she shows an admirable ability to distinguish between her 'professional' life and her social life as an ordinary woman. As a priestess, she is unyielding and her commands are unanimously respected: being who he is, even Okonkwo resigns himself to her commandments, even when these have to do with Ezinma as when she comes to take the latter away to Agbala's shrine on a moonless night.⁹² As a common resident of Umuofia, Chielo is a kind-hearted woman who loves Ezinma (whom she calls "my daughter"), is friends with Ekwefi and modestly helps in cooking at Obierika's daughter's "*uri*" for instance:

Every woman immediately abandoned whatever she was doing and rushed out in the direction of the cry. 'We cannot all rush out like that, leaving what we are cooking to burn in the fire,' shouted Chielo, the priestess. 'Three or four of us should stay behind.'/'It is true,' said another woman. 'We will allow three or four women to stay behind.'/Five women stayed behind to look after the cooking pots, and all the rest rushed away to see the cow that has been let loose (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 84).

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Beatrice Nwanyibuife, whose name means "a woman is also something," serves, in the words of Andy Greenwald, as a "source of passion and inspiration to the men around her."⁹³ She helps to "rewrite or adapt" her "culture for the future," emerging simply "as the true spirit and heart of the novel" as the same scholar writes.⁹⁴ To be sure,

Okonkwo 'feels well' when he is beating somebody, Ekwefi does not seem to do much to avoid his beatings. In the above mentioned example she gives Okonkwo the opportunity to beat her deliberately. The question which Okonkwo has asked in provocation of his wives while looking for an outlet to his suppressed anger is "Who killed this banana tree?" whereas, as Achebe tells us, "as a matter of fact, the tree was very much alive?". Yet Ekwefi decides to 'plead guilty,' unlike the other wives. Furthermore, we know, more generally, that Ekwefi is both Okonkwo's favorite wife and the one he beats most, which suggests that Achebe may have had reference to the masochism-sadism dichotomy in depicting their relationship. What fosters this is the fact that *Things Fall Apart* definitely includes a "psychological sub-plot" as we shall see shortly.

⁹² See *Things Fall Apart*, chapters 9 – 12 (p. p. 55 - 85) for the quotations, detail on these points and more.

⁹³ Andy Greenwald, "Postcolonial Feminism in *Anthills of the Savannah*," *African Postcolonial Literature in English*, The Postcolonial Web, URL:

<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/achebe/greenwald3.html>, Last modified 21 March, 2002, extracted 10 mars 2011, 01:44:06 GMT.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

Achebe puts forward a point of view that is largely favourable to women, mainly through this character, when he makes her say, for instance: "In our traditional society (...) the father named the child. But the man who should have done it today is absent (...) I think our tradition is faulty there. It is really safest to ask the mother what her child should be called" (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 206). Even feminist critics, very reserved about Achebe's treatment of women in his earlier novels as we noted, see positive progress in his position in this novel. Oyekan Oyowemola says more about this:

As far as gender is concerned, Achebe's use of Beatrice and her role in the novel to ingratiate himself with leftist feminists is quite transparent, and the measure of his success is feminists' frequent citation of *Anthills of the Savannah* as a work informed by a progressive attitude towards gender relations, in contrast to his earlier works which they see as suffused with patriarchal subjugation of women.⁹⁵

Thus, whereas Ure Mezu calls Achebe a "sexist," Uzoechi Nwagbara considers him a "feminist," or almost so:

Following in the footsteps of early feminist writers in Nigeria, Chinua Achebe has engaged with Nigeria's modus operandi of governance as well as the expansion of its public sphere for the consolidation of democratic ideals through feminist aesthetics. Achebe's aesthetic preoccupation with the expansion of the public sphere and good governance finds resonance in the craft of *Anthills of the Savannah*, where he modifies his previous idea of women – thereby seeing them as political actors and people with a voice capable of changing gender relations through participation in the business of the public sphere.⁹⁶

On the other hand, Ngugi's treatment of female characters, though favourable to women on the whole,⁹⁷ is not likely to satisfy his female readership. For example, while female characters always inspire the actions of the male characters in his novels and are always written about with considerable care and sympathy, the main female protagonists of *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, in spite of their many virtues remain, after all, street girls. Mumbi's adultery in *A Grain of Wheat* may even suggest

⁹⁵ Oyekan Oyowemola, "Discourse on Gender: Historical Contingency and the Ethics of Intellectual Work," *West Africa Review*, 3.2 (2002): 1 - 15, p. 4.

⁹⁶ Uzoechi Nwagbara, "Changing the Canon: Chinua Achebe's Women, Public Sphere and the Politics of Inclusion in Nigeria," *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, September 2009, p. 5.

⁹⁷ For discursive pro-feminists statements of Ngugi's see, for example, his interview with Anita Shreve (1977), published in Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks* (71-75), London: James Currey, 2006. The interview is fully devoted to knowing Ngugi's point of view about the feminine condition and gender issues, and to his fictional treatment of women, mainly in *Petals of Blood*. Ngugi's answers to Shreve's questions are largely in favour of women and their combat.

that prostitution is treated as a sort of 'second nature' of women, that being a result of an impulsive, almost subconscious reaction of hers. And in his first three novels the female characters tend to be sensitive and warm-hearted, but they are, on the other hand, depicted as submissive and helpless beings. But, ultimately, Ngugi's typical position would not disagree with that expressed through the "simple logic" of the wise Nyakinyua in *Petals of Blood*: "A man cannot have a child without a woman. A woman cannot bear a child without a man. And was it not a man and a woman who fought to redeem this country?" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 161). It follows that Ngugi and Achebe are actually not that far apart in their conceptions and treatments of female characters. In spite of the differences outlined above, they are not only similar in creating congenial female portraits but also have in common the same general attitude to female characters. This common attitude consists in a tendency to depict them in a way which reflects their realities as women on the one hand, and as browbeaten and oppressed beings in African contexts and elsewhere. One could even think of many of Ngugi's female protagonists as echoes of Achebe's Ekwefi and Beatrice.

Concerning the similarity in their treatments of white characters, these are, generally speaking, treated almost exactly in the same way. Their dramatisations and their roles in both writers' fictions consist, in the main, of periodic – or strategic – references to them, and they are, in both cases, typically depicted and used as mere "pieces of wood." However, there is a way in which *A Grain of Wheat* can be seen as an exception, though not a perfect one, in this sense. While their general stereotypical and symbolic functions remain in the limits of their being negative colonial stereotypes of the type Achebe created in his first three novels, Ngugi expands the portraits of John and Margery Thompson, and 'humanises' them to such an extent that there seems to be little difference between them and the main black characters in terms of character complexity. They are, indeed, closer to being "round characters" with negative stereotypical functions than ideal exemplars of the negative and "flat" character-stereotypes of which Achebe sets the tradition in (Anglophone) African fiction.⁹⁸

Except for the Thompsons, nevertheless, this category of characters hardly receives more treatment in Ngugi's fiction than it does in Achebe's, and white characters are barely more developed, and remain types. Characters like D. O. Robson, Dr Lynd, Dr Van Dyke, in *A Grain of Wheat*, the Ironmongers, Cambridge Fraudsham, the English and German tourists in *Petals of Blood*, and the "capitalist monster-gods" in the Gikuyu novels can even be thought of as 'transplantations' into Ngugi's novels of mere 'figures of wood' like Mr Brown, Reverend Smith, the District Commissioner and the other "white men" of *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, and *No Longer at*

⁹⁸ "Round character" and "Flat character" are E. M. Forster's terms. They indicate, respectively, what is more commonly referred to as "main," "compound" or "complex," characters, and "secondary" characters. See E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, *op. cit.*, "Appendix A," p. 169.

Ease. In fact, even the idea of a fuller development of the “colonial type” and of the “white man” embodied in the Thompsons bears close resemblance to Achebe’s relatively detailed treatment of Mr Brown in *Things Fall Apart*. And Ngugi’s most tactical point – from the thematic point of view – is – as Achebe does through his rather detailed description of Mr Brown and the nuances he highlights between him and Reverend Smith – to appear more liberal (or less “racist”), as a writer, than do writers to whom both he and Achebe strive to respond partly by such portraits. It is a way of distinguishing themselves from authors such as Conrad, Cary, Defoe and Shakespeare in the portrayals of Mfumu, Mister Johnson, other black character-stereotypes, Friday, Ariel, and Caliban.

Concerning their attitudes to social origins, it seems obvious that both writers bring into play characters from both upper and lower social positions, but some of their objectives in doing so, namely their respective class-conscious attitudes, are simply divergent. It is noticeable that Ngugi is essentially interested in characters of the lower social conditions whereas Achebe is concerned with dramatising the elite. It is plain enough that Achebe characteristically cares about the upper class, the “greatest” and “great” men and women, people “of title” like Okonkwo, Obierika, Nwakibie, Akunna, Ezeudu, Ekwefi and Ezeulu. These obviously receive more focus and sympathy than the “poor,” the “weak,” the “sick,” the “outcasts,” the “abominations,” the “effeminate,” and, indeed, the mere ‘mobs’ – the rather anonymous ‘rest of the people’ – of his novels. In contrast, there is no doubt that Ngugi’s imaginative interest, sympathies and expressions of hope go to the lowly people, the “masses,” “peasants and workers,” “grassroots,” “proletarians” – the petite-gens which people his stories, and certainly not to the “bourgeois,” “petty-bourgeois,” “MPs” and “rulers” – the “moneyed and propertied few” “oppressors” and governors.

As we have hinted above, the similarity between the two novelists at the general schematic level can also be seen in their coinciding divisions of these main character-categories into sub-categories with, again, similar stereotypical and symbolic functions. Thus, the main groups of white characters are often divided, in the novels of both, into missionary figures (and/or colonial educational figures) – such as Mr Brown and Reverend Smith in *Things Fall Apart* and the Ironmongers and Cambridge Fraudsham in *Petals of Blood* – and, on the other hand, administrative and/or military figures – represented by the various D. C.s and D. O.s in both novelists’ works, and by witty references to the “Queen of England” as a symbol of British imperialism. According to their number in a given story by Achebe or Ngugi, such missionary and colonial administrative figures either stand for the (nature) of the “mission” and colonial administration(s) themselves in the writers’ respective countries or, when there is a succession of such figures (as in *Things Fall Apart*, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*), for the history of colonialism in African communities. When there is more than one

of them, this always involves the writers' intentions to underline strategic changes in agents and methods of colonialism represented through the alternations of these figures. Thus, in *Things Fall Apart*, there is Mr Brown who epitomises the first generation of missionaries with its indirect method of controlling natives (based on the avoidance of "frontal attacks" on their beliefs), a method whose effects are subtle but sure. Then, there is his successor, Reverend Smith, who stands for the subsequent generation of missionaries and who – the decisive part of the job having been done by the first generation – carried out the rest of the program on the colonial agenda with the 'required' change in method, namely a voluntary increase in authoritarianism towards the colonised populations. Finally, there is the D. C. symbolising the colonial administration itself, namely its austerity and race-conscious ideology and drives. White characters are divided into just such stereotypical and symbolic subcategories in Ngugi's novels, most notably in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*. In *Petals of Blood*, we also have two sets of missionary figures – the Ironmongers and Cambridge Fraudsham – that play the same stereotypical and symbolic functions as, respectively, Mr Brown and Reverend Smith. In *A Grain of Wheat*, there is no white missionary figure, but D. O. Robson and D. O. Thompson equally stand for two generations of colonial administrators around the period of the Mau Mau insurrection and, again, for two different but complementary methods of "dealing with natives." The same functions of similar white-character-types may be suggested in Achebe's later fiction and in Ngugi's earlier and Gikuyu novels as well.

In the same way, the category of female characters is divided into smaller, functional groups by both writers. Ekwefi and Ezinma in *Things Fall Apart* and Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah* are women of the free-thinking perhaps even revolutionary, type; Chielo, though a 'woman of character' too, is, on the other hand, nearer to the sort of authoritarian 'active women' of the conformist and conservative kind who, typically, would conform to the *status quos* of their societies and turn them to their personal advantages. Nwoye's mother is, for her part, of the submissive and docile housewife type. She represents the obedient Ibo women who endure the laws of their milieus in general and of their husbands in particular. Though their changes throughout the stories make their stereotypical classifications more difficult to identify than they are in the case of Achebe, Ngugi's female Characters are, in fact, either cast into just such general types of personality, or into slightly nuanced variations on them. Indeed, there are in Ngugi's novels 'Ekwefi and Ezinma figures' such as Warui and Njeri, and, perhaps, even the changed Mumbi in *A Grain of Wheat*; Nyakinyua, the militant Wanjia of the Old Ilmorog and the final, 'resurrected,' one in *Petals of Blood*, as well as the transformed Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross*. On the other hand, we have 'Chielo figures,' such as the business-like Wanjia, in Ngugi's novels. The female protagonists of *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*, the initial

Mumbi and Wariinga, and Mumbi's mother are rather of the humble and submissive type of women we have already mentioned. It is noticeable however that Ngugi's main female characters have additional – mythical and allegorical – significance, which is not the case in Achebe's novels. Unlike Achebe, Ngugi's heroines are allegories for Kenya/Africa, and some of them, like Mumbi and Wariinga, are epitomes of the putative mothers of the Agikuyu in the Kikuyu myth of origin.

Although the social classes to which Ngugi's and Achebe's characters belong are different, the (black) characters of a given social class are similarly divided in the novels of both writers, into, on the one hand, all three age categories. Both of them bring into play elders, youth and teenagers, plus occasional references to children. On the other hand, characters are, still similarly, type-cast into stereotypical and symbolic 'families' with, what is more, very comparable stereotypic and symbolic roles. Indeed, Achebe deals with all three age-categories; he brings into play young characters such as Okonkwo and Obierika, "elders" like Ezeulu, Akunna, Nwakibie, Ezeudu as well as lads and lasses such as Nwoye, Ikemefuna and Ezinma. This age-based division of characters aims, in Achebe's ethnic novels, first at providing a symbolic representation of the various age categories of people in the African communities, more precisely at capturing the typical, or common, character, and the typical lives, of each group so as to provide a complete general picture of the populations who live in those communities. By the same token, they provide representations of generational changes in the histories of these societies. On the other hand, these characters are divided by Achebe into archetypal personality categories. Thus, in *Things Fall Apart*, there is a group composed of characters like Okonkwo, Nwakibie, Ezeudu, Ikemefuna, (and Chielo and Ezinma) standing, roughly, for the kind of conformist, conservative, and rather harsh side of the 'African character.' These are definable as people "of action," to put it in the language of *Things Fall Apart*. Another group, including Obierika, Okonkwo's uncle Uchendu, Akunna (and Ekwefi), stands for the reasonable and, one can say, "intellectual" type of personality (in Umuofia/Africa) – that is, for man and women "of thought" to put it, again, in Achebe's words. Finally, there is a third group made of individuals of the "soft," "weak", romantic, 'feminine' and "effeminate" type which includes people like Unoka, Nwoye and his mother, and, as Nwakibie tells us, many of the "youth" of Umuofia. Even people from the lower class are sub-divided into smaller functional groups. These include the "lazy" and "effeminate" (like Unoka and Nwoye), the "sick," the "outcasts," and the "converts."

Ngugi has recourse to the very same stereotypical and symbolic subdivisions of character. He too divides his black protagonists, first, into age categories. His novels always include youth (Gikonyo, Mumbi, Kihika, Karanja, Wambuku, Njeri, Mugo in *A Grain of Wheat*; Munira, Karega,

Wanja, in *Petals of Blood*; Wariinga, Gatuiria, and Muturi in *Devil on the Cross*,...etc.), elders (Wambui, Warui, Mumbi's parents, Karanja's parents, Waitherero, Nyakinua and the elders of Ilmorog and the other old people of his novels) as well as lads such as Njoroge, Kariuki, Joseph, young Kihika. Such a division of characters into age groups also aims, as with Achebe, to provide an all-inclusive overall image of African populations, of their typical lives and mentalities, as well as a representation of generational changes and continuities in Kenya/Africa's history. Like Achebe, Ngugi also divides his characters into groups based on types of (African) personality, and these types of personality are, furthermore, again generally akin to those Achebe deals with. Thus, we have in Ngugi's novels, as well, men and women "of action," protagonists with "rebellious spirits" (of Mukami, *Petals of Blood*, p 3) – or Okonkwo figures. These consist of the various nationalist activists of these stories such as Wambui, Warui, General R., Lieutenant Koinandu and Njeri in *A Grain of Wheat*, Nyakinua, Abdulla, Mukami, Karega and the militant Wanja in *Petals of Blood*, Wariinga, Muturi and the old man from Nakuru in *Devil on the Cross*, and Matigari, Guthera and Muriuki in *Matigari*. Another category consists, again as in *Things Fall Apart*, of intellectuals -- men and women "of thought" who can be compared with Obierika. Examples of this category are Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child*, Waiyaki in *The River Between*, Gikonyo and Mumbi in *A Grain of Wheat*, (aspects of) Munira, Joseph and aspects of Kihika in *Petals of Blood* and Gatuiria in *Devil on the Cross*. The category of the "soft" and "effeminate" type of personality in Achebe's fiction is paralleled in Ngugi's novels by aspects, or phases in the developments, of Waiyaki, Njoroge, Mugo, Munira, and Gatuiria plus the other assimilated, Western-cultured and imperialist characters. These can be seen as more or less nuanced variations on Achebe's Nwoye: they either are simply the 'Nwoyes' of Ngugi's fiction, or characters with pointed aspects of Nwoye's personality.

As is typically the case in *Things Fall Apart*, each individual character in Ngugi's fiction functions as a symbol, or represents as a smaller subcategory, a stereotypical variation, as it were, on one of those three main typical-personality categories. Thus, in the same way as Okonkwo symbolises the most radical and close-minded kind of personality in his category, so are, for instance, Boro, Kihika, Karega and Muturi in Ngugi's fiction. And the nuances between Uchendu (who stands for traditional 'African wisdom') and Obierika (whose character would rather epitomise something like 'African common sense,' or an evolution of African wisdom) can be paralleled by similar nuances between Nyakinyua, Abdulla and Karega, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, by those between Nyakinyua and the earliest Wanja in *Petals of Blood* for instance.

*

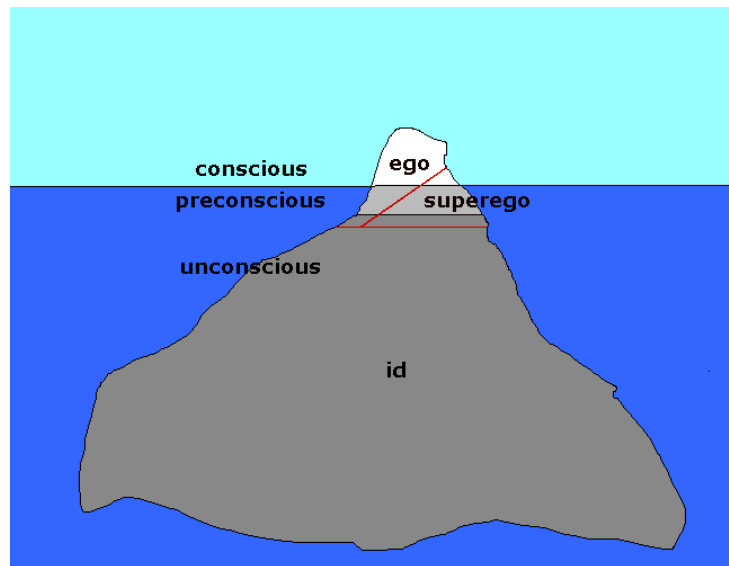
The second major area of the intersection of their respective characterisations has to do with their approaches to characterisation from the *psychological* standpoint, as stated earlier. As already hinted at, characterisation itself, as a literary notion, is largely conceived by both novelists on the basis of fundamental psychoanalytic principles, those often associated with Sigmund Freud. These principles are used, by both writers, to give coherence to the behaviours, identities and relationships between their respective characters (i. e. to make them believable, these being, after all, imaginative incarnations of human beings). Thus, there is in both writers' attitudes to characterisation, first, a similar and characteristic tendency to establish logical links between the behaviours of the characters, their immediate (or conscious), and their deeper (or unconscious) drives. The major principle of psychoanalysis which both writers apply to their characterisations is, accordingly, the most fundamental one: the idea that human character is an outcome of interaction, or conflict, between the "conscious," the "preconscious" and "unconscious" minds – that is between their "ego," "superego" and "id" made popular by Freud. These concepts, and the fundamental relationship between them, are summarised by C. George Boeree as follows:

The conscious mind is what you are aware of at any particular moment, your present perceptions, memories, thoughts, fantasies, feelings, what have you. Working closely with the conscious mind is what Freud called the preconscious, what we might today call "available memory:" anything that can easily be made conscious, the memories you are not at the moment thinking about but can readily bring to mind. Now no-one has a problem with these two layers of mind. But Freud suggested that these are the smallest parts! The largest part by far is the unconscious. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness, including many things that have their origins there, such as our drives or instincts, and things that are put there because we cannot bear to look at them, such as the memories and emotions associated with trauma. According to Freud, the unconscious is the source of our motivations, whether they be simple desires for food or sex, neurotic compulsions, or the motives of an artist or scientist. And yet, we are often driven to deny or resist becoming conscious of these motives, and they are often available to us only in disguised form.⁹⁹

The scheme¹⁰⁰ proposed by the same psychologist (a simplified version of Freud's) – through the metaphor of the iceberg – provides a helpful schematic representation of this fundamental theory of human personality:

⁹⁹ C. George Boeree, *Personality Theories* - "Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939)," 1997, 2006, 2009, URL: <http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/freud.html>, 14 April 2010.

⁹⁹ C. George Boeree for the scheme, *ibid.*



The main theory of personality – the layers of mind (Ego, Superego and Id) – applied by both Achebe and Ngugi to their complex characters.

Without a doubt, both Ngugi and Achebe draw on this scheme to portray their complex characters. In effect, their compound characters are always endowed with, first, an “ego,” that is an *outer* aspect, or manifestation of personality that we can observe. Both writers present us, first, with sets of external aspects – consisting of the sets of mere behaviours and attitudes – of their characters. Furthermore, they both do so through two related introductory steps towards fuller depictions of the personalities of practically all their main characters. The first of these steps consists of providing us with revealing physical looks, sets of actions, sayings and behaviours of these characters which are suggestive of permanent human states of mind and states of consciousness. The second step consists of establishing those actions and behaviours, not as isolated and momentary occurrences, but as manifestations of permanent traits – of the “egos” (the apparent part of the personalities) – of their performers. With reference to Okonkwo, for example, Achebe gives us, first of all, a series of such revelatory signs by drawing attention to Okonkwo’s appearance and behaviour. These signs consist of mere details such as the facts that “when he walked” Okonkwo’s “heels hardly touched the ground,” that he “seemed to walk on springs,” and generally stressing his serious and severe appearance and violent behaviour (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 2). These aspects of the behaviour and appearance of Okonkwo are not presented as circumstantial ones, but as symptoms of permanent external traits of his personality – mainly the characteristic arrogance, aggressiveness and

violence we are soon made to associate with Okonkwo's "ego." These permanent traits are confirmed to us by the recurrence of their 'symptoms,' but also literally by the narrator when, in a second procedure, he tells us, for instance, that he "did pounce on people quite often," that "he had a slight stammer," that "whenever he was angry and could not get his words quickly enough, he would use his fists" (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 2). It is also with an intention to point up Okonkwo's 'killer-instinct' that he tells us that, unlike his father, he "could stand the look of blood," and that

In Umuofia's latest war he was the first to bring home a human head. That was his fifth head; and he was not an old man yet. On great occasions such as the funeral of a village celebrity he drank his palm wine from his first human head (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 8).

In fact, Okonkwo's behaviour as a whole is presented to us as symptomatic of this kind of violent, perhaps homicidal, character-ego.

Similarly, when he first introduces Kihika, for example, Ngugi tells us, first, about his grave and stern appearance, emphasising the way he looks and speaks – namely the tone of his voice and his gestures – as when he tells us, for instance:

People laughed. Kihika did not join them. He was a small man with a strong voice. Speaking slowly with emphasis on the important words, he once or twice pointed at earth and heaven as if calling them to witness that what he spoke was the truth (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 15).

The depictions of Kihika's outer look and actions – some of the most revealing include his performance in the capture of Mahee and his execution of D. O. Robson, but, in fact, and as is the case with Okonkwo, his behaviour as a whole – functions, as with Achebe, as a first step in Ngugi's further depiction of Kihika's "ego." As with Okonkwo, they are treated as symptoms of arrogance, authoritarianism and violence that, we soon understand, are inherent aspects of the visible side of Kihika's personality. As with Okonkwo, these aspects of Kihika's personality are confirmed – in a second step – by the narrator when he tells us, for instance, "What arrogance? Kihika had spoken of blood as easily as if he was talking of drawing water in a river" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 15) And, as in the case of Okonkwo, such details may very well indicate Kihika's predisposition for murder.¹⁰¹ The same two-stage "ego-depiction" process can be noted in the portrayals of any of Ngugi's, and Achebe's, compound characters. Other ideal exemplars include Nwoye and Ezeulu in the case of Achebe, and Mugo, Munira, Wanjia, Karega and Wariinga in respect of Ngugi.

¹⁰¹ The more so because, at another level, Kihika's violence epitomises the *murderous* violence of the colonised individual as a result of colonial violence as we shall see in Chapter Four, on the impact of Frantz Fanon on Ngugi.

Both Achebe and Ngugi detail the symptoms of their characters' personalities and go further than depicting the external aspects (or "egos") of these personalities. Both novelists go beyond depicting the 'apparent parts of the icebergs of their characters' personalities', for, indeed, they both conceive of and present their characters' "egos" only as 'apparent parts of the icebergs' of deeper personalities. Such egos are manifestations of deeper layers of the characters' minds, that is, they are outcomes of hidden, psychic operations. They are indeed results of conflicts between the immediate-unconscious – "superegos" – and remote "unconscious" – the "ids" – of these characters. We have in both writers' works a few cases of relatively stable, or "normal," personalities – such as Obierika and his son, Maduka, in the case of Achebe and Gikonyo, Mumbi, Abdulla (to some extent) and, perhaps, Matigari in Ngugi's fiction. These are characters who seem to 'manage' to balance the conflicting demands of their superegos and ids, so that their egos appear stable. But, more generally, the main characters in both writers' works are unstable personalities. In strictly psychoanalytic terms, most of them are "anxious" personalities. George Boeree defines anxiety as follows:

The ego -- the "I" -- sits at the centre of some pretty powerful forces: reality; society, as represented by the superego; biology, as represented by the id. When these make conflicting demands upon the poor ego, it is understandable if it -- if you -- feel threatened, feel overwhelmed, feel as if it were about to collapse under the weight of it all. This feeling is called anxiety, and it serves as a signal to the ego that its survival, and with it the survival of the whole organism, is in jeopardy.¹⁰²

Paraphrasing Sigmund Freud, Boeree distinguishes, nevertheless, between three different types of anxiety which he calls "realistic," "moral" and "neurotic" and each of which he and Freud define as follows:

Freud mentions three different kinds of anxieties: The first is realistic anxiety, which you and I would call fear. Actually Freud did, too, in German. But his translators thought "fear" too mundane! Nevertheless, if I throw you into a pit of poisonous snakes, you might experience realistic anxiety. The second is moral anxiety. This is what we feel when the threat comes not from the outer, physical world, but from the internalized social world of the superego. It is, in fact, just another word for feelings like shame and guilt and the fear of punishment. The last is neurotic anxiety. This is the fear of being overwhelmed by impulses from the id. If you have ever felt like you were about to "lose it," lose control, your temper, your rationality, or even your mind, you have felt neurotic anxiety. Neurotic is actually the Latin word for nervous, so this is nervous anxiety.

¹⁰² C. George Boeree, *ibid.*

It is this kind of anxiety that intrigued Freud most, and we usually just call it anxiety, plain and simple.¹⁰³

The kind of anxiety which the personalities of Ngugi's and Achebe's main characters are often associated with is only rarely of the non-pathological, "realistic" kind, and is often of either, or both, of the two other types. According to individual cases, both writers deal with characters oscillating between "moral" and "neurotic" anxiety. In the case of Achebe, characters like Ezeulu, Okonkwo and Nwoye display signs of anxiety that is definitely not of the realistic kind. Ezeulu's anxiety, for instance, can be situated between the objective and the moral kind since it originates from both realities of "the outer, physical world," and "the internalized social world of [his] superego." On the other hand, Okonkwo and Nwoye's anxieties come both from their personal "internalisations of the social world" – from "fears of punishment and feelings of guilt" indeed – as well as from their characteristic repressions of needs of their subconscious, instinctive (or primitive), selves – that is of their "ids." Their anxieties are, therefore, both "moral" and "neurotic," as we shall demonstrate further along. In so far as Ngugi is concerned, Mugo, Munira and Gaturia are particularly illustrative examples of anxious personalities, and whose anxieties are – as in the case of Okonkwo and Nwoye – at once moral and neurotic, whereas Kihika, Wanja and Karega's anxieties seem closer to the moral than to the neurotic type of anxiety.

In fact, Ngugi's and Achebe's main characters display obvious signs, not just of these general types of anxiety, but also of specific "mechanisms of defence." They display reactions to these anxieties, that are typical of, and which situate their characters within, specific categories of anxious personalities as defined by psychoanalysts. In other words, Achebe and Ngugi do refer to the other psychoanalytic principle which says: "when the anxiety becomes overwhelming, the ego must defend itself. It does so by unconsciously blocking the impulses or distorting them into a more acceptable, less threatening form."¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, they associate their characters' reactions to their own anxieties with "techniques" to which human beings have recourse in order to defend their egos, known by psychoanalysts as "ego defence mechanisms." Put more simply, both writers relate their characters to specific psychopathologies. It will not be possible to explore this (important) point in full detail here,¹⁰⁵ and we will limit ourselves to reference to the psychopathologies associated with Ngugi's and Achebe's characters by their names when necessary in the rest of our argument.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ See C. George Boeree, "mechanisms of defence" *ibid.*, for more detail,

What is even more crucial is that Ngugi, like Achebe, explores the origins of his characters' anxieties and psychopathologies again in psychoanalytic terms, and just in the way a psychoanalyst seeks the causes of a given patient's psychopathology. Both novelists suggest 'relevant' psychoanalytic explanations to each 'case of anxiety', as it were, according to the specific 'symptoms' displayed. And, again in the way of psychoanalysts, both novelists suggest such explanations through accounts about their characters' childhoods. In fact, the characters' anxieties in the work of both novelists have to do directly with particular family and social environments in which the characters are said to have evolved as children. Furthermore, these anxieties are said to be directly provoked and worsened by traumatic events which the characters are said to have undergone during their childhoods. They are, more precisely, suggested to be caused by "odd" family environments and odd "couples" in which, and by whom, the characters are 'brought up,' plus shocking experiences which they are said to have gone through during their childhood or adolescence. And, as we shall see, it is typical of both novelists to directly establish such links between the suggested causes of the psychological malaise of a given character and the alienating effects of those causes on that character's personality as an adult by the use of plain cause-effect conjunctions such as "so," "and so," and "then." As far as Achebe is concerned, Okonkwo and Nwoye illustrate this well. Okonkwo's anxiety which is manifested as a combination of arrogance, aggressiveness, wanton violence, hatred of femininity and even criminality originates from a struggle with a *phobia*, an overwhelming fear of "effeminateness" and "failure,"¹⁰⁶ which degenerates into an *obsession* with masculinity and success:

Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 10).

The development of this obsession, it is equally clear, is encouraged by the specific and 'odd' family environment in which Okonkwo is said to have evolved as a child, namely an "effeminate" father in a milieu rooted in masculine values. And indeed this obsession is first provoked by a traumatic experience which, Achebe tells us, Okonkwo went through in his infancy:

¹⁰⁶ For a discussion of Okonkwo's "fear," see the part entitled "Okonkwo, A Life Dominated by Fear," in Obi, O. Akwani's review of *Things Fall Apart*, published online by IMDiversity, Inc., at IMDiversity.com., in 2006.

Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was agbala. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that agbala was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. **And so** Okonkwo was ruled by one passion – to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 10).

Likewise, Nwoye's anxiety comes from his struggle with an inferiority complex first created in him by contradictory parents (again an "odd couple"): an excessively affectionate but submissive mother, and an excessively authoritarian and violent father. His condition is made worse by the absence of a 'male model' other than a father who is harsh to him (For additional proof we are told that Nwoye feels much better with the arrival of Ikemefuna). Nwoye's effeminateness and confusion are, in other words, consequences of his being the son of a woman whom he likes but is forced to consider "foolish," and of a 'hated man' who strives to teach him the 'right' principles with authoritarianism. The following passage points this out in detail:

Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his obi, and he told them stories of the land – masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent, but somehow he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell, and which she no doubt still told to her younger children (...) That was the kind of story that Nwoye loved. But he now knew that they were for foolish women and children, and knew that his father wanted him to be a man. **And so** he feigned that he no longer cared for women's stories. And when he did this he saw that his father was pleased, and no longer rebuked him or beat him (*Things Fall Apart*, p. p. 37 - 38).

Nwoye's disturbance is, again, aggravated by two shocking events. The first is his witnessing of a throwing of twins in the evil forest, the other – the most determinant – is the execution of Ikemefuna with the participation of his father:

It was after such a day at the farm during the last harvest that Nwoye had felt for the first time a snapping inside him like the one he now felt. They were returning home with baskets of yams from a distant farm across the stream when they had heard the voice of an infant crying in the thick forest (...) Nwoye had heard that twins were put in earthen water pots and thrown away in the forest, but he had never yet come across them. A vague chill had descended on him and his head had seemed to swell, like a solitary walker at night who passes an evil spirit on the way. **Then** something had given way inside him. It descended on him again, this

feeling, when his father walked in, that night after killing Ikemefuna (*Things Fall Apart*, p. p. 43 - 44).

What fosters this all the more is Achebe's suggestion that other lads, such as Ikemefuna and Maduka, Obierika's son, who did not undergo such psychological oppression and traumatic experiences, are stable personalities. With a father like Obierika – a character whom Achebe offers as a contrast to Okonkwo – it is not surprising, the writer suggests, that Maduka is, in contrast to Nwoye, a “manly” and “promising” personality.

The relationships between the “egos,” “superegos” and “ids” of many of Ngugi's main characters are conceived in this manner. Thus, for example, Kihika's severe and nervous appearance, his violence, as well as the sort of predisposition for killing with which Ngugi endows him testify to an anxious personality, like Okonkwo's, and that equally has roots in his childhood. The devotion to politics he shows, his disproportionate hatred of the “white man,” the violence with which he leads the struggle against collaborators and settlers, and his “total disregard of personal danger” in doing so are signs which testify to an obsession that is of a very similar kind as, and is no less overwhelming than, that of Okonkwo. Kihika's great and exclusive interest in politics, his accentuated hostility and his behaviour as a whole are, indeed, consequences of such an obsession. And the origins of this obsession are, as in the cases of Okonkwo and Nwoye, traced back to his childhood. As Ngugi tells us: “Kihika's interest in politics began when he was a small boy and sat under the feet of Warui listening to stories of how the land was taken from black people (...) Unknown to those around him, Kihika's heart hardened towards ‘these people,’ long before he had even encountered a white face” (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 81 - 82). Also, again as in the cases of Okonkwo and Nwoye, it is a traumatic experience which he undergoes as a child that directly stirs and worsens his obsession and anxiety, namely an attempt to humiliate him in public by whipping him on his naked buttocks before the whole school. It is after this event that Kihika is said to have first developed his abnormally strong taste for politics, communal causes and violence:

For a long time the incident boiled in his mind. He read more; he even taught himself how to read and write Swahili and English. Years later, soon after the end of the war, he went to work in Nairobi, attended political meetings and discovered the Movement. He had found a new vision (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 86).

The example of Mugo is even more expressive of the similarity between Ngugi and Achebe in this respect. Mugo, from the strictly psychoanalytic point of view, is again an anxious personality, and his anxiety is definitely a combination of “moral” and “neurotic” anxieties. Symptoms of the eccentricity of Mugo's personality are given to us from the beginning:

physical and behavioural signs of anguish, stress, guilt, timidity, phobias and isolation. Later we realise that Mugo actually suffers, very much like Nwoye, fundamentally, from an inferiority complex, and we have confirmation of this when, at the end of a long account of the causes, the narrator tells us: 'So Mugo was haunted by the image of his own inadequacy' (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 7) As in the cases of Nwoye, Okonkwo and Kihika, this complex has roots in Mugo's orphan's childhood in general, and in several traumatic experiences he endures during that childhood, namely the moments of drunkenness of his aunt as this passage shows:

Mugo's father and mother had died poor, leaving him, an only child in the hands of a distant aunt. Waitherero was a widow with six married daughters. When drunk, she would come home and remind Mugo of this fact. Female smile, she would say, exposing her toothless gums; she would fix Mugo with a fierce glance, as if he and God had conspired against her (...) Do you laugh you – what's your penis worth? Oh God, see what an ungrateful wretch is left on my hands. You would have followed your father to the grave (...) Whatever he did or made, she would deride his efforts. So Mugo was haunted by the image of his own inadequacy. She had a way of getting at him, a question may be, about his clothes, his face or hands that made all his pride tremble down. He pretended to ignore her opinions, but how could he shut his eyes to her oblique smiles and looks? (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 7).

The same procedure is used to build up the personalities of Munira, Karega and Wanja in *Petals of Blood*, and of Wariinga and Gaturia in *Devil on the Cross*. They all display psychoneurotic attitudes, and troubled personalities, and their distresses are suggested as specific psychopathologies whose geneses are unhappy childhoods and adolescences, plus shocking events which they underwent in those periods of their lives. Munira – who is very much of the same psychological profile as Mugo and Nwoye – equally displays first an outlandish appearance (his "reddish eyes" for example) and behaviour (so much so that he is mocked by little school children, his friends and the rest of Ilmorogans) that indicate, from the beginning, the characteristically stressed and anguished personality that we discover in him. All Munira's deeds, including those which seem socially and religiously motivated, are suggested to originate ultimately again from an inferiority complex – a desire to feel "more than average" in Ngugi's words – which develops into isolation, an obsession with success at an individual level. Like Nwoye, Munira's complex is a consequence of a specific family environment as Ngugi tells us in detail in Chapter Two. His family background is very much like Nwoye's: a severe, authoritarian and fanatic religious (therefore hated) father and a mother and brothers and sisters who would "look upon him as a failure" (except for the late Mukami) (*Petals of Blood*, p. 13). Munira seems to suffer, additionally from a feeling of guilt which, as in the case of

Nwoye, is both of the moral kind (having to do with a religious dilemma, more precisely), and neurotic (as a result of repressed vital needs). Like Nwoye, too, Munira's moral anxiety and his 'neurosis' are bound up with the dilemma of his being brought up to holding as "right" the religious teachings (including repression of instinctive need like food and sex) of (a hated) father whose own deeds reveal him, on the other hand, as a hypocrite and his values as "wrong:"

Hence he felt his heart quicken at his return to a seat of his past. But it pained him that he still depended on his father for a place in which to set a home. He had always thought of striking out on his own but he had remained circling around his father's property without at the same time being fully part of it. This was unlike his more successful brothers (...) One, Mukami, had recently died and he still felt deeply saddened at the memory because, although she was much younger than himself, yet he felt that she somehow sided with him, and did not look upon him as a failure (...) His father Ezekiel, tall, severe in his austere aloofness, was a wealthy landowner and a respected elder in the hierarchy of the Presbyterian Church. He was tall and mean in his austere holiness. He believed that children should be brought up on boiled maize grains sprinkled with a few beans and on tea with only tiny drops of milk and no sugar, but all crowned with words of God and prayers (...) But Munira even as a boy was quick to notice that away from his father's house, (...) the workers (...) were less stilted, were more free and seemed to praise and sing to the Lord with greater conviction and more holiness (*Petals of Blood*, p . 13 - 14).

In the same way as Nwoye, Okonkwo, Mugo and Kihika, Munira's psychological malaise is aggravated by definite events that traumatised him in his adolescence related in the following quotation. His criminal action of burning Wanja's house with the men inside is, as the passage also shows, a belated repercussion of those childhood experiences:

It was at one of their meetings that Munira once during his holidays from Syria had felt a slight trembling of the heart and a consciousness of the enormity of the sin he had earlier committed, his very first, with Amina, a bad woman, at Kamiritho. He had felt the need to confess, to be cleansed by the Lord, but somehow, on the verge of saying it, he felt as if they would not believe his confession (...) Instead, he had gone home, convinced that inwardly he had given himself up to the lord, and decided to do something about his sins. He stole a matchbox, collected a bit of grass and dry cowdung and built an imitation of Amina's house at Kamiritho where he had sinned against the Lord, and burnt it. He watched the flames and he felt truly purified by fire. He went to bed at ease with himself and peaceful in his knowledge of being accepted by the Lord. Shalom. But the cow dung had retained the fire and at night the wind fanned into flames which would have licked up the whole barn had it not been discovered in time. In the morning he heard them talking

about it – saying that maybe some jealous neighbours had done it – and he decided to keep quiet. But he felt as if his father knew and this had added to his consciousness of guilt (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 4 - 15).

The same scheme and process are applied to Wanjia. The next passage (again from chapter two) gives us signs of her anxiety, gives hints at the exact nature of this anxiety, a mixture of sickly distrust in people and sadism, and defines the causes of Wanjia's neurosis in her troubled adolescence. It implies that the character was predisposed to anxiety by odd family environment plus the shocking event which it enfolds:

[T]ake me for instance,' she started again in an introspective tone, which was very captivating. 'I sometimes ask myself: why should a silly happening (...) affect one's life? (...) 'Now this boy. His name was Ritho. He and I were in the same class (...) Ritho walked me home (...) That evening I felt so good to be with one who was so confident in his heart's desires that I seemed to share in his ambitions (...) A man coughed as he passed by: I thought he was shaped like my father – but I did not care. I run home (...) my mother asked me (...) with whom where you just now? My boy friend, I said just like that and now I laughed. Mother, he – I started. But the look in her eyes killed the words. My father said: she is now a woman, she even talks to her mother as equals. They locked me in my room and they both beat me, my father with his belt and my mother with a cowhide strap we used for tying and carrying things. This will teach you to come home holding hands with boys! It was so unfair and I was determined not to cry. This seemed to add to their anger. They were now beating to make me cry. At last I screamed for help. I cried: you are people of God: have you no mercy? (...) I silently cursed at this world. I could not see that I had done anything wrong. I did not feel guilty (...) I also felt that the way they beat me – it was as if they were working out something between them (...) I resented that they should use me as a path for their coming together. That time they whispered long into the night. For days and weeks I planned vengeance. My parents had often beaten me, but it was the first time I was so rebellious in my thoughts (...) At the same time I hated the young man who had been the cause of my suffering (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 36 - 38).

As is typically the case of Achebe and Ngugi's characters, Wanjia's account of the causes of her psychological affliction in childhood is followed immediately by a 'verdict' of its impact on her as an adult. That impact is again a troubled, neurotic personality:

I nursed the pain in my soul. I am a hard woman and I know I can carry things inside my heart for a long time. I wanted to find something that would really hurt them and humiliate them as they had done to me (...) But I also knew that since that night I, my home, school, the world, nothing was any longer the same (*Petals of Blood*, p. 38).

Wanja is said to have another traumatic event while a little girl, the murder of her aunt, burnt alive by her ex-husband. Wanja narrates that event in a way which indicates that she has never recovered from the shock. This and the above-cited incident seem to be presented to explain the anomaly of Wanja's sexual behaviour. They would further explain her anxiety, particularly her sadism, i. e. the sickly pleasure she takes in luring men which the writer presents as one of her main characteristics as an adult:

She looked very much like the pictures of European women we saw in books. Even her gait and the way she held up her chin as she spoke, had "staili." It was now dark. My cousin stood and she said that she was going out to the latrine and also to see if her mother had come back from the market. My mother who was strangely quiet looked at her gate and I could tell disapproval in her eyes. All at once we heard a scream. It was – it was – it chilled words – blood – it's difficult to describe it because it was not like a human cry at all. My father and my mother and us children rushed outside. At the sight a few yards away, my mother screamed, but I couldn't scream or cry, just urine trickled down my legs. "My sister, my only sister," cried my mother as she rushed forward toward the burning figure of my aunt (*Petals of Blood*, p. 65)

Munira's reflection about Wanja's account confirms the decisiveness of this event in shaping her depression: "It was as if this was happening now in Ilmorog. He felt the terror in Wanja's voice, felt the desperation hidden in the very offhand tone she had adopted in telling it" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 65).

A whole side of Wariinga's psychological profile is approximately like Wanja's, though Ngugi endows her with aspects which he does not grant Wanja. What is said of Wanja in the above, for instance, also applies to her. Yet, Ngugi additionally associates with her neurosis self-hatred and a low self-esteem which has to do with her physical appearance, namely with her blackness (which is certainly not the case of Wanja). An important aspect of *Devil on the Cross* as a whole is that it simply aims to provide a simplified 'course' of psychology to African readers, so as to inform them about the nature and dangers of the black man's inferiority complex which Frantz Fanon warned about, and he mainly does so through his portrayal of Wariinga's psychological experience. The depiction of the nature and origins of her neurosis in the following passage shows that Ngugi refers to the same Achebean-Freudian psychological scheme and theory of personality as with the other characters noted above:

She took a small mirror out of her handbag and examined her face distractedly, turning over her many problems in her mind. She found fault with herself; she cursed the day she was born; she asked herself: Poor Wariinga, where can you turn now? (...) Wariinga was convinced her appearance was the root cause of all her problems. Whenever she looked at herself in the mirror she thought herself very ugly. What she hated most

was her blackness, so she would disfigure her body with skin-lightening creams like ambi and snowfire, forgetting the saying: 'That which is born black will never be white. Now her body was covered with light and dark spots like the Guinea fowl. Her hair was splitting, and it had browned to the colour of moleskin because it had been straightened with red-hot iron combs. Wariinga also hated her teeth. They were a little stained; they were not as white as she would have liked them to be. She often tried to hide them, and she seldom laughed openly. If by mistake she laughed and then remembered her teeth, she would suddenly fall silent or else she would cover her lips with her hand. Men would sometimes tease her, calling her Wariinga, the angry one, because of her lips, which were nearly always firmly pressed together (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 11).

The writer's reference to the general psychoanalytic theory associated with Sigmund and Emma Freud, in the way of Chinua Achebe, is certainly crucial in examples such as this one. However, a portrait and experience like those of Wariinga cannot be adequately understood without considering as well the impact on Ngugi of another major precursor of his: Frantz Fanon.

Chapter Four

Ngugi and Frantz Fanon – The Discourse of Alienation

A. Foreword

Fiction borrows and produces ideas: it does not “grow and develop in a vacuum” to quote Ngugi.¹ As Ngugi also famously argues, “every writer is a writer in politics,” and “the only question is what and whose politics” a given writer deals with.² This is to say that, in the same way that the ideological aspect of fiction should not be neglected in studying this form of art, the influence of political and social ideas on writers and their works should not be disregarded in dealing with literary influence. From a suggestion of a suitable approach to literature and to the question of influence, this proposition becomes an indispensable condition when it comes to reading Ngugi's fiction, and we have had occasion to draw attention to this in the previous chapters.

However, writers have dissimilar attitudes to, and work differently with, ideas. Their attitudes to ideas range from a typical tendency to produce and refer to “literary ideology” to a tendency to use and produce “social ideology.”³ Like other novelists, Ngugi draws on thought and knowledge⁴ in composing his novels but, unlike most novelists, he certainly resorts to social ideology, not just to literary ideology.⁵ Moreover, he does so profusely

¹ This is a reference to Ngugi's statement in *Homecoming* on the links between literature and the extra-literary world, namely the following: “Literature does not grow or even develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism.” Ngugi, *Homecoming*, quoted in Paul Dorn's “Turning Toward the World: Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*,” originally written for ENG 631: Post-Colonial Literature, taught Spring 1999 at San Francisco State University by Prof. Loretta Stec., URL: <http://www.runmuki.com/paul/writing/ngugi.html>, extracted June 25 2010.

² Ngugi, *Writers in Politics*, London: Heinemann, 1981, p. 58. Here is Ngugi's full point: “Literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape our everyday life. Hence a writer has no choice. Whether or not he is aware of it, his works reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side in the battlefield: the side of the people, or the side of those social forces and classes that try to keep people down. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics?”

³ Simon Gikandi, *Reading the African Novel*, Kenya: Heinemann, 1988, p. 112. Gikandi is paraphrasing Wole Soyinka here.

⁴ That is, they draw either reflexively or deliberately on the ideas inherent in other literary works and all sorts of sources outside imaginative literature.

⁵ Ideology is originally a Marxist term. It refers, in that sense, to a definite system of interrelated ideas that underlie (the) human community(ies) and on the basis of which (system of ideas, or ‘(abstract) facts’ in the Marxist logic) Marxists justified the doctrine of Marxism, namely what they consider to be people's unawareness of their exploitation by the “bourgeoisie.” The term is not used in that sense here but in its broader, non-doctrinaire, meaning. It indicates here any system of interrelated and complementary ideas established by men, not nature, including the

and to a degree which makes of such intensified reference to ideology one of the main markers of his style as a novelist. How and where to situate Ngugi's novels between what Wole Soyinka calls "reflexive and expository" modes of writing and what he terms "explanatory and analysis",⁶ and whether or not Ngugi's interest in ideology is a defect from the literary standpoint are complex and debatable questions, which are not our subject-matter here. But it is useful to pinpoint, before going further in this argument, that there are good reasons to think that even what could seem crude and insipid ideological usages and sheer propaganda in Ngugi's fiction, especially in, and after, *A Grain of Wheat* is, in fact, part of a creative approach, and of methods and techniques of writing creatively. Those usages are more interesting in a literary sense than to be mere propaganda since, at bottom, they sprout out of artistic⁷ impulses as our argument in this chapter implies, and we shall endeavour to further demonstrate this in Chapter Five.

Ngugi does not refer himself only to Marxist ideologies but to political and moral thought in all its diversity and perplexities. Either calculatingly or not, he draws on Western, *liberal as well as Marxist*, thought and knowledge. The culmination of such thought and knowledge in the works of the founding quartet of modern and contemporary Western world – Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud – has, in a way or other, certainly had its impact on his writings. And a serious and dedicated artist, scholar and researcher like Ngugi is surely aware of the quintessence of what has been produced in terms of ideas, and what progress was made, in the Western intellectual and scientific scenes. Ngugi also brings into play Eastern, including Confucian,⁸ philosophies, but mainly ideas of Gandhi whom he mentions by name in some of his novels,⁹ and, as Brendon Nicholls rightly notes, he seems familiar with Buddhism in *Wizard of the*

various versions of liberalism and humanism. Every system of ideas is an "ideology" from our point of view.

⁶ The citations are quoted in Simon Gikandi, *Reading the African Novel*, *op.cit.*, p. 112. However, Gikandi here is paraphrasing and quoting Wole Soyinka's argument in the forward to his *Opera Wonyosi* (London: Rex Colings, 1981, n. p.) on the "question of ideology in art." Here is the complete statement: "Soyinka reflects an angry attempt to hedge the whole question of ideology in art. In *Opera Wonyosi*, he declares his preference for 'reflexive and expository' modes of writing in contrast to what he terms 'explanatory and analysis' (...). In trying to draw a distinction between social and literary ideology, Soyinka insists that he is primarily interested in literature as an immediate-effect medium, but not as an anodyne of 'correct' class analysis." *ibid.*, p. 112.

⁷ Because they belong in novels, and novels are unquestionably art works.

⁸ Confucius is literally mentioned in *Wizard of the Crow* (p. 47).

⁹ Gandhi is a crucial source of inspiration for Ngugi. In *A Grain of Wheat* Kihika derives his philosophy in part from Gandhi whom he cites, together with Jesus Christ, as one of his main models. More broadly "the example of India" is in Ngugi's works a symbol of the righteousness of anti-colonialist resistance and the triumph of all just causes. Ngugi also mentions Gandhi in *Wizard of the Crow* (p. 56), again as an outstanding anti-colonialist and humanist icon.

Chapter Four: Ngugi and Frantz Fanon – The Discourse of Alienation

Crow.¹⁰ Moreover, especially in *Petals of Blood* and the later novels, he resorts to the different adaptations of Marxism, namely the contributions of Soviet theorists and political leaders such as Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Leo Trotsky, the works of the Chinese Mao Zedong and the surrounding literature, and he also mentions the names of some of these thinkers (favourably), and paraphrases them, in some of his novels.¹¹ Ngugi draws, as well, on the ideas and legacies of a variety of African, Caribbean and Afro-American thinkers and political activists. His intellectual background includes the work of Jomo Kenyatta, as we saw in Chapter One, other fellow Kenyan intellectuals like Alamin Mazrui, Amilcar Cabral, and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah among other thinkers from Africa, though his response to these African figures varies between approval and refutation of their claims.¹² The legacies of Kenyan freedom fighters and political activists such as Dedan Kimathi, Waiyaki wa Hinga and Oli Masai also had a tremendous effect on Ngugi's thinking and imaginative work, and these figures and their achievements are abundantly brought into play in his fiction. Additionally, Ngugi is conscious and concerned about the ideas of Senghor on Negritude, and of the Negritude movement in Africa more broadly, as well as of the debate about Negritude as a philosophy in all its peculiarities. In addition, there has certainly been a crucial impact on Ngugi of the creeds and ideas of the Civil Rights, Black Consciousness and Black Power movements in the USA (mostly Imamu Amiri Baraka, Malcolm X, and Langston Hughes as some aspects of his novels may reveal). Their influence on Ngugi must have been substantial, if only because the rise of these important movements of the emancipation of black people in America and elsewhere coincided with his coming into the literary scene.¹³ Finally, we have seen in Chapter One, as

¹⁰ In an interview I did with him at Leeds on March 23, 2008. To the following questions: "Ngugi is frequently and divergently described as a religious, leftist, liberal-humanist and even regionalist writer. Do you think any such categorisations could fit as a description of Ngugi (even as a thinker)?" Brendon Nicholls answers: "I think that a number of these categories are applicable to Ngugi's writing, even though he may have consciously disavowed them. For instance, both Christianity and Gikuyu cosmologies are at work within the novels. We only have to look at a figure like Waiyaki in *The River Between* to see both forms of belief pattering him. In *Devil on the Cross*, we still see the influence of Christian imagery and mythology, even though Ngugi is writing in *Detained* that he is no longer religious at this point. And of course, Kamiti in *Wizard of the Crow* seems very conversant with Buddhism!". Indeed Gautama Buddha's name is mentioned favourably (as a prophet among others) in *Wizard of the Crow*, p. 47.

¹¹ For instance, these are cited by Joseph, the symbol of Kenya/Africa's future prospects in *Petals of Blood*, as his favourite authors and models as he says: "I have been reading a lot about what the workers and peasants of other lands have done in history. I have read about the people's revolution in China, Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, Guinea, Mozambique ... Oh yes, and the works of Lenin and Mao" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 340).

¹² See *Detained* (the preface for instance) for a discussion of these Kenyan intellectuals and to know Ngugi's opinion about them.

¹³ Though it is obvious that there is kinship between Ngugi's discourses and those of these black-American movements, we do not have direct evidence as to the existence of any direct relationship of influence between his fiction and the works of particular black American activists and thinkers. Nevertheless, Komozi Woodard, drawing on one of Ngugi's arguments, suggests

well, how Ngugi urges African writers and intellectuals to acknowledge and celebrate the crucial importance of Caribbean thinkers such as Marcus Garvey, C. L. R. James, Aimé Césaire, V. S. Naipaul, and, last but not least, Frantz Fanon. Ideologically speaking, Ngugi's fiction is really a very complex assortment of various ideologies and of the ideas of these, and, certainly, many other thinkers and theorists.¹⁴

Among the thinkers who had particularly decisive impacts on Ngugi, Frantz Fanon is outstanding and is of a singular importance in this study. This is not only because he has had some of the most shaping impacts on Ngugi's fiction and career, but also because Fanonism is, to a far extent, a culmination, a synopsis, and a watershed of at least the Marxist, African, Afro-American and Caribbean currents of thought that mattered for Ngugi. If D. H. Lawrence and Chinua Achebe best exemplify the kinds of influences Anglo-Saxon and modern African writers have had on Ngugi, Frantz Fanon can, similarly, typify the impacts on Ngugi of Marxism, African socialism, Negritude, Pan-Africanism, African nationalism, and Afro-American and Caribbean currents of thought. As to the particularity of the impact of Fanon on Ngugi, suffice it note that it is principally the influence of this thinker that caused the dramatic transformation that we know in Ngugi's creed as an artist and intellectual. The new artistic and intellectual directions translated in his books of essays, the play and the five novels he wrote after he came across Fanon, can quite reasonably be called "Fanonian" whereas they tend to defy all pigeonholing otherwise. In Ngugi's artistic and intellectual attitudes and activities since he read Fanon – including his positions and experiments with the languages, forms and audiences of African literatures and cultures – what we can principally observe is a phenomenal desire and a serious reflection on the ways to translate Fanon's teachings on the ground, as well as increasingly concrete movement, activities and achievements towards that. So much just cannot be said of Ngugi's connections with any other thinker.

We know the primary reason why Frantz Fanon has been so particularly influential in determining Ngugi's discourse and his orientation in art since

the possibility of the existence of such a relationship. As he notes: "the upheaval in the Third World" in general and these movements led by African-American intellectuals and writers had an impact on "[Ngugi's] generation of African writers." Woodard cites the next claim by Ngugi to support his point: "The decade [i.e. the 1950s] heralded, internationally, by the triumph of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 and by the Independence of India about the same time (...) in [the] USA the Fifties saw an upsurge of civil rights spearheaded by Afro-American people" (Brackets in Woodard's quotation). Woodard suggests a connection between Leroy Jones (Amiri Baraka), in particular, and Ngugi. See Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (Leroy Jones) and Black Power Politics*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1999 (E-text: Google Books), p. p. 53 – 54, extracted on June 25th, 2010.

¹⁴We only need a cursory glance at *Detained* to have an idea of how encyclopedic Ngugi's intellectual Background is. The list we propose here outlines the thinkers and creeds that have been the most influential for Ngugi and is perhaps representative of his influences, but it is by no means an exhaustive one.

he encountered him, since Ngugi gives us this reason in his previously cited statement, in *Moving the Centre*, concerning the significance of this scholar for him. Ngugi claims, in that declaration, that all modern African literature of his period is simply but “a series of imaginative footnotes” to Frantz Fanon, and that this literature cannot be properly understood without a proper understanding of the work of Fanon. If Ngugi exaggerates in his assessments of Fanon and his relationship to modern African literature, as we argued in Chapter One, that exaggeration testifies, nevertheless, to the fact that Fanon’s is not just an inspirational theory, and that it has not been such a crucial source of inspiration and material for Ngugi in the ways we shall describe in this chapter, only because of outstanding clinical and literary merits of it of the kind any other interesting theory possesses. From our point of view, Fanon’s work is of exceptional merit and of outstanding pertinence to Africa as we shall see, and so it is of exceptional significance for a writer like Ngugi. We can infer from Ngugi’s claim above, from observing his career, and from a reading of his fiction in comparison with Fanon, that the latter must have inspired him so much¹⁵ principally because his theory encapsulates ‘the whole thing’ about Africans and their relationships with the rest of the world. Indeed, the theory analyses in depth the condition of the African person, as a black, African and “colonised” being, promises his renaissance from a condition of inhumanness to one of full humanness, and indicates the way towards that. What is more, it does so unambiguously, in detail and in a pleasant, crisp style. No other thinker or writer (on Africa), not even Chinua Achebe, offers so high a potential of direct, reliable and constructive ideas that are, furthermore, directly relevant to the quest, and close to the sensibility of, a writer concerned with Africa like Ngugi.

One can argue with confidence that a more direct reason why Fanon’s work has inspired Ngugi is the fact that it addresses Africans. Achebe and other African imaginative writers inspired Ngugi because, as he affirms, they are “speaking to him.” Similarly, it is very characteristic of Fanon’s work – mainly *The Wretched of the Earth* – that it addresses the subjugated and colonised, chiefly African, people. Besides, it does so with a rarely paralleled honesty and sympathy. On the other hand, Fanon seems to ignore the European readerships, in much the same way that most Western thinkers and writers – including Karl Marx – ignored African and non-European readerships as Ngugi observes, though, as Sartre suggests (below), they are ‘allowed’ to over-hear what Fanon and his “brothers” say. Furthermore, he does so in a way and to an extent which writers like Achebe do not do. Fanon displays as much honesty and devotion in “addressing himself” to the black and colonised people (obviously the “colonised intellectuals” mainly) as he shows, on the other hand, indifference toward the subjugators.

¹⁵ i.e. to the degree that we stated and will further do in the rest of this chapter.

When appropriate, he also shows a constructive kind of antagonism to them, including the European “proletariat” who, Fanon considers, share responsibility with the colonisers in the enterprises of the black people’s subjugation. It is noticeable, additionally, that Fanon does so with the self-confidence of a man who knows that ‘truth’ – backed with clinical evidence – is on his side. At the same time, the importance of his theory, and the decisive nature of his conclusions *a propos* of Europe and America make it a ‘must-read’ for responsible Europeans, even if, except for Jean Paul Sartre’s preface to the *Wretched of the Earth*, it does not address itself to them.¹⁶ This aspect of Fanon is remarkable enough to make Jean-Paul Sartre write this in reaction:

Europeans, you must open this book and enter into it. After a few steps in the darkness you will see strangers gathered around a fire; come close, and listen, for they are talking of the destiny they will mete out to your trading-centres and to the hired soldiers who defend them. They will see you, perhaps, but they will go on talking among themselves, without even lowering their voices. This indifference strikes home: their fathers, shadowy creatures, your creatures, were but dead souls; you it was who allowed them glimpses of light, to you only did they dare speak, and you did not bother to reply to such zombies. / In this case, you will say, let’s throw away this book. Why read it if it is not written for us? For two reasons; the first is that Fanon explains you to his brothers and shows them the mechanism by which we are estranged from ourselves; take advantage of this, and get to know yourselves seen in the light of truth, objectively. Our victims know us by their scars and by their chains, and it is this that makes their evidence irrefutable. It is enough that they show us what we have made of them for us to realize what we have made of ourselves. But is it any use? Yes, for Europe is at death’s door (...) Have the courage to read this book, for in the first place it will make you ashamed, and shame, as Marx said, is a revolutionary sentiment. You see, I, too, am incapable of ridding myself of subjective illusions (...) As a European, I steal the enemy’s book, and out of it I fashion a remedy for Europe. Make the most of it.¹⁷

Thus *The Wretched of the Earth*, in particular, is not important for Ngugi only because it addresses Africans. It is of a singular importance for him because it inverts the equation of who is *speaking* and who is *forced to listen*, and this is a point to which Ngugi pays considerable attention as he reveals in his interview with Aminu Abdullahi. Arguably, therefore, it is partly because the theory is such a concrete ‘act of revenge,’ at the same time as it is *the*

¹⁶ These include facts such as Fanon’s pledges on clinical grounds on the inevitability and nearness of the emancipation of the colonised peoples and his prophecies on Europe and America’s downfalls unless they take what both Fanon and Sartre present as necessary and urgent measures. See, for instance, Sartre’s preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (*op. cit.*) for more detail.

¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Preface” to Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), translated from French by Constance Farrington, London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1965, p. p. 11 - 12.

manifesto of the emancipation of the subjugated people, that it has been decisive in determining Ngugi's Fanonian orientation as an intellectual and novelist. By this, Fanon has provided *the* ideal example to follow for Ngugi in terms of who he should be writing for, and why, in which ways, on what tone, and in what languages he should be doing so. The transformations in Ngugi's career as a novelist and scholar since he discovered Fanon on the one hand, and the nature of his disagreements with Achebe on the other hand, also vindicate this.

Fanon's work is likely to have influenced Ngugi on account of the style in which it is written as well. Indeed, Fanon's writing style is inspirational; it definitely has poetic quality and value. Fanon has a "lyrical" and,¹⁸ more importantly, "prophetic" style, and this is a way of writing which appeals to Ngugi.¹⁹ What is more, Fanon's literary, "lyrical and prophetic," style and tone are so notable that they have made some of his readers reproach him over it. In this context, Alice Cherki writes in her preface to a 2002 French edition of *The Wretched of the Earth* that Fanon "has been reproached over his style which came to be described as lyrical and prophetic."²⁰ But other scholars, including Cherki herself, notice that such a style adds to the value of Fanon's theory instead of undermining it. Indeed, Fanon deals with psychiatric, psychological and psychosomatic phenomena, that is with phenomena which have to do with the mind, and this is a zone of the human entity which even a psychiatrist like Fanon cannot describe without emotion. In other words, he describes phenomena, and experiences, the nature of which resists systematic explanation, rigorous and masterful as Fanon's analysis of his subject is said to be. The recognition, over and against his subjective will, as he says, of the value of Fanon's theory by such a first-rate thinker as Jean Paul Sartre, and with such devotion and eloquence as he does in his preface to (the first edition of) the book, plus the noticeable pertinence of Fanon's views to present-day realities, justify this. Alice Cherki explains that Fanon's "lyric and prophetic style" makes his theory the more valuable, as it makes it a "modern" one, and that Fanon's choice of such a style is deliberate. To her, such a choice of style comes out of his expertise and experience as a modern and innovative psychiatrist, namely his consciousness of the "subjectivities in suffering" that derive therefrom: "But, paradoxically, it is this [i. e. this lyrical and prophetic style]

¹⁸ i.e. musical - melodious and serene.

¹⁹ Ngugi as we noted previously shows particular interest in the narrative modes of the Bible, for instance, and in writers and thinkers such as D. H. Lawrence, Jomo Kenyatta, Ghandi and Karl Marx who, like Fanon, have a prophetic style.

²⁰ Alice Cherki, "preface" to Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre*, Paris: La Decouverte/Poche: 2002, p. 10. The translation is mine. Here is Cherki's point in French: "*On a pu lui reprocher [à Fanon] son style, en le qualifiant de lyrique et de prophétique.*"

that makes Fanon's modernity. A psychiatrist, his experience of the subjectivities in suffering put him in direct contact with the deprived."²¹

So Fanon has probably inspired Ngugi – at least as far as his fiction including, and after, *A Grain of Wheat* is concerned – not only in view of the content of his theory and who it addresses, but also because of its attractive style. In this capacity, Fanon may have provided another important *literary* model for Ngugi. The pamphlet-like passages which abound in his imaginative work including *A Grain of Wheat* and the novels that came after it, which frequently have Fanonian overtones indeed, may have to do with the influence of Fanon's manner of writing. Aspects of Ngugi's style, particularly in parts of *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu works, including the tones often adopted by the narrators of these stories and by characters such as Kihika, Abdulla, Karega, the Lawyer and Matigari, recall, in effect, the Fanonian "prophetic and lyrical" tone and mode of writing.

The content of Fanon's theory is equally stirring and has, without a doubt, supplied a crucial and direct source of scholarly material for Ngugi's fiction. Fanon's theory touches, not just on African matters, but on the heart of the human matter at large. It is about *the* problem of modern man and the world – i.e. about what Fanon has proved to be the unnaturalness of racism and the resultant forms of enslavement and dehumanisation of people by other people – which is also one of Ngugi's ultimate philosophical concerns. Ngugi's early journalism, short stories, first two novels and other works he wrote before he read Frantz Fanon – reflect patriotic and Pan-Africanist views. However, these views are akin to the views of those Fanon calls "colonised intellectuals," including fellow Kenyan theorists like Jomo Kenyatta, blended with liberal-humanist and overtly pro-Christian ideas. In contrast, the works he wrote after his discovery of Frantz Fanon, i.e. his books of essays and his fiction from *A Grain of Wheat* onwards, reflect the writer's retreat from this set of creeds, at least his struggle to set his mind and imagination free from their impact. Concurrently, the latter works clearly mirror his movement in the direction of Fanonism, as well as an increasing convergence of his discourse with Fanon's discourses on revolution and in psychology and psychiatry. The shifts in Ngugi's views about language, literature, culture and politics embodied in his creative writings and in the essays, interviews, and lectures which he wrote or gave during, and after, his detention reflect his unconditional agreement with Fanon. A major aspect of all the works he produced after he came across Fanon is that they are, in a sense, "a series of footnotes" to, and a quasi-literal embodiment of, Frantz Fanon's theory as Ngugi himself has suggested in, among other places, *Moving the Centre*.

²¹ *ibid.*. The translation is mine. Cherki's original statement is this: "Mais, paradoxalement, c'est cela [i.e. ce style lyrique et prophétique] qui fait la modernité de Fanon. Psychiatre, son expérience des subjectivités en souffrance le plaçait au contact direct des déshérités."

I shall not devote much space in discussing Fanon's influence on Ngugi in terms of the "discourse of liberation" here, as the question has been dealt with in my Magister dissertation.²² I shall rather shed light on an aspect of this influence which is at once crucial, rather untreated and, to my mind, worthier of exploration from a literary standpoint. Indeed, despite the importance of the impact of Fanon's psychological and psychiatric findings on Ngugi's fiction as we shall see hereafter, discussions have disregarded this of the connection between Ngugi and Fanon. The relevant studies have focussed on the impact on Ngugi of Fanon's political ideas, or, rather, on what can be considered as the inferences Fanon makes about politics and sociology on the basis of his findings and experience in psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Simon Gikandi's view is typical of the manner in which this impact is perceived and documented:

In Fanon's work, Ngugi could find lucid explanations for the sense of betrayal and disillusionment he was sensing around him. He could understand how the new postcolonial government was seeking to legitimise authoritarianism and ethnic chauvinism instead of instituting democracy and equality; he could see how dreams of Pan-African unity were disappearing quickly into "the mists of oblivion, and the heartbreaking return of chauvinism in its most bitter and detestable form;" he could witness how the party that had mobilized the populace against colonial rule had established itself as "the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous, and cynical."²³

What is worth adding at this juncture about the link between the two writers in terms of politics and sociology is the fact that the "discourse of liberation" (often put in the foreground in the relevant discussions) should not be separated from "the discourse of alienation" (often neglected in these discussions) in reading Ngugi as in reading Fanon.

Awareness of the complementarity between these paired discourses is, from our point of view, a *sine qua non* condition to comprehend both writers,

²² See Salah Kaci Mohamed, *Western Ethics and Aesthetics and the Discourses of Liberation in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's A Grain of Wheat, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross*, *op. cit.*. More generally, in the same way as "Modern discussions among theorists of nationalism, anti-colonialism, and liberation have largely focused on Fanon's later, more revolutionary works, rather than the psychoanalytic explanation of colonial relations," discussions of the connections between Fanon and Ngugi are mainly concerned with the impact of Fanon's revolutionary, rather than his psychoanalytic and psychiatric, claims on Ngugi's work. The citation in this footnote is from Wikipedia, "Black Skin, White Masks," URL:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Skin,_White_Masks, extracted on 28 June, 2010.

²³ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, *op. cit.*, p. 32. Similarly, James Ogude explains the influence of Fanon on Ngugi in socio-political terms, sustaining that Ngugi's interest in the peasantry as a dispossessed group seems to echo Fanon's understanding of the peasantry both as the most exploited group and as having the potential to provide revolutionary change in the postcolonial state. James Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*, London: Pluto Press, 1999, p. 28

the impact of Fanon on Ngugi, and, particularly, the significance of the adaptations of Fanon's discourse on violence in Ngugi's novels properly. This is first because, on the one hand, this correlation between the two discourses is a key to the understanding of the socialist discourse in Ngugi's stories (as in Fanon): it allows us to establish coherent links between certain mental and psychological aspects of the characters and the political and social actions and behaviours of these characters. On the other hand, it is a key to identifying the relationships between these aspects and actions of the characters and the overall political plots and logic of the stories which Ngugi wrote after he discovered the work of Fanon. For example, in *A Grain of Wheat*, Kihika's violence (which also functions as an aspect of his individual profile as we have seen in Chapter Three) also has a well definite political significance. This violence should not be understood as being revolutionary or political violence in the general, or even in the Marxian sense. Politically, this aspect of Kihika is a consequence of his alienation as a result of colonial violence. It is depicted as a normal and spontaneous result of the kind of alienation which Fanon considers a natural result of colonial oppression, and not as conscious and controllable violence in the Marxian meaning for instance. Also, it is clear that Ngugi treats Kihika's violence as being what Fanon considers the inevitable, necessary and only effective means to achieve liberation.

Thus, Kihika's violence emerges as a replica of the violence of the revolutionary individual as Fanon theorises it, and Kihika himself emerges precisely as a typical and comprehensive – inseparably psychiatric and socio-political – representation of this definite type of revolutionary individual. Reading these two functions of Kihika's violence separately would be a misreading of the significance of this violence at the political/ideological level, which leads to misinterpretations of the political significance of the character himself, and of the story as a whole. If we interpret his violence as a symptom of sheer alienation, Kihika will appear as a furious criminal (as Mugo, for instance, sees him) which is not exactly the case in the (political) logic of the story. Likewise, if we consider this violence independently from Kihika's alienation in the Fanonian sense we are likely to understand Kihika at best as a revolutionary individual in the Marxian sense, and, at worst, as an incoherent revolutionary character. Kihika's social background,²⁴ the

²⁴ For instance, Kihika and the other Mau Mau of the story (General R, Lieutenant Koinandu, Wambũ and Warui) are not "proletarians" but typical "lumpenproletarians" – poor, not, or little, educated peasants. The "lumpenproletariat" is, according to Marx, a worthless class, one which is rough and deprived of class consciousness. The class is not only unfit for the revolutionary struggle in the Marxian sense, but is, for Marx, a burden hindering the proletarian revolution. If Ngugi suggests that Kihika and "his band of forest fighters" are lumpenproletarians (since they are poor, not, or little educated peasants), he does not in the least depict them as worthless in revolutionary processes as Marx sustains. Instead, he, Like Fanon, highlights the worth of this category of people, and depicts it, as the only really effective *means* of a(n) (anti-colonial) revolution.

general context, the political plot, and the political logic of the story itself urge us to conceive of him as a revolutionary individual in the Fanonian sense of the term.

Furthermore, awareness of the relationship between the “discourse of liberation” and “the discourse of alienation” in Fanon and Ngugi, allows us to solve the problem of establishing coherence between Ngugi’s nationalist, pan-Africanist and internationalist appeals and references. These appeals and references are irreconcilable otherwise, and only an understanding of the influence on Ngugi of Fanon’s *comprehensive* theory is likely to prevent us from seeing the coexistence of these ideologies in Ngugi’s stories as a blatant inconsistency. More generally, reading “the discourse of liberation” independently from “the discourse of alienation” in Ngugi’s fiction – as in Fanon’s work – will inevitably result in misinterpretations of the stories themselves of the kind we often make when we consider part of a very complex statement out of its context.

Finally, awareness of Ngugi’s adaptations of Fanon’s full (psychiatric and political) theory enables us to realise the artistic worth of such adaptations by realising the high degree of complexity of such a task, and of the demands of a meaningful insertion of these adaptations in the broader plots and logic of his novels in terms of craftsmanship. It makes us see that behind the illusion of facility and ‘political politics’²⁵ that may result from a misguided reading of Ngugi’s political passages and levels of narration lies, in fact, an original and interesting kind of artfulness in ‘literary politics.’²⁶ There is, in these adaptations, a creative unity and a philosophical coherence, coming out of the careful and minute juxtaposition and threading of the mental and political identities of the characters on the one hand, and between these characters and the political logic and the broader philosophies of these stories on the other hand, which are worthy of writers with the most powerful minds and imaginations. Having provided a summary of the ‘first half’ of “the discourse of liberation” in Chapter One, and having added the above in this introduction, we will, for the rest of this chapter, attempt to bring about – by analysing typical examples – the ‘missing second half’ of such a discourse, that is Ngugi’s fictional adaptations of Frantz Fanon’s “discourse on alienation.”

*

We argued in Chapter Two that Ngugi adopts D. H. Lawrence’s approach to characterisation in order to endow his characters with spiritual dimensions, or souls, and we saw in Chapter Three that he has recourse to Achebe’s model of applying the general, i.e. Freudian, personality theory to give his characters realistic psychological identities. In the rest of this

²⁵ That is to say, politics for politics’ sake.

²⁶ That is, inseparably politics for art’s sake and art for politics’ sake.

chapter, we shall see how, in addition, Ngugi draws on Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytic and psychiatric theories to grant his characters *mental* – as slightly distinct from, but complementary to, their psychological and spiritual – aspects. We shall also see that those Fanonian theories are applied by Ngugi scrupulously, and in ways that are consistent with the individual and collective specificities of the colonial and neo-colonial contexts in which these characters are portrayed.

To distinguish between these three dimensions of Ngugi's characters, and determine which exactly of these three authors Ngugi is referring to with regards to a given character, on a given occasion, is important in reading Ngugi. This is, however, a rather delicate operation, for reasons which it is useful to state. On the one hand, it goes without saying that such a task requires at least a modicum of knowledge of the theories of all three writers (Lawrence, Freud and Fanon), and therefore a degree of knowledge in domains which intersect with, but are not, our direct area of expertise. On the other hand, the exercise demands an especially careful reading of Ngugi's novels, paying attention to details regarding the circumstances of a given character, including details about the physical and temporal contexts, the style, language, and tone in which this character is described in a given juncture. Only this allows us to discern effectively which of Lawrence, Freud (via Achebe) or Fanon Ngugi is referring to in connection with the given character on a given occasion.²⁷

The task is the more complicated because, in quintessence, D. H. Lawrence, Sigmund Freud and Frantz Fanon's views about the human mind intersect more than they diverge. Concerning Lawrence and Freud, H. T. Moore points out that Lawrence's view of human nature is closely comparable to Freud's, especially in consideration of the importance which both Lawrence and Freud give to sexuality in determining and justifying human behaviour and personality, and, more precisely, on the central position which the Oedipus complex occupies in their respective works.²⁸ In turn, an aspect of Fanon's psychological theory is Freudian. Generally speaking, Fanon's theory might be seen as an extended and contextually more specific parallel to Freud's: despite its peculiarities, it is, in effect, a critical revision of, and complement to, the Freudian theory applied to the well defined colonial context. Richard L. W. Clarke rightly observes that Fanon refers himself to Freud's study of the psyche of an oppressed category of human beings – women – to another category of subjugated

²⁷ This difficulty to disentangle these influences in Ngugi's work is perhaps a mark of his strength as a writer.

²⁸ H. T. Moore writes, for example: "The principal thematic point that emerges from this *précis* is what Freud was first to call the Oedipus complex. Lawrence had not gone deeply into the official aspects of this – he said at the time that he never read Freud though he knew about him – but his intuition and knowledge led him independently to many of the conclusions at which psychoanalysts were then arriving in the Viennese clinics." Harry T. Moore, *D. H. Lawrence: The Man and His work*, *op. cit.*, p 79.

humans, (colonised) black people: "In a manner parallel to Freud's famous assertion "What does woman want?" which underpins much of Freud's later research especially on the distinction between the sexes, Fanon's question [in *Black Skin, White Masks*] is "What does the black man want?".²⁹ Also, and more importantly, the principal procedure which Fanon uses in his analyses of the psyches of the coloniser and the colonised is Freudian as Clarke recalls us:

Fanon's tool of choice is Psychoanalysis: "only a psychoanalytic interpretation can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex" in black men. In this regard, it is "imperative to eliminate a whole set of defects left over from childhood" because, as Nietzsche put it, "Man's tragedy (...) is that he was once a child."³⁰

Concerning the intersection between Fanon and Freud still, it is equally relevant and important to note this:

[C]ontending that adult neuroses mainly "owe their origin" to what takes place in early childhood, Fanon then proceeds to utilise Freud's notion of the Id in particular in order to explain both the anti-black racism of white Europeans and the detrimental effect which this has in turn on the psyche of black people.³¹

As regards the main points of convergence between Fanon and Lawrence (as well as Freud here), what is first noteworthy is again the critical role which sexuality plays, in the work of both authors, as a drive for human behavior, and the seminal role it plays in shaping the human personality. And where Fanon is not like Freud, he is comparable to D. H. Lawrence. Indeed Fanon's quest is not unlike Lawrence's; like him, he seeks "to "interrogate both metaphysics," that is "both blackness and whiteness," in order to show how "they are often quite fluid",³² even if Fanon followed such a quest, and gave expression to it, in more 'orderly' ways, in different contexts, in less spontaneous terms, and in a terminology that is less symbolic and less mythological in comparison with the language of D. H. Lawrence. While Fanon mainly draws on Freud, he also refers himself to the postulates of "cosmic" psychoanalysts such as Carl Jung and G. Legman, who, similar to Lawrence, explore how religious and spiritual beliefs affect

²⁹ Richard L. W. Clarke, "Rev. of Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*" Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1967. E-text in "Aclanet" (Website) <http://www.umass.edu/complit/aclanet/FanonBW.html>. Extracted on April 23, 2010. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, *op. cit.*, "Introduction," p. 10, for the interrogation "what does the black man want ?", and the full introduction (particularly) to have a more exhaustive idea on Fanon's similarity with Freud from this standpoint.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

the human psyche and social behaviour. Jung's postulate of the "collective unconscious" specifically is central to Fanon's analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks*. As he writes in this document: "What do we see in the case of the black man? Unless we make use of that frightening postulate – which so destroys our balance – offered by Jung, the *collective unconscious*, we can understand absolutely nothing."³³ Like Jung, Fanon does not in the least disregard the "spirituality of things," but engages with it and attempts to explain what it means in both psychoanalytic and sociological terms: he recognizes the roles which spirituality plays in provoking, revealing and alleviating "neurosis" in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*.³⁴

From our point of view, both Freud and Fanon's theories are used by Ngugi to provide partial and circumstantial, or contextualised, logical explanations for (some of) the behaviours and states of mind of his characters. We, nevertheless, maintain the points that we made in Chapter Two, namely the fact that Ngugi's highest objective is to create *living* characters by providing, through them, the profoundest possible exploration of human nature as he learnt to do from D. H. Lawrence. His references to both Freud and Fanon have different, but equally localised and contextualised, agencies, and Ngugi exploits the findings of these scholars to achieve partial semantic and aesthetic goals that are not unimportant in themselves. But these agencies and goals are not in contradiction with the Lawrentian philosophy of his novels. Ngugi uses these empirical – contextual and partial – explanations of processes of the mind provided by Freud and Fanon as foils for fuller exploration of human nature through his characters. He offers them to complement a Lawrencean philosophy, which, as we argued, does not conceive of "the world and the soul" separately but endeavours to bring them together – to convey a sense of harmony between what Lawrence called "mind knowledge" and "blood knowledge." As we have seen, Ngugi wants to provide his characters with *souls* – not just psychologies and minds – and such a notion remains beyond rational definition by scientific methods and terms. His use of Fanon's psychoanalytic and psychiatric teachings (as well as his exploitation of Freudian teachings) to build the related aspects of his characters, although very important as we shall see, ought to be considered in the larger context of this profounder – religious, cosmic and poetic – quest.

³³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, *op. cit.*, p. 144. Emphasis in the source.

³⁴ For more detail, see in particular the chapters "The Negro and Psychopathology" (mainly pages 141 - 150), and "Concerning Violence" (mainly pages 42 - 45) in *Black Skin, White Masks* (*op. cit.*).

B. Fanon's Discourse of Alienation

Fanon's psychoanalytic and psychiatric theory has two major distinctive traits which can be used as landmarks in separating the influence of Fanon from those of Freud (via Achebe) and Lawrence in Ngugi's fiction. The first particularity of this theory is its context. It is a "psychoanalytic explanation of colonial relations,"³⁵ not a 'universal,' or "European," theory such as Freud's. Though Fanon uses Freud's method in the ways we mentioned earlier, he is concerned with this particular domain; and his main findings are not applicable out of it. This characteristic allows us to distinguish the contexts in which Ngugi uses, or makes allusions to, Fanon from those in which he draws on, or alludes to, Freud (via Achebe) or to Lawrence in depicting the minds, the psychologies or the souls of his characters. It is in the contexts and situations in Ngugi's novels which describe the "colonised" and/or "colonising" people, and/or lay stress on the psychological relations between (members of) these two categories of people, and not in contexts and situations which involve the human psyche in the general sense, or the human soul, that Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytic and psychiatric principles are likely to have been brought into play by Ngugi. It is, accordingly, in such contexts that we sought for, and found, the indications of Ngugi's use of such principles that we propose in the coming sections.

The second distinctive aspect of Fanon's psychoanalytic and psychiatric theory which we have used as a guideline here is the fact that, apart from his drawing on the notion of the *Id* in the ways we cited earlier, Fanon "questions the wholesale applicability of the Freudian schema to the black man," and this in the following two ways:

He [Fanon] argues, firstly, that it is important not to view the effects of racism on the Negro as analogous to the effects of sexual repression on the part of the white man. From the Freudian point of view, the white European cannot be aware of his repressed sexual desires precisely because they have been repressed. However, the Negro's unconscious does not consist of repressed feelings of inferiority: since the "racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to 'make it unconscious.' The Negro's inferiority (...) is conscious. In him there is none of the affective amnesia characteristic of the typical neurotic". Secondly, given the largely matriarchal structure of West Indian postslavery society in which the father is often absent, in effect disrupting the nuclear familial triad of which Freud speaks, he doubts whether Freud's theory of the Oedipal complex is applicable to "97% of the families" in the French Antilles.³⁶

³⁵ Wikipedia's review of "*Black Skin, White Masks*." URL:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Skin,_White_Masks. Extracted on June 28, 2010.

³⁶ Richard L. W. Clarke, "Rev. of Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*," *op. cit.*.

So far, we have used the term Fanon's "psychoanalytic and psychiatric theory" to indicate, in fact, two complementary but distinct sides of Fanon's work on the human mind: the psychoanalytic and the psychiatric sides. What we mean by "the psychoanalytic" side of Fanon's theory is his analyses of the psyche of the subjugated black person, i.e. what he calls "the Negro psychopathology," and of the psyche of this black person's subjugator, i.e. what he calls "anti-black white racism," in *Black Skin White Masks*.³⁷ We also mean by this term the points about the psychologies of the "colonised" and "coloniser" in colonial and "neo-colonial" contexts, which Fanon makes in *The Wretched of the Earth* and in some of his other works.³⁸ By "the psychiatric side of Fanon's theory," we mean Fanon's theorisation, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, of collective and individual madness in the colonial and "neo-colonial" settings, and in contexts of (anti-colonial) war.

Of Fanon's psychoanalytic teachings, the points we are predominantly interested in analysing in relation to Ngugi's novels are the following: first, "the Negro psychopathology;" second, "anti-black white racism" (both points are explored in *Black Skin White Masks*); third, the psychology of "the national bourgeoisie" and, fourth, the psychology of "the colonised intellectual" (both theorised in *The Wretched of the Earth*). In so far as Fanon's psychiatric teachings are concerned, we will focus on two psychiatric pathologies of the colonised people which Fanon describes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, and which are important with regards to Ngugi's novels. These are, fifth, "the pathology of atmosphere" or "collective madness" in a colonial context and/or in a context of (an anti-colonial) war, and sixth "the pathology of the tortured." We will focus on these six points because they, and the main details related to them, seem to have been of particular significance for Ngugi in composing aspects of his novels as we shall see, though further explorations might reveal that he has also used other analyses of Fanon in the domains of psychoanalysis and psychiatry.

The central point which Fanon makes in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and which is adapted in Ngugi's novels in, and since, *A Grain of Wheat* is that both the colonised black person and his (white) colonisers are in conditions of *clinical*, that is authentic, mental alienations of very specific kinds. Concerning the psychopathology of the colonised black man – or "the

³⁷ These terms are Fanon's; here they are quoted in Richard L. W. Clarke, *op. cit.*.

³⁸ In Fanon's work, the psychopathology which results from colonial subjugation does not concern the black individual only; it affects the colonised person in general. Nevertheless, Fanon's claims on "the Negro psychopathology" as such, as described in *Black Skin, White Masks*, is particular in that it concerns only black people, more precisely the French Antillean "Negro." What we are primarily concerned with here are Fanon's teachings on "Negro-psychopathology" as theorised in *Black Skin White Masks*, though we will also refer to Fanon's teachings on the psychology of the colonised and coloniser in general, mainly as theorised in *The Wretched of the Earth*, when this is relevant and required.

Negro” in Fanon’s terms –,³⁹ Fanon considers that the (French Antillean) Negroes who used to have human identities before they underwent the alienating effects of slavery and colonialism, came to be in a condition of inhumanity: “At the risk of arousing the resentment of my coloured brothers, I will say that the black is not a man” he points out.⁴⁰ Fanon calls this state of inhumanness, or deficient humanness, “the Negro-psychopathology,” which he also refers to by more usual terms such as the black man’s “depersonalisation,” “fragmentation of the self,” “division of consciousness,” “neurosis,” “inferiority complex” and so on. Such a state of the mind, Fanon maintains, is not of the usual illusionary kind of alienation; it is not a state of neurosis in the general sense, nor is it any of the types of anxiety and neurosis we mentioned in Chapter Three. In other words, this state of the mind is not that of a white neurotic in a ‘white world,’ nor is it that of a black neurotic or schizophrenic in a (pre-colonial) ‘black world’. Though it is a genuine case of neurosis too, the Negro-psychopathology which Fanon talks about differs from the individual and isolated cases of ‘usual’ neurosis and schizophrenia in that it is an “extraordinary,” “self-conscious” type of neurosis, which is typical of, and generalised to, subjugated black people.

As the metaphor in his title implies, Fanon’s point is that the skin – or the body – of the colonised black person is naturally black, i. e. the image of him reflected by a mirror is that of a black-bodied person. Nonetheless (as a result of colonial psychological and physical violence), “the Negro” is unwilling and incapable of accepting that body (as being his). Therefore, the colonised black person’s self-image is troubled because of the self-hatred and self-refusal originating from the (acquired and internalised) hatred and refusal of his black body and (black self), on the one hand, and because of an illusion and pursuit of a whiteness of the self and body which he is *conscious* he will never attain. Richard L. W. Clarke summarizes well Fanon’s description of Negro-psychopathology, its genesis, and the way in which Fanon differentiates it from ‘ordinary’ mental alienation in the Chapter entitled “The Negro and Psychopathology” in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann, London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1968 (Originally published in France as *Peau noir, masques blancs*, Paris: Seuil, 1952.), p. 14. Though he also refers to the alienated black man as “the black,” “the black man,” the “coloured man” and “the man of colour,” Fanon uses the term “Negro” to refer exclusively to the alienated black person. It seems that he does so not just to mean that the alienation of the black person is a result of anti-black white racism (“Negro” being the anti-black white racist’s typical and current way of referring to a black person), but also to distinguish the alienated black person from both the mentally healthy modern black person and the pre-slavery and pre-colonial black person (whom he also calls ironically “the jungle savage” (as an additional allusion to colonial racism). Fanon refers to the mentally healthy black person as “the black,” ‘the black man’ or “colored man,” but never, in so far as one can tell, as “the Negro.” See *Black Skin, White Masks* for more detail. For the term “Negro” see p. 14 for example, idem for the expression “the jungle savage.”

⁴⁰ Fanon’s premise in *Black Skin, White Masks*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

The negro “lives an ambiguity that is extraordinarily neurotic”: this is because the Antillean has recognised himself as a Negro, but, by virtue of an ethical transit, he also feels (the collective unconscious) that one is a Negro to the degree that one is wicked, sloppy, malicious, instinctual. Everything that is the opposite of these Negro modes of behaviour is white. This must be recognised as the source of Negrophobia in the Antillean. In the collective unconscious, black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality. In other words, he is Negro who is immoral.⁴¹

Another important Fanonian postulate concerning “Negro-psychopathology” which is relevant to our subsequent arguments is that this state of “extraordinary neurosis,” though a permanent condition of the colonised black person, does not manifest itself in the same way when s/he is in a ‘black context’ and when s/he is in the presence of a white person or in a ‘white context.’ “The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with another Negro,” Fanon points out.⁴²

On the other hand, the ideal coloniser is, for Fanon, as disordered as “the Negro” that he has alienated. Fanon considers the alienation of the Negro, as summarised above, an upshot of the alienated black person’s internalisation of his/her oppression, by “the white man,” as a result of slavery and colonialism. To Fanon, the fundamental drive for the subjugation of the black person by the white person (through slavery and colonialism) is anti-black white racism. Such racism is, according to him, a psychopathology; it is a phobic phenomenon that he calls “Negrophobia” – or fear of the black person.⁴³ In Fanon’s analysis, “Negro-phobogenesis” – i.e. the origin of the white person’s fear-hatred of the black person – is the troubled sexuality of the racist (or Negro-phobic) white person.⁴⁴ Drawing on Freud here, Fanon claims that such fear of black people, which manifests itself as racism, has roots in the repressed sexuality which Europeans endure in consequence of requirements of their idea of civilisation. It is a consequence, he points out, of the repression of sexuality recorded as a necessity in what Carl Jung calls the “collective unconscious” of “civilised” societies.⁴⁵ More precisely, Fanon explains racism in whites in terms of an inferiority complex of the racist white person (mainly males) *vis a vis* Negro sexuality. Richard L. W. Clarke, again, summarizes this aspect of Fanon’s theory:

⁴¹ Richard L. W. Clarke, *op. cit.*

⁴² Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, *op. cit.*, p. 17

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 160 for the term “Negrophobia,” and the Chapter entitled “The Negro and Psychopathology” (p. p. 141 - 210) for more detail.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. p. 144 - 145. “The collective unconscious” is Carl Jung’s key term and postulate, cited by Fanon here.

Racism in whites, he [Fanon] argues, is due to what he describes as a “Negro-phobogenesis,” the development of a fear of black people. The reason for this, he argues, is that the white person projects onto the Negro all the repressed sexuality which he harbours in his unconscious and which is, for Freud, the price of civilisation: “Every intellectual gain requires a loss in sexual potential. The civilised white man retains an irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest. (...) Projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man behaves ‘as if’ the Negro really had them (...) In other words, following the tendency of many so-called ‘vulgar’ (i.e. crude or simplistic, not obscene) Freudians to seek out sexual etiologies for all ailments, Fanon contends that the negro is, in a nutshell, “viewed as a penis symbol”: “when a white man hates a black man, is he not yielding to a feeling of impotence or of sexual inferiority?” he asks rhetorically. For the majority of white men, he continues, the Negro “represents the sexual instinct (in its raw state). The Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions.”⁴⁶

Equally pertinent to our claims in the next sections is that Fanon adds to his explanation of anti-black white racism in psychosexual terms a psycho-cultural factor which, for him, has fostered such racism. Fanon sees anti-black white racism partly as a result of the fact that blackness itself – as a colour – is registered as negative in the collective unconscious of Europeans. He considers the racist white person’s hatred of the black person as an effect of the fact that “whiteness” symbolises virtue and beauty while all that is black, and the “colour black” itself, stands for evil and ugliness in European cultures:

Fanon (...) supplements this Freudian interpretation of white racism with an essentially Jungian argument that, given the unfortunate historical conflation in European civilisation of evil with the colour black, the negro has been tragically equated in the collective unconscious of Europe with the absence of Good and Beauty. Both the Jew and the negro stand for Evil. The black man more so, for the good reason that he is black. Is not whiteness in symbols always ascribed to (...) Justice, Truth, Virginity? (...) ‘His body is black, his language is black, his soul must be black too (...)’ The black man is the symbol of Evil and Ugliness. “In Europe, the black man is the symbol of Evil”, he writes. There are many examples of this: the “torturer is the black man, Satan is black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty one is black – whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness” (...) In short, the negro “has one function: that of symbolising the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of homo occidentalis, the Negro –

⁴⁶ Richard L. W. Clarke, *op. cit.*. See also Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, *op. cit.*, particularly p. p. 154 – 173, (in the chapter “The Negro and Psychopathology”), for Fanon’s full point on “Negrophobogenesis.”

or, if one prefers, the colour black – symbolises evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine. All birds of prey are black.”⁴⁷

As to “the pathology of atmosphere,” or “collective madness,” in a colonial context and/or in a context of (an anti-colonial) war, and “the pathology of the tortured,” Fanon’s analysis of them is very detailed, but it is enough to introduce the points that we will make in the next section concerning these notions to note this:

A marked increase in mental disorders and the creation of conditions favourable to the development of specific morbid phenomena are not the only consequences of the colonial war in Algeria. Quite apart from the pathology of torture [the pathology of the tortured and that of the torturer] there flourishes in Algeria a pathology of atmosphere, a state which leads medical practitioners to say when confronted with a case which they cannot understand: “This’ll all be cleared up when this damned war is over.”⁴⁸

C. Psychopathologies of Natives and Colonisers in *A Grain of Wheat*

The concepts outlined in the previous section, as well as much of the detail related to them which Fanon provides, in *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, are embodied in aspects of the minds of many of Ngugi’s characters, and in other aspects of his novels including, and after, *A Grain of Wheat*. In terms of size and frequency, it is in *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu novels – mostly *Devil on the Cross* – that the references to Fanon in matters of the psychology of the colonised and the coloniser are the most substantial and perceptible. Nonetheless, when it comes to the thoroughness of Ngugi’s imaginative adaptations of Fanon’s psychological and psychiatric ideas in creating characters, *A Grain of Wheat* is, of all Ngugi’s imaginative works, exceptional. Furthermore, *A Grain of Wheat* mirrors Ngugi’s use of the first four Fanonian teachings that we will be studying here. These are, for memory, and in the order in which they will be studied: “the pathology of atmosphere” (or collective madness), “the negro psychopathology,” “the pathology of the tortured” and “anti-black white racism.” *Petals of Blood* and

⁴⁷*ibid.*

⁴⁸*The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. 234 (emphasis mine). For a reason that we ignore, Constance Farrington’s translation does not mention the phrase that we have added (in brackets) in this citation, a part of which is important to our argument. Here is Fanon’s statement as it appears in the original text of *The Wretched of the Earth*: “La guerre coloniale d’Algerie n’a pas seulement eu comme consequence de multiplier les troubles mentaux et de favoriser l’eclosion de phenomenes morbides specifiques. En dehor de la patologie de la torture, de la pathologie du torture et de celle du tortionnaire foisonne en Algerie une pathologie d’atmosphere, celle qui fait dire communement aux medecins-praticiens en presence d’un malade qu’ils n’arrivent pas a comprendre: ‘tout cela finira avec cette sacree guerre.’” Frantz Fanon, *Les damnes de la terre* (1961), Paris: La Decouverte, 2002, p. 278 (emphasis mine).

the subsequent novels reflect, somewhat more immediately, mainly three of the six Fanonian teachings we cited earlier: “the pathology of atmosphere,” “the psychology of the national bourgeoisie” and “the psychology of the colonised intellectual.” In view of this, we have devoted this first section exclusively to *A Grain of Wheat*, and the second to *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu novels with a focus on *Devil on the Cross*.

The four Fanonian concepts implied in the above title, namely “the pathology of Atmosphere,” “Negro-psychopathology,” “pathology of the tortured” and “anti-black white racism,” are brought into play, in the creation of the characters of *A Grain of Wheat*. Most of the characters of this novel, major, minor, black and white ones, are affected by them. Pertaining to the secondary characters, these notions are applied to Githua, Gatu, and Gitogo mainly. Other minor characters such as Wambui, Warui, General R. and Lieutenant Koinandu are affected by collective madness or “the pathology of atmosphere.” As regards the complex black characters, all of them embody one or more of those definite psychological and/or psychiatric pathologies, as we will specify later, and much of the deriving details. The most notable cases, however, are Kihika, Gikonyo, Mugo and, in a sense most ideally, Karanja. As concerns white characters, the pertinent Fanonian teaching, namely the notion of “Anti-black white racism” is applied to all of them, including John Thompson, Margery Thompson, Dr Lynd, Dr Van Dyke, D. O. Robson and Mrs Dickinson.

The black characters, including the initial states of those among them who later become revolutionaries, embody the state of resignation of the colonised individual to mental subjugation as well as material misery as described by Fanon. As a group, they convey the idea of collective pathology. The notions of the Negro-psychopathology and the pathology of the tortured are applied to many of them individually as we shall attempt to demonstrate. The main background of the story, the specific experiences of most of these black characters, plus revealing incidents in relation to some of them – namely the scenes which describe Karanja and Mugo in the presence of white men and women – makes it fairly obvious that they embody the “extraordinary” and generalised negro “neurosis” which Fanon talks about.⁴⁹ In certain characters, mainly Gatu and Gikonyo, the writer implements the notion of the “pathology of the tortured” as we shall also show.

While their portraits do not reflect the mental state of the colonised black person in full detail, many of the flat characters are crucial from this point of view. One of the key symbolic significances of these flat characters

⁴⁹ Their conditions and experiences makes it equally clear that they at the same time embody the “Lumpenproletariat” which Fanon advocates as the ideal background for the recruitment of (anti-colonialist revolutionary) fighters.

is that they stand for the general mental (and material) condition of the colonised individual and people, that is, both for collective madness and the Negro psychopathology. They definitely stand for the “wretched of the earth” and, as such, they reflect the psychic condition of colonised people in general and the colonised black man in particular (at least implicitly for some of them). The examples of Githua, Gitogo and Gatu are indeed outstanding in this respect. In fact, little more than such a function – i.e. their symbolic and typical embodiments of the black/colonised man’s neurosis in a colonial context, and of collective madness in a context of an anti-colonial war – would justify the presence of these characters in the story. The ‘secret’ of their dramatisation seems to be Ngugi’s intention to convey through them Fanonian ideas about the archetypal mental (and material) conditions of the colonised individual and people. What indicates this with reference to Githua and Gitogo is, first, the fact that, just before introducing both of them, Ngugi writes an introduction in which he puts us in the ambiance of colonialism, of the Kenyan liberation war more exactly:

Thabai was a big village. When built, it combined a number of ridges: Thabai, Kamandura, Kihingo, and parts of Weru. And even in 1963, it had not changed much from the day in 1955 when the grass-thatched roofs and mud walls were hazily collected together, while the whiteman’s sword hung dangerously above people’s necks to protect them from their brethren in the forests. Some huts had crumbled; a few had been pulled down. Yet the village maintained an unbroken orderliness; from a distance it appeared a huge mass of grass from which smoke rose to the sky as from a burnt sacrifice (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 3).

Knowing, *a priori*, Ngugi’s connection with Fanon, one should indeed have Fanon in mind in such contexts when reading Ngugi’s novels, though this particular passage also has Achebean overtones. When it comes to the characters’ minds, we should recall Fanon’s (rather than Freud’s or Lawrence’s) teachings on the mental condition of the colonised individual (and on those of the coloniser when any colonialist characters are involved) in such contexts.

In the examples we are discussing here, the descriptions of, and allusions to, the dehumanisation of Githua and Gitogo, which follow the above introduction of the colonial context, are clear, and they are certainly not indicative of estrangement in the Lawrentian sense. In view of the context still, they normally are not cases of madness or anxiety in the general sense. Githua and Gitogo are parts of a colonial situation, precisely of an environment of an anti-colonialist insurrection – characterised by general disorder including the erosion of the human condition. They are elements of the colonial set up, with its typical living places described by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* as places where the only “orderliness” is a general chaos (physical and mental) as echoed by Ngugi’s description of Thabai above.

These characters are stereotypes of individuals who are deprived of humanity and brought by colonial violence to sub-human conditions. In other words, they are stereotypes of mental alienation in the Fanonian sense. Githua's vagrant condition described below is archetypical of such dehumanisation of the colonised person:

When he [Githua] reached Mugo he stood to attention, lifted his torn hat, and cried out: "In the name of blackman's freedom, I salute you." Then he bowed several times in comic deference (...) By this time two or three children had collected and were laughing at Githua's antics. Githua did not answer at once. His shirt was torn, its collar gleamed black with dirt. His left trouser leg was folded and fixed with a pin to cover the stump. Rather unexpectedly he gripped Mugo by the hand: "How are you man! How are you man! Glad to see you going to the Shamba early (...) I tell you before the emergency, I was like you; before the whiteman did this to me with bullets, I could work with both hands, man. It makes my heart dance with delight to see your spirit. *Uhuru na Kazi*. Chief I salute you." (...) Githua's voice suddenly changed: "The emergency destroyed us," he said in a tearful voice and abruptly went away (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 3).⁵⁰

Only faintly better, the condition of Gitogo is also illustrative of this. His portrait puts forward a certain inhumanity in his mental (and material) condition. Note, in particular, how the writer underscores the animal-like states of this other stereotype of colonised human beings:

In the old village she lived with an only son who was deaf and dumb. Gitogo, for that was the son's name, spoke with his hands often accompanied with animal guttural noises (...) Gitogo worked in eating houses, meat shops, often lifting and carrying heavy loads avoided by others (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 4).

Whether they have an intentional symbolic significance or not, Gitogo's "deafness and dumbness" do foster the ideas of the inhumanity of the colonised person, his internalised oppression, and of collective madness and wretchedness in *A Grain of Wheat*.

Because he is a relatively more complex character-stereotype, Gatu may appear less directly relevant to our point here. He may seem not to be

⁵⁰ It is noticeable that the language of the passages is Fanonian as well. The use of the terms "blackman" and "whiteman" (in one word, and without capital letters, instead of the usual "black man" "white man") is reminiscent of Fanon's concern with race, mainly with the total fusion between the concepts of humanity and race in colonial and segregationist contexts, and of the logic of inevitable and total conflict between the black and white ethno-cultural groups in such contexts. Also evocative of Fanon is the contrast of the terms "blackman's freedom" and the whiteman's "bullets." This brings to mind a number of Fanonian notions including his claims on the relationship between the violence of the "whiteman" and the liberation of the "blackman," namely the inevitability of black man's aspiration to liberation (through violence) as a result of colonial violence, and the coloniser's systematic opposition of military violence to any attempts at unity and liberation on the part of the colonised for instance. For more detail, see in particular the chapter entitled "On Violence" in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

dramatised typically to highlight the kind of madness resulting from atmospheres of colonialism and war, nor the Negro-psychopathology, or, as a Mau Mau leader he can be thought of as a formerly colonised Black man whose mind is now 'desintoxicated'⁵¹ by his engagement in the armed struggle. His alienation seems accordingly to have given place to an "unmistakable wisdom" as the narrator tells us (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 104). Nevertheless, Gatu is still a good example here to represent the alienation of revolutionary individuals, precisely as it occurs under torture. Gatu, we are told, is a pioneering Mau Mau leader caught by the British colonial authorities and detained at Yala concentration camp. This detention camp is notorious for its exceptionally inhuman conditions and for the severity of the regulations to which prisoners are submitted in it. Because of Gatu's particular significance and of his persistence in challenging the British authorities at Yala (by mocking their symbols and working to raise the spirits of his co-detainees), he, unlike the other detainees, is subjected to exceptional psychological pressure. We are also told that he is physically tortured:

No amount of beating could silence Gatu. He would come back to the others and re-enact the recent drama in the office, mimicking the English voices and miming their features. In the end, they confined him in a cell, all by himself. For days he was not allowed to see the sun or speak to anyone. He was given food once a day, which he ate in the dark. Later they let him out and he joined the men in his compound (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 10).

These considerations (again the Fanonian context) make us expect a Fanonian approach in Ngugi's treatment of the mental condition of this character. And, indeed, Gatu's portrait displays signs of such a treatment. He shows an eccentric behaviour and a certain mental fragility that can be seen in the quick alternations of his moments of dejection and self-confidence. These symptoms suggest mental instability. Furthermore, Gatu's "jokes and stories" reveal that the imagination of this character is 'much too fertile,' and his humour sounds excessive. The following joke which he tells the other detainees at the instant of his release from torture confirms this and suggests that the probable mental disturbance of the character is caused by torture. The joke carries, in addition, more than one other Fanonian "moral" about the conditions of the colonised and the coloniser and the nature of the relationship between them,⁵² especially since Ngugi tells us that Gatu's jokes "carried a moral:"

⁵¹ Fanon's term "desintoxique" in *Les damnés de la terre*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁵² Among these are a suggested sexual potency, or a taboo-free character of the sexuality of the African person, the repression of sexuality in civilized contexts, the role of sexuality in defining the black-white relationships in a colonial context, racism in whites, the nature of the relationship

Forget these people. They are thick, thick like darkness. Instead I will tell you the full story of my life. I was born in a valley (...) I often lay in the sun on the grass, a piece of fruit in my hand, and listened to the running stream and the wild animals. Nobody knew of this valley and I knew no fears. Then one day I was surprised to get an unexpected visitor. Can you guess who? Anyway, you can imagine my surprise when I saw the famous Queen – Queen of England. She said (mimics her voice): “Why are you living in this dark place? It is like a cold, dark place in prison.” I lay there on the grass. I could see she was quite surprised, naturally, because I was not impressed with her blood-stained lips. “I like it where I am,” I told her and went on lying on the ground. She said (mimics her): “If you sell me your valley, I’ll let you ... once.” Women are women you know. “In my country,” I told her, “we do not buy that thing from our women. We get it free.” But man, my own thing troubled me. I had not seen a woman for many years. However, before I could even say anything more, she had called in her soldiers who bound my hands and feet and drew me out of the valley. I have just come from there, and that’s why, gentlemen, I am back with you here in case you are surprised. / “Man,” he said after the laughter. “I wish I had agreed at once to satisfy my thing which troubles me to this day.” They went on laughing. “Show us how she walked,” one of the men called out. Gatu stood up and mimed the whole drama amid appreciative laughs and comments (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 106).

Sometimes, we are told, Gatu changes and his voice sounds “broken” and “carried little conviction” so that it made the detainees of Yala “hang on his words, and counter the silent taunt of the whiteman with open disbelief, ill-carried by their half-hearted grins and jarred laughter” (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 104). Actually, the shifts in Gatu’s moods go from extreme hilarity as in the above citation to extreme melancholy as we are impelled to understand when, again immediately after the funny performance above, his face appeared “weary.” And in a subsequent conversation with Gikonyo, he “spoke in a subdued voice that sounded like a suppressed cry” (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 107). Even the stories he has to tell range from hilarious comedy as in the above example to absolute tragedy as in the following one:

Gatu then turned his eyes from Gikonyo, and as he gazed into the shimmering distance, spoke in a voice clear, colourless, and not raised above a whisper: “A certain man (...) once wanted a woman. And the woman also wanted to marry him and have children. But the man kept on putting off the marriage because he wanted to build a new hut. “We can build it together,” she often told him. In the end, she was tired of waiting and letting life dry in her. She married another man. The first man went on trying to build the hut. It was never finished (...) As a result the man never had a woman or children to continue his family fire.” He then rested his eyes on Gikonyo and continued as if he was talking straight into

between “the man of colour and the white woman,” colonial violence, and the alienating effects of colonial violence on the colonised.

Gikonyo's heart. "So, you see, we all have our separate losses (...) for the cause" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 108).

Furthermore, the possibility that Gatu "hanged himself," though it is the 'official' version of facts (given by the commandant of the camp), cannot be excluded as Ngugi leaves the real conditions of his death a mystery. This strengthens the hypothesis of his mental instability as a result of the colonial and war contexts and of his torture.

In ways that are more elaborate and more substantial, the mental profiles of some of the main black characters, namely Karanja, Mugo, Kihika and Gikonyo, also bring to mind Fanon's views about the mental states and the psychology of the colonised black person. Gikonyo's mental profile is founded in part on Fanonian notions as can be noticed in Ngugi's depiction of him during his detention at Yala, and in the period which follows his release. In depicting these periods in Gikonyo's experience, Ngugi continues to allude to the spiritual side of this character. What he underlines in relation to Gikonyo during these specific periods, however, is a genuine mental depression of the character due to his detention and psychological torture. His condition is worsened by the disillusionment that he experiences when he discovers Karanja's and Mumbi's betrayals of him. The passages dealing with his mental state at Yala seem both Lawrentian and Fanonian, but they sound more Fanonian than Lawrentian. The following description of Gikonyo's state of mind after the death of Gatu (who was the only source of encouragement and distraction for him and the other detainees) is an apex of his depression:

The warder held the gun firmly, waiting for Gikonyo to attempt to break, and seeing that he did not, called him. Gikonyo heard the voice, a distant echo, and walked toward it, elated by his new experience. He suddenly stood before the warder, stared insolently into his face and then raised the hand for the warder to see the blood and perhaps become envious. The warder (...) saw the glaze into Gikonyo's eyes. "Go in and rest," he told him and abruptly turned and walked away, almost running from Gikonyo's weird laughter. In his cell, Gikonyo found that everything (...) was dissolved into a colourless mist. He struggled to recall the outline of Mumbi's face without success, there was only a succession of images each one cancelling out the one immediately preceding it (...) Gikonyo watched himself act – his very gesture, his flow of thought. He was both in and outside himself – in a trance, considering everything calmly, and only mildly puzzled by the failure of his memory (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 109 - 110).

Another sequence in which Ngugi points up Gikonyo's mental depression as a result of the violence of the context of an anti-colonialist war, and the sequels of his detention and torture at Yala on his mental state is this one:

Everything had happened so quickly that Gikonyo could not sort out the feelings and *thoughts that whirled through his head*: he only knew that the man with whom he had taken an oath to fight the whiteman was talking to him about the power of the white people, (...) was now shouting at him. /And no sooner was he outside the Chief's house and office, than he remembered Karanja was the man who had slept with Mumbi (...) Not once, not even in the office did he bring Karanja into his other torture, which lay, as it were, in a different compartment of his **mind**. But now the image of Mumbi moaning with pleasure as her necked body bore Karanja's heavy weight corroded him everywhere. He recreated the scene, in its sordid details (...) He went through a long, continuous shuddering, then tottered towards a small tree by the road and held on to it. But the images did not stop corroding his **mind** (...) He found himself dwelling on irrelevant details, worrying himself, for instance, over whether Mumbi had whimpered with pleasure at the orgasm ... Before he could finish the details of the scene, *he groaned and emitted a hoarse cry*. He let go the tree. He ran down the street towards his mother's hut. The woman who had sighed under Karanja's sweating body could not live (...) *He would strangle Mumbi* (...) *His imagination had shot ahead; Mumbi was gasping for mercy, saliva flowed out of her mouth, her eyes bobbed out* (...) The hut was locked. Perhaps they had locked themselves inside. *He threw his weight against the door, shouting*: "Open the door. Open the door you who auction your bodies on the market." The door did not open. *He gathered force and crashed into it again and again*. Suddenly, the wooden door gave way. Gikonyo *fell on the floor and hit his head against the hearthstone. Foam tossed from the sides of his mouth*. For a time the carpenter *made incoherent noises through the foam, ending in one prolonged moan*: "God, oh, oh, God, my God" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 117 - 118).⁵³

Again not absolutely everything about this text is Fanonian. Vaguely though, the sexual references here, for instance, sound Lawrentian in spite of the Fanonian context of the passage. Also, the image of Gikonyo "holding on to a tree" does not merely suggest his need of something to cling to in order to keep physically steady in this moment of physical and mental breakdown, but also his search for spiritual support and renewal in a natural element. It suggests his search for a spiritual strength lost during custody, and his longing to feel the kind of organic unity discussed in Chapter Two through contact with the symbol of (the renewal of) life which a tree typically is. The theme of betrayal and its repercussions on the person betrayed, which are also crucial here, can also suggest a Conradian quality to this passage.

However, the quintessence of this and such passages is Fanonian. The above passage, in particular, first describes a state of genuine mental depression, not one of estrangement in the mystic sense. Here, Ngugi is dealing with Gikonyo's "brain" and insistently recalls this by emphasising and repeating words such as the character's "brain," "mind" and "head" (in the emphasised places). The writer clearly wants to capture, moreover,

⁵³ My emphases and italics.

abnormally intense and uncontrollable operations that are of a cerebral, and not spiritual, kind. Ngugi speaks, here, of “feelings and thoughts” that “whirled through his head,” of his “remembering” Karanja, and of the facts that “all last night and all today he had thought,” that “the image of Mumbi ...,” that “the images did not stop corroding his mind,” that he found himself “dwelling on irrelevant details,” that he “recreated the scene in its sordid details,” that he was “worrying himself (...) over whether ...” and that “his imagination had shot ahead.” Finally, several expressions – those underlined in the citation – clearly point out Gikonyo’s state of aggression and psychosomatic phenomena. These phenomena are familiar symptoms of the states of genuine loss of the sense of reality which characterise the demeanour of people in states of depression. Gikonyo himself confirms this when he later describes his condition at his release from detention to Mugo: “I must have gone mad,” he observes (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 119). The aspect of Gikonyo’s experience with mental alienation described in the above passage and further through his post-detention relationship with Mumbi may even recall a specific psychiatric case described by Fanon in the chapter entitled “Colonial War and Mental Disorders,” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, namely that of the “Impotence of an Algerian Following the Rape of his Wife.”⁵⁴

Concerning Kihika and Mugo, Ngugi suggests that their “anxieties” which we have discussed in Chapter Two existed, ‘under benign forms,’ before the war. However, their anxieties look as if they have been aggravated by the context of war. Some descriptions of these characters make us think that they *additionally* suffer from alienations having to do with the climate of violence and war in the story. This is revealed to us in very specific instances. The best example, in the case of both characters, is perhaps the sequence where Kihika goes to hide in Mugo’s house after his shooting of D. O. Robson. It can be maintained that the manifest disturbances which both characters display in that sequence are normal and momentary in view of the deadly risk they are said to run. However, there is manifest abnormality in the behaviours and reactions of both characters even when we consider this fact. Ngugi would have made these characters react and behave much less eccentrically, even in such a perilous circumstance, if his aim were only to highlight temporary states of terror in both characters. The appearances, behaviours, and tones of speech of both characters, as well as the narrator’s descriptions of them in that scene reveal that the author’s point is not to dramatise momentary states of panic in a circumstance of great fear, but rather to exploit that event to highlight their perpetual mental disturbance in the context of war in which the novel is set. It is indeed clear that these characters (and every other character in fact) are

⁵⁴ Compare “Cas No 1: Impuissance chez un algerien consecutive au viol de sa femme,” in Chapter V, “Guerre coloniale et trouble mentaux,” *Les Damnés de la terre*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 305 - 310.

under overwhelming mental pressure due to the atmosphere of extreme violence of the story, and not just in this scene, and that one of the writer's points is that these pressures have alienated Kihika, Mugo, and the other characters. The scene in question is not the only example able to sustain this, but it is definitely one of the most illustrative ones, especially as regards Kihika. The narrator also suggests, by the same token, the traumatising effects of violence on people in general through Kihika's words in the same scene:

'You [Mugo] think we don't fear death? We do. My legs almost refused to move when Robson called out to me. Each minute, I waited for a bullet to enter my heart. I've seen men piss on themselves and others laugh with madness at the prospect of a fight. And the animal groan of dying men is a terrible sound to hear' (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 186).

Besides, we know from General R. that Kihika was never the same man after his killing the D. O; we are told that he spoke less and that he spent most of his time reading the Bible. From this point of view, the scene under consideration – which is the climax of the story – is an occasion for Ngugi to put forward the culminating points of those pressures, and the culmination of the effects of those pressures on the two protagonists we are discussing here. The scene does not look like one in which two lucid and only momentarily terrified persons argue over an issue, or seek a way out of the tricky situation that it deals with. It looks like an odd drama in which two insane individuals, who have lost all sense of reality, are brought together and explored in relation to each other. It looks like one in which two "mad" individuals, as it were, are not even communicating with one another, but talking each on his own side, to himself and not to his interlocutor. The language in which the narrator describes Kihika's condition confirms this in so far as this character is concerned; again the use and repetition of the word "mad" with reference to Kihika is noticeable:

He [Kihika] spoke without raising his voice, almost unaware of Mugo, or of his danger, like a man possessed. His bitterness and frustration was revealed in the nervous flow of the words. Each word confirmed Mugo's suspicion that the man was mad (...) Kihika was mad, mad, he reflected, and the thought only increased his terror (...) 'What do you want?' Keep him talking. A mad man was not dangerous as long as he was talking (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 186).

We know prior to this scene that Mugo suffers from a neurotic state. But because we know that he, too, is tortured at Rira, he too can be said to suffer precisely from what Frantz Fanon calls the pathology of the tortured. This scene confirms and fosters the hypothesis of his neurotic state, and, from a certain perspective, it perhaps points out his own relative 'madness' too as a result of the general climate of violence and of his torture.

In fact, Mugo is mostly significant to our argument here, together with Karanja, in another crucial way. Through him, the author puts forward “Negro-psychopathology” as defined in *Black Skin White Masks*, namely in the sequence in which Mugo goes to D. O. Thompson’s office to indicate to him Kihika’s whereabouts. On that occasion, Mugo displays unjustified feelings of guilt and inferiority, a notable uneasiness in the presence of the “whiteman,” John Thompson, and unfounded admiration and feelings of gratitude towards him. These symptoms, Ngugi suggests, are not due to Mugo’s usual uneasiness with people in general, i.e. they are not symptoms of his usual anxiety. They are not signs of the kind of intimidation people would normally feel in the presence of a(n) (military) authority either. They rather indicate Mugo’s, and illustrate the colonised black man’s, inferiority complex and his “depersonalisation,” the black man’s “extraordinary” neurosis, as it manifests itself in the presence of a white person. Typical symptoms of this phenomenon are embodied in Mugo’s attitude in that sequence, and in the language used by the author to point out this phenomenon, specifically in this quotation:

John Thompson, the District Officer, came out and shouted at them [i.e. two soldiers who have been mocking Mugo] to stop the laughter. They told him about Mugo, and he told them to let him in. Mugo was almost short of breath as he bounded into the office; grateful to the whiteman who had rescued him from shame and humiliation. And now that he was in, he did not know how to begin. It was the first time he had ever confronted a whiteman at such close quarters. He fixed his eyes on the opposite wall determined, if possible, not to look at the whiteman’s face (...) He [Thompson] peered at Mugo. The two men were almost the same height. Mugo resolutely refused to meet the other man’s eyes (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 193).⁵⁵

It is, however, in the portraits of Karanja and the white characters that Ngugi embodies more clearly and abundantly Fanon’s postulate on the psychopathologies of the colonised, namely the black man, and coloniser. The dramatisation of the “Negro psychopathology” is certainly one of the main reasons for the creation of the character of Karanja. It is noticeable, first of all, that the father is absent in the cases of both Karanja and Mugo. This absence of the father is not unimportant, especially with reference to Karanja: it is meant to fulfil an important condition for Fanon’s theory of “the Negro psychopathology” to be applicable to both characters, and mostly Karanja. For one of the problems with applying Fanon’s theory of “the Negro psychopathology” to the contexts of *A Grain of Wheat* is, indeed, the fact that, unlike the referential context of Fanon’s theory – the French Antilles – which is a “matriarchal society” – the Gikuyu /Kenyan context

⁵⁵ Besides the two soldiers who have been mocking Mugo here are doing it over the size of Mugo’s “penis,” which recalls Fanon’s idea that “in a nutshell, the Negro is viewed [by the racist white individual] as a penis symbol.”

of Ngugi's novel is a patriarchal community. Fanon does not argue that the Negro psychopathology has developed exclusively in matriarchal black communities. However, the fact that his study refers itself to a matriarchal society is crucial because it is a major point of distinction between the contexts of his and Freud's psychoanalytic theories as we have seen. The fact that the context upon which Fanon builds his theory of the "Negro psychopathology" is a matriarchal society is, in effect, not a mere detail, and it is therefore not treated as such by Ngugi. First, it allowed Fanon to sustain his thesis that the "Negro psychopathology" is "extraordinary" (the context of Freud's general theory is Patriarchal). Also, and mainly, it allowed Fanon to justify his point that it is a consequence of colonialism, and not of sexual repression (as in the case of psychopathology in the strictly Freudian sense). The Negro psychopathology, which Ngugi is definitely concerned with in *A Grain of Wheat*, runs the risk of being mistaken for psychopathology in the general (Freudian) sense, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of sounding inconsistent in relation to characters which evolve in a patriarchal setting like that of *A Grain of Wheat*. To resolve these two problems, the solution Ngugi has found is to eliminate the fathers of the characters in whom he intends to embody the Negro-psychopathology.

The example of Karanja is outstanding. We know he has been raised by his mother alone. The narrator's saying that "it was never easy to tell the relationship between Karanja and his mother" sounds like an allusion to the fact that the Oedipus theory (the key Freudian theory in the analysis of personality and human relationships) does not apply to Karanja and his relationship to his mother. By the same token, the statement implies that any psychopathology displayed by Karanja should not be interpreted in Freudian terms. It is the rather so because that statement of the difficulty of understanding Karanja's relationship with his mother is followed by an account which draws attention to the absence of Karanja's father. In this regard, the psychological malaise which Karanja displays as studied below is, definitely, the syndrome which Fanon calls "Negro-psychopathology." This syndrome is manifest in Karanja's behaviour in the presence of white people, in the ways in which he talks about them, in the manner in which Ngugi describes him in relation to them and in his behaviour with fellow black people.

Indeed, Karanja "has two personalities." He "behaves differently" with the white man and with fellow black people, a fact which, in itself, is significant as, in Fanon's theory, it is the overall symptom of the Negro psychopathology. A cursory glance at his behaviour, both with fellow black people and when he is in the presence of white people is enough to confirm this, and closer attention paid to his portrait reveals more pointed symptoms of this pathology. With black people, Karanja's attitude could sometimes seem 'ordinary,' mainly in the sequences where he is shown to share good times with Mumbi, Gikonyo, Kihika and the rest of his (former) friends. But

his “Negro-psychopathology” is manifest even in his behaviour with fellow black people in several other instances. Karanja’s attitude when he is in a ‘black context’ is characterised by the impression he has, and his pretence, that he is privileged because of his proximity to, and collaboration with, white people while, in point of fact, he and the readers know that he is only a docile and ill-treated servant of theirs. His behaviour with fellow natives is also characterised by his quick irritation when he is shown in conflict with them and by sadistic brutality towards them after he becomes a homeguard. The following illustrates Karanja’s Negro psychopathology as it manifests itself in the ‘state of his personality’ with other black people:

Karanja picked a clean stencil from a pile on the table and started writing labels (...) and he concentrated on the label in hand: STUDIES IN AGRONOMY VOL. – Suddenly he felt a man’s presence in the room. He dropped the stencil and swung round. His face had turned a shade darker. He tried, with difficulty, to control the tremulous pen in his hand. /“Why don’t you people knock at the door before you rush in?” he hissed at the man standing at the door. /“I knocked, three times.”/“You did not. You always enter as if this was your father’s thingira.” /“I knocked at this door, here.”/ ‘Feebly like a woman? Why can’t you knock hard, hard, like a man circumcised?’ Karanja raised his voice, and banged the table at the same time, to emphasise every point./“Ask your mother, when I fucked her-”/“You insult my mother, you-”/“Even now I can do it again, or to your sister. It is they who can tell you that Mwaura is a man circumcised.”/Karanja stood up. The two glared at one another. For a minute it looked as if they would come to blows. /“You say that to me? Is it to me you throw so many insults? He said with venom. /Mwaura’s lower lip fell. His stomach heaved forward and back. His breathing was quick and heavy. Then he seemed to remember something. He held his tongue. /“Anyway, I am sorry,” he suddenly said but in a voice edged with menace./“So you ought to be. What do you want here?”/“Nothing, just that Thompson wants to see you, that is all.” Mwaura went out. Karanja’s mood changed from tension to anxiety (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 34 - 35).

In this passage, it is clear that Karanja behaves with his fellow African, Mwaura, in a way which suggests his feeling, or impression, of his superiority *vis a vis* other Africans. Such a feeling of superiority is, of course, not an objective one; it is typically symptomatic of the Negro psychopathology since it is founded in Karanja’s illusion that he is different from, and better than, the other African. It is precisely rooted in an impression he has of his ‘whiteness’ in comparison with fellow Africans, as can be deduced from his saying “you people.” By “you people,” Karanja means “you [*black*] people,” and is actually miming the colonialists who typically use this expression to refer to natives. This means that he sees black people as inferior to white people on the one hand, and to himself on the other. This is tantamount to saying that he does not conceive of himself as a black individual, or that he has no respect for his condition as a black

individual while he knows, on the other hand, he is not white. The passage contains other indicators of Karanja's rejection of his blackness and his eagerness to identify with whiteness. One can also notice Karanja's endeavour to imitate the "white man," trying his best to address Mwaura in this white man's terminology, tone, typical manners and physical habits, with more or less success. These signs are characteristic of the "extraordinary neurosis" of "the Negro" as described by Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks*.

At another level, the conflict between Karanja and Mwaura treated above also exemplifies the tension, quick irritation and great hostility which characterise the reaction of the colonised black person whenever s/he feels his/her dignity, or rather what remains of it, is threatened by another black person in a colonial context. Frantz Fanon noticed that fights between individuals, such as those Ngugi dramatises through Karanja and Mwaura's dispute above, are frequent and typical of the relationships between colonised people in a colonial context. The psychoanalytic explanation that Fanon provides to such disputes is that they are remedies to defend (remnants of) their dignities perpetually challenged and put at stake by the colonisers. They are natural and inevitable effects of colonialist violence, he sustains.⁵⁶ What he says about this in *The Wretched of the Earth* is in concurrence with the event described above, and with both Karanja's and Mwaura's anomalous hostility to one another:

⁵⁶ Some passages in *A Grain of Wheat* also echo very neatly Fanon's points on other alternatives to which the colonised has recourse in order to evacuate the pressures put on him by the settlers. Here is what Fanon says concerning such "outlets": "The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet (...) The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions – in tribal warfare, in feuds between septs and in quarrels between individuals." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.* p. 42 (*Les Damnés de la terre*, p. 55). Fanon considers certain dances of the natives as some of these most typical outlets as well: "On another level, we see the native's emotional sensibility exhausting itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic (...) The native's relaxation takes precisely the form of muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalized, transformed and conjured away. The circle of the dance is a permissive circle: it protects and permits. At certain times on certain days, men and women come together at a given place, and there, under the solemn eye of the tribe, fling themselves into a seemingly unorganized pantomime, which is in reality extremely systematic, in which by various means – shakes of the head, bending of the spinal column, throwing of the whole body backwards – may be deciphered as in an open book the huge effort of a community to exorcise itself, to explain itself." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. 44. (*Les damnés de la terre*, p. p. 57 - 58). These ideas and statements are echoed in *A Grain of Wheat* in this passage for instance: "Men brought dances. When a person brought a dance, the guitarist played for him alone, praising his name, always the son of a woman. The man danced to the rhythm alone or invited his friends to join him while others only watched. Nobody else could come in. The conventions governing the dances in the wood were well understood. Often the dances ended in fights. Again this was well understood and men came prepared, at times courting danger with provocative words and insulting songs. The men organized themselves in groups according to the ridges of origin. Thabai was famous because men from there successfully fought other groups and took away their women (...) At the platform things were different. Nobody thought of starting a fight. There, the man who beat you the previous Sunday and took away your woman was a friend (...) But he knew later in the wood you would look for a chance to stab him and take away his woman" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 71).

Where individuals are concerned, a positive negation of common sense is evident. While the settler or the policeman has the right the live-long day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality *vis-a-vis* his brother.⁵⁷

On the other hand, every time Karanja is in the presence of a white person – especially in the very Fanonian Chapter Four – he is depicted so that he appears as an exemplary case of “Negro psychopathology” as it manifests itself when “the Negro” is in the presence of a white person. This is the case in the scene which follows the one quoted above, where Karanja is shown with John Thompson, in the scene in which he is shown with Margery Thompson in her house, and in that in which he is depicted in the presence of John Thompson and Dr Lynd outside the office (when Karanja is threatened by Dr Lynd’s dog). In the first of those three scenes, a total transformation occurs in Karanja’s personality as soon as he hears Thompson’s name: his “mood changed from tension to anxiety” the very instant Mwaura informs him that Thompson called for him. By presenting Karanja’s behaviour with another black man (in the scene with Mwaura) in juxtaposition with his behaviour in the presence of a white man in the scene that follows it immediately (quoted below), it is clear that Ngugi intends to emphasise the two fundamental observations about the black man’s psychopathology mentioned in the previous section, that is 1) to emphasise all the more “the extraordinarily neurotic ambiguity of the negro,” and 2) to exemplify the fact that “the black man has two dimensions,” “one with his fellows, the other with the white man.” The depiction of Karanja with John Thompson in the same scene captures, additionally, some of the most typical symptoms of the Negro psychopathology:

[...] Karanja’s mood changed from tension to anxiety. What did Thompson want? (...) He dusted his kaki overall, passed a comb through his mole-coloured hair and hurried along the corridor towards Thompson’s office. He knocked boldly at the door and entered. /‘What is it? Why do you people knock so loud?’/‘I thought, I thought you sent for me, sir,’ Karanja said in a thin voice, standing, as he always did before a white person, feet slightly parted, hands linked at the back, all in obsequious attention.”/‘Oh, yes, yes. You know my house?’/‘Yes, sir.’/‘Run and tell Mrs Thompson that I’ll not be coming home for lunch. I am going – eh – wait a minute. I’ll give you a letter” (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 35)

In the scene with Margery Thompson, equally, we are given a description of Karanja’s “negro neurosis” which plainly appears in his great nervousness

⁵⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. 42. (*Les damnés de la terre*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.)

and awkwardness in the presence of a white person. Like Mugo, in the presence of John Thompson,

Karanja was surprised because he had never, before, been invited inside the house. He sat at the edge of the chair, his uneasy hands on his knees, and idly stared at the sailing and at the walls to avoid looking at her breasts (...) / 'Would you like some tea, coffee or anything?' / I – I must go! Karanja stammered out his thoughts. / 'Sure you don't want some coffee? (...)' (...) / 'All right,' he said edging deeper into the seat with eyes longing for the door and the hedge beyond. Even now he had no courage to lean back and be comfortable. At the same time, he desperately wished one of the workers was present to see him entertained to coffee by a white woman (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 37).

Right after he leaves the Thompsons' house, Karanja goes to an eating-house in the "African quarters" for lunch where he finds Mwaura. Ngugi makes of this scene in the "Friend" (eating-house) an occasion to make us note, once again, an "extraordinary" shift in Karanja's personality. Karanja's mood passes, this time, from one of total submission and subservience to John and Margery Thompson to one of ostentatious arrogance once in the African quarters, among fellow Africans.⁵⁸ Note, again, how Karanja emulates Europeans, fancying himself as 'one of them' "except for the black skin" as he says in another place:

There Karanja found Mwaura. It was not good to create enemies, Karanja always told himself after alienating any of the other workers. / 'I am sorry about the incident,' Karanja quickly said, an affability that didn't come off. 'I hope you'll take it as a little shauri between friends. You see some people don't understand that the work we do, you know, writing labels for all those books of science, requires concentration. If somebody flings the door open without warning, it upsets you and you ruin the letters. I tell

⁵⁸ Furthermore, Ngugi sets in contrasts the Thompsons' living area and the "African quarters." His description of the "European quarters" and "African quarters" echoes the contrasts between these living places as described in *The Wretched of the Earth*. This is how the Thompsons' bungalow looks like: "A neatly trimmed hedge of cedar shrub surrounded the Thompsons' bungalow. At the entrance, green creepers coiled on a wood stand, massed into an arch at the top and then fell to the hedge at the sides. The hedge enclosed gardens of flowers: flame lilies, morning glory, sunflowers, bougainvillea. However, it was the gardens of roses that stood out in colour above the others." (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 36). This is how the "Friend" eating-house in the African quarters looks like on the other hand: "The stony walls were covered with grease, a fertile ground for flies. They buzzed around the customers, jumped on top of the cups and plates and at times even made love on food brought on the table. Plastic roses in tins decorated each creaking table" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 39). The juxtaposition of these settings is very likely to be a replica of Fanon's statement on colonial settings: "The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters; of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall apartheid in South Africa (...) The colonial world is a world cut into two." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., p. 29.

you, if you knew that Librarian woman as well as I do – you think she separated from her husband for nothing – Waiter, two cups of tea, quick ... Now, what news from Rung'ei? (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. p. 39 - 40).

In the scene where Karanja is threatened by Dr Lynd's bull-mastiff, he does not even dare to defend himself against that dog: all he can do is to "pick up a stone and raise it in the air" when the attacking dog was about to leap at him. Karanja owes his safety from assault by a white woman's dangerous dog only to the fact that the dog is finally ordered to retreat by its owner. What is more, we are told that Karanja "watched Thompson with grateful eyes" for sparing him troubles with Dr Lynd due to his raising the stone at that dog of hers in legitimate defence. He feels such gratitude for a statement as insignificant as "I shall see with this" from a Thompson who, on the other hand, feels "this was the wrong thing to have said" because it "smacked too much of an apology" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 42).

This incident and these facts pave the way for us to tackle the question of the writer's treatment of the typical mentality of the coloniser in *A Grain of Wheat*, a treatment which reflects another important aspect of Ngugi's indebtedness to Frantz Fanon in matters of psychology in the colonial context. To these white characters Ngugi applies the idea of "anti-black white racism" as well as Fanon's argument on the pathologic nature of such racism. In effect, the writer portrays all of them as individuals who hate Africans, and highlights the subconscious sexual underpinnings of that hatred, echoing Fanon's theory of the "Negro-phobogenesis," the sexual foundation of the racist white person's hatred/fear of the black man. The colonists are all depicted as ethnocentric and xenophobic individuals, and not simply as tyrannical and arrogant administrators in the broad sense. The minds of John Thompson, Dr Lynd, Dr Van Dyke, D. O. Robson and Margery Thompson all illustrate this very well.

In the citation last provided (above), for instance, both Thompson and Dr Lynd show more concern about the dog than about Karanja's safety. The same citation also clearly points to Dr Lynd's and Thompson's racism in several other ways. For example, the dog's reaction shows that it is trained to attack Africans specially. In fact, Karanja's reluctance to defend himself against the beast is 'justified' in a way other than his own Negro psychopathology. We understand better Karanja's reaction when we read what Ngugi has written in *Detained* about European settlers, their dogs and Africans in the Historical period in which *A Grain of Wheat* is set:

In 1960, Peter Harold Poole shot and killed Kamame Musunge for throwing stones at Poole's dogs in self-defence. To the settlers, dogs ranked infinitely higher than Kenyans; and Kenyans were either children (to be paternalistically loved but not appreciated, like dogs) or mindless scoundrels (to be whipped or killed). In his autobiography, *Words*, Sartre has made the apt comment that 'when you love children and dogs too

much, you love them instead of adults.' The settlers' real love was for dogs and puppies. Thus, to hit an attacking dog was a worse crime than killing a Kenyan. And when Poole was sentenced to death, the whole colonial Herrenvolk cried in unison against this 'miscarriage of justice'. Peter Harold Poole had done what had been the daily norm since 1895.⁵⁹

The multiple references to Europeans, dogs and Africans in *A Grain of Wheat* are, it is clear, allusions to this sad historical reality. And it is to the same reality that the narrator refers us when he tells us: "[l]ike many Europeans in Kenya, Thompson had a thing about pets, especially dogs" (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 43). Thus, the scene of Karanja's issue with the Dr Lynd's dog is meant, on the other hand, to reveal to us John Thompson's and Dr Lynd's racism, racism that is equal to that of Peter Harold Poole, as we can see:

The bull-mastiff emerged from the other side of the chemistry block, sniffing along the grass-surface. Then it stood and raised its head towards the library. Thompson tensed up: something was going to happen. He knew it and waited, unable to suppress that cold excitement. Suddenly the dog started barking as it bounded across the compound towards the group of Africans. A few of them screamed and scattered into different directions. One man could not run in time. The dog went for him. The man tried to edge his way out, but the dog fixed him to the wall. Suddenly he stooped, picked up a stone, and raised it in the air. The dog was now only a few meters away. Thompson waited for the thing he feared to happen. Just at that moment, Dr Lynd appeared on the scene and, as the dog was about to jump at the man, shouted something. Thompson's breath came back first in a long-drawn wave, then in low quick waves, relieved and vaguely disappointed that nothing had happened (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 42).

Dr Lynd's racism is manifest in her reaction after the incident as well:

Dr Lynd held her dog by the collar with the left hand and pointed an accusing finger at Karanja with the other. /'I am ashamed of you, utterly ashamed of you,' she said putting as much contempt as she could in her voice. Karanja looked at the ground; fear and anger were visible in his eyes; the sweat-drops had not yet dried on his face. /'The dog – dog – come – Memsahib,' he stammered. /'I would never have thought this of you – throwing stones at my dog.' /'No stones – I did not throw stones.' /'The way you people lie --' she said, looking round at the others. Then she turned to Karanja. 'Didn't I catch you holding a stone? I should have allowed him to get at you. Even now I have half a mind to let him --' (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 42).

⁵⁹ Ngugi, *Detained*, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

She even avows racism when, a few pages later, she tells John Thompson: "I hate them. How can I help it?". And "how can I help it?" here suggests a subconscious character of her "Negrophobia" which can be an allusion to Fanon's claim on the subject. A statement such as "she often scolded her houseboy but she also gave him presents, clothes, built him a little brick house at the back, and never worked him hard" reinforces this hypothesis. It suggests a relationship between the fact of her hatred of black people and some non-avowed and repressed attraction to them that calls to mind Fanon's analysis of the question in the chapters entitled "The Man of Colour and the White Woman" and "The Negro and Psychopathology" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. This aspect of her experience (and, as we shall shortly see, the same aspect of the portrait of Margery Thompson) is in agreement with the following statement of Fanon's:

All the Negrophobic women I have known had abnormal sex lives. Their husbands had left them; or they were widows and they were afraid to find a substitute for the dead husband; or they divorced and they had doubts at the thought of a new object investment. All of them endowed the Negro with powers that other men (husbands, transient lovers) did not have. And besides there was also an element of perversion, the persistence of infantile formations: God knows how they make love! It must be terrifying.⁶⁰

This is all the more probable because we know that Dr Lynd was never married and that she is "a solitary being, like a ghost."

Likewise, John Thompson's "anti-black racism" is confirmed in more than one place in the story, although, unlike the other settlers, he seems to struggle with it. Another good example of his Negrophobia is the notes in his diary – in terms and statement which he uses in that diary such as "the Negro is a child," "the African is a born-actor" and "the Negro is a liar."⁶¹ Concerning the origin of Thompson's racism, the fact that he thinks that "the negro is a liar" calls to mind Fanon's assertion that the racist white person associates the Negro, because of his or her black complexion, with vice and sin (and whiteness with virtue). There is, in so far as one can tell, no direct allusion to John Thompson's "negro-phobiogenesis," i. e. to the psychosexual origin of his "anti-black racism." There is, however, a hint of this in Ngugi's suggestion of Thompson's sexual impotence, or, at least, to his sexual weakness. Such impotence or deficiency is suggested in all the scenes in which Thompson is involved with women, namely with his wife Margery and with Dr Lynd. This insinuated impotence or deficiency may symbolise the white man's sexual inferiority, especially if it is considered in contrast with the much healthier sexual lives and the fertility of the African characters that interact with Thompson and his family, namely Karanja.

⁶⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, *op. cit.* p. 158.

⁶¹ See Thompson's notes in *A Grain of Wheat*.

Thompson's sexual deficiency may well be a hint at the fact that the white man's hatred of the Negro is anchored in an (unconscious) impression of his sexual inferiority in comparison with the black man, a fact which Fanon, as we have seen, holds to be the main Negrophobiogenesis. We are more impelled to think so because we are told, on the other hand, that Thompson's wife is attracted by Karanja sexually, and that she is eager for phantasmagorical sexual adventures more generally as the writer's depiction of her affair with Dr Van Dyke reveals. These considerations can be understood as hints at a subconscious and sexually-founded inferiority complex supplying Thompson's racism.

One of the characters in whom these Fanonian notions are incarnated more obviously and most typically is Dr Henry Van Dyke. This figure is, on the one hand, one of the most evident cases of "anti-black white racism" of the colonists (perhaps second only to D. O. Robson.⁶²) Ngugi certainly portrays Van Dyke as a prototype of ethnocentric and chauvinistic military and administrative (white) colonialist figures. On the other hand, his experience clearly typifies the subconscious sexual origins of this pathology. The narrator points out Van Dyke's ultra-nationalism as well as his hatred of natives when he says that he "had always sworn (...) that he would kill himself if Kenyatta was ever set free from Lodwar and Lokitaung." And, indeed, though the circumstances of his death are a mystery, "[h]is car crashed into the train soon after Kenyatta's return home from Maralal." The sexual origin of this racism is suggested in the following passage:

Karanja (...) remembered Dr Van Dyke mostly because of a strange game he sometimes played: he would come up to the African workers, put his arm around their shoulders and then suddenly, he would strike their unsuspecting bottoms. He used to let his hand lie on their buttocks feelingly, breathing out alcohol over the shoulders of his victims. Then unexpectedly he would burst into open and loud laughter (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 34).

Ngugi's making Van Dyke behave this way while he is in a state of insobriety is not a random detail, i.e. it is not simply meant to capture the behaviour of an individual or a colonist administrator in a state of insobriety. Or, rather, if it may seem a detail (Dr Van Dyke being an alcoholic), it is certainly a very revealing one. Firstly, the state of insobriety, here, is certainly a metaphor, and an indicator, of a subconscious state of the character, or more exactly, of the subconscious states of Van Dyke's brain and behaviour in this instance. Thus, the sexual conduct of Van Dyke above reveals his subconscious sexual phantasms towards black people. From this standpoint, his behaviour echoes Fanon's argument that anti-black white racism (exemplified here by Van Dyke's racism) is rooted in the white

⁶² Ngugi does not provide much detail about Robson, but the latter's happiness with torturing and executing Mau Mau and innocent people is manifest in Ngugi's description of him.

racist's subconscious projection on the Negro of the sexual incest (exemplified by Van Dyke's incestuous sexual behaviour). In other words, Dyke's behaviour Fanon's idea that racism in whites owes its origin to an unconscious longing for the satisfaction of the subconscious demands of a sexuality that is repressed by civilisation. Van Dyke's triumphant "laughter" after his 'performance' corroborates this.

Another white character whose Negrophobia and Negrophobiogenesis are both clearly suggested is Margery Thompson. There is no doubt that Margery is a racist white woman and settler. The narrator tells us, for instance, that she "never thought of Karanja as a man," prior to the event of her invitation of him into her house. Also, we can deduce from the following depiction of her ideas about Karanja that her anti-black racism has to do with a subconscious sexual phenomenon. We could say, more exactly, that it has to do with an overwhelming and phantasmagorical idea of Negro sexuality. It has to do with Margery's phantasm about and her search for sexual experiences that are different and, to her mind, more interesting than the ordinary (or perhaps less than ordinary) experiences it is suggested she has with her husband John Thompson:

Margery felt a sensual power at the fear and discomfiture she inflicted on Karanja. Why did he not look at her? She had often seen him, but never thought of him as a man. Now she was suddenly curious to know what thoughts lay inside his head (...) She let her fancy flow. She warmed all over and stood up, slightly irritated by the thrill (...) Although she was still ashamed of the thrill, she would not let it go. She could only remember once before when she had experienced a similar flame. That was the day when she danced with Dr Van Dyke (...) She was attracted, at the same time disgusted, by his drunken breath. When later in the evening he took her for a drive, she submitted to his power. She let him make love to her, and experienced, for the first time, the terrible beauty of a rebellion (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 37).

What is going on in Margery's mind with reference to a "Negro," Karanja, above is the same as that which is happening in the psyches of both the "young woman" and "the prostitute" in the following part of Fanon's analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

There is one expression that through time has become singularly eroticized: the black athlete. There is something in the mere idea, one young woman confided to me, that makes the heart skip a beat. A prostitute told me that in her early days the mere thought of going to be with a Negro brought on an orgasm. She went in search of Negroes and never asked them for money. But, she added, "going to be with them was no more remarkable than going to bed with white men. It was before I did

it that I had the orgasm. I used to think about (imagine) all the things they might do to me: and that was what was so terrific.⁶³

D. The Pathology of Atmosphere and the Psychologies of the National Bourgeoisie and the Native Intellectual in *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu-Language Novels

Many of the points made above describe typical procedures by which Ngugi applies Frantz Fanon's psychiatric and psychological theories to his characters. That is to say, they also pertain to the characters of his fiction after *A Grain of Wheat*, in particular *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*. In very much the same ways, the broad mental states and the psychology of "the native," as described by Frantz Fanon, are, in effect, applied to the characterisations of *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu novels. And this is so much the case that characters in Ngugi's fiction as a whole have practically identical Fanonian mental traits. It is, indeed, noticeable that a crucial technique which Ngugi uses in these novels in order to show that colonialism has not ended in Kenya and Africa with the military departure of the British⁶⁴ is to project the frantic atmosphere of *A Grain of Wheat*, and of the colonial era, onto the post-independence settings of these novels. Thus, like the characters of *A Grain of Wheat*, the characters of these novels, as a group, seem stricken by a "pathology of the atmosphere" in addition to neuroses in the Freudian sense, estrangements in the Lawrentian sense, and, as we shall see through some examples as well, mental alienations at individual levels in the Fanonian sense. Like those of *A Grain of Wheat*, the characters of these novels – peasants and petty-bourgeois alike – are really in "a kind of collective madness."⁶⁵ And what seems to destabilise them, is, broadly and above all, the "neo-colonial" situations of these novels in the same way as the characters of *A Grain of Wheat* are alienated by the colonial atmosphere as we noted earlier.

On the other hand, although the immediate contexts of these novels are not colonial,⁶⁶ the minds of the petty-bourgeois (flat) characters, or the members of "the national bourgeoisie," in these novels are really little more than incarnations of Fanon's analyses of the psychology of the national bourgeoisie. Aspects, or phases in the developments, of the experiences of complex characters such as Munira, Waringa and Gatuiria also reflect

⁶³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

⁶⁴ That is, to embody the concept of "neo-colonialism."

⁶⁵ The phrase is Ngugi's. Ngugi, *Detained*, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁶⁶ The "neo-colonial" context is very comparable to the colonial context and this keeps Fanon's claims on the psychology of the colonised (and the coloniser) normally valid in the "neo-colonial" context as well.

Ngugi's reference to the same Fanonian teachings. In Munira and Gatuiria, Ngugi introduces, furthermore, another crucial aspect of Fanon's theory about the minds of the colonised, which is the psychology of the colonised intellectual. We will, hereafter, only have a cursory glance at the way Fanon's premises on "the pathology of the atmosphere" (as well as and on the psychopathology of the colonised black man in the general sense of the term when this is relevant), are applied to the characters of *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu novels. This is because Ngugi's adaptation of these notions is rather obvious, on the one hand, and has already been discussed in our previous section on the other hand. Instead, we will lay more emphasis on displaying the adaptations of the psychologies of the national bourgeoisie and the colonised intellectual in these stories, these having not been dealt with before, and important details relating to them being likely to escape the readers' attention.

The "pathology of the atmosphere" itself and the fact that it is an effect of "neo-colonialism" are clearly suggested in *Petals of Blood*. All the characters in this narrative are mentally and emotionally destabilised, or weakened in all cases, by the neo-colonial situation in which they exist. The Ilmorog villagers, as a group, are "wretched of the earth" in every sense of the term and so are the main protagonists. The narrations of their experiences consist mainly of accounts about mental and material hardships they endure from start to finish, and that the writer puts the responsibility for such general wretchedness is a fact beyond illustration. The depictions of the experiences of the four main protagonists – Munira, Abdulla, Wanja and Karega – reveal the confusions of these protagonists, confusions that are so deep as to make them continually swing between different – indeed opposite – moods, convictions, and (social) behaviours due to the neo-colonial situation in which they live. Their successive confessions of their earlier lives, thoughts, and their tragedies as seen by the narrator, reveal that they are in sorts of existentialist crises. These accounts show that these crises are not the consequences of the neo-colonialism alone, or that this system is not necessarily the direct cause of such crises. However, those accounts either point an accusing finger at neo-colonial realities as being the direct causes for the mental predicaments of the characters or indict it with having encouraged, or worsened their mental unsteadiness.

Wanja and Munira, above all, seem not to have any firm bearings, and, to a lesser degree, Abdulla. The same may even be said of Karega who appears in a similar state towards the end of the story. Munira and Wanja hesitate and alternate between peasant and city life, and between bourgeois and peasant values and lives, showing perturbations at identity and mental levels. Disheartened, possibly disillusioned, by the post-independence reality, Abdulla, in turn, appears rather doubtful in the very values for which he fought during the anti-colonial struggle. By the end of the story, he behaves like a madman: a deprived, despaired, incoherent and depressed drunkard –

a complaining and mourning vagrant, who recalls Gitutu in *A Grain of Wheat*. Similarly, Karega is rather uncertain about the principles that he claims, and, again ends up wondering if Wanjia's "eat or you are eaten" were not the ultimate truth. While he spent part of his life struggling for the dignity and rights of the peasants and workers, he often appears as a rather cynical person, with communist beliefs that seem quite unsure and hazy. Near the end of the story, he appears as a broken and lonely man in custody who rather regrets such an end. Hearing the news of his mother's death while in prison, he affirms: "I have lost everything." Therefore, due to the "neo-colonial" situation, none of the protagonists in *Petals of Blood* prove mentally stable. Thus, the mental and emotional states of the characters of this novel altogether reflect a kind of collective madness, a "pathology of the atmosphere" which, Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the Earth*, characterises (colonised) peoples in oppressive and subjugating environments.

The bourgeois characters, mainly individuals such as Ezekiel (and the other Christian figures), Chui and Mzigo display clear signs of the "Negro psychopathology," even if this is not Ngugi's focal point in this novel. True, apart from some exceptions – as in the sequence where Chui, as the new headmaster of Syriana High School, talks to the 'white' teachers as if *he*, and not they, were their hierarchic subordinate – we are not given as many occasions to see how this pathology manifests itself when the colonised black man is "in the presence of white persons" as is the case in *A Grain of Wheat*. However, the narrator tells us enough about these characters for us to see that they are archetypes of 'black-skin-white-masks.' These mentally colonised characters are exposed in the way they negate, and work against their native cultures and even reject their blackness. Deprived of dignity and self-esteem, indeed, they are satisfied as mimic Europeans. Chui, for instance, dressed in "khaki shorts and shirt and a sun helmet" is, the narrator tells us, simply "a black replica of Fraudsham" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 171).

However, what Ngugi principally dramatises by way of such characters is not only their "negro-psychopathology" but, in fact, two other key Fanonian concepts relating to the colonised individual in a neo-colonial context. These are, firstly, the mentality of those Fanon calls the "petty-bourgeois," i.e. members of the class which Frantz Fanon refers to as the national bourgeoisie which has replaced the colonial bourgeoisie at the end of colonial rule. This Fanonian concept is embodied in detail mainly through characters like Ezekiel, Chui, Mzigo, Kimeria, Nderi wa Riera (the MP) and the like –; secondly, the mentality of the "colonised intellectual," embodied typically by Chui and, in more detail, in Munira. There is no exaggeration in claiming that Ngugi embodies in the latter two characters almost every detail of Fanon's observations first on the politico-cultural identity, and then on the typical mentality of "the national bourgeoisie" in general, and the

mentality of “the colonised intellectual” in particular. In creating these characters/stereotypes Ngugi has certainly drawn, with remarkable detail and “faithfulness to the source” of influence, on Fanon’s premises on these questions mainly in the two chapters entitled “Concerning Violence” and “The Pitfalls of Nationalist Consciousness” in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Before analysing Ngugi’s indebtedness to Fanon regarding the mentality of “the national bourgeoisie,” it is noteworthy that, like *A Grain of Wheat*, these novels “warn about [the pitfalls of the Nationalist consciousness as depicted by Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth*].”⁶⁷ The political discourse in *A Grain of Wheat* and after is in tune with Fanon’s main premise on the anti-nationalist way taken by the national bourgeoisie, namely the following:

In an under-developed country an authentic national middle class ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people: in other words to put at the peoples’ disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it had snatched when going through the colonial universities. But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle class does not follow this heroic, positive, fruitful and just path; rather, it disappears with its soul set at peace into the shocking ways – shocking because anti-national – of a traditional bourgeoisie, of a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois.⁶⁸

For it is beyond doubt that those who represent this national bourgeoisie (or “national middle class”⁶⁹) in *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*, are not “authentic national bourgeoisies.” A characteristic element of the class to which characters of the MP and the Christian figures in *A Grain of Wheat* belong is its failure (or refusal) to “betray the vocation to which it was destined” by its colonial educators and promoters. What these epitomes of “the national bourgeoisie” have definitely betrayed, on the other hand, is precisely what Fanon describes, and Ngugi replicates, as the “heroic, positive, fruitful and just” path of “going to school with the people.” Because their main defining criteria clearly are “their refusal to put at the people’s disposal the intellectual and technical capital they snatched” when going through the colonial educational institutions, and their engagements instead in the “anti-nationalist way,” the ‘national bourgeoisies’ in Ngugi’s fiction are the same as the “national bourgeoisie” defined by Frantz Fanon.

Fanon considers the political attitude of the national bourgeoisie which he describes above to a mentality, or a “psychology,” which “the national

⁶⁷ Ngugi, *Moving the Centre*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 120 – 121.

⁶⁹ Fanon’s original term is “bourgeoisie nationale” which therefore also translates as “national bourgeoisie,” a term used in some places here.

bourgeoisie,” as a specific social group, has acquired as a result of its colonial education. Concerning this mentality, or “the psychology of the national bourgeoisie,” Fanon’s main assumption is this one:

The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an under-developed middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace. In its wilful narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied cries for help towards the former mother country. The university and merchant classes which make up the most enlightened section of the new state are in fact characterised by the smallness of their number and their being concentrated in the capital, and the type of activities in which they are engaged: business, agriculture and the liberal professions. Neither financiers nor industrial magnates are to be found within this national middle class. The national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour; it is completely canalised into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket. The psychology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of a captain of industry; and it is only too true that the greed of the settlers and the system of embargoes set up by colonialism has hardly left them any choice.⁷⁰

The mentality of the “national bourgeoisie” as represented in Ngugi’s novels including *A Grain of Wheat* and in the subsequent novels is clearly a replica of this definition of it. Ngugi’s faithfulness to the Fanonian premise cited above (and to details in Fanon’s further analysis of it in “Pitfalls of National Consciousness”), suggests that Ngugi has not roughly imitated the reality of this national bourgeoisie as it is reflected by the Kenyan context, but that he has referred to this psychoanalyst’s definition of “the national bourgeoisie” to represent it in its deep and detailed nature.

Every statement in the above definition is embodied in the portrayal of the national bourgeoisie in *Petals of Blood*. Chui, Mzigo, Nderi wa Riera, Kimeria and Ezekiel replicate Fanon’s definition of this concept (in the above) to the letter. First, these characters represent “an underdeveloped bourgeoisie,” that is a bourgeoisie without the required background. It is a ‘bourgeoisie’ devoid of the whole cultural and institutional heritage that the word “bourgeoisie” supposes, that is it is a ‘bourgeoisie’ without the descent, culture, view of life and institutions which supply the authentic bourgeois life and attitude towards life. These characters are, instead, false, cynical, rough, ludicrous and plainly grotesque ‘bourgeois,’ with a particular

⁷⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 119 - 120 (*Les damnés de la terre*, p. 146).

psychology that is far from being comparable to the psychology of the authentic bourgeoisie. Such a psychology is totally different from that of the colonial bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie in the larger sense, and from the psychologies of the peasantry and “the proletariat.”

For example, except for Kimeria and Ezekiel (who collaborated with the British army during the Mau Mau war) these characters, as in Fanon's analysis, do not see themselves as enemies of their fellow people, that is they do not conceive of themselves as antinationalist as such. Deprived by the colonial system of practical knowledge in general, of real knowledge of the matters of the countries they came to govern after independence, and of any exercise of power before the independence of these countries, they believe, before they come to power, first, that they could possibly replace the colonial bourgeoisie, and, second, that they would serve both their own interests and those of their fellow people simply by ‘filling the places’ left vacant by the colonial bourgeoisie. In Fanon's words (above), they naively believe that “they can advantageously replace the colonial bourgeoisie/middle class.” What the narrator says about Nderi wa Riera's beginnings as an MP verifies this (at least in his own case). Besides, it shows how Ngugi sheds light on the “voluntarist narcissism,” rather than on some commonsensical, or deliberate bad intention, that lies behind the character's “stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois” (political) demeanour and personality:

There was a time when Nderi wa Riera was truly a man of the people. He used to play darts and draughts in small and big places, punctuating his playing with witty lighthearted comments and threats to invert his opponents: you will know me today ... You think I was in Manyani for nothing! It used to be said that he had chosen his offices in the Market Street to be near Camay which was then a renowned centre for darts and draughts and roasted goat meat and beer (...) He was in those days also one of the most vocal and outspoken advocates of reform in and outside Parliament. He would champion such populist causes as putting a sailing on land ownership; nationalisation of the major industries and commercial enterprises; abolition of illiteracy and unemployment and the East African Federation as a step to Pan-African Unity (*Petals of Blood*, p. 174).

The rest of Nderi's story reveals how his status of MP puts him in “the circuit” of business, and soon makes him a member of the new Kenyan “petty bourgeoisie.” This Kenyan national bourgeoisie has, after twelve years of independence, Ngugi insinuates, a little past the phases of its being “driven into a corner” and of “launching frenzied appeals for help” to the former metropolis, though. It now is under the hegemony of the former ‘mother country’ again and has already submitted Kenya to the will and mercy of “foreign owned companies.” Nderi's further delineation is illustrative of this, as well as the non-revolutionary psychology of the national bourgeoisie – their tendency to maintain the colonial status quo and

randomly through, and within, the inherited colonial structures. It also draws attention to the type of activity which the members of the national bourgeoisie typically tend to exercise, namely “liberal professions, “business” and “agriculture.” By the same token, it shows that the national bourgeoisie “is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour” but is “canalised into activities of the intermediary type.” In brief, the further depiction of this MP is in complete agreement with Fanon’s conclusion above that the national bourgeoisie has the businessman’s psychology, not that of a captain of industry:

As if to reinforce his new social standing, he took a huge farm in the Rift Valley. But his most lucrative connection was with the tourist industry. He owned a number of plots and premises in Mombasa, Malindi and Watamu and had been given shares in several tourist resorts all along the coast. Soon he began talking of ‘the need for people to grow up and face reality. Africa needed capital and investment for real growth – not socialist slogans.’ But he remained a strong advocate of African culture, African personality, Black authenticity: ‘If you must wear wigs, why not natural African or Black wigs?’ He insisted on most of the companies of which he was chairman or director dropping their European names and taking names like Uhuru, Wananchi, Taifa, Harambee, Afro, Pan-African, which would give the enterprises a touch of the soil (*Petals of Blood*, p. 175).

The case of Chui is even more illustrative. He too is a non-revolutionary figure, “a flatly and cynically bourgeois” individual who betrays his fellow people instead of honouring what Ngugi, echoing Fanon, presents as his “duty to betray the vocation to which he has been destined,” and to “put at the people’s disposal the intellectual and technical capital” that he and his likes (like Mzigo for instance) obtained during their passages in colonial universities [and/or other colonial educational institutions].” For example, while commonsense itself makes us expect, and everybody at Syriana expected, him to respond favourably to their demands of Africanising education at the school, he not only maintains the colonial model of education but also proves ‘more Loyalist than the King’ by making every effort to protect that model of education and school administration. He even calls a riot-van inside the school and violently represses the students’ strike which followed his decision.

Furthermore, Chui typifies the way in which Ngugi draws on the congruent Fanonian postulates to represent the psychology of a specific and important segment of the national bourgeoisie: “the colonised intellectuals.”⁷¹ What Fanon says about “native intellectuals” like Chui and

⁷¹ It is noteworthy that this is not the only type of intellectuals which Ngugi dramatises. As Oliver Lovesey points out, “The figuration of the intellectual in his most recent essays, novels, and stories, and his own intellectual practice attempt a new accommodation between different views of the intellectual: Fanon’s “native intellectual,” Gramsci’s “organic intellectual,” and Cabral’s activist intellectual.” Oliver Lovesey, “The Exiled Artist Writes Back: Ngugi wa Thiong’o and the

about the way their attitudes are perceived by the people in a post-independence society is mainly the following. It is important to quote the complete argument:

We have said that the colonial context is characterised by the dichotomy which it imposes upon the whole people [or the world]. Decolonisation unifies that people [or world] by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial, basis. We know the fierce words of Senegalese patriots, referring to the manoeuvres of their president, Senghor: 'We have demanded that the higher posts should be given to Africans; and now Senghor is Africanising the Europeans.' That is to say that the native can see clearly and immediately if decolonisation has come to pass or no, for his minimum demands are simply that the last shall be first./But the native intellectual brings variants to this petition, and, in fact, he seems to have good reasons: higher civil servants, technicians, specialists – all seems to be needed. Now the ordinary native interprets these unfair promotions as so many acts of sabotage, and he is often heard to declare: 'It wasn't worthwhile, then, our becoming independent ...' /In the colonial countries where a real struggle for freedom has taken place, where the blood of the people has flowed and where the length of the period of armed warfare has favoured the backward surge of intellectuals towards bases grounded in the people, we can observe a genuine eradication of the superstructure built by these intellectuals from the bourgeois colonialist environment. The colonialist bourgeoisie, in its narcissistic dialogue, expounded by the members of its universities, had in fact deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men may make: the essential qualities of the West, of course. The native intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas, and deep down in his brain you could always find a vigilant sentinel ready to defend the Greco-Latin pedestal. Now it so happens that during the struggle for liberation, at the moment that the native intellectual comes into touch again with his people, this artificial sentinel is turned into dust. All the Mediterranean values – the triumph of the human individual, of clarity and of beauty – becomes lifeless, colourless knick-knacks. All those speeches seem like collections of dead words; those values which seemed to uplift the soul are revealed as worthless, simply because they have nothing to do with the concrete conflict in which the people is engaged.⁷²

Chui's mentality and his experience with the people show that he is, in effect, a typical "colonised intellectual" as Fanon defines him above. Like Senghor in Fanon's argument, what Chui seeks, as a product of The Ironmongers and Cambridge Fraudsham and a "black Shakespeare," is ironically to "Africanise Europeans," while the students at Syriana have been

Postcolonial Intellectual," The Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies: URL: <http://ocs.sfu.ca/aclals/viewabstract.php?id=307>, Last modified: October 1, 2006.

⁷² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 35 - 36 (*Les damnés de la terre*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 48 - 49).

“claiming the Africanisation of the administrative officers” and expecting of Chui to do so. The latter sees the interest of the student (and of his country) in perpetuating the existing colonial model of education by maintaining the European teachers and curricula. To justify this, he gives what *he* believes, out of his condition as “a colonised intellectual,” to be pragmatic reasons:

But we sang with hope: a new school, a new beginning, a new people (...)/ our eyes were glued to the scene before us. He had khaki shorts and shirt and a sun helmet: a black replica of Fraudsham. We waited for words that would somehow still the doubt and the fear. He spoke and announced a set of rules. He thanked the teachers for the high standards and world-wide reputation of the school. It was his desire, nay his fervent prayer, that all the teachers should stay, knowing that he had not come to wreck but to build on what was already there: there would be no hasty programme of Africanisation, reckless speed invariably being the undoing of so many a fine school. There had been a recent breakdown in discipline and he vowed that with the help of all he would resolve it. Far from destroying the perfect system, he would inject it with new blood (...) The school's tradition, which had stood the rest of time, had to be maintained. He did not therefore want to hear anymore nonsense about African teachers, African history, African literature, African this and that (...) What mattered were good teachers and good content: history was history, literature was literature, and had nothing to do with the colour of one's skin (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 171 - 172).

To the students (who stand for “ordinary natives” here) however, this attitude and discourse – indeed a “variant” on, and not a total negation of, the popular “[radical] petition” – is *naturally* “manoeuvres and acts of spoliation” of the achievements of the decolonisation struggle. In tune with Fanon's argument, Chui's attitude stirs in them inkling that “it was not worthwhile, then, to become independent”: “Where, we asked, was the African dream?” says Karega on their behalf, as a reaction to the ‘conservative’ measures taken by the Chui administration at Syriana (*Petals of Blood*, p. 173). For the Syriana students, Chui's discourse is nothing else than an absurd resolution to restore a key institution (colonialist education) of an oppressive colonialist superstructure destroyed by fellow natives in a long, painful decolonisation process. As in Fanon's argument, the students' reaction is justified, while Chui's mentality and creed appear abnormal in view of the revolutionary logic, spirit and climate established by the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya and which are still vivid in the freshly independent country.

And yet Chui's attitude does not testify to absolute and deliberate bad will; that is to say, he is rather unconscious of his anti-nationalism. He seems to be genuinely convinced of his nationalism, and his calling a riot-van inside the school to defend his positions actually testifies to the force of such a conviction. For him such an outlandish, radical repressive measure is

positive to the school (and the nation); at least it is necessary to “keep order” in the school. Another piece of evidence in this sense is the genuine anxiety which he shows about the degradation of the students’ level “in spoken and written English.” This shows that he really thinks of himself as nationalist ‘in his own way.’ In point of fact he is the very archetype both of the “pitfalls of nationalist consciousness,” and a typical “colonised intellectual” with, in the brain, a “vigilant sentinel ready to defend the Greco-Latin pedestal.” The same is true of the mentalities of Mzigo and Munira. There is no doubt that Mzigo displays vulgar opportunism, and there is no doubt that he lacks genuine nationalist consciousness in the Fanonian sense of the word more broadly. But, he, for instance, insists on keeping the Ilmorog School running on the other hand, regardless of the Machiavellian character of the measures he takes and means he uses for that purpose – including recourse to unqualified teachers. As for Munira, he too falls within the category of colonised intellectuals, though, by his quality of complex character, he is at once a thorougher and less systematic personification of this Fanonian notion.

Indeed, if Chui and Mzigo are only stereotypes of the colonised intellectual, Munira is a much more complex imaginative representation of such an intellectual. As such, Ngugi embodies in him many of the details, and not just the broad lines, of Fanon’s analysis of the colonised intellectual in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Before analysing some of these details, it is worth being reminded that Munira grows up in an austere missionary family environment, and that he has received an exemplary colonial education at the Syriana of the Ironmongers and Cambridge Fraudsham (we are told that he has been Chui’s schoolmate). We also know that Munira did not take part in the people’s struggle for decolonisation. In this quality, he has the idyllic background of a “colonised intellectual.” What he himself says in the beginning of the story sets the tone for this:

“Some of us who had a schooling ... we tended to leave the struggle for Uhuru to the ordinary people. We stood outside ... the song I should say. But now, with independence, we have a chance to pay back ... to show that we d... did not always choose to stand aside ... That’s why ... well ... I chose to transfer to this ... to Ilmorog” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 10).

However, as this passage also reveals, the writer intends to problematise Munira’s response to his condition of a “colonised intellectual,” unlike the cases of Mzigo and Chui. Thus, on the one hand, Munira’s educational background makes of him an ideal example of the potential mentalities of both “the national bourgeoisie” and of “the colonised intellectual” as we just noted. On the other hand, Ngugi endows him with ‘a destiny’ and makes him take decisions that lead him into a struggle with his own self, and with his petty-bourgeois background. He makes him choose, over and against his petty-bourgeois intellectual’s condition, to lead his adult’s life

among the people, and not to keep aside from them as is the case with Chui, Mzigo and the other petty-bourgeois of the story. Endowing Munira with such a background and experience is not ideologically innocent: it has allowed the author to dramatise not just the generalities relating to the typical social and political behaviours of the colonised intellectual (and the national bourgeoisie) as he does through Chui and Mzigo, but the complex psycho-social processes which govern the relationship between the colonised intellectual and the people in a post-independence (or neo-colonial) setting as described by Fanon. In Munira, Ngugi personifies, imaginatively, Fanon's analyses of the colonised intellectual in its details and complexity.

The first of such details is individualism. To Fanon, it is individualism that characterises, above all, this kind of intellectual. Concerning the nature and origin of the individualism of the colonised intellectual and the ways in which it determines his (anti-) social demeanour, Fanon notes this:

The native intellectual had learnt from his masters that the individual ought to express himself fully. The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought. Now the native who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory. The very forms of organization of the struggle will suggest to him a different vocabulary. Brother, sister, friend – these are terms outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme for getting on. The native intellectual take part,⁷³ in a sort of auto-da-fe, in the destruction of all his idols: egoism, recrimination that springs from pride, and the childish stupidity of those who always want to have the last word.⁷⁴

Surely, no other term better describes Munira as individualism in this Fanonian sense. Munira's individualism is even absolute – i.e. it is egotism and narcissism – since it is, as we have seen in chapter three, a pathological effect of his family environment before it is fostered by his colonial education at Syriana. Although, as is suggested in some places in the story,

⁷³ We suggest the term “attends” “or “watches,” rather “than takes part in,” which can be understood as “participates” here, which would very seriously affect the significance of Fanon's statement, the term he uses being “*assiste à*” and not “*participe à*” or “*assiste [+ object]*” as the translator may perhaps have understood Fanon's word. Here is Fanon's full statement in French: “*L'intellectuel colonisé avait appris de ses maîtres que l'individu doit s'affirmer. La bourgeoisie colonialiste avait enfoncé à coup de pilon dans l'esprit du colonisé l'idée d'une société d'individus où chacun s'enferme dans sa subjectivité, où la richesse est celle de la pensée. Or le colonisé qui aura la chance de s'enfouir dans le peuple pendant la lutte de libération va découvrir la fausseté de cette théorie. Les formes d'organisation de la lutte vont déjà lui proposer un vocabulaire inhabituel (...) L'intellectuel colonisé assiste, dans une sorte d'autodafé, à la destruction de toutes ses idoles: l'egoïsme, la recrimination orgueilleuse, l'imbecilité infantile de celui qui veut toujours avoir le dernier mot*” (*Les damnés de la terre*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 49 – 50).

⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 36 - 37.

Munira could sometimes feel genuine (though transient) sympathy towards the Ilmorog villagers, it is individualism, and not altruism, that motivates his actions. Such actions include those that could look like acts of social or religious dedication on his part, such as the tremendous job he did in the Ilmorog School, his participation in the delegation to the city, his persistence to stay in Ilmorog despite the difficulties and, finally, his execution of Chui, Mzigo and Kimeria. Even his triumph where all other teachers (i. e. other “colonised intellectuals”) who sojourned in Ilmorog before him failed is not a sign of spontaneous selflessness as it may be understood. On the contrary, it is an indicator of the extraordinary nature of Munira’s commitment to his own self. We know, for instance, that Munira came to Ilmorog principally out of a quest of self-affirmation: he is there in pursuit of a dream “do something of himself.” This is *the* quest which Ngugi associates with Munira, and we are literally told so in the sequence where Mzigo announces to him his ‘promotion’ to the rank of ‘Headmaster’ of the Ilmorog ‘School.’ Also, Abdulla’s comment on Munira’s pretence that he came to Ilmorog out of an intention to “pay back” for his “standing aside” of the struggle for independence in the above cited passage is an irony to this: “I am not sure that some have already started looking after their stomachs only.” Munira’s reaction to such a comment confirms this: “once again the tone made Munira slightly uncomfortable. It was as if Abdulla was already suspicious of, or else antagonistic to his ... well ... his rather missionary posture and fervour” (*Petals of Blood*, p. 10).

Munira’s individualism can also be seen in his characteristic ineptitude for dialogue, which Fanon renders to the failure of the colonised intellectual to make himself inessential in front of a given object or idea.⁷⁵ Indeed, in the realm of every discussion in which he is involved, such as his discussions with Karega, Ngugi draws our attention to Munira’s self-consciousness. Those discussions show that Munira is not interested in finding solutions to the issues discussed but in finding ways to impose his (dogged) opinion on a given issue. When there is no way for that, he does not hesitate to impose his views through radical actions. His dismissal of Karega from the Ilmorog School and his burning of Wanja’s whorehouse are the best examples of this: these are desperate reactions to situation in which Munira failed to make himself heard, obeyed and accepted by more tactical and less radical means.

⁷⁵ Compare Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 38. Fanon’s full point about that runs like this: “In order to assimilate and experience the oppressor’s culture, the native has had to leave certain of his intellectual positions in pawn. These pledges include his adoption of the forms of thought of the colonialist bourgeoisie. This is very noticeable in the ineptitude of the native intellectual to carry on a two-sided discussion; for he cannot eliminate himself when confronted with an object or an idea” (*Les damnés de la terre*, *op. cit.*, p. 51).

In tune with Fanon's argument,⁷⁶ Munira is not only granted "the chance to live with the people," but also this makes him, in effect, "discover the falsehood of the theory" of individualism. In this way, Munira's experience is made to echo the particulars, not just the main premise, of Fanon's definition (above) of the individualism of the colonised intellectual and its repercussions on the way he cohabitates with the people. Indeed, Munira, to put it in Fanon's words, displays "the egoism, the haughty recrimination, the infantile imbecility of he who always wants to have the last word." The poor idea which Munira has of Ilmorogans and his demeanour with them early after he arrives there, revealed by the following passage, illustrates this. Besides its confirmation of Munira's egoism in general, the passage clearly hints at his "haughty recrimination" "infantile imbecility" which characterise Munira's attitude as he tries to impose his view of discipline, and other 'strange' ways, on the Ilmorog children and their parents:

Once more he ran about the ridge, caught up with a few and asked them to tell the others that he had called a School Assembly. Only five pupils turned up. He addressed them from the raised mud rostrum: "Listen, you have shown more than average diligence and even intelligence by attending this meeting. You are therefore promoted to the English beginners' class. But you will need to get a teacher who can and will endure all this hostility and indifference of a people opposed to light and progress." He closed his first school assembly by silently swearing never to come back to this God-forsaken place. His first conscious attempt to keep in step with the song seemed to have ended in yet another failure and defeat (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 10 - 11).

Munira indeed "attends" in Ilmorog to "the destruction of all [such] idols" of his, that is of his "egoism, the haughty recrimination, the infantile imbecility of he who always wants to have the last word."⁷⁷ Fanon, in fact, describes phases through which the intellectual is, on the one hand, brought to realise such "destruction" (or to the realisation of his alienation), and his attempt to integrate the people accordingly. He argues precisely that the "insertion of the intellectual finds itself deferred by the existence in the intellectual of a curious cult of detail" which he explains as follows:

The inclusion of the native intellectual in the upward surge of the masses will ... be differentiated⁷⁸ by [the existence in him of] a curious cult of detail. That is not to say that the people are hostile to analysis; on the contrary, they like having things explained to them, they are glad to understand a line of argument and they like to see where they are going. But at the beginning of his association with the people the native

⁷⁶ See our previous citation from *The Wretched of the Earth*.

⁷⁷ See the citation as quoted in French on p... of the present chapter. The translation here is mine.

⁷⁸ Rather "deferred" here. Here is Fanon's original statement: "*L'insertion de l'intellectuel colonise dans la maree populaire va se trouver differee par l'existence chez lui d'un curieux culte du detail.*" (Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, *op. cit.*, p. 51).

intellectual overstresses details (...) Carried away by the multitudinous aspects of the fight, he tends to concentrate on local tasks, performed with enthusiasm but almost always too solemnly. He fails to see the whole of the movement all the time. He introduces the idea of special disciplines, of specialised functions, of departments within the terrible stone crusher, the fierce mixing machine which a popular revolution is. He is occupied in action on a particular front, and it so happens that he loses sight of the unity of the movement. Thus, if a local defeat is inflicted, he may well be drawn into doubt, and from thence to despair. The people, on the other hand, take their stand from the start on the broad and inclusive positions of Bread and the land: how can we obtain the land and bread to eat? And this obstinate point of view of the masses, which may seem shrunken and limited, is in the end the most worthwhile and the most efficient mode of procedure.⁷⁹

By this, Fanon suggests a first phase which the intellectual goes through in the process of his integration in the people where the intellectual is *rejected* by the people because of such a “curious cult of detail.” Munira’s insertion in Ilmorog (his becoming “one of them” in the language of Ilmorogans) is indeed progressive, and the phase of rejection suggested by Fanon as well as the reason by which he explains this rejection definitely pertain to Munira’s experience in Ilmorog. In effect, Munira goes through a period of open hostility on the part of the villagers when he first arrives in Ilmorog which the following passage clearly stands for:

Spurs, stirrups, metal horseback, rider in a cloud of dust. Munira was aware of the many eyes that laughed at his failure behind the hedges. Nyakinyua, the old woman, stepped into the dusty truck and shouted at him, at his retreating back. Further in the fields women mockingly sang to a gitiro tune of another horseman long ago, when Ilmorog was truly Ilmorog, and they chorused: Sons of Munoru we see; where now the stock of Ndemi?/ (...) For a month they had made a fool of him. And even Abdulla whose store and bar had become a daily refuge, would not help (...) He would turn to pour curses at Joseph before continuing, leaning toward Munira and assuming a conspiratorial voice: “Mwalimu, is it true that the old woman shat a mountain in your compound? A did without a name. Ha! ha! Joseph, Gatutu Gaka, bring another beer for Mwalimu. But is it really true?” And the crippled fellow would laugh at Munira’s discomfort (*Petals of Blood*, p. 11).

The main reason which Ngugi seems to imply to justify the villagers’ hostility to Munira during this first phase of his integration equally echoes Fanon. The villagers have noted the inconsistency of Munira’s behaviour – indeed his “strangeness” – in comparison with theirs, plus the fact that he reminds them of the ways of their former colonisers. In tune with Fanon’s

⁷⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. p. 38 - 39. Emphasis and capitalisation in the source. (See also *Les damnés de la terre*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 51 - 52).

view, the villagers of Ilmorog *have reason*, Ngugi makes it clear, to demand “bread and soil” as primary priorities. Their aspirations are encapsulated in Fanon’s claim (above) that “The people, on the other hand, take their stand from the start on the broad and inclusive positions of Bread and the land: how can we obtain the land and bread to eat? And this obstinate point of view of the masses, which may seem shrunken and limited, is in the end the most worthwhile and the most efficient mode of procedure.” What Munira seeks, on the other hand, is to run a ‘modern’ school in Ilmorog, a fact which, in itself, is far from being a priority of the Ilmorog peasants: for them this is indeed “detail.” Furthermore, Munira wants to run such a school by the standards, curricula and discipline of colonial schools which are so sophisticated by, and so incomparable to, the standards of life and to the way of thinking of the peasantry at Ilmorog as to sound “curious” for them. Strangers who arrived in Ilmorog, Ngugi insinuates, see themselves rejected for much less weird motives. The villagers’ hostility to Abdulla only because he has a donkey is an illustrative irony here. First, it makes us see the extent to which the peasants hate things and ways that are alien to them – here a mere donkey that, they consider, what is more, consumes too much grass. Second, it shows the extent to which “bread and soil” are a priority in Ilmorog. From this point of view, Munira appears to have a veritable “cult of detail,” which the villagers not only do not understand and reject as “strange” to their ways, but also as reminiscent for them of the ways and mentality of their former colonisers. It is, indeed, such a “strange cult for detail” that “delays” Munira’s “integration” in Ilmorog.

For Munira finally succeeds to achieve a degree of integration with Ilmorogans. This happens, however, only when he attends “the school of the people” for long enough. His life and “militancy among the people” finally bring him to grasp the value of the villages and the significances of their ways, though he fails to totally get rid of his alienation. This, in turn, is in agreement with the second phase in the process of the integration of the (colonised) intellectual which Fanon describes as follows: “On the other hand when once he begins to militate among the people he is struck with wonder and amazement, he is literally disarmed by their good faith and honesty.”⁸⁰ This is exactly what happens to Munira as the narrator suggests when he tells us how Munira thought and felt about Ilmorogans after a while:

Munira was now thinking of Abdulla, the cripple; Nyakinyua, the old woman; the children who preferred herding cattle and climbing up miariki trees to going to school. He contrasted their direct approach with this [Mzigo’s] pomposity; their atmosphere of curiosity with the fear behind the faces that sat in the back corners of sleek Mercedes Benzes, behind the walls of the once For-European’s only mansions and private clubs;

⁸⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, *op. cit.*, p. 38. (*Les damnés de la terre*, p. 51).

their sincerity with the bellies pregnant with malice and cunning that walked the length of a golf course negotiating business deals, and recalling Abdulla's words he felt kindly toward Ilmorog./Maybe he had not understood Nyakinyua, Abdulla, Njogu, Njuguna, Ruoro and all the others, he now reflected (*Petals of Blood*, p. 12).

Once thus "disarmed" by the "good faith and honesty" of the people, Ngugi suggests, Munira's "insertion within the people" finally takes place:

So Godfrey Munira once again galloped his metal horse into Ilmorog, and this time people actually came out to greet him. The old woman went to the school compound and said: You have indeed come back, God bless you: and she showered a bit of saliva into her hands in blessing. He shrank a little but he was glad that Nyakinyua was now not hostile. / He resumed his teaching, now warming to their apparent acceptance of him (*Petals of Blood*, p. 16).

*

Fanon's psychological teachings – the same Fanonian "discourse on alienation" – are carried out, in similar ways – though more 'synthetically' – in *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*. By synthetically, one means that these teachings are not treated and applied in detail to the mentalities of the characters as Ngugi did in the two earlier novels, but are generally used and alluded to as being now common and already consumed knowledge for Ngugi. The colonised and petty-bourgeois mentalities of the representatives of the national bourgeoisie in the Gikuyu novels – characters like Gitutu wa Gataanguru, Nditika wa Nguunji, Kihaahu wa Gatheeca, Ithe wa Mbooi and his wife Nyina wa Mbooi, Mwireri wa Mukirai, the Rich Old Man, etc; comparable characters (though fewer in number) in *Matigari* like his Excellency Ole Excellence and the MPs, and the Ruler, his ministers, administrators and other servants in *Wizard of the Crow* – are practically identical to those of their parallels in *Petals of Blood*, save that they are more exaggeratedly stereotypical and more cartoonish. That these figures stand for the national bourgeoisie and/or colonised intellectuals in the Fanonian senses is beyond doubt. So are their embodiments of the black man's internalised inferiority complex and the "extraordinarily neurotic" disrespect and hatred of their own blackness as theorised by Fanon. One of them – Gitutu wa Gataanguru – is even most proud of such a Baptismal name as Rottenborough Groundflesh Shitland Narrow Isthmus Jointstock Brown just because of its English intonation. Another one complains that "his children can't speak English through the nose like real European children" and adds: "And to think how often they made me feel ashamed in front of

people of my class because whenever they are spoken to in English, they normally reply in Gikuyu?" (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 121).

Through such flat, stereotypic characters Ngugi also embodies, and makes allusions to, some of the main details of Fanon's psychoanalytic theory mentioned in our analysis of the previous novels. For example, while they feel inferior before those Ngugi calls their "white masters" whom they serve and obey with docility, the principal black participants in the Devils Feast show open superiority and hostility toward their fellow African people. This brings to mind Fanon's points that "the black man has two dimensions" "one with his fellows, the other with the white man," and that "a Negro behaves differently with another Negro." Also, while they show no dignity in their attitudes with and reaction to the abuses of white people – namely "the master of ceremonies," these caricatures of the national bourgeoisie and epitomes of the "colonised mind" show great and open hostility when they feel that their 'dignity' is challenged by another black person. "The Rebuttal" scene in *Devil on the Cross* clearly refers us to that Fanonian principle (the *dédoublment* of the Negro's personality), in the same way as the dispute between Karanja and Mwaura does in *A Grain of Wheat* does. An extract from that sequence shows that the scene is an "imaginative footnote" to Frantz Fanon's previously cited point that "while the coloniser or the policeman can, all day long, insult, beat and make him sit on his knees, we will see the colonised reach for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive look of another colonised:"

Kihaahu wa Gatheeca descended from the platform, utterly baffled about why nobody was applauding him. Before he had reached his seat, Kihaahu saw Gitutu wa Gataanguru heaved himself towards the platform. Gitutu was full of bitterness. His lips were trembling, and saliva dribbled out of the corners of his mouth. /"Mr Chairman, we didn't come here to hurl insults at one another. We didn't come here to cast contemptuous innuendos at one another (...) We came to this cave to take part in a competition (...) The lucky winner may find himself appointed the watchdog of foreign-owned finance houses and industries, so that while benefiting his foreign masters, he may also be able to line his own pockets (...)/But if this competition is designed to find out who can hurl the filthiest insults and innuendos, we should all be told now. Some of us have been circumcised, and we learned a few lessons in abuse and insulting epithets during the initiation rites (...) if there's anybody here who is anxious for a duel, I, Gitutu, wa Gataanguru am ready with my gun, *wakati wo wote*" (*Devil on the Cross*, p. p. 118 - 119).

Also, the writer's treatments of the white characters – the businessmen and the tourists – still bear the marks of Fanon's theory on black-white relationship in a colonial context, namely on the sexual genesis of anti-black white racism. Robin Mwaura's account of the story of the old American tourist and the young African certainly alludes to Fanon's idea that "[t]he

national bourgeoisie will be greatly helped on its way toward decadence by the Western bourgeoisies, who come to it as tourists avid for the exotic, for big game hunting, and for casinos.”⁸¹ Simultaneously, it refers us to Fanon's other postulate about the role of sexuality in determining the black-white relationships in a colonial and imperialist situation. In all cases, it clearly points to the eagerness of a white man to satisfy sexual phantasms of the kind which typically result from the repression of sexuality:

On another day an American tourist hired this car. This American was really old. His face was full of deep valleys. And on the other parts of his body, the folds of the skin lay in rolling layers. But he had with him an African girl, so tiny she could have been a schoolgirl. They sat in the back. I drove them all around Nairobi for an hour or so. They didn't talk much. And they didn't do a lot either. All he did was to keep pressing pinching the little girl's things, and the girl massaged his face- sometimes her fingers got completely lost in the folds of his skin. When the girl pretended to feel pain and 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 did were on (*Devil on the Cross*, p. p. 70 - 71).

As in *Petals of Blood* and *A Grain of Wheat*, Fanon's psychoanalytic notions are embodied in more detail, and more problematically (though still stereotypically as well), through the psychologies and experiences of Wariinga and Gatuiria. Wariinga, we have argued in Chapter Three, experiences a period of anxiety which has to do with her obsessions with her own experience and childhood as an individual. We had already mentioned, on that occasion as well, that her neurosis has also to be seen in the Fanonian sense as it has to do, we argued, with her blackness. Indeed Wariinga's neurosis has multiple reasons and can have multiple interpretations (including Lawrentian ones as we argued in Chapter Two). But there is no doubt that another important aspect of her neurosis is a consequence of the alienating impact that the Christian/colonial education she received and accumulated throughout her young age had on her. That education, Ngugi makes it clear, is based on the idea that whiteness is virtuous and blackness is evil which, Fanon claims, is part of the European collective unconscious. In accordance with Fanon's main point in *Black Skin, White Masks* Wariinga's neurosis – indeed her “Negro-psychopathology” – begins, we are told, when she realises the contrast between her reality as a black individual and her acquired and internalised consciousness that blackness stands for sin and evil. Among the multiple examples we can cite in illustration of this, the following is one of the most informative:

⁸¹ Fanon, quoted in *Petri Liukkonen (author) & Ari Pesonen's "Frantz Fanon,"* Amazon.com. <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/fanon.htm>. Extracted on 20 April, 2010.

Every Sunday her aunt would take her to the morning mass at the Church of the Holy Rosary. Wariinga was baptised at the Church of the Holy Rosary, where she was given her new name, Jacinta. What Wariinga tried hard to avoid (...) was looking at the pictures on the walls and windows of The Church of Holy Rosary. Many of the pictures showed Jesus in the arms of the Virgin Mary or on the Cross. But others depicted the Devil, with two cowl-like horns and a tail like a monkey's, raising one leg in a dance of evil, while his angels, armed with burning pitchforks, turned over human beings on a bonfire. The Virgin Mary, Jesus and God's angels were white, like Europeans, but the Devil and His angels were black. At night Wariinga would have a recurrent nightmare. 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 (...) and after three days (...) he would be taken down from the Cross by black people in suits and ties, and, thus restored to life, he would mock Wariinga (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 139).

There is great analogy between this and what Frantz Fanon wrote in "The Negro and Psychopathology" in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

In the Magazines the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage, are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians; since there is always identification with the victor, the little Negro, quite as easily as the little white boy, becomes an explorer, an adventurer, a missionary "who faces the danger of being eaten by the wicked Negroes (...)/The black schoolboy (...) identifies himself with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages – an all-white truth. There is identification – that is, the young Negro subjectively adopts a white man's attitude. He invests the hero, who is white, with all his own aggression – all that are closely linked to sacrificial dedication, a sacrificial dedication permeated with sadism.⁸²

As regards Gatuiria, his experience and character resemble those of Munira to a large extent. Much of what we said about Munira pertains to him, and some of the relevant points are repeated with reference to him. In summary, while he too struggles with the shadow of his father and with complexes of the general (Freudian) type created in him by such a father, and has a rather complex profile, he too provides at the same time a typical representation of a "colonised intellectual" with a "petty-bourgeois" background. Like Munira, as well, Gatuiria fights, though with a more positive attitude and with more success in comparison with Munira – with such a background. Like Munira still, he changes progressively after rubbing shoulders with the people and militating within it. As in the case of Munira, he finally becomes "one of" the people. However, unlike Munira who seems to have become literally mad at the end of *Petals of Blood*, both Gatuiria and Wariinga rather succeed to surmount their mental alienations in the end.

⁸² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 146 – 147.

Wariinga is “born again” as a free and accomplished African person, and so is Gatuiria to a lesser extent. In any case, he finally gets the inspiration for the “truly national music” which he has been seeking throughout the story and does succeed to compose it. That artistic achievement is presented by Ngugi from the beginning as a condition and a sign of Gatuiria’s mental liberation – as a metaphor of his deliverance from the alienation of the (neo-)colonised.⁸³

⁸³ See *Devil on the Cross*, for example pages 132 - 135, for an ample illustration of Gatuiria’s resemblance to Munira as regards the aspects mentioned here and others.

Chapter Five

‘Oedipuses’ and Muses, or the Search for Creativity

I associate my concept of art with creativity, movement, change and renewal (...) Creativity, art embodies the principle of what our hands do anyway: change. Creativity is really the essence of what is God and what is human. God is changing: we change the environment, we change when we plant, when human beings sow. When human beings plant one seed, this will produce more seeds out of one. We take what we raise and transform it for the better.

Ngugi, Interview with Charles Cantalupo, 1999.

A. Ngugi and Creativity: Some Reflections

It would be useful to begin this section by briefly recalling the premises that we set forth in Chapter One about the concept of creativity and its relationship to influence. What needs to be reiterated in the first place is that this work is not intended to make a value judgement on Ngugi's achievement, but to examine how his fiction is linked intertextually to the works of his major precursors. This is what we endeavoured to do in the previous chapters. On the other hand, we intend, as we explained, to define the main creative dynamics and processes that underlie the making of Ngugi's fiction in consideration of those influences, and that is what we will strive to do in the present chapter. We intend, by this, to provide a neutral reading of Ngugi's fiction based on the contemporary theory of influence as we pointed out in the beginning. As we also specified, we attempt to do so on the basis of an approach to the issue of influence and creativity which, like Harold Bloom's, privileges the intimacy that often characterises, per force and of necessity, the relationship between the two concepts, without disregarding the sometimes antonymic aspect of this relationship. But, unlike Bloom's approach and that of the theories of intertextuality in their strict forms, our approach considers so called extra-literary factors as crucial and intrinsic to literary production. The first major implication of this is the following: if our argument in this chapter goes on being antithetical to the traditional – ideological and/or evaluative – stances from which Ngugi is usually read, it should *not*, however, be seen as a pure antithesis to our main premises in the three previous chapters. Major counter-arguments to our claims on the operations of influence in Ngugi's novels have already been considered, whenever necessary, in each of the preceding chapters. This chapter is then to hold a further discussion of essential, yet neglected, facts regarding influence and creativity in Ngugi's fiction, following the approach and method detailed in the first chapter.

What is also worth reiterating and emphasising is our definition of creativity which we provided only implicitly in the introduction, preferring to focus there on defining its associated notion, influence, for methodological reasons.¹ As our hypothesis in the first chapter implies, the absolute act of creation, though it certainly exists in the human mind, exists only as a pure abstraction. It is a crucial "signifier" without a concrete

¹ The main of these reasons are: firstly the fact that what is necessary to found our arguments in the three chapters which follow the introduction immediately is implied in our definitions of the concepts of intertextuality and influence in the introduction and, secondly, the first three chapters which follow the introduction are chiefly concerned with the aspect(s) of influence/intertextuality in Ngugi's fiction rather than with the search for creativity which is the subject of the present chapter mainly.

“signified” to recall Ferdinand De Saussure’s famous dichotomy. To a large extent, this is also true of its derivative “creativity,” philosophically conceived, though, even when so conceived, it is a more concrete notion in comparison with creation. It suggests ability and talent in imitating creation, or merely signs of such predispositions as revealed by artworks, rather than the possession of some faculty to generate things out of nothing. These philosophical meanings of the words “creation” and “creativity” are not what these words mean in art, and are not what is meant by them here. Indeed, no artist can reasonably be said to possess the faculty to create works *ex nihilo*. The experiences of Pablo Picasso and George Braque in painting show with particular clarity that bisecting the concepts of creativity and influence is not only unsuitable but also unthinkable in artistic disciplines. The tremendousness of the impact of African art on Picasso’s work, as well as the decisive role which the mutual inspiration between Picasso and Braque played in their respective oeuvres, are well-known facts. It is generally accepted that it is such influences that have ‘begotten’ Picasso and, arguably, the cubist movement as well.² This gives us a very clear idea of how artistic creativity is different from creativity in the absolute sense of the word. To realise how far apart these two senses of the word are, it is indeed enough to consider how trivial the aspect of influence is before the greatness of the achievement of an artist of the size and weight of Pablo Picasso.

Things are not very different when it comes to literary creativity. Scholars, throughout history, and in their great majority, tend to see it as a process of imitation, rather than one of creation, starting with Aristotle and Plato. In his attempt to give explanation to “literary fabrication” in *The Poetics*, Aristotle uses the term “mimesis” to refer to the phenomenon. The word may be “fiendishly slippery;” it may be “preferable to the English translation ‘imitation’, which carries with it a pejorative overtone of ‘mere copy;’” it can also carry “more weight” than the word “representation” as John Sutherland points out.³ But it is clear that “mimesis” which, according to Sutherland, best translates as “holding a mirror up to nature,” borders very closely both on imitation and representation (of nature). In *The Republic*, Plato agrees with Aristotle that what imaginative writers essentially do is to imitate (nature). Furthermore, he (unlike Aristotle) considered that their imitations are inherently untruthful: for him they are “intrinsically superficial, subjective and untrue.”⁴ Paul Fry provides a useful summary of

² For more detail on Picasso’s influences, including his indebtedness to master painters such as Goya and Velasquez, see, for instance, France Huser’s article “Picasso Face a ses maitres,” published in *Le nouvel observateur* (magazine), No 2175, 13 - 19 July, 2006, p. p. 94 - 95.

³ John Sutherland, *50 Literature Ideas You Really Need to Know*, London: Quercus Publishing Plc, 2010, p. 4.

⁴ *ibid.*. Plato “admired the aesthetic quality of their imitations” as Sutherland specifies. Literature is, for Plato, “the mere shadow of reality” as Sutherland further writes. *ibid.*, p. p. 4 - 5.

how the idea of *mimesis* developed since Aristotle and Plato without that development altering the nature, and scholarly view, of literary creation as an exercise of imitation in essence.⁵ Fry's point is that *mimesis* – a “world based” idea of imitation – becomes “*imitatio*,” a “word based” idea of imitation, meaning “imitation of literary models,” in Ancient Rome with the emergence of writers like Virgil and “rhetorical critics” like Cicero and Antiquarian. Crucially, Fry argues that *imitatio* is the view of the fundamental process of literary creation which scholars, from Alexander Pope to Harold Bloom through T. S. Eliot, have typically maintained (with some variations) ever since.⁶ Indeed, no modern literary theorist, not even a very exacting one like Harold Bloom, claims that any poet, “strong” or “weak,” can be absolutely creative - not even Shakespeare (whom he almost literally deifies otherwise). And none of the theorists of Dialogism, Intertextuality, Hybridity, Subalternity and *Créolité* asserts the existence of any literary creativity that is not relative, and that is not a process of “recycling” of previous literature and language. “All is already read,” to summarise their views of the concept in Barthes's other famous aphorism.

But while literary creativity has thus little – if anything at all – to do with absolute creativity, the field in which it operates should not be unduly reduced. Even as we consider that literary creativity has as much to do with language as we claimed in the introduction, we nevertheless believe that it is beyond a linguistic phenomenon. Language is certainly not all that matters in literary creation; it is one among other tools by which writers create their works, and the medium through which readers can receive those works. Bloom justifiably claims that a poem is not self-contained, that its significance is not merely what is there on the page, because reducing the domain of literary creativity to the text means its limitation to only one of

⁵ See Paul Fry, “Lecture 14: Influence.” Department of English, Yale University, published: Aug. 10, 2010, recorded: February 2009. Videlectures.net. URL:

<http://videlectures.net/yaleengl300s09_fry_lec14/>. Media consulted on 26 January 2011, at 18:17.

⁶ *ibid.*. Importantly too, Fry argues that the crucial, though not fundamental, transfer from literature as the imitation of nature to literature as the imitation of literary models originated from a “crises” of creativity that goes back to the Roman poet, Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro). Referring Himself to Alexander Pope's “Essays on Criticism,” he reports that when Virgil first decided to write *Aeneid*, his national epic of Rome, he was initially intending to “imitate nature.” However, having read Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* prior to that, Virgil realised that Homer “already said everything” that he himself initially felt like saying in his own epic, and so he thought that there was no way for him to write creatively by imitating nature as Fry goes on to say. Thus, the only alternative left to Virgil, Fry argues (paraphrasing Alexander Pope), was “to *imitate* Homer” instead of imitating nature. Fry then draws on T. S. Eliot's “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (In *The Critical Tradition*, p. p. 537 - 41) and Harold Bloom's “A Meditation upon Priority” (in *The Critical Tradition*, p. p. 1156 - 1160), to point out “that imitation of literary models” became the tradition in literature, and that that was the idea on the process of literary composition maintained by literary scholars ever since Virgil.

the elements in which, and by which, it proceeds.⁷ On balance, isn't it more reasonable to see language itself as something beyond what is said and transcribed? Furthermore, isn't one of the most conceivable reasons for the existence of literature the creative attempt to give expression to more than what (common) language can allow to express by making the most of language, and often by changing it? Isn't it better to think of literature as a sovereign creative discipline that relies, in part, on language to represent – or at least to insinuate –, and to stir in us an awareness of, things that lie deep beneath and wide around language? The very fact of our hesitation to answer such questions with certainty is enough for one to assume that literary creativity's domain of operation should not be reduced to language or, worse, to a matter of linguistic performance. Also, it seems obvious that literary creativity does not depend on the author's "misreading" of, and other intertextual relationships with, precursor texts exclusively, especially when it comes to fiction. Why then, if not for subjective reasons, reduce literary creativity to a relationship between authors (and texts), to a "story of intra-poetic relations" only? Isn't literature's field of action and existence apparently larger than just that as well? Isn't it far more realistic and pertinent to the study of literature to consider the "socio-genetic" aspect of literature – i. e. "the production of literature by social, economic, political and historical factors" – as internal to it (in addition to its "logo-genetic" and "psycho-genetic" aspects, that is, respectively, "the production of literature by language" and the production of literature by the human psyche)?⁸ Because it seems clear that literature's domain of existence and operation cannot reasonably be limited to any of its linguistic, structural, psychological, sociological, theological, moral and philosophical constituents alone, the sources which supply literary creativity are, from our point of view, as varied and wide ranging as these domains in which literature operates. Literary creativity, at least as far as the novel is concerned, clearly does not depend on any of these disciplines exclusively; it is far more logical to assume that it depends on *all* of these disciplines, which are in all cases interlocking and inseparable.

A very important implication of this is that even as we avoid reference to abstract criteria in defining creativity, our analysis of the creative processes and techniques which constitute Ngugi's fiction in this chapter is founded on rigorous and established standards by which literary creativity is definable. If any evaluation of the creativity of Ngugi's fiction is inevitably implied in our analysis (which is not the main purpose of this work as we insisted), then it should be said, in fairness to Ngugi, that this is not done on the basis of mediocre criteria. We want to make it clear that it is for very good reasons, those we just outlined, that we have eliminated the radical

⁷ Other important elements in which and by which literature proceeds include ideas, the psyche, the reader, society and environment as we already suggested and will further explain.

⁸ These terms are borrowed from Paul Fry's lecture on influence. Paul Fry, *op. cit.*.

meanings of the words “creation” and “creativity” from our exploration of Ngugi’s creative undertaking, just as we did with reference to radical views of influence and intertextuality in the previous chapters. From this perspective, the content and the relatively extensive character of our analysis of Ngugi’s major influences in the previous chapters do not in the least signify that Ngugi has been imitative of any writer or tradition, or has shown little creativity, in any of his novels. What that mainly means is that we endeavoured to consider Ngugi’s intertextual relationships with his major predecessors with as much rigour as we now strive to do in discussing the main creative mechanisms and exercises that preside over the making of his works.

*

Concerning the concept of creativity in Ngugi’s fiction, it is important to note first that the topic is practically unexplored. Despite being an essential aspect of the literary field, it has never been a focal point in discussions of Ngugi’s work hitherto. And, when it is discussed, it has tended to be treated as a peripheral matter and, what is more, to be mistreated. This is the case in the numerous comparative essays that labelled Ngugi as an imitator of Conrad for instance. In spite of exceptions (examined below), Ngugi, like most African writers, but arguably more than any of them, is most often read from ideological perspectives. His creative work has seen itself constantly interpreted from political or, at best, thematic perspectives, often for bluntly ideological and political aims as we argued in detail in Chapter One. Quantitatively, there is now a large number of critical writings on Ngugi, but these works typically interpret his art as if it were not creative literature, and much as if it were discursive writing. All reservations made,⁹ much of the criticism written on Ngugi does not tell us much on the literary, or textual, nature of his work, not even from serious Marxist, postcolonialist and historicist critical perspectives.¹⁰ In view of this, it is fair to say that many of Ngugi’s critics have been quite unjust to him; they have generally overlooked the literary worth of his achievement.

A brief overview of the criticism written on Ngugi validates this. Western critics such as David Cook, C. B. Robson, Adrian Roscoe and George Douglas Killam shed light on Ngugi’s ‘style’ to some extent, though they too have focused chiefly on the meaning of his themes and on interpreting the

⁹ There exist of course notable exceptions to this as we shall see. Moreover our point is not in the least that the criticism written on Ngugi has no worth whatsoever. On the contrary, it often has a remarkable ideological and documentary worth, and is some of the most detailed African and postcolonial criticism from that point of view.

¹⁰ Generally, it is notable that Ngugi’s critics have hardly applied the theories of serious Marxist, Historicist, and Postcolonialist scholars such as the contributions of George Lukacs, Raymond Williams, Edward Said or Frantz Fanon to Ngugi with rigor, though they do refer themselves to those seminal works and cite them frequently.

documentary and ideological apparatus used in his works. Their contributions have a considerable value in that regard. But the reductive and subjective attitudes of such criticism are noteworthy on the other hand. We only have to consider details such as the brevity of most of such contributions to have an idea about this. And, as we already noted, it is the reductionism and bias of colonialist criticism that laid the foundations for the kind of criticism turned towards ideology and politics which plagued African literary studies, most outstandingly in the case of Ngugi. Eurocentric criticism has caused Ngugi to continue being read as a sub-product of English literature and colonialism only. When it happened that it dealt with the intertextual aspect of his work, it stressed more his Anglo-Saxon, Christian and liberal-humanist, and colonialist influences, and it only rarely shed light on the creative originalities of his work. David Cook, mainly in the parts he (obviously) composed in his and Michael Okenimkpe's still very important work, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o – An Exploration of His Writings*, is a sort of exception – perhaps the only notable one to date. Cook is, in effect, concerned with the literary nature and worth of Ngugi's style from the textual point of view. He is one of very few critics to have stressed to some degree, and with considerable objectivity, the individuality of Ngugi's style.¹¹ This is not surprising as Cook is one of the critics who best knew Ngugi, the imaginative writer. He was one of Ngugi's teachers of literature while Ngugi was a second year undergraduate student at Makerere University College, still making his first attempts at creative writing.¹² He had thus the immense advantage of having closely attended Ngugi's first beginnings as a writer. In this capacity, he could see and sense perhaps better than any other critic of Ngugi that in spite of his interest in moral issues and ideology Ngugi's main motivation is an artistic one. And it is David Cook who, in his very important *Origin East Africa – A Makerere Anthology*, has first (re)published professionally some of Ngugi's very first imaginative writings – his first short stories – which are the mainstay from which all his novels are developed.¹³ Ngugi himself has credited David Cook's criticism of the form and structure of his work, even if he deprecated Cook's formalist perspective for its disregard of the thematic component of his writing style. David Cook, Ngugi observes in his essay "On David Cook," "was attracted

¹¹See, in particular, the sections on Ngugi's style in David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe's *Ngugi wa Thiong'o – An Exploration of His Writings*, (*op. cit.*). See, especially, section 10, entitled "Style", p. 177 – 203 in that document.

¹² See David Cook, *Origin East Africa – A Makerere Anthology*, *op. cit.*; see the introduction for Cook's own commentaries on Ngugi while a young writer. See, as well, Ngugi's first short stories, namely "The Village Priest," "The Return," "The Fig Tree," and "Gone with the Draught," published further in the same book.

¹³ Ngugi's novels are obviously elaborations on those first short stories of his.

to the more formal side of a literary text, how it was put together, how it read.”¹⁴

Another group of Ngugi's critics includes African and 'pro-African' scholars in the main. It is composed of critics such as Peter Nazareth, Ime Ikiddeh, Simon Gikandi, Emmanuel Ngara, Al Amin Mazrui, Lupenga Mphande, Patrick Williams, Charles Cantalupo, Florence Stratton and Brendon Nicholls. Some of these scholars, namely Ikiddeh, Nazareth and Gikandi have been close friends and schoolmates of Ngugi by the time he was making his beginning as a creative writer. It is noticeable that the readings of Ngugi's work offered by these three critic-friends of Ngugi's have never failed to illumine its aesthetic dimension,¹⁵ even though they tended to philosophise on what they see as the problematic of the nature of Ngugi's aesthetics in comparison with both Western aesthetics and the African cultural background. It is also noticeable that some of the most recent among the works written on Ngugi, outstandingly Gikandi's *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, Williams' *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* and Cantalupo's *The World of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, also show considerable interest in the creative or aesthetic side of Ngugi's work, though they problematise rather than attempt to solve the question of the nature of his aesthetics. For example, Gikandi's *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* addresses very directly the question of how to be fair to the *art* of Ngugi, while knowing the centrality to such art of its historical and biographical elements, by discussing the relationship between Ngugi's "texts" and their "contexts." Very importantly, Gikandi points out that an adequate perspective on Ngugi is "to analyse [his] major novels as a series of experiments in narrative form, experiments driven by search for an appropriate style for representing an increasingly complex social formation."¹⁶ Even more crucially, he specifies that this is the best critical perspective on Ngugi. Our perception of Ngugi's creative enterprise is in agreement with the part of Gikandi's argument where he affirms that Ngugi's literary works "are best read as a continuous (...) search for the narrative forms that might best represent the complex culture of postcolonial Africa."¹⁷ It is very significant to our argument too that Gikandi, referring himself to a statement of Ngugi's in *Writers in Politics*, admits that "Ngugi's most agonising reflections on the ideology of literature inevitably seeks resolution in the aesthetic," and that "[e]ven when he conceived literature as a primarily collective enterprise in what may be considered his orthodox Marxist phase in the 1970s and 1980s, Ngugi could not negate his belief in the close relationship between collective identity and

¹⁴ For more detail, see Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "On David Cook," published in *Research in African Literatures* - Volume 35, Number 1, Spring 2004, pp. 1 - 2.

¹⁵ 'As a rule,' then, the critics who knew Ngugi personally and have attended his debut in creative writing have all tended to treat him, if not as a typical aesthete, as a creative writer.

¹⁶ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2000, p. 1.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 2.

aesthetic forms.”¹⁸ But instead of heading confidently in this direction, Gikandi prefers to question “how do we respect his [Ngugi’s] strong views on the nature of literary production, the function of culture, and the relation between art and politics without repressing the significant contradictions that are equally important to the shape and function of his novels and plays?”¹⁹ By this, Gikandi turns what is from our point of view an inherent feature, perhaps even a quality, of Ngugi’s art into an insoluble philosophical problematic of which his work is chiefly an analysis. Gikandi’s work, with its many points of excellence, remains thus, on balance, no real exception to the tradition of criticism which he himself calls “the ideological perspective.”²⁰

Patrick Williams’ *Ngugi wa Thiong’o* also has an exceptional critical worth in many of its aspects. Like Gikandi, he tackles the question of “texts and intertexts” in Ngugi’s imaginative work. Consonant with our perspective is the critic’s emphasis on the importance of the question of “intertexts” in reading Ngugi in the introduction to his work.²¹ However, despite the awareness he promotes as to the significance of the question of intertextuality and creativity in Ngugi’s work, Williams’ addition is not a discussion of this question. On the whole, it is another contribution which dwells upon investigating “the growing complexity of Ngugi’s accounts of the history of colonised and post-colonial Kenya.”²² Similarly, Mazrui and Mphande are famous for their exclusive interest in the politics of nationhood and Marxism in Ngugi’s works. Other scholars like Brendon Nicholls in *Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Gender, and the Ethics of Postcolonial Reading* and Florence Stratton in parts of her *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* are very specially interested in the place and role of gender in Ngugi’s work.²³ This places their contributions within the feminist perspective, therefore within the scope of the traditional view of (African) literature as social/cultural studies. The exception here would be Charles Cantalupo whose contributions (his interviews of Ngugi as well as his critical writings on him) offer perhaps the most satisfactory perspective to the study of Ngugi to date, although he too gives excessive importance to

¹⁸ Here is the argument of Ngugi’s to which Gikandi is making allusion: « Literature is a reflection on the aesthetic and imaginative planes, of a community’s wrestling with its total environment to produce the basic means of life, food, clothing, shelter, and in the process creating and recreating itself in history.» Ngugi, *Writers in Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 5 – 6, quoted here in Simon Gikandi’s *Ngugi wa Thiong’o*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ See the first chapter in Patrick Williams’ *Ngugi wa Thiong’o*, Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 1999.

²² *ibid.* That is the focal point of William’s study as stated on its back cover.

²³ See Brendon Nicholls, *Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Gender, and the Ethics of Postcolonial Reading*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010; See as well Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (*op. cit.*).

ideology. Together with his work, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Texts and Contexts*,²⁴ Cantalupo's *The World of Ngugi wa Thiong'o* is of particular importance in the sense that it offers "extensive discussions of Ngugi's (...) use of oral literary techniques" for instance.²⁵ But most of the critics who have written recently on Ngugi continue succumbing to the temptation of reading him thematically and ideologically, providing a kind of criticism which treats him, typically, as a historian, a patriotic and pan-Africanist activist, or, in some of the best cases, as something between an artist and a typical historian, and/or auto-biographer of contemporary African literature.²⁶ This almost general neglect of the artistic 'side' and essence of Ngugi's work is incomprehensible in literary terms, because it disqualifies from analysis not just one important side of his imaginative work, but arguably the whole of it - its very *raison d'être* – its literariness.

As if to call attention to this, Ngugi never missed an occasion to remind us that he is an artist, preoccupied first and foremost with the search for creativity. The very titles of his essays, from those in *Homecoming* to those in *Dreams in a Time of War*, are quite enough to corroborate this.²⁷ Actually, the furthest away from the domain of art and creativity Ngugi's interest, even as an intellectual, can go is cultural politics as these essays show. His view of art and principal worry as a novelist are, nevertheless, past state, class,

²⁴ Charles Cantalupo (ed.), *Ngugi wa Thiong'o – Texts and Contexts*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 1995.

²⁵ Charles Cantalupo, *The World of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, Africa world Press: 1995. The quotation is from a review of the book at "Barnes and Nobles," URL: <<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/The-World-Of-Ngugi-wa-Thiongo/Charles-Cantalupo/e/9780865434592#TOC>>.

²⁶ There is a third category of critics concerned with Ngugi. These are radical Marxist scholars such as Emanuel Ngara and Paul Dorn. They offer radical Marxian readings of his work, almost as if it were Marxist propaganda. Their claims seem to be in contradiction with the Marxist view of art itself. Even Marx and Engels do not encourage writers to be deliberately dogmatic. For them, the difference between art and propaganda is clear, and being aware of such a difference is necessary for a creative writer (confident as Marx and Engels are as to what they considered to be the naturalness of the communist theory, therefore as to the art's ability to reflect, embody and even promote such a theory spontaneously. See for instance Raymond Williams' *Marxism and Literature* for more detail on this.

²⁷ It is noticeable that Ngugi's essays and his other discursive contributions are literary criticism, cultural criticism or cultural theory; they never deal with politics or ideology for their own sake. Here are some examples: in *Homecoming*: "On Culture" – "Towards a National Culture," "Mau Mau: Violence, and Culture" –; "Writers in Africa" – "The Writer and His Past", "The Writer in a Changing Society", "Chinua Achebe: A Man of the People", "Wole Soyinka, T. M. Aluko and the Satiric Voice", "Okot p'Bitek and Writing in East Africa" –; "Writes from the Caribbean" – George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, "George Lamming and the Colonial Situation," "On the Abolition of the English Department," in *Decolonising the Mind*: "The Language of African Literature", "The Language of African Theatre," "The Language of African Fiction;" in *Moving the Centre*: "Freeing Culture from Eurocentrism," "Freeing Culture from Colonial Legacies," "Freeing Culture from Racism," Matigari, *Dreams and Nightmares*" and so on. Ngugi's last discursive work so far, *Dreams in Times of War* (2010), his "childhood memoir" which treats various aspect of (his) life, simply has the charm of a fictional narrative - it is a powerful, beautiful and moving account – like a novel.

gender, race, religion and dogma, except for the humanist moral discourse natural to the novel genre and literature as a whole. A close reading of his fiction shows that it “transgresses” these and similar concepts, even if they are crucial parts of it as some of its main philosophical subjects.²⁸ But the moment we start considering them for their own sakes, that is, the moment we separate them from the notions of art and creativity, we inevitably commit serious misapprehensions of Ngugi’s achievement as a novelist.

In all serious considerations of art, creativity is the most essential concept; it is *naturally* the first obsession of the artist, and it a central notion in Ngugi’s thought about the art of fiction. In 1996, that is to say well after his works that are most overtly ideological – *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari* – came out, his answer to a (provocative) question of Charles Cantalupo’s on the subject leaves no room for doubting this:

I associate my concept of art with creativity, movement, change and renewal. I'm thinking of a much more ethical society than what we have now. This "reign of art" would subsume or transcend the coercive nature of the state: a more ethical, more human society that is constantly renewing itself; art embodies this.²⁹

Not only creativity itself, but also the continuous search for it – the synchronic as well as diachronic anxiety of influence and creativity – is fundamental to Ngugi’s view of art/literature. As well as the artist’s awareness of the necessity to “create himself” which Harold Blooms calls the anxiety of influence, Ngugi says that he and every other novelist and artist are also in permanent need to “**re**create” themselves. Even the idea of “revolution” which is associated with him is actually, and exclusively, revolution *at an artistic level*. In so far as *he* is concerned, it is an artistic quest which means the “reinvention” of the artistic self:

Even a novelist at his poorest does not want to reproduce his previous work. I think of art in terms of permanent revolution (...) Constant revolutionizing, reinventing itself is inherent in the nature of art. The artist considers reinventing himself all the time.³⁰

To be sure, then, Ngugi defines himself as an artist, and art as he conceives of it is, furthermore, allied with creativity and the permanent search for it. The other notions usually associated with him, such as socialism, pan-

²⁸ They are important for him in just the same way as love, human relationships, human nature, God, and other existentialist subjects are for him and, perhaps more characteristically, for European and American writers.

²⁹ “Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: An Interview by Charles Cantalupo.” Publishes in *Left Curve*, no. 23, Csaba Polony (ed.), Left Curve Publications (ISSN: 0160-1857), 1999, URL:

<<http://www.leftcurve.org/LC23webPages/ngugu.html>.>

³⁰ *ibid.*

Africanism, patriotism, regionalism, Gikuyu nationalism, liberal-humanism, Christianity, etc., are important fields of exploration for Ngugi. It is a matter of fact that they are crucial providers of philosophical and moral questions for him, both as a man and an artist. They are even so important as to be some of his most personal and preferential domains of exploration and questioning, and markers of his individual style as a novelist. Those elements should not, therefore, be disregarded in considering the question of creativity in his work. We do not necessarily need to read most of what is written on Ngugi to see that these notions *do inspire* his view of art and furnish much of the material for his imaginative compositions. But, compared to the weight of the notion of art itself for Ngugi – i. e. with the importance of creativity for him –, those other notions become secondary matters. From this angle, they are, important as they are, only some of the elements, not to say just raw material, which he uses, as he would do any other stuff, as part of the exercise of his work of artist as he sees it. Not least of all, they are integral parts of a venture which aims at the endowment of his fiction with a mode of writing and a *style* that are proper to him, and that are interestingly distinct from the modes and styles of other novelists. They are parts of an aesthetic principle, of serious, personal and changing creative designs.

*

Coming to the heart of the matter in this chapter, the question of defining the creative processes that govern the production of Ngugi's fiction, and sketching the developments in these processes in his creative experience hitherto, it is noteworthy that novelists are not compelled to create works through processes that are the same to all of them. Nor is an individual novelist constrained to create by the same dynamics and processes all the way through his/her career. From our point of view, every writer, and every individual novel, is a case apart, with all that implies in matters of the difficulty to define standard creative processes, ones that would be common to all novelists. We wish then to maintain all suitable reservations in that sense with reference to what we will next submit. Nevertheless, meditation on the concept of creativity in literature (with in mind our own readings about, and for, the subject) allows submitting that the search for creativity in fictional composition obeys two major types of processes. These types of processes, which we will also call creative attitudes, creative dynamics, and creative approaches are perhaps not absolutely separate philosophically speaking. But they are quite distinct when we look at them from a reasonably realistic critical perspective as we committed ourselves to doing in this work.

As scholars have noted, there is a first type of creative attitude which depends on influence, that is, which is determined by the nature and vigour

of an author's psychological struggle with his literary fathers. That is what Harold Bloom calls the "Argon struggle" in the writer, his (or her) "anxiety of influence." This attitude can also be called more concisely the "psychogenetic" side of literary creativity. Creative processes of the second type result from creative impulses that are different, and more 'personal' to the author. They are less dependent on influence in its strictly psychogenetic and "intra-poetic" sense, though they can suitably be linked with these ideas in other, less radical ways than those which Bloom defines. The latter can be subdivided into two categories which we already mentioned, the "logo-genetic" creative attitude and the "socio-genetic" one to refer to Paul Fry's very interesting division and terminology again.³¹ These can be seen as creative operations which result in more experimental achievements from a literary viewpoint, because they have less to do with "the anxiety of influence" than with 'the rest of the writer's personal mind and experience.' They can be thought of as effects of anxiety phenomena as well, but which have more to do with creative work by means of language itself, and creative work with social (or so-called extra-literary) elements, than with any of the six variants of the argon struggle in literature described by Harold Bloom through his six ratios.³² In this case, the author can be said to 'concentrate' on creativity rather than on influence. He can be said to be in pursuit of creativity, while s/he is free from the immediate, creative but restrictive, effects of influence and the demands of its shackling hold. If one has to put this psychoanalytically, one is almost tempted to call it the anxiety of creativity. Specialists in so-called "brain tools" would refer to this as "lateral thinking," in as far as *technical* creativity is concerned. In the case of artistic/fictional creation, we could better refer to this type of process as "lateral imagination," distinct from the "programmed" or "disciplined" kind of thinking and imagination associable with influence.³³ In more figurative terms, one can describe this second general attitude to poetic creation as one

³¹ Paul Fry, "Influence" (Academic Lecture), *op. cit.*

³² Bloom's six ratios/metaphors (of the six ways in which he argues that influence operates) are: "*Clinamen* or poetic misprision," "*Tessera* or completion and antithesis," "*Kenosis* or repetition and discontinuity," "*Daemonization* or the counter-Sublime," "*Askesis* or purgation and solipsism," and "*Apophrades* or the return of the dead." For more detail, see Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, *op. cit.*

³³ These terms, not the ideas, are borrowed or adapted from an article "Approaches to Creativity," by As this scholar argues: "there are two main strands to technical creativity: programmed thinking and lateral thinking. Programmed thinking relies on logical or structured ways of creating a new product or service. Examples of this approach are Morphological Analysis and the Reframing Matrix. The other main strand uses 'Lateral Thinking'. Examples of this are Brainstorming, Random Input and Provocation. Lateral Thinking has been developed and popularized by Edward de Bono, whose books you can find in the appropriate articles." (Mind Tools Ltd, 1996 – 2010 (Internet source).

in which the author is not under the control of the “demons” of influence, but, ‘forgetting’ or simply ignoring his Oedipal, or Hamlet, complex – the tormenting shadow of the father – he lets himself to be led in other paths of creation directed by the different, but not necessarily less inspirational, voices of the Muses of creation.

A close examination of Ngugi’s novels reveals that they are the fruits of these two types of creative dynamics (in addition to a sometimes imitative stand as we have seen through examples in the previous chapters). Accordingly, we shall, in the first section of this chapter, called “Oedipuses,” attempt to identify and illustrate Ngugi’s archetypal creative responses to his main influencers, chiefly those we studied in the previous chapters, as well as main changes in these attitudes as he progresses and matures as a novelist. In the second section, entitled “Muses,” we will, as the metaphor suggests as well, shed light on the ways in which his novels exhibit creativity, and the search for creativity, in its second, freer and more experimental sense.

B. ‘Oedipuses’

The following excerpt from *Wizard of the Crow* is an excellent place to begin our discussion of what we would call the Oedipal creative dynamic in Ngugi’s fiction:

He was tired, hungry and thirsty and felt beaten down by the sun. He wanted to climb to the top when suddenly he felt very weak in the knees and collapsed at the foot of the mountain of garbage. He could not tell whether he was in a temporary coma or a deep sleep but when a slight breeze blew it lifted him out of himself to the sky, where he now floated. He could still see his own body lying on the ground and the mountain of garbage, where children and dogs fought over signs of meat on white bones. The body needs a rest from you and you need a rest from the body, he heard himself saying to himself. He decided to let his body lie there in the sun, and free of the body, he wandered Abruria – why leave the exploration and enjoyment of our country to tourists? He said with a chuckle to himself – comparing the conditions in the different towns and regions of the country. / This is really funny, he said to himself when he saw that he looked like a bird and floated like a bird; he enjoyed the rush of cold air against his wings. He now recalled a Christian song he had once heard: I will fly and leave this earth / I will float in the sky and witness / Wonders never seen before / Being done with the earth below. / He started to sing but because he could not open his beak as wide as his mouth what came out was a whistling reminiscent of the song of the birds he had listened to in the mornings in the wilderness (*Wizard of the Crow*, p. 38).

This passage exemplifies our major premises concerning this dynamic in this section. What it mainly shows, first, is that this Oedipal creative dynamic is definitely applicable to Ngugi's fiction. Indeed even at this advanced stage of its development we can still perceive echoes of Lawrence, Achebe and Fanon. For example, Ngugi still refers to the "sun," the key Lawrentian symbol, which is mentioned twice in this sole passage, and which keeps recurring in *Wizard of the Crow*. Also, the passage denotes a still acute sense of the dichotomy "body"- "soul," one of the Key dichotomies of Lawrence's. Ngugi still refers to the Bible – his and Lawrence's favourite book – as a source of myth, symbolism and morality, and still looks at the world largely through Nature, like Lawrence. Furthermore, language such as "He could not tell whether he was in a temporary coma or a deep sleep but when a slight breeze blew it lifted him out of himself to the sky, where he now floated" is unmistakably Lawrentian. However, here, more than ever before in Ngugi's fiction, the sun is not a Holy and benevolent force as it is for Lawrence and in Ngugi's short stories and first three novels. While he hesitates to 'write against' the symbol in *Petals of Blood*, as we have seen, by parodying it as an ironic and teasing but still crucial cosmic force, here Ngugi is clearly at ease in treating the sun as a symbol of powers that are counterproductive and adversary to Man. It is, here, an unwanted element, a "power demon" that "beats down" his hero, and that works to "completely scorch" this hero's temporarily deserted "body" as we are told a little further in the story. It is a subtle but perfect contrast to what it used to be in Ngugi's early fiction, such as in *Weep Not Child*, where "the sun shone with a warmth that gave life and activity to all things" (*Weep Not, Child*, p. 24), though even in this first novel of Ngugi's it could "burn freely" if "the children of Mumbi forgot to burn a sacrifice to Murungu" (*Weep Not, Child*, p. 25). In this latest novel of his so far, it is clear that Ngugi still remembers Lawrence, but it is equally clear that he is now dialogising with him from the position of a writer who is now mature. This writer has now a personal vision and a personal style and writes with an *ease* and confidence that cannot be missed. This cannot be said of his responses to Lawrence in any of his earlier novels and short stories, even if he started 'challenging' Lawrence in this bold way, by turning against him a version of his own language and philosophy in this way, in as early as *Petals of Blood*. Thus, the passage is illustrative, though in a very concise way, of how Ngugi at once "recycles" and "subverts" Lawrence's philosophy and style, or, rather, of how he subverts this major precursor of his partly by recycling literary elements inherited from him.

The passage is also significant because it shows very clearly that a psychogenetic creative dynamic is at work with reference to Ngugi's response to the other two major influencers of his studied in the previous chapters, namely Achebe and Fanon. What it reveals precisely in this respect is that Ngugi's oedipal response to both writers has also matured at this

stage of his career, but it remains essentially a response through the “recycling” dynamic. While elements in the passage show that Ngugi has now fully absorbed the styles and visions of Achebe and Fanon, and that he is not writing from a position of one who remembers and imitates their visions and styles, it also shows that Ngugi’s anxiety about their influence is lesser in comparison with his anxiety about the influence of D. H. Lawrence. Still, concerning his dialogism with Achebe, this specific passage shows that Ngugi has now internalised Achebe, he assimilated him, so much so that the latter appears not any longer as one of his most direct and most positive inspirers and influencers, but as a remote and subconscious recollection – a trace, an echo, a palimpsest. A statement such as “He started to sing but because he could not open his beak as wide as his mouth what came out was a whistling reminiscent of the song of the birds he had listened to in the mornings in the wilderness” appears but as a remote echo of Achebe. It may vaguely recall the fables that Achebe includes in *Things Fall Apart* (those Ekwefi tells Ezinma for instance). But it sounds more like a mature, spontaneous, adoption of the style of African fables themselves in a way that makes the influence of Achebe, if it is at all at work here, appear unintentional – as an undistinguishable part of Ngugi’s general “African palimpsest.” It does not seem to come from the immediate influence of Achebe as it used to be in the earlier novels, mainly those in English. With reference to Fanon, the passage shows that the African-socialist – Fanonian – echoes, if still neat here as well, are not as sharp and insistent as in *A Grain of Wheat* and the later works. In the form in which it is presented here, Fanon’s philosophy appears again internalised by Ngugi, so much so that, in comparison with any of the four earlier novels, it appears as an intrinsic element of a style and vision that are no more notably Fanonian, but remarkably new and simply Ngugian.

Secondly, the passage shows that Ngugi’s anxieties about the influence of his main precursors have increased at this late stage of his career. Here, we are a long way away from “the early Ngugi (the student of English literature, the admirer of D. H. Lawrence and the great tradition).” We are also quite far from “the later Ngugi” often called “the disciple of Marx and Fanon and the advocate of socialist realism” either.³⁴ If Ngugi’s dialogism with those writers is still at work, it is clear that a very harmonious and beautiful individual style and vision are now distilled. They are synthesised by continual struggle with the shadows of those precursors, for one can capture the ease and confidence with which Ngugi writes in that individual style and vision in this passage and throughout *Wizard of the Crow*. This gives a clear initial idea on the diachronicism of Ngugi’s search for creativity which is a crucial side of our argument here and in this work as a whole. The high quality of *Wizard of the Crow*, and the ways in which it dialogises with

³⁴ Simon Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, *op. cit.*, p. 2, for the quotes, not the idea.

precursor authors as outlined above, show that Ngugi manages and exploits his influences the most masterfully here. Highly individual in style, yet highly intertextual, passages like these testify not only to the author's search for a creativity of a psychogenetic type – i .e. not just to the existence of great anxieties of influence in his case – but to stunning battles won in his struggle with his influencers. In examples such as these – *Wizard of the Crow* as a whole – we are neatly before a case of “transformation of historically given martial” that is very successful, an example of “deserved self appropriation.” “Fragments of memory from elsewhere,” the intertexts are now more than ever before in Ngugi's fiction, “part of [a] local [and personal] cultural performance.”³⁵

Finally, the passage is a good point of departure because, on the one hand, it introduces our division of the psychogenetic type of creative dynamic in Ngugi's work into the “reprocessing” and the “subversive” dynamics detail hereafter. On the other hand, it introduces the varieties in each of these two psychogenetic dynamics determined, as we shall explain, by the differences of the influencing writers, influencing texts, and influencing aspects of texts, and also by the given text or aspect of the text by Ngugi that one is considering.

*

For, as we noted earlier in this chapter and just reiterated a first major type of creative dynamics that can be observed in Ngugi's fiction is a (synchronic and diachronic) oedipal struggle for creativity with his ‘literary fathers,’ or precursor texts. Naturally, and as we also noted, the nature of such a struggle differs depending on who the given precursor is, the specific influencing aspect or element of the precursor work, and, of course, the given short story or novel by Ngugi that one is dealing with. For example, Ngugi surely does not wrestle with Joseph Conrad, or even D. H. Lawrence, in the same way as he does with Peter Abrahams or Chinua Achebe. On the other hand, there is no doubt that his struggle with the influence of a writer like Conrad, for instance, in matters of technique is not of the same nature as his struggle with Conrad's discourse on Africa or his colonialist discourse and colonialist phraseology. And Ngugi certainly does not deal with the influence of any of his precursors in stories he wrote at early stages in his career such as “Mugumo,” *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* in the same ways as he does in a mature work such as *Wizard of the Crow*. He surely does not respond to the influence of Chinua Achebe's approach to narrative and

³⁵ This is an application of Tobias Doring's definition of literary texts from the Caribbean as “Fragments of memory from elsewhere” which “are now part of local cultural performances” to the case of Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow*. See Tobias Doring, *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 3.

language in a novel like *Devil on the Cross* with the same creative dynamic as in *Weep Not, Child* for instance.

This variety and this change in Ngugi's attitudes *vis a vis* his sources of influence are reflected in his creative practices and the development of these practices throughout his career. It is not practicable, and it is not the method we have chosen in this work, to apply Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence in its full details to study these creative practices. But in view of the assortment and wealth of Ngugi's fictional language (or creative modes), we can note at first that it would be surprising not to find examples in his novels that can correspond to *all* of Bloom's ratios – from *Clinamen* to *Apophrades*. The repercussions of Ngugi's struggle with his precursors can be more realistically divided into three main categories (that may, though only very vaguely, also mark historical stages in his development as a writer). The first of these categories, and the less creative of all three types of practices, is simulation or direct borrowing.³⁶ In examples in his earliest short stories and first three novels mostly (but not exclusively), Ngugi sometimes tended to imitate his precursors in both broad and specific ways, many of which we have already described and illustrated in the previous chapters.³⁷ Further exploration is likely to reveal other examples of this practice. But even the operation of direct borrowing, which is with reference to Ngugi neither sporadic enough to be considered trivial, nor frequent and methodical enough to be an essential writing practice of his, is at a certain level of complexity in his work. Even if he does replicate aspects of the styles of writers like Lawrence and Achebe and borrow elements from their texts, Ngugi never seems to do so utterly systematically. He certainly does not borrow, when he does it, only for the sake of borrowing; that is, he does not do so just to reproduce aspects of the works of his influencers or even to sound akin to them. Typically, Ngugi does not borrow from a single source but, as we have seen, from several sources in each single novel of his. The very fact of this eclecticism in borrowing alleviates the imitative undertone

³⁶ By "direct borrowing" we do not mean plagiarism as such but a practice that is almost akin to it. The main difference between the two is that, in contrast to plagiarism, what we consider as direct borrowing in Ngugi's work is a sporadic, less systematic, and sometimes even strategic kind of imitation. In the case of Ngugi direct borrowing is an exercise that seems closer to being a creative one than plagiarism as such is. For instance, in addition to examples suggested in the previous chapters, it is noticeable that in some of Ngugi's works, like *Weep Not, Child*, *The River Between*, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*, the first few chapters that come after the first or second chapters are always Achebean in a pronounced way, but this never takes the aspect of plagiarism *per se*.

³⁷ Further examples include borrowed items such as the following in *Petals of Blood*, where the narrator describes abrupt shifts in Wanjia's feelings towards her dying father: "Her heart mellowed toward him. She wanted to confess all her failings and ask for forgiveness (...) And suddenly her hands became frozen at the very act of pulling a note (...) She said I have nothing!" and she shut the handbag" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 337). This can bring to mind Lawrence's "He looked at her in mingled hate and contempt, also in pain because she suffered, and in shame because he knew he tortured her. He had an impulse to kneel and plead for forgiveness. But a bitterer red anger burned up to fury in him" (*Women in Love*, p. 57) for example.

of the borrowings to a certain extent, even if, considered case by case, they definitely are outright, little individuated, borrowings. Better, they suggest an attitude that is perhaps not, but is almost akin to a creative one. What fosters this all the more is the fact, undeniable, that Ngugi's novels, considered as units, are never like those of any other novelist in spite of the borrowings. And, ironically, such eclecticism in borrowing – perhaps deliberate, almost creatively tactical even in the earliest works – can even be said to partake of the differentiation of Ngugi's novels from those of other novelists in a certain way.³⁸ At any rate, whether the practice of borrowing in Ngugi's fiction is purely imitative or akin to a creatively tactical one, it is far from being a very significant one in comparison with the other two psychogenetic types of creative practices of his, namely what we called “recycling” and “subversion” studied in detail hereafter. It is notable, what is more, that the exercise diminishes considerably and regularly with Ngugi's progress as a novelist. Many of the points and passages discussed in the previous chapters illustrate this.

B. a. Recycling

What Ngugi more typically tends to do in as far as the psychogenetic side of his creative undertaking is concerned, is, at worst, to “recycle” (or reprocess) elements from the precursor works.³⁹ In Ngugi's fiction in general, but mainly in the first short stories, the first three novels and, to a lesser extent, in *Petals of Blood* this practice consists of two principal literary procedures; these are: first (intertextual) allusion, and, second, rewriting.⁴⁰ Literary recycling – or thus the *creative* use of allusion and rewriting – in Ngugi's imaginative writings is, in turn, of two different sorts, dependent on the nature and on the functions of the given ‘recycled’ literary element in his novels. There is what we can call (just for differentiation's sake) second-degree-creative recycling and first-degree-creative recycling.

Recycling of the second-degree-creative sort is a type of literary procedure which is neither unoriginal enough to be considered as outright

³⁸ We do not mean that this practice is, or that it is comparable in any way, to the kind of ‘borrowing’ that we often associate with modernism (such as classical allusion and rewriting). The latter also fall within the category of literary “recycling,” but they have a more creative character in comparison with the specific kind of literary reprocessing under consideration here. Ngugi also uses the Modernists' allusion and rewriting as such as we will argue shortly.

³⁹ Paul Frye uses the term “recycling” to indicate something else. His argument is that all literary theorists and not only the theorists of influence agree that literary composition is always a phenomenon of “recycling” and he himself agrees about this. The word as adapted here refers only to one type of creative processes which Ngugi uses in writing his novels.

⁴⁰ For, except by drastic standards, these procedures, providing they are skilfully carried out, are creative, and not imitative, acts. They are widely used by creative writers, and they are largely acknowledged by critics as important creative procedures even as they have to do with rather direct sorts of influence.

borrowing, nor sufficiently inventive to be considered wholly personal to Ngugi. It consists of allusions to, and rewritings of previous literary elements (exemplified subsequently), some of whose roles in Ngugi's novels are akin, and sometimes identical, to the roles they play in the precursor texts. Allusions and rewritings of this type have nevertheless the crucial additional characteristic of playing other, original and important roles in Ngugi's texts concurrently. These additional functions often have to do with the special or immediate contexts of Ngugi's novels, and so we can refer to them as "simultaneous," "second," "supplementary" or "contextual" functions. Of the two types of recycling procedures that we will consider here, this one is the closer to imitation, but is definitely not imitation. This is because if this type of reprocessing testifies to Ngugi's struggle with his precursors in order to "clear creative space for himself," it reveals on the other hand that this struggle is relatively feeble in this case.⁴¹ The allusions and rewritings in this category are however not cases of systematic imitation (or direct borrowing) because they are endowed, often in a calculated and dexterous way, with supplementary functions that are new and important, even if their importance varies according to cases, and from one novel to another as we noted and shall illustrate shortly. This type of procedure is present mainly – though not solely – in Ngugi's earliest short stories "The Fig Tree," "The Village Priest," "The Return" and "Gone with the Drought," and in his first three novels *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*.

Concerning what we have named literary recycling of the first-degree-creative type, it is a literary procedure based on reworking existing literary elements and techniques, but in ways which are more boldly creative, and which have sharper differentiating effects. It consists of a set of ways of using the modernists' allusion (distinguished from both general allusion and classical allusion⁴²), and modernist rewriting, in Ngugi's novels. It includes cases in which the writer uses the modernists' allusion and rewriting with conformism to the way they are used by 'master illusionists' and 'rewriters' such as James Joyce, T. S. Eliot and Derek Walcott, as in *A Grain of Wheat*; and cases in which he draws on them from a 'postmodernist' creative perspective, as in *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu works as we will explain. This type of literary reprocessing is farther still from systematic imitation in comparison with literary recycling of the second-degree-creative type, as we suggested and will further explain. As just noted as well, creative practice of this type is present in *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu novels though it started occurring – timidly and in embryonic forms, one can say – in as early as the first short stories. It is also noticeable that its use increases

⁴¹In comparison with the state of this struggle in the case of what we have called the first-degree-creative type of recycling which will also be defined and illustrated next.

⁴²That is, the kind of allusion that we can associate with Dante Alighieri, William Shakespeare and John Milton for instance.

both in frequency and creative range as we go from one of Ngugi's stories to the next one.

These two types of literary reprocessing occur *simultaneously* in *all* Ngugi's novels. However, it is notable, and understandable, that the writer's recourse to recycling of the second-degree-creative type decreases in a way that is proportional to the increase of recycling of the first-degree-creative type from one of Ngugi's novels to the subsequent one. This is very important to note because, as both procedures testify to the anxiety of influence and the search for creativity in each of those novels, their evolution in this proportional way is a blatant indicator of the permanence of Ngugi's search for creativity as he progresses in his career, in so far as the *psychogenetic* aspect of literary creativity in his fiction is concerned.

Concerning intertextual allusion, what we have implicitly called allusion of the "second-degree-creative" type affects cases in which Ngugi uses both usual and classical allusions (distinguished from modernist allusion in its specific sense) inspired by definite authors such as D. H. Lawrence and Chinua Achebe, for private creative ends. These allusions *greatly* resemble, but are not the same as, the allusions used by the precursors, and they have additional functions that differ from the functions of the inspiring allusions. To illustrate this, let us take a first example, and let it be an extreme one – Lawrentian Biblical allusion in Ngugi's narratives. This, as we have seen, is a way in which Ngugi bears forthright resemblance to Lawrence. Ngugi owes this specific practice to Lawrence, as we also pointed out, and taking it as an outright impact of the Bible itself would be a serious hermeneutic mistake. None the less, Ngugi tempers his resemblance to Lawrence in matters of using Lawrentian Biblical allusion by adding on considerable creative exertion of his own. Thus we can note several differences in their respective employment of the allusions under consideration. These include their nuanced choices of the Biblical myths, differences in the specific visionary and aesthetic ends aimed at by their respective allusions to those myths, and, in some cases, simply divergent philosophical and aesthetic priorities justifying the recourse to those myths in the work of each author.

Consider for instance Ngugi's and Lawrence's treatments of The Fall, Exodus, Crucifixion and Resurrection, which are crucial to both. Among the differences in their uses of these myths one can note, first of all, a difference as to which particular myth is typically central for each novelist. Reference to The Fall is dominant in Lawrence's work, while the preferential Lawrentian-Biblical allusions in Ngugi's novels are Exodus, Crucifixion and Resurrection as we already noted. Secondly, though allusions to Exodus and Resurrection are also current in Lawrence's work and allusion to The Fall is not absent from Ngugi's work,⁴³ Ngugi employs his allusions to these

⁴³ Allusion to the "The Fall" is quite obvious in the emphasis Ngugi puts on the consequential effect which his heroines always have on the male characters at the psychosexual level. Females are always behind the dramatic event in his stories and we already pointed up.

Biblical stories in settings and ways, and for aims, that are not the same as Lawrence's in all cases and from every perspective. For example, up to *Petals of Blood* at least, Ngugi's allusions to Exodus and Resurrection have Lawrentian symbolist and transcendentalist levels of significance. None the less, the same allusions always have additional meanings in the case of Ngugi – regional and contextual ones at any rate – that are not trivial or uninteresting, and which have, in their specificity, nothing to do with Lawrence.

Thus the “Journeys” of individuals and peoples (Exodus) “to be born again” (Resurrection), via sacrifice (Crucifixion) so crucial to all Ngugi's narratives, are similar in nature to Lawrence's allusions to the same myths. They are similar in nature because they are, in the case of both authors, allusions to the Divine promises of deliverance from tyranny in the corresponding accounts in the Old and New Testaments. And, as with Lawrence's Biblical allusions, one of their roles in Ngugi's novels is “to imply a generality of experience: often the human condition.”⁴⁴ However, Ngugi uses them for very specific and personal, visionary and aesthetic, additional purposes. Semantically, for example, they are intended to “add historical [and philosophical] depth” to inseparably fictional and historical narratives, and a multiplicity of sub-narratives, about the plight of individuals and peoples under colonial/imperialist oppression, and about resistance to such oppression. And in *Petals of Blood* and the subsequent novels they are also utilised to add historical depth to a discourse on the predictability and inevitability of the emancipation of those individuals and peoples subjugated by imperialism (in Kenya and elsewhere) specifically. From the strictly aesthetic viewpoint, they are intended to grant artistic fineness – an epic dimension, religious solemnity, and a prophetic tone – to those specific narratives and sub-narratives. What is more, the creative aspects of those allusions do not only consist of the fact that they serve those well definite contextual purposes in Ngugi's novels. Most of their creative worth lies in the fact that they are (also) multifunctional in a way that is again original and typical to Ngugi.

Each of the above mentioned Biblical allusions has a multitude of other contextual, universal and historical meanings, plus their significance at the level of the experiences of individual characters. In all Ngugi's novels, the “Journey,” for instance, functions as a parallel to the Historical and fictional experiences of the peoples of the stories; at the same time, it is a parallel to

⁴⁴ This is one of at least seven creative uses of allusion. These are listed here by John Holcombe: “Allusion is used to: 1. display literary knowledge or cleverness. 2. Advertise membership of a poetic tradition or community. 3. Add historical depth to a word or phrase. 4. Suggest an association with literary excellence. 5. Show topicality by reference to recent events. 6. Sharpen contrasts, as in satire. 7. Imply a generality of experience: often the human condition.” C. John Holcombe 2007. “Allusion in Poetry,” in *Textetc*, URL: <<http://www.textetc.com/traditional/allusion.html>>. Extracted on December 30, 2010.

the specific social and psychological experiences of *each* of the main individual characters. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the Journey is even exploited 'vertically' and interestingly light-heartedly with reference to the Ruler's projected journey towards Heaven, instead of the usual 'horizontal' and solemn journeys of the previous stories, introducing another type of novelty in using this myth plus a very original and fine type of humour in the way. This is also valid for "Resurrection" which is the most focal (Lawrentian) Biblical allusion in *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow* and for Crucifixion which is particularly central to *A Grain of Wheat*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow*. Accordingly, these allusions as Ngugi uses them do not only have original functions; they also are refined as adaptations of Lawrentian Biblical allusion. The use of Biblical allusion in this polyvalent and multifunctional way reveals a creative talent and dexterity that is outstanding, and perhaps unparalleled. The use of Lawrentian Biblical allusions, crucial as it is to Ngugi's narratives, is, for the above specified reasons, an act of "(deserved) self-appropriation." In most of the cases, anyway, it is at least a competent and original kind of adaptation that is far beyond outright and systematic borrowing.

Also to be put under this category of allusion are Ngugi's references to pagan myths – chiefly the Gikuyu cosmogonic myth, but also, and importantly, sub-myths and a multitude of legendary elements, symbols, names, settings and times related to this legend. These provide another excellent, though less extreme, example in comparison with Ngugi's use of Lawrentian Biblical allusions. The example is less extreme because the Gikuyu source of these cherished and skilfully adapted mythical references of Ngugi's is enough to make them look, in comparison with his Lawrentian Biblical references, more private to Ngugi even if they too remain within the scope of "second-degree-creative" allusion. This is in view of the fact that they too are partly an effect of the impact of D. H. Lawrence, known for his use of pagan allusions as we argued in Chapter Two.

Be that as it may, Ngugi's references to the Gikuyu and Mumbi myth and to many of the sub-myths associated with it are important pointers of his creativity in using allusion of the specific type we are discussing here. "The Gikuyu and Mumbi" *always* lies in hindsight of the plots and/or subplots in his novels; it always underlies the historical and patriotic subplots of his narratives, and often the narratives themselves. The fact that the lovers in Ngugi's stories – Waiyaki and Nyambura, Gikonyo and Mumbi, Karega and Wanja, Wariinga and Gatuiria, Matigari and Guthera (presumably), and Kamiti and Nyawira – are offered as parallels to these putative parents of the Gikuyu is obvious. That this specific allusion is Ngugi's 'registered property' in a literary sense is, in spite of the affinity and oedipal connection with Lawrence, also a fact beyond illustration. There are in Ngugi's fiction many other Gikuyu mythical and symbolist references related to this myth, that are typical and personal to Ngugi for the same reasons. One example is

the fact that his heroic/patriotic (secondary but important) female characters are often named after the nine “great Gikuyu women,” the daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi in the Gikuyu cosmogonic myth. These are, from the eldest to the youngest one (for even their presumed age can be significant in Ngugi’s novels): Wanjirũ, Wambũi, Njeri, Wanjikũ, Nyambũra, Wairimũ, Waithĩra, Wangarĩ and Wangũi. It is also noteworthy here that whilst the experiences of the ‘dignified prostitutes’ which Ngugi’s heroines often are recall Jesus’ female follower, Mary Magdalene, and are allegories of the putative mother of the Gikuyu, they also seem to be allusions to another sub-myth, that of the “tenth daughter” of Gikuyu and Mumbi in the Gikuyu myth of creation. According to Emmanuel Kariuki:⁴⁵

There was a tenth daughter [of Gikuyu and Mumbi] (...) who according to tradition was not counted due to an incestuous relationship (...) The daughters were always said to be ‘nine and the fill’ perhaps to imply that the tenth daughter was known but was unmentionable.⁴⁶

This is so important as to provide additional explanation to Ngugi’s portrayals of noble and dignified, and yet prostituted, female figures in nearly all his novels. Other typically Ngugian pagan mythical allusions include a set of emblematic Kikuyu ritual practices such as clitoridectomy, circumcision of the flesh in general, and elements of the Gikuyu symbology such as Mount Kenya, the Mugumo tree, the soil, and work on the soil (or agriculture). Typical of Ngugi’s use of pagan allusion, the following example illustrates well our point here:

But in this darkness, at the foot of Kerinyaga, a tree rose. At first it was a small tree and grew up, finding a way even through the darkness. It wanted to reach the light, and the sun. This tree had Life. It went up, up, sending forth the rich warmth of a blossoming tree – you know a holy tree in the dark night of thunder and moaning. This was Mukuyu, God’s tree. Now, you know that at the beginning of things there was only one man (Gikuyu) and one woman (Mumbi). It was under this Mukuyu that that he first put them. And immediately the sun rose, and the dark night melted away. The sun shone with a warmth that gave life and activity to all things. The wind and lightning and thunder stopped. The animals stopped wondering and moved. They no longer moaned but gave homage to the Creator and Gikuyu and Mumbi. And the Creator who is also called Murungu took Gikuyu and Mumbi from his holy mountain. He took them to the country of ridges near Siriana and there stood them on a big ridge before he finally took them to Mukuruwe wa Gathanga about which you

⁴⁵ Though not an anthropologist himself, Kariuki founds his claim on the works of eminent anthropologists such as Jomo Kenyatta, L. S. B Leakey, and M. A. Kabeca.

⁴⁶ Emmanuel Kariuki, “Kikuyu Myth of Origin,” in the Hub Pages Inc,” URL: <http://hubpages.com/hub/Kikuyu-Other-myths-of-Origin>. Extracted on 7 February, 2011, at 19: 39.

have heard so much. But he had shown them all the land – yes, children, God showed Gikuyu and Mumbi all the land and told them, / “This land I hand over to you. O Man and woman/ It’s yours to rule and till in serenity sacrificing / Only to me, your God, under my sacred tree ...” (*Weep Not, Child*, p. p. 23 - 24).

The Gikuyu sides of these allusions are not only alien to Lawrence’s works but are also genuine ‘trademarks’ of Ngugi. Their Lawrentian functions aside, they are Ngugi’s private and special domains of allusion. And, as is the case with his use of Biblical allusion, his combination of the contextual agencies of those Gikuyu mythical allusions with a variety of other dramatic roles which they also play in the narratives – at universal, aesthetic and individual-character experience levels, for instance – makes these allusions interestingly polyvalent and sophisticated. More than just an act of deserved self appropriation as in the case of his use of Lawrentian Biblical allusion, Ngugi’s work with pagan-Gikuyu allusion constitutes some of the most personal creative performances in the category of literary “recycling” under consideration here.

Allusion to the psychoanalytic theory is another major example of second-degree-creative allusion in Ngugi’s fiction. The writer’s references to this theory are evocative of Achebe as we pointed out in Chapter Three; however, they are exploited to create characters with higher levels of psychological depth in comparison with Achebe’s characters. Furthermore, those allusions are used to ‘rationalize’ behaviours of the characters that are relatively rarely identical to the behaviours of their equivalents in Achebe’s novels. We noted in Chapter Three that the psychological aspects of characters like Mugo and Munira recall Achebe’s Nwoye, and some traits of Wanjia and Wariinga evoke Ekwefi for instance due to the writers’ allusions to psychoanalysis in portraying them. However, Mugo, Munira, Wanjia and Gatuiria are much more elaborate than Nwoye and Ekwefi, and, more generally, Achebe’s protagonists hardly have the psychological complexity, the dynamism and the wealth of action that characterise their parallels in Ngugi’s narratives. The difference between the two writers, in this context, comes in part from Ngugi’s furthered and more elaborate work with Freud’s theory, thought he learnt to work with this theory from Chinua Achebe as we demonstrated. And, paradoxically, Ngugi’s additional hints at the postulates of other influencers of his, mainly Frantz Fanon and D. H. Lawrence, are other major differentiators between his own and Achebe’s characterisations, especially from *A Grain of Wheat* onwards.

Ngugi’s reference to colonialist literature, namely *Heart of Darkness*, can be put under this category of allusion as well. As our argument in chapter three implies, Ngugi’s dialogism with Conrad in general and *Heart of Darkness* in particular is a result, not of Conrad’s influence alone, but of the double-influence of Conrad himself and Chinua Achebe. Ngugi responds to

Conrad's discourse on colonialism with the same, subtly oppositional, approach that Achebe shows in his fiction as we have seen. Thus, for instance, *A Grain of Wheat* has, not "its own Kurtz" as Abdulrazak Gurnah points out,⁴⁷ but rather its own Mr Smith because, just like Mr Smith, D. O. Thompson is an oblique – circumlocutory and oppositional – adaptation, and not a direct replica, of Conrad's Kurtz. If Ngugi's Mr Highlands, D. O. Thompson, D. O. Robson, Ironmongers, "Master of ceremonies" and other such parodied allusions to Conrad's Kurtz in his fiction are 'copies' of any characters, then they are more likely to be the 'Mr Browns' and 'Mr Smiths' than the 'Mr Kurtzs', of Ngugi's novels. Then again, Achebe's Mr Smith is beyond compare with D. O. Thompson from the standpoint of psychological elaboration and the dramatic development of the characters more broadly. Compared to Mr Smith, John Thompson is a subtler allusion-response to Conrad's Kurtz. He is accordingly a more efficient, more convincing, and creatively more interesting oppositional adaptation of Conrad's Kurtz. Ngugi's John Thompson is an Achebean allusive response to Conrad's Kurtz, but one which, unlike any of Achebe's colonial types, measures up to the function of Kurtz himself. More generally, Ngugi's allusions to colonialist literature and to real events in the colonial and post-independence histories of Africa differ from Achebe's allusions to the same, and/or similar texts and events in many ways many of which we have already discussed in our comparisons of the two novelists' dramatisations of African history, colonialism, and their approaches to characterisation. But if we are to take another example, the following passage would be an ideal one:

Learned men will no doubt dig into the troubled times which we in Kenya underwent, and maybe sum up the lesson of history in a phrase. Why, let us ask them, did the incident in Rira Camp capture the imagination of the world? For there were other camps, bigger, scattered all over Kenya, from the Manda Islands in the Indian Ocean to the Magata Islands in Lake Victoria (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 127).

Though they are 'not very literary' if taken out of context, and though they can be said to have sprouted out of Ngugi's inspiration by his African precursors' interest in history, passages such as this one, and allusions like those it contains – recurrent in Ngugi's stories – do not seem to have anything to do with any of the direct forms of the influence of Chinua Achebe, or of any other African novelist who has mattered for Ngugi.

*

⁴⁷ Abdulrazak Gurnah, "introduction" to the 2002 Penguin Edition of *A Grain of Wheat*, (*op. cit.*) p. xii.

Allusion of the other, “first-degree-creative type” is different in nature and literary function from the one we have just described. Its major distinctive feature is its proximity to the modernists’ allusion. Whether it identifies with, or is akin to, modernist allusion depends on the specific novel by Ngugi in which the allusion occurs, and/or on specific cases in these novels. By the ‘modernists’ allusion,’ we mean precisely the kind of intertextual allusion that is often associated with Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Franz Kafka, Derek Walcott and, in Africa, with Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka and Kofi Awoonor. True, Ngugi is above all a realist with, otherwise, a characteristic eclectic tendency in writing mode and in technique. At no point of his career can he be said to be a resolute modernist, not even in *A Grain of Wheat*, the nearest of his novels to high modernism. His use of modernist techniques, including modernist allusion and rewriting, seems to be part of such eclecticism, and not the contrary. That is to say, Modernist techniques seem to be used by Ngugi from a perspective in which modernism is a paradigm of eclecticism, and not eclecticism a paradigm of modernism (as is the norm in European modernism). In other words, his employment of these techniques is not an indicator of his commitment to literary modernism as a comprehensive ethical and aesthetic philosophy and creative approach. True, like other African writers such as Achebe, Armah, Soyinka and Awoonor, Ngugi seems to have been aware since his *débuts* as a writer of the visionary and creative opportunities which literary modernism offers with regard to the colonial and post-independence African contexts. His recourse to modernist allusion and rewriting in all his works testifies to his struggle to maximize these opportunities as we shall see. But his writing mode consists, in the main, of blends of Lawrentian and Achebean – and not typical, or typically Western, modernist usages – cast within a type of imagination and creative system that are fundamentally realistic, with very strong romantic and symbolist tendencies. That said, his recourse to modernist techniques, not least those on which we will focus here – i.e. modernist allusion and rewriting – went regularly increasing in span and quality up to *Petals of Blood*. From *Petals of Blood* onwards, he continues using these techniques, but in a way which suggests that he does it with a changed creative perspective, one that remains very ‘eclectic’, but with an orientation to postmodernism in *Petals of Blood*, and then, with more and more determination, to magical realism in the Gikuyu works.

Whether it follows an eclectic imaginative perspective as in the earliest works, to an ‘eclecto-modernist’ one as in *A Grain of Wheat*, or an ‘eclecto-post-modernist’ one as in *Petals of Blood* and the Gikuyu works, modernist allusion is, nevertheless, used in all Ngugi’s creative works, including the short stories and the first two novels. Before attempting a description of how these allusions are used in Ngugi’s early short stories and first two novels, and how the way in which they are used in these novels can be

distinguished from the ways in which they are used in his later fiction, it has to be admitted that doing so with precision is an extremely difficult exercise. It is always difficult to distinguish a truly modernist creative act from one that is not so. Nigel Wheale's statement and question on such a difficulty, though they refer to a context that is different from that of Ngugi, are relevant to the task of defining and distinguishing Ngugi's changing attitudes towards literary modernism:

Artistic responses to the first World War also demonstrate another major difficulty within the generalised definition of early twentieth century culture as modernist: how precisely can we differentiate between works which are thoroughly modern in their form and content, and those which appear to be conventional, but somehow do contain elements of the new because they address similar issue within their period?⁴⁸

But a number of considerations (stated hereafter) make it sound to argue that in his early works – the short stories and the first two novels – Ngugi's interest in modernist techniques in general and modernist allusion in particular, seems motivated by visionary considerations rather than by a quest for an individual style as in the cases of icons of (European and American) modernism, and of 'more resolute' African modernists such as Armah and Awoonor, and, to a lesser extent, in the case *A Grain of Wheat*. Unlike Armah's modernism in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments*, or Kofi Awoonor in *This Earth, My Brother* for example, Ngugi does not embrace this mode of writing in its essence and totality, especially in those early short stories and first two novels of his. In these works, in particular, he does not seem to be primarily concerned with taking full advantage of the creative opportunities which modernism, as a comprehensive literary system, offers. He seems, instead, worried more about sustaining a moral discourse by means of modernist, among other, techniques, including intertextual allusion. Perhaps he deliberately avoided a more determined engagement with modernism out of the consideration that colonial and only just independent African countries were not "modern existentialist" ones, as Chinua Achebe had noted in criticism of Kwei Armah's (high) modernism in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.⁴⁹ Ngugi's earliest short stories and his novels *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* display only partial and almost strictly thematic interest in literary modernism, sacrificing the opportunities which the latter offers from the structural and stylistic standpoints for the sake of realistic, historical and discursive pertinence and clarity. In the African contexts in which those early works are set, and in which modernity both as a social and cultural

⁴⁸ Nigel Wheale, "Modernism and Its Consequences", in *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, Nigel Wheale (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 24.

⁴⁹ David I. Ker *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*, p. 2.

phenomenon is all but an inherent or 'internal' reality, the combination of (Achebean) historical realism and (Lawrentian) romanticism/mysticism in a linear and relatively simple style provided a fitter writing mode for a writer like Ngugi who is greatly concerned with such pertinence and clarity. In brief, Ngugi's implementation of the modernist techniques, not least the modernist allusion, in these first works, seems to be motivated by the Achebean view of modernism, according to which "[t]he Modernist artist is not simply an artist set free in the Joycean sense but the artist under a specific historical strain." Indeed for African novelists like Achebe and Ngugi "colonialism is the strain that brought [them] into the international literary modernist scene."⁵⁰ In other words, it is more his search for a way to achieve a powerful rendering of the apocalyptic atmospheres of African colonial situations, and the ensuing anti-colonial war in Kenya, than an interest in writing from a truly modernist perspective or the search for originality that has drawn Ngugi to literary modernism in his early writings.

This half-hearted attitude towards modernism in Ngugi's early works affects the character and value of his modernist allusions in these works. Thus, on the one hand, modernist allusions as used in those early works have a creative nature and range that are very close to those of what we have called second-degree-creative allusions. Nevertheless, they are somehow more personal to Ngugi in comparison with the latter. Or, knowing the Sphinx-like character of modernist allusion, one is almost forced to argue so. This is first because these allusions seem to have to do with a whole literary trend, a 'tradition', modernism, rather than with the immediate impact of individual writers as is the case with second-degree creative allusions. This literary trend is, moreover, one which renders our conception of the relationship between allusion and creativity extremely problematic, by turning upside down the meaning of the use of it from the condition of being an imitative exercise to one of being an established and commendable creative technique. Accordingly, even if modernist allusion is the least innovatively used in these early works by Ngugi in comparison with its uses in his later novels, it may at least *sound like* a more satisfactory practice still in comparison with second degree-creative allusions.

On the other hand, the modernist allusions in these works do not seem inspired and original enough, not even as much as necessary for them to be considered as authentic modernist allusions, as is more the case in *A Grain of Wheat* and the later works (as we shall see). They lack the privacy and the aesthetic foundation essential for making them genuine. For only a wholehearted engagement with the full theory of modernism and its application in truly modern settings – which is not the case in these works – can give the modernist allusion such a label of authenticity. Modernist

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 2.

allusion in the short stories and the first two novels by Ngugi are, at best, systematic adaptations of the notion of Modernist allusion as used by the typical (Western) modernists. The way in which it is used bears no particular attempts to individuate it, except by processes of adaptation aiming at the contextualisation of its functions of the kind achieved through second-degree-creative allusions. When they are not 'borrowed' from specific modernists (like Lawrence and Conrad), they are 'imported' from European and American modernism, and inserted into these works without notable "attempts to subvert expectation and norm,"⁵¹ not even from the point of view of vision. Indeed, even thematically they lack the sort of transcendental character, and the strength of the differentiating effect characteristic of authentic modernist allusion – they lack the experimental resolution, the personal stamp, which is compulsory in the philosophy of modernist allusion. Perhaps the task was not just unwanted, as we suggested, but also too complex for a young Ngugi still an apprentice novelist when he composed these first works of his.

Thus the main ways through which the modernists' allusion comes into play in these works are clichéd modernist allusions such as recourse to epigraphs, symbolic reference to the stories of mythical and historic figures and events, and *frank, plain* and consenting allusions to Biblical accounts. These procedures are not just frequent but perhaps too frequent in those works. Furthermore, when these modernist allusions do not recall Lawrence in these stories, they evoke the ways in which they are used by other, more typical, modernists such as James Joyce and T. S. Eliot. The kind of work Ngugi does with them is just the same in nature, but lesser in quality, to the kind of work modernist archetypes typically do with them both technically and thematically (because of Ngugi's flirtation with modernism instead of embracing the spirit of it as we noted). Ngugi's use of Biblical allusion (other than those related to the impact of Lawrence) in these earliest works is hardly more creative than to show him as more than conform to the Western modernist use of it. They show him as a 'traditional,' uncommitted and almost imitative, sort of modernist. For example, the very reference to the Bible in this specific aim is a commonly used modernist allusion, as we already suggested. Also, this is done, as in the exemplary modernist works, chiefly to sustain expressions of grief about the loss of classical and Christian ideals such as humanism and faith in God. As is commonly the case in literary modernism, the major role of these allusions is to sustain cynical discourses about modern times and situations. They help convey concern about the degradation of the human condition in the modern era, and the suffering of the individual within this context, which are, as in the

⁵¹ Georg M. Gugelberger, "Blake, Neruda, Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Issues in Third World Literature," in *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Winter, 1984), p. p. 463 - 482, published by: Penn State University Press, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246506>. The expression is Gugelberger's; the idea is mine.

ideal modernist, the main visions displayed by these novels of Ngugi's. More broadly, they echo the typical European and American modernists' approach to tragedy writing, thus contributing to put into words an apocalyptic vision of things – a sense of a general and irrevocable chaos. The use of modernist techniques, including intertextual allusion, in Ngugi's short stories and first two novels appears "conventional," not "experimental," because they display the same kind of "pessimism, anguished individualism and apocalyptic despair" which, Nigel Wheale reminds us, "have been described as the anti-modern tendency within modernism."⁵²

If this is but relatively pertinent to the short stories,⁵³ the use of the Modernist allusion in this way is dominant in *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between* and is typical of both novels. These novels have at once very Lawrentian and very Joycean/Eliotian aspects in general. For instance, they rely on plain and simultaneous associations of the experiences of the heroes, Njoroge and Waiyaki, with the stories of messianic prophets (mainly Jesus and Moses), Kikuyu prophetic figures such as Mugo wa Kibiro, and icons of the anti-colonial struggle in Kenya such as Waiyaki wa Hinga and Jomo Kenyatta. One of the outstanding visionary effects achieved by these intertextual associations is the same old solemn cynicism and gloom, the great and profound sense of absolute tragedy, that we feel when reading typical modernist works. These allusions are clearly destined to make us see, and regret, the suffering of human individuals who are harshly mistreated – violently, sometimes fatally, disillusioned in the cases of these two novels of Ngugi's – by realities of modern times, here colonial and emergency contexts and realities in Kenya. Effectively, these contexts and realities are made to look apocalyptic by means of these allusions, among other techniques. The latter contribute to make us see that "Apocalypse" in these works is a consequence of the deprivation of Modern human societies of (high humanist/religious) morals, and their replacement with sheer anarchy, violence and devious materialism. Those allusions make characters and "peoples" of these stories of Ngugi's look like the "Dubliners" of the so-entitled collection of short stories by James Joyce, and, for many of them, like the "lost, violent souls" of Eliot's "The Hollow Men" and "The Wasteland." They are used principally so that they help create atmospheres in those novels of Ngugi's that are just like those "Kingdoms", "valley," "groves," "cities," "countries" and "worlds" "of death" and "living death" achieved through this type of allusion in the above mentioned, and other

⁵² Nigel Wheale, "Modernism and Its Consequences," in *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, Nigel Wheale (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 24. Idem for the adjectives "conventional" and "experimental" with reference to Modernist techniques. See, in particular, the part of Wheale's essay entitled "Formal Experiment or Conventional Form?" (*ibid.*, p. p. 24 - 25) for more detail.

⁵³ They are more Lawrentian than Joycean indeed.

such mother-texts of modernism. The opening paragraph of *The River Between* gives the tone for this:

The two ridges lay side by side. One was Kamenno, the other was Makuyu. Between them was a valley. It was called the valley of life. Behind Kamenno and Makuyu were many more valleys and ridges, lying without any discernible plan. They were like many sleeping lions which never woke. They just slept, the big deep sleep of their creator (*The River Between*, p. 1).

The last paragraph confirms it:

The land was now silent. The two ridges lay side by side, hidden in the darkness. And Honia river went on flowing between them, down through the valley of life, its beat rising above the dark stillness, reaching into the heart of the people of Makuyu and Kamenno (*The River Between*, p. 152).

Aesthetically, these allusions are definitely parts of “the aesthetics of melancholy” known to Modernism described above.⁵⁴ The main aesthetic merit of these allusions lies in their great capacity to suggest apocalyptic images and ability to produce a powerful melodramatic effect. The main technique by which this is done is the transposition, at several levels of trope, of images and lexis of mystery, solemnity, anguish and agony contained in the texts to which allusion is made – typically the Bible – into the belated texts. In the above quoted passages, for instance, the apocalyptic atmosphere is evoked through an association of terms such as “valley,” “valley of life,” “darkness,” “dark stillness,” “river of life,” and “they just slept, the big deep sleep of their creator.” Such Biblical imagery and language is made to coalesce with the imagery and language of brokenness, division, disorder, darkness, silence and stillness of (this part of) the text itself – that is, with the “many more valleys and ridges, lying without any discernible plan,” the “dark stillness” of the Honia river and the dark “hearts” of the quarrelling people of the two ridges – to create the melodramatic effect. This effect is much like that produced by just the same procedure in, say, T. S. Eliot’s poem “The Wasteland.”⁵⁵

Another aesthetic effect of the allusions under discussion is a mixture of a sense of approbation and perhaps wonder that they can provoke in readers about the writers’ ability to achieve such a ‘beautifully complex’ task, able to ‘transport us’ into the hearts of matters that are vital, and which, we are prompted to feel, can hardly be better expressed otherwise. A last major

⁵⁴ Julian Roberts, “Melancholy Meanings: Architecture, Postmodernity and Philosophy” (130 - 149), in *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, Nigel Wheale (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 137.

⁵⁵ An imagery of living-death that is very evocative of Eliot’s imagery in “The Wasteland” and “The Hollow Men,” as well as of any of the short stories in James Joyce’s *Dubliners*, perhaps particularly “The Dead.” The style as a whole, notably the use of very short sentences in these first two novels of Ngugi’s, recalls Joyce’s style, especially in *Ulysses*.

aesthetic effect of this type of allusion as used in those novels by Ngugi is perhaps its suggestion of the writer's eagerness to show his "association with literary excellence," rather than to conceal or to overcome it; and this, too, is one of the major roles of the usual modernist allusion.⁵⁶ These considerations can give a reader with only a modest familiarity with modernist allusion impressions of *déjà vu* with reference to many of the modernist allusions used in Ngugi's early stories. Passages like the following one, very recurrent in Ngugi's early fiction, constitute, in spite of their pointed and original contextual specificities, other typical examples:

There was something strange in Ngotho's eyes. He looked as if he had forgotten all about those who were present, Kamau, Njoroge, Boro, Kori, and many other young men and women who had come to make the long hours of night shorter by listening to stories. It was as if he was telling a secret for the first time, but to himself. Boro sat in a corner. The expression on his face could not be seen. He did not once move but kept on looking past his father. It was as if Boro and Ngotho were the only two who were there at the beginning when these things came to be. Njoroge too could imagine the scene. He saw the sun rise and shine on a dark night. He saw fear, gloom and terror of the living things of the creator, melting away, touched by the warmth of the holy three. It must have been a new world. The man and woman must have been blessed to walk in the new Kingdom with Murungu. He wished he had been there to stand near Him in His holy place and survey all the land (*Weep Not, Child*, p. p. 24 - 52).

It follows from this that the best creative use which Ngugi is making of this type of allusion in these first novels is drawing on it from an ambivalent creative attitude which, in both vision and technique, tends to be 'conventionally Joycean.' It is used with endeavour for conformism to its inventors rather than for differentiation from them. Even if this has the merit of contributing to diversify his uses of allusion, and to achieve the creative purposes stated above, it makes Ngugi sound, on the other hand, as if he wants to advertise his "membership of [this] poetic tradition"⁵⁷ in the same way as James Joyce, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot did with reference to classical and religious literatures. In brief, one can then conclude with reference to the use of first-degree-creative allusion in his early work, Ngugi is still imitating the typical modernist way of using allusion more than he is employing it in the framework of some private modernist enterprises of his own. Intertextual Allusion is, in these works, just a means to a typically modernist and chiefly *thematic* end; it is less of a means to an aesthetic end, and it is to an even lesser extent an aesthetic end in itself.

⁵⁶ John Holcombe (2007), *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

A more substantial, masterful and original work with the modernists' allusion is done by Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat* and the following novels. Here the modernist allusion becomes both a means to put forward a more personal vision, and to a more personal aesthetic end in itself. This came with Ngugi's calculated, tactical movements first towards a form of modernism that is more convincingly creative in *A Grain of Wheat*, to postmodernism in *Petals of Blood*, and then towards an increasingly resolute and special form of postmodernism in the Gikuyu novels.⁵⁸ In these novels, Ngugi continues to use the modernists' allusion, like the modernists, to widen and multiply the fields of significance of his works, as well as to convey a sense of the fragmented and disorderly character of the (modern and contemporary) world in general and of Kenyan/African contexts in particular. But this is done as part of a bolder and more pronounced kind of creative response to the precursor traditions, authors and texts, including (Western) modernism. One of the main markers of this progress in Ngugi's creative attitude – i.e. of the change in his creative response to his sources of influence in general, and to the 'modernist tradition' in particular – is an attempt to transcend these influences, and not just to contextualise them as in the previous novels. Such an undertaking is carried out, in part, through a multiplication and diversification in the characters and functions of the modernists' allusion in ways that become increasingly particular, and that are characteristic of these later works in comparison with the earlier ones.⁵⁹

A Grain of Wheat powerfully gives the tone for this. Certainly, many of its allusions are, as in the previous two novels (and in all the subsequent ones), Lawrentian in aspects of the vision which they promote, and in some of their aesthetic functions as we argued in Chapter Two. And it can be argued that many of these allusions still correspond to the conventional modernist way of writing as well. However, the modernist allusions have never before in Ngugi's writings been so private to him – they have never

⁵⁸ We do not wish to venture in the riddles of the relationship of modernism and postmodernism to "tradition" on the one hand and that of differentiating these two literary trends, which are often acknowledged as indefinable, on the other hand. We do not believe in the absolute accuracy of such categorizations either, though we acknowledge that they have a useful (though essentialist) suggestive merit, and that they are useful when used moderately for methodological considerations. Our point here does not require a sharp distinction between the two concepts. Our point is only that the use of classical allusion by Ngugi, though it is by no means his own invention, is, as is the case with typical modernists and postmodernists, part of an effort to deal with his influences creatively. We do not think that Ngugi strives to be a Modernist or Postmodernist in any of his works, but to write creatively. And as we argued, he seems to be as (un)faithful to the realistic, historicist, naturalistic, romantic, symbolist, mystic, and African(ist) 'traditions' as he is to modernism and post-Modernism. From this perspective, Ngugi is not miming the modernists or postmodernists here but is mainly making use of techniques he learnt from them, either to escape their and other writers' influences, or to celebrate a sense of keenness with major literary works and writers in order to add value to his own creative work in the ways of James Joyce, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

⁵⁹ This attitude is also observable in the development of Ngugi's approach to the exercise of *rewriting* simultaneously as we shall see shortly.

before been so *Ngugian* – as they are in this novel. In the earlier works, one can easily decide that the Biblical allusions have philosophical and aesthetic aims that are within the limits of Western liberal-humanist literary tradition(s) – (Lawrentian) romanticism, (Lawrentian) symbolism, (Lawrentian) naturalism/realism, and (Joycean/Eliotian) modernism – despite the African contexts and situations of those novels. In *A Grain of Wheat*, one just *cannot* ascertain the aims of those allusions. What causes this is a quality of this novel which is not found in Ngugi's earlier narratives (nor in the subsequent ones): a balance between the regional and universal appeals of the novel – that is, between its nationalist-Africanist and the Christian and Liberal-Humanist ethos and aesthetics – that appears 'perfect.' This makes impossible the positioning of the novel itself, not just its modernist allusions, within one definite literary mode or tradition. The two worlds – the Western and African ones – are so perfectly merged as to look inseparable. Now the Modernist allusion, as used in this novel, is a cornerstone of such a unique 'identity' of *A Grain of Wheat*; it is an integral part of the 'alchemy' that disables us from classifying the novel, of what makes it unique. Unlike in the previous stories where the writer appears "very Christian" because of the nature of his references to the Bible, one cannot say whether the modernist biblical allusions serve the regional or the Christian and liberal-humanist discourse(s) of the novel. In this capacity, they have the original quality, and the merit, of making us experience a feeling that *that* which is African is inseparably universal, and that which is universal is also African. Thus the Modernist allusions in *A Grain of Wheat* appear special even in comparison with those of masters of allusion such as T. S. Eliot: Eliot's allusions cannot transcend "the mind of Europe" as he himself claims, while Ngugi's allusions in *A Grain of Wheat* do it in a way, as we just pointed up. At least they 'neutralise' the "mind of Europe." Illustrative examples of this are Ngugi's allusions to the Bible with reference to Kihika's experience, mainly in passages like the following one, recurrent and very characteristic of the style of *A Grain of Wheat*:

'Take up my cross, is what Christ told his people,' Kihika resumed in a more light-hearted tone. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Do you know why Ghandi succeeded? Because he made his people give up their fathers and mothers and serve their one mother – India. With us, Kenya is our mother' (*A Grain of Wheat*, p. 87).

The question of the relevance of the philosophy contained in such a passage will perhaps remain a moral puzzle, but the Modernist allusions in examples like this one certainly have the novelty and merit of making us experience and 'enjoy' a type of moral dilemma that is, in comparison with Conrad, Joyce and Eliot, and with Ngugi's own earlier stories, *different* and more

profound. By the same token they denote a different and very interesting “novel and valuable”⁶⁰ kind of oedipal creative dynamic.

If *A Grain of Wheat* thus marks Ngugi's movement towards a type of modernism that is more creative in comparison with the half-hearted and mainly imitative modernism of the earlier works, and that is visible in an innovative work with the Modernist allusion, *Petals of Blood* marks the writer's movement towards a style and a use of intertextual allusion that can be described – roughly – as postmodernist, even though the novel presents a number of continuities in comparison with the previous one.⁶¹ Concerning the use of intertextual allusion in particular,⁶² two (resultant?) changes can be observed in the way Ngugi recycles the Modernist allusion in comparison with the ways in which he did it in *A Grain of Wheat* and the earlier stories: on the one hand a notable multiplication and diversification of the intertextual allusions; on the other hand, a remarkable change in the aesthetic and visionary objectives of these allusions. This makes of *Petals of Blood* one of the most allusive and intertextual of Ngugi's narratives, paralleled only by *Wizard of the Crow*. At the same time, it makes it one of the most innovative in terms of the way in which these allusions are used in comparison with the way they are used in Ngugi's earlier novels and in the typical Modernist works. True, in comparison with Ngugi's earlier novels, intertextual allusion as used in *Petals of Blood* presents a number of continuities, both in nature and function.⁶³ For example, the writer continues to make allusions to the Bible profusely, in a way which reflects a

⁶⁰ Ömer Akin *et al* argue that « creativity is the process that leads to the creation of products that are novel and valuable ». Ömer Akin, Cem Akin, and John P. Heinz, « On the Process of Creativity in Puzzles, Inventions, and Designs », in *Automation in Construction*, Volume 7, Number 2, January 1998, p. p. 123 -138 (16), p. 123. Publisher: Elsevier.

⁶¹ Some critics classify *A Grain of Wheat* as a postmodernist novel; others classify *Petals of Blood* as a modernist novel. For example, David I. Ker, in *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*, discusses *Petals of Blood* as a modernist novel. In contrast, Kathy Kessler, in “Rewriting History in Fiction: Elements of Postmodernism in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Later Novels,” discusses both *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* as postmodernist works. See, respectively, David I. Ker, *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*, New York: Peter Lang, 2000. P. cm. – (*Studies in African and African-American Culture*, vol. 12), particularly the introduction and Chapter Four; and Kathy Kessler, in “Rewriting History in Fiction: Elements of Postmodernism in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Later Novels” (75 - 90), in *Ariel, A Review of International English Literature*, 25: 2, April 1994.

⁶² We will use the term “intertextual allusion” henceforth to indicate a type of allusion that is akin to Modernist allusion used, in this novel, from a postmodernist perspective, not from a modernist perspective as in the previous works.

⁶³ Better, David I. Ker classifies *Petals of Blood* not just as a typical modernist African novel but as one of the models of the European “Modernist tradition” perpetuated by the African novel. Comparing the novel with Conrad's *Nostromo*, the critic argues that the two novels share what he calls “the multiple perspective” (in point of view, due to the multiplicity of viewpoints). He offers this as evidence both of what he considers to be the novel's direct link with *Nostromo* as well as of its belonging to the “Modernist tradition.” See David I. Ker, *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*, New York: Peter Lang, 2000. P. cm. – (*Studies in African and African-American Culture*, vol. 12). See the chapter entitled “The Multiple Perspective I: Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo*; Ngugi wa Thiong'o *Petals of Blood*” (75 – 102). David I. Ker's claims do not sound very convincing however; we will discuss these claims and attempt to dismiss them subsequently.

more critical, but ultimately still ambiguous, position towards it. Also, some of these Biblical references have functions which dialogue with the functions of Lawrence's allusions still very closely; other allusions may recall the 'imitative' treatment of allusion characteristic of *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* as described earlier. The use of an allusive, intertextual title and the use of epigraphs are illustrative of such on-going conformism in dealing with modernist/intertextual allusion. The title is taken from a poem in Derek Walcott's *The Swamp*, which Ngugi quotes more extensively as an epigraph in the beginning of the narrative. The phrase "Walking towards Bethlehem to be born" also recalls the typical modernist allusion, though it also exemplifies changes in the functions of intertextual allusion in this novel as we will explain. Indeed the sentence is biblical, it is provided in fragments, and is used as a metaphorical parallel to the plot of the novel. This brings to mind the typical modernist allusion, and perhaps literary modernism more broadly, as it is conforming to the modernist practice of reference to the Bible and other religious literature through similar procedures (epigraphs, etc.). It may also remind us of the Modernists' striving to convey a sense of the fragmented character of modern life, their characteristic search for coherence in such a disorderly state of things, through a style that is proportional to such a state of things, i.e. one that is characteristically bitty and fragmentary. Also, reference to psychoanalysis in the way of Chinua Achebe is still remarkable in this novel as we pointed out in Chapter Three.

Nevertheless, the dialogism with Lawrence is relatively less immediate and more complex here – that is, the struggle with Lawrence's influence is more significant and complex, and sometimes it is oppositional as we argued in Chapter Two. The irony in the author's treatment of the "sun," and its replacement by the "soil" as a main symbol, as pointed up in the same chapter, illustrate this. And we will come back to Ngugi's oppositional dialogism with writers such as Lawrence, Conrad and Achebe in further detail in our study of the subversive creative attitude in *Petals of Blood* and Ngugi's work subsequently. Also, allusions to psychoanalytic principles, which in the earlier novels suggest a very direct type of link with Achebe, are here more refined. They are subtler and more suggestive as we noted earlier in this section and in the previous chapters. (They are, for example, better adapted to the African context by the writer's reference to Fanon's psychoanalytic theory when relevant as suggested in Chapter Four).

Concerning the change in the use of Modernist, or intertextual, allusion itself, what is noticeable is first the diversification of intertextual allusions as we stated above: while they consist mainly in references to the Bible and to Gikuyu mythology, symbology and imagery in the earlier novels, here they include Biblical texts and pagan myths still, but also excerpts from Derek

Walcott, Walt Whitman, William Blake and Amilcar Cabral,⁶⁴ direct as well as oblique references to African literature, plus direct and indirect allusions to other religious literature, Marxist texts (“the works of Mao and Lenin” are even literally mentioned), and to Frantz Fanon.⁶⁵ The following is an example of very direct intertextual allusions to a multitude of documentary – here precisely mythological, anthropological, archaeological, historical and sacred – literature all at once in *Petals of Blood*. The aim here is to emphasise the ancient status and the grandeur of Ilmorog:

The [Ilmorog] river is now only a stream. But there was a time when it was probably much bigger and geological speculation has it that its subterranean streams, buried long ago, feed Ondirri marshes at Kikuyu and Manguo in Limuru. Results of the researches on the recent archaeological finds in Ilmorog may well add to the theories of Ogot, Muriuki, Were and Ochieng about the origins and the movement of the Kenyan peoples: they may also tell us whether the river is one of those referred to in ancient Hindu and Egyptian sacred literatures or whether the walls that form the ridges are any part of Ptolemy's Lunae Montes or the Chandravata referred to in the Vedas (*Petals of Blood*, p. 67).

Other documents are literally mentioned. Some examples include an ironic allusion to Pastor Richard Wurmbrand's *Tortured for Christ* (very significantly changed here into *Tortured by Christ*), and another to Rev. Billy Graham's *World Aflame* (equally sarcastically changed into *World Flame*) with reference to Munira. The aim is to satirise Munira by presenting him as a parody of such extremist religious figures and texts. Thus Munira is in turn a Richard Wurmbrand, an anti-communist (anti-Ceausescu) Christian opposition figure in Romania, and a much less enthusiastic, but no less radical, Rev. Billy Graham, a famous “evangelistic crusader” who became very active in America by the middle of the twentieth century:

The kind of books the followers [of the charismatic religious movement discovered by Munira] were encouraged to read were interesting: *Tortured by Christ* by Wurmbrand; *World Flame* by Billy Graham, and other tracts published in America and speaking of communism as a Devil: they also warned of the immediate second coming of Christ to root out all the enemies of freedom (*Petals of Blood*, p. 306).

The contents of referential Marxist literature is overtly and extendedly ‘discussed,’ paraphrased and commented upon in parts of the novel, through the debates between Karega and Munira for example, and in the more overtly ‘discursive’ and ‘documentary’ sections of the story – those relating to the narrator's direct ‘interventions’ and to descriptions and dialogues involving Munira, Karega, the Lawyer, Abdulla and Joseph for

⁶⁴ See the epigraphs in *Petals of Blood*.

⁶⁵ See *Petals of Blood*, p. 340.

example. Other forms of intertextuality are introduced, like this quotation of the narrator's from a personal chronicle written by Munira: "Once, in Siriana, falling into such a mood, he [Munira] sat down to write (...):

My heart is heavy. There is ulcerous pain in my belly. How is it that small things, the screech of a cricket, the touch of a grass-hopper, make me suddenly start and look about me? Why do I look at her, my soul-image of truth, and become frightened for tomorrow? Why, why, why should I not be secure in the knowledge that once on the hippo hump of Manguo marshes two hearts refused to hate and beat each to each (*Petals of Blood*, p. 127).

There even is a plain reference to Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, to the Man, the novel's hero, and to the world and style of Armah's novel altogether in the following:

Put a tiger in your tank. Healthy hair means beautiful hair. Every time is tea time. Be a platinum blonde: be a redhead: be a whole new you in 100 / imported hand-made human hair. Join the new Africans: join Ambi people. Beautiful ones not yet born? You are joking. They are, everyday, with beautiful silky wigs: Man can get lost in it (*Petals of Blood*, p. 273).⁶⁶

More experimental forms of intertextual allusion are also implemented. Here is an irony about the compliant and non-professional character of the governmental press in Kenya, providing an amusing parody of its dailies through a quotation of the headline of one of its issues: "One newspaper, the *Daily Mouthpiece*, brought out a special issue with a banner headline: MZIGO, CHUI, KIMERIA MURDERED." The narrator 'quotes' from the imaginary newspaper in order to satirise the typical style and content of pro-governmental media in Africa:

A man, believed to be a trade-union agitator, has been held after a leading industrialist and two educationists, well-known as the African directors of the internationally famous Theng'eta Breweries and Enterprises Ltd, were last night burnt to death in Ilmorog, only hours after taking a no-non-sense-no-pay-rise decision (...) /The three will be an irreplaceable loss to Ilmorog (...) ... etc ... etc ... Kimeria and Chui were prominent and founding fathers of KCO ... etc ... etc ... (*Petals of Blood*, p. p. 4 - 5).

⁶⁶ With the novel's (*Petals of Blood's*) characteristic focus on the loss of high values in a materialistic, consumer society in a post-independence African setting, its focus on the general degradation in the human condition, on corruption, on other human vices and general chaos characteristic of such a setting, on the «existentialist crises» which «honest» individuals consequently suffer from, plus the use of a language and of style that very frequently recall Armah's work, it can be said that *Petals of Blood* is written in very close dialogism with *The Beautiful One Are Not Yet Born* indeed.

The writer does not hesitate to 'quote' his own imaginary ads (created by him) in the narrative either (again often to insinuate the dullness and stupidity of typical practices of the media in Kenya and the third-world obviously aiming to "control the masses," in a post-independence consumer society). Here is an example:

Most of the containers, whether plastic or glass bottles, carried the famous ad, now popularised in most parts of the country through their sales-vans, newspapers, and handbills: POTENCY-Theng'a, Theng'a with Theng'eta. P= 3T (*Petals of Blood*, p. 281).

Taken individually, the use of such an amount and variety of intertextual allusions is perhaps not proper to Ngugi in general, but having such a great number and variety of intertexts together in this specific way and for such a multitude of specific aims and that are all interconnected – and as a central element of the style of a single novel – is certainly an innovative and sophisticated procedure. Such a multiplicity and variety of the literary and discursive intertexts of *Petals of Blood*, and the remarkable assortment in the manners in which these intertexts are implemented – ranging, as we just noted, from overt reference, to citation, to paraphrasing, to a multitude of subtler forms of dialogism and intertextuality – is in itself a major experiment in Ngugi's use of intertextual allusion in *Petals of Blood*, both thematically and aesthetically. It definitely gives the text the character of a "matrix" to recall Michael Riffaterre's concept. Such a matrix is, in addition, an original, personal and interesting one on account of the sophisticated quality of many of the texts to which it sends us, but also in view of the specificity, in meaning and form, of the web of these intertexts taken as a (semantic and aesthetic) unit. But the "simulacrum," the "process of serial replication," in *Petals of Blood* really "takes on a logic and momentum of its own."⁶⁷ And, in the main, the "re-presentation" of intertextual allusion, is "intrinsically factitious," and it is "displayed in its artificiality." The "mimesis" here can "be read as delusive, and known to be not-the-thing-which-it-presents," much as "in postmodern theory."⁶⁸

There is, in addition, innovation in the immediate visionary role played by the intertextual allusions in *Petals of Blood* in comparison to Ngugi's earlier novels, as well as to the typical modernist approach to intertextual allusion as a whole. Like Ngugi's other novels, *Petals of Blood* is written from an eclectic perspective, and it displays continuities in the use of modernist techniques, but if it is to be seen as part of any Western 'tradition' in particular, this would be postmodernism, rather than modernism, as we already noted. Like postmodernist or contemporary works of art, and quite

⁶⁷ Nigel Wheale, "Postmodernism: from Elite to Mass Culture?," in *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, Nigel Wheale (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 50.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 51.

in contrast to the typical modernist works, *Petals of Blood* displays “elements of postmodernism,” including ones relating to the use of intertextual allusion.⁶⁹ It obviously displays, for instance, the originally intertextual way of writing that we described above. In addition, it displays, in comparison with *A Grain of Wheat*, a movement “from elite to mass culture,” or, at any rate, a blending of both cultures; a challenging rather than frustrated, and ironic rather than solemn and melancholic, attitude towards the contemporary world; plus a worldview that definitely has a melancholic undertone still, but which is ultimately optimistic.⁷⁰ Some of these elements at least are implied in Oscar M. Maina’s definition of postmodernism:

[P]ostmodernism has a celebrative attitude towards the modern world. Unlike the modernist who laments and problematizes human identity and individuality, the postmodernist appreciates the overcoming of limitations of human progress, although this progress lacks distinctive direction and purpose. With a particular bias to artistic representation, postmodernism rejects the tragic and pessimistic worldview of modernism. Postmodernism embraces human diversity in culture, art and ideology in a universal context. Relativism and indeterminacy are therefore major characteristics of a postmodern reading of a text, which rejects the concept of a unified underlying reality.⁷¹

Other major elements of postmodernism in *Petals of Blood* pertain to the points implied by Nigel Wheale’s definition of postmodernity:

Postmodernity is often described as blurring or destroying distinctions between established cultural hierarchies, and it is said to do this by

⁶⁹ See Kathy Kessler, “Rewriting History in Fiction: Elements of Postmodernism in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s Later Novels” (75 - 90), in *Ariel, A Review of International English Literature*, 25: 2, April 1994, for a detailed discussion of some of these elements.

⁷⁰ Though “That postmodernism is indefinable is a truism” as Gary Aylesworth reminds us, the elements we mention here are often presented as major defining aspects of postmodernism. See, for example, Gary Aylesworth, “Postmodernism,” *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/postmodernism/>, Winter 2010. See mainly the part of Aylesworth’s contribution on “Postmodern Rhetoric and Aesthetics.” See also Nigel Wheale, *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, Nigel Wheale (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1995, in particular the essays entitled “Paradigms of the Postmodern” (*ibid.*, p. p. 3 - 14); “Postmodernism from Elite to Mass Culture?” (*ibid.*, p. p. 33 - 56). Though the difficulty to establish clear limits between modernism and postmodernism is equally acknowledged by scholars, the points we mention here are often seen as major distinctive elements between the two concepts and movements. See for instance “Modernism and Its consequences: Continuity or Break?” *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, in Nigel Wheale (ed.), (op. cit., p. p. 15 - 32), for more detail.

⁷¹ Oscar M. Maina, « Mirroring the Subtext: Postmodernism in Ngugi wa Thiongo’s *Wizard of the Crow*. » Publication: Nairobi: Kenya United States International University 2008, vol. (p. p. 67 - 74) Date: 2008, p. 68.

introducing themes and images from mass/popular/consumer culture into the prestige forms of high culture, such as literature and the fine arts.⁷²

Many of the intertextual allusions in *Petals of Blood* seem to be used in fulfilment of these elements of postmodernism. The phrase “walking toward Bethlehem to be born again,” to return to this simple but very illustrative example, shows that Ngugi here is writing with a postmodernist’s rather than with a modernist’s consciousness; it clearly suggests that the point in *Petals of Blood* is not to lament a disorderly and materialist present and near past, or show nostalgia about a more orderly and innocent past (only), but to offer a vision that is critical of the present (and the past) but that looks forward to the future with optimism. It can be argued that such optimism is conceivable in a *Grain of Wheat* which, we just argued, has rather a modernist tendency in style and in vision as it puts forward a cynical vision as we pointed out. Yet, while it is true that “rebirth” is important to the vision which this novel promotes, the allusion is used rather to point up the inevitability of continual sacrifice, on the necessity of more death and suffering than is already undergone, before the tiny elements of hope that the novel hints at by its end could take place. In the logic of *A Grain of Wheat* such rebirth does not mean the end of suffering or definitive emancipation; they are only momentary. The “grain of wheat” is in fact at best a neutral metaphor – it stands for the inevitability of rebirth but, equally, for the necessity of sacrifice and death at the same time. A “grain” needs to die and be buried in the ground to be born again quite a while later, and when it is resurrected it is only to die again and so on. Thus, “a grain of wheat” is not of necessity an optimistic metaphor. The metaphor in the title of *Petals of Blood* and in the phrase “walking toward Bethlehem to be born ... la luta continua” is obviously more optimistic, and the allusions to the Bible, Walcott, Whitman, Achebe, Ousmane, Marx, Mao, Lenin and Fanon are deployed and employed so help convey such an optimistic, say utopian, vision.

*

The very intertextual character of *Petals of Blood* paves the way for us to shed light on the process of rewriting – the second major aspect of the recycling dynamic in Ngugi’s fiction. Despite the importance of this exercise in Ngugi’s writings, we will abridge our discussion of it here because much about it is suggested in our earlier treatment of how Ngugi recycles intertextual allusion, and because we will deal with some of its aspects,

⁷² Nigel Wheale, “Postmodernism from Elite to Mass Culture?,” in *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, Nigel Wheale (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 34. See also the essays cited in the two previous notes for an ampler definition of postmodernism in comparison with modernism in literature and art.

namely parody, in the next section. The rest of this section will deal with aspects of this process which closely correspond to the dynamic of recycling. For what is first noteworthy is that rewriting implies several practices, not all of which should be seen as processes of recycling. In fact, the exercise of rewriting anterior texts shows two notable aspects in Ngugi's fiction, namely adaptation and parody. Parody will be briefly considered in the next section as we just noted, because it is closer to the dynamic of subversion than to rewriting. Concerning the adaptation of previous texts or parts of them, it is noticeable that some such adaptations are quite direct as we have already seen in several examples in our comparison of Ngugi and Achebe, Lawrence and Fanon in the previous chapters. For one more example, the following passage from *Petals of Blood* recalls very immediately a passage from *Heart of Darkness* (quoted subsequently):

From Agu and Agu, Tene wa Tene, from long long before the Manjiri generation, the highway had seen more than its fair share of adventures from the north and north-west. Solomon's suitors for myrrh and frankincense; Zeus' children in a royal hunt for the seat of the sun-god of the Nile; scouts and emissaries of Genghis Khan; Arab geographers and also hunters for slaves and ivory; soul and gold merchants from Gaul and from Bismarck's Germany; land pirates and human game-hunters from Victorian and Edwardian England: they had all passed here bound for a kingdom of plenty, driven sometimes by holy zeal, sometimes by a genuine thirst for knowledge and the quest for the spot where the first man's umbilical cord was buried, but more often by mercenary commercial greed and love of the wanton destruction of those with a slightly different complexion from theirs (*Petals of Blood*, p. 68).

Here is the passage from *Heart of Darkness* that Ngugi seems to have adapted with some modification here:

'I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago – the other day (...) But darkness was here yesterday. Imagine the feelings of a commander of a fine (...) trireme in the Mediterranean, ordered suddenly to the north; run overland across the Gauls in a hurry; put in charge of one of these craft the legionaries – a wonderful lot of handy men they must have been, too – used to build, apparently by the hundred, in a month or two, if we may believe what we read (...) They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others (...) It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind (...) The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much' (*Heart of Darkness*, p. p. 8-10).

It seems that Chapter Four in *Petals of Blood* as a whole is modelled after Chapter One in *Heart of Darkness* in which Conrad is the most considerate in treating Africa and Africans in *Heart of Darkness*. In another context, the character of Munira and an aspect of Gaturia are evidently re-dramatisations of the character of John in Ngugi's short story "A Meeting in the Dark." Similarly, Gikonyo is clearly an elaboration on Kamau, the protagonist in Ngugi's "The return," and *A Grain of Wheat* as a whole is equally obviously an elaboration on the same short story. Some of Ngugi's first short stories seem to be adaptations of previous works with only slight modifications having to do with context mainly. "The Fig Tree" is the main case in point. In addition to its Lawrentian characteristics, it recalls James Joyce's "Eveline" in up to details relating to story, plot, mode, technique and diction. The first paragraph of the story is clearly a rewriting, in an African context, and with minor changes, of the first few paragraphs of Joyce's short story. A juxtaposition of those passages demonstrates it:

"The Fig Tree:"

Mukami stood at the door; slowly and sorrowfully she turned her head and looked at the hearth. A momentary hesitation. The smouldering fire and the small stool by the fire-side seemed to be calling her back. No she had made up her mind. She must go. With a smooth oiled upper-garment pulled tightly over her otherwise bare head, and then falling over her slim and youthful shoulders, she plunged into the lone and savage darkness ("The Fig Tree," p. 70).

"Eveline:"

SHE sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired. / (...) Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home (...) She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years (...) She had consented to go away, to leave her home.⁷³

Other elements of resemblance foster the point. At the level of plot, "The Fig Tree" is, like "Eveline," a story of a depressed young woman confused as to whether to run away from oppressive homestead and social environment or stay for moral reasons. At the level of style, "The Fig Tree" is written in a typical Joycean style. For instance, the story is written through the protagonist's flash backs and, more generally, through what Roger Fowler calls "the 'psychological realism' of Joycean stream of consciousness where, instead of subordinating the character to his own voice, the narrator effaces himself to realise the character as an independent subject expressing

⁷³ James Joyce, "Eveline," in *Dubliners* (1914).

the special nature of his mental experience.”⁷⁴ And, at the level of language, Ngugi has resorted to what Fowler, still, describes as the “use of language to mime the structure of the character’s thoughts.” The use of language in this way is typical of Joyce’s work, and is equally characteristic of “Eveline” and “The Fig Tree.” In the above passages, for example, writing in very short, independent clauses allows achieving the objective described by Fowler indeed. Ngugi is using Joyce’s “artificially constructed language, which, by convention, has come to be accepted as the representation of a fragmented, unfocused consciousness” of a character as can easily be verified in those passages.⁷⁵ In Ngugi’s other short story, “A Meeting in the Dark,”⁷⁶ the experience of John sounds very much like a retelling indeed, at best a re-dramatisation, of the tragedy of Achebe’s Nwoye. Like Achebe, Ngugi focuses on the alienation of the protagonist as a result of the father’s excessive authority in a way that makes the parallel between the two stories obvious. In turn, an aspect of Mugo in *A Grain of Wheat*, Munira in *Petals of Blood* and Gaturia in *Devil on the Cross* are elaborations on that same ‘John-Nwoye’ in Ngugi’s short story.

But it is the Bible that comes on top of the works adapted in Ngugi’s fiction, as can be deduced from some of our previous arguments. In *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* mainly Ngugi does not merely make allusions to the Bible. Actually, he provides genuine adaptations of the Bible in these works. Furthermore, he does so with such faithfulness to the spirit and world of this sacred book that he gives the impression that what he intends to do is to provide Kenya/Africa with a referential written religious literature – with their own (parallel to the) Bible – (in addition to its written history). The Africa of Ngugi’s novels in general and these first narratives in particular has its own Christian God, its own Satans, its own Devils, Angels and Demons, its own (black) Adam and Eve. It also has (black) prophets, (white and black) pharaohs, (black) Moseses, (black) Israeli people, plight, ‘Misris,’ Journeys towards promised lands and emancipation, promised lands, Jerusalems, New Jerusalems, and new worlds of its own. It has, as well, its own (black) Christs, its own followers and soldiers of Christ, its own anti-Christs, its own crucifixion myth, its own crucifying emperors, its own resurrection myth, its own processes of rebirth, its own saints and hermits, its own notion of sacrifice and martyrdom, its own trees of life, its own grains of wheat, its own good versus evil dichotomies, its own Christian morality and so on. In *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*, in particular, such adaptations look like transfers of the whole world of the Bible, or at least of its quintessence, into the Kikuyu/African (geographical, historical,

⁷⁴ Roger Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel* (in the *New Accents* series), Terence Hawkes (General Editor), London : Methus and Co., 1977, p. 97- 98.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. p. 98 - 99.

⁷⁶ Ngugi, « A Meeting in the Dark », a short story published in *Secret Lives, Short Stories by Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (55 - 70), London : Heinemann, 1975.

ethnic, cultural and moral) situations of the novels. This is so much the case that it would be sound to read these texts as versions of the Bible, retellings of it in new, African/Gikuyu contexts.

Simultaneously, more than just alluding to Gikuyu myths Ngugi actually rewrites these myths, so much so that the stories are also readable as elaborate adaptations of Gikuyu Mythology. The related symbology and diction is enriched and perhaps modified to meet the various other aesthetic and discursive requirements of the stories. True, Ngugi never rewrites Gikuyu mythology in its raw state but always amplifies it; he develops, expands and embellishes it, by its combination of Christian mythology, historical facts, and literary procedures and devices, so that it looks profounder and more captivating than it actually is. But the core of the myths in question is maintained to the point that makes them also readable as very sophisticated imaginative adaptations of the Gikuyu and Mumbi story. Many of our points in the previous chapters imply that, in *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child*, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi equally and simultaneously tended to adapt the world of Chinua Achebe, with more or less pointed modifications and innovations. In the first two novels he tended to adapt Achebe's world almost in its entirety, to rewrite favourably *Things Fall Apart* more specifically. Much of what has been said in Chapter Three shows that stories such as *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between*, are indeed adaptations of *Things Fall Apart* from different points of view. The adaptations are sometimes obviously direct; therefore, it would be fair to say that they are relatively little inspired; they can, accordingly, be classified as adaptations of a "second-degree-creative" type. In *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*, as our previous arguments also imply, the spirit and essence of the world of Chinua Achebe is still there, but the adaptation of it is subtler, only partial, and, what is more, mainly synthetic, especially in *Petals of Blood*. We can thus roughly speak, in the case of *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*, of adaptations of Achebe's world that are of a "first-degree creative" kind. In *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi's adaptations of Achebe's world and style become decreasingly direct and traceable, proportionally to Ngugi's increasing orientation towards adaptations of Frantz Fanon's ideas and style. In these two novels, in particular, Ngugi has clearly entered a phase that can be called one of 'literary puberty,' a phase of rebellion, where one of his main creative dynamics consists of reactionary very emotional – indeed violent – attempts to *subvert* his pre-Fanonian literary fathers.

B. b. Subversion

Among the various creative dynamics by which he composes his works, Ngugi's practice of subversion is the most often put in the foreground by

his critics. It is also the most documented one: overt Marxism and 'Afrocentrism,' – the two main subversive processes in Ngugi's fiction – are in effect documented enough to make it necessary to deal with them in detail here. It is important, however, to insist that this dynamic is only one among several other creative processes by which Ngugi writes. It is equally noteworthy that this dynamic is not antithetical to influence as it might seem. We have classified it with the "Oedipal" creative dynamics because, despite its seditious appearance, it is in reality an effect of influence under one of its most direct aspects: it testifies not to the absence, or the end, of the Argon struggle with reference to Ngugi as it might seem, but to a state of this struggle at its fiercest. As commonly known, Ngugi displays an extremely strong anxiety to write novels that would be as different as possible from both Western and mainstream modern African fiction written in English and other European languages. What confirms this is that the products of this creative dynamic – which is prominent with reference to African and postcolonial authors in general – are not some absolutely experimental works, but works that "blend revolt and conciliation" to recall Asante Darko's description of postcolonial literature.⁷⁷ Tobias Doring's argument in connection with Caribbean literature, in *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition*, is true of Ngugi's novels, though to different degrees:

They [Anglophone texts from the Caribbean] acknowledge the shaping influence of European genres and English models while, on the other hand, they rewrite this cultural heritage through their rhetoric. The traces of tradition can be read in two ways. Both enabling and restricting, earlier texts from the literary canon may always be ambiguous for later writing and serve a double function: to mark affiliation and to maintain difference.⁷⁸

The more powerful the desire to subvert the literary father, the more self-conscious it is, the more the ambiguity and duality that Doring talks about increases and the more the relationship with the literary father seems immediate and strong. This might seem ironic, but Ngugi's most subversive works, particularly *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* are indeed the most affected by Doring's contention. And this is precisely because those two novels are the most subversive of all his narratives. What is also important and relevant to do here is to define this dynamic with some more precision. Accordingly, we shall try and study what this subversive creative dynamic

⁷⁷ Kwako Asante-Darko, "Language and Culture in African Postcolonial Literature." *The C. L. C. Web Journal*, URL: <http://clwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb00-1/asante-darko00.html>, March 2000.

⁷⁸ Tobias Doring, *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 3.

means in intertextual terms. And what it means in intertextual terms is, on the one hand, a very strong, essentially emotional endeavour on the part of Ngugi to simply expel his earlier liberal and Christian humanist influences and to replace them with new, chiefly Fanonian and Marxist, ideas and devices as direct and 'approved' sources of inspiration. On the other hand, it means the creative exploitation of the subversive potential of these new sources of influence to write against the older precursors, indeed against the Englishness and neutrality of his own previous novels.

Indeed, besides reprocessing literary elements, Ngugi also tended to *subvert*, or write in opposition to, some of his major sources of influence – both the liberal-and-Christian-humanist and the modern African ones. Only an aspect of this creative approach can be referred to by Bloom's term "*Tessera*," or "completion and antithesis." For these terms are not sufficient to describe the phenomenon in its entirety with reference to Ngugi, as what he precisely does in this case is not just to strive to complement – i.e. to 'fill' imaginative space left vacant by his influencers – and to write antithetically to his liberal humanist influencers and the Anglo-Saxon canon which is all that the term *Tessera* can mean with reference to Ngugi. Furthermore, his aim by doing so is not exclusively poetic in the sense in which Bloom defines the term and uses the term *Tessera*. For instance, Ngugi's subversive practices include the use of procedures inspired from available forms of art and literary practices and modes likely to offer media of writing that allow for *ideological* and not just aesthetic opposition to the liberal and Christian humanist, and the neutral, novelistic traditions. These practices include recourse to socialist art, post-modernism, orature, performance, magical realism and the Kikuyu language – though, in the latest novels, namely *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*, he uses these media for purposes other than just subversion.

Other practices that can be associated with this subversive attitude of Ngugi's include a profuse use of documentary and discursive sources – chiefly Marxist and Fanonian –, sometimes in a very direct way, to achieve rupture with the Christian and liberal humanism novelistic tradition of many of his influencers. A last element of this creative attitude is again a very self-conscious use of some of the very literary procedures of the liberal humanist influencers such as techniques easily recognisable as 'private' to writers such as Conrad, Lawrence and Achebe, for purposes that are simply opposite to their aims in the original works – often to provide witty and satirical rewritings – parodies – of the influencing (i.e. the subverted) texts. This subversive creative dynamic – or thus Ngugi's radically socialist and Afrocentric tendencies and literary practices – can be found in all Ngugi's writings; however, it is not salient before *Petals of Blood*, and the writer's recourse to it went increasing with the progress of his career up to *Devil on the Cross*. In *Devil on the Cross*, exceptionally, Ngugi goes so far in privileging this particular creative dynamic as to challenge established literary forms and

norms, both Western and modern African, at the expense of conventional artistic finesse.⁷⁹ We say both Western and Modern African norms because writing from a Marxist perspective and in an African language clearly aims not just at sharp differentiation from Western literature – from Conrad and Lawrence and the English tradition, and from African literature written in European languages, namely from writers like Achebe – but at writing violently and rhetorically against these literatures.

Ngugi's "struggle," from *Petals of Blood* onwards, to make his fiction interestingly Marxist, and to "Africanise" it equally interestingly – and, by the same token, to individuate it adequately – terms which can summarise this second oedipal creative dynamic of his as we noted – is, in effect, a fact beyond question. This subversive/antithetical creative attitude can be noticed in the three main levels of Ngugi's fiction namely the thematic, formal, and linguistic levels. Although *A Grain of Wheat* is not free from this practice as can easily be deduced from our arguments in Chapter Four, *Petals of Blood* constitutes the first really bold attempt in this sense. In the narrative itself, Ngugi not only confirms his movement towards an overtly dissident – i.e. communist and Afrocentric – view and practice of African imaginative literature but also dramatises the causes that led him to write subversively, by dealing squarely with imaginative literature and intertextuality as one of the themes in *Petals of Blood*. He does this in several places in the novel, but the most explicitly in Chapter Seven. There, using Karega's experience clearly to hint at his own experience as an imaginative writer, Ngugi not only confirms that his way of writing in *Petals of Blood* is based on a subversive philosophy, and that it aims at the subversion of both Western and modern African Christian and liberal humanist (or "neutral") literatures – that is of all his major precursors in the earlier works – but also dramatises this subversion in a way that clearly aims to demonstrate that this is the only natural and reasonable way of writing for him and every other African writer. Before simply 'expressing' a subversive point of view towards "neutral" African literature (to recall Claude Wauthier's, but also the Lawyer's term *Petals of Blood*, p. 200) – i.e. towards the writing typical modern African literature including Achebe's writing and Ngugi's own writing before *Petals of Blood* – Ngugi first suggests his scepticism about, and disillusionment with, his own earlier – Lawrentian and liberal and Christian humanist – (literary) philosophy. Thus, we are told, through a stream of consciousness of Karega's, that

⁷⁹ However, this also paved the way for his creations of what is now some of his most original literary practices, namely the freer, more 'relaxed,' more eclectic, more encyclopaedic and more optimistic, yet less subversive way of writing of *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*. For, though his subversive tendency is still important in *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*, these works are, nevertheless, ripper fruits of Ngugi's struggle with his precursors. In comparison with *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*, they correspond to a further step towards a positive kind of rupture with many of his previous creative practices, including the candidly subversive creative dynamic of *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* that we are discussing here.

There was a time, where he [Karega] used to be sure of things: there was a time for instance when he thought that contact with a loved one could solve everything, was the key to the world. And indeed in those days when his heart beat in rhythm with Mukami's, he had seen a world without knots and riddles opening out, a world which, bathed in the floodtide and light of their innocence, promised eternal beauty and truth (*Petals of Blood*, p. 197).

Such a view of the world (including an approach to literature based on such a view) proves to be only a youth's phantasm, Ngugi very clearly suggests further on. Thus, it is replaced, first, by "hero worship," recalling Ngugi's near-veneration of Jomo Kenyatta and other nationalist heroes (such as Ghandi) in one of the intermediary stages of his career, namely when he wrote *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between*:

He [Karega] was soon to know, shockingly so, that there were those who waited in shadowy corners to suffocate growth with their foul breaths with the fart and shit of their hypocrisy and religious double-dealing (...) Hero worship of those he thought could clear the air of suffocating man-made foul smells had gradually replaced his earlier faith in the universal healing power of love and innocence (*Petals of Blood*, p. 198).

"Hero worship" soon proves to be as fallacious and naive a doctrine to Ngugi's hero as his earlier "faith in the universal healing power of love and innocence" has been, resulting in an even profounder disappointment, and leaving the place to a second phase of puzzlement that sound much like an allusion to the world of *A Grain of Wheat*:

But in Siriana he had watched the transformation of Chui from a popular hero into a tyrant who thought that his power came from God and foreigners. Karega had gone through all these experiences including his fruitless search for jobs in the city and his even more humiliating venture of selling fruits and sheepskins to tourists. Why then had he not learnt from these? Why had he urged a whole community to undertake a journey which he should have known would end in futility and added humiliation? (*Petals of Blood*, p. 198).

Karega, we are told, seeks solutions to such enquiries in reading African literature. Thus, on his request, he receives from the Lawyer a selection of books of history, politics and imaginative literature written by African professors and scholars. But instead of illumining and comforting his belief in what Ngugi presents as the righteousness of the collective and black causes for Africans -- instead of "restoring his faith and his belief" and answering his "hope for a vision of the future rooted in a critical awareness of the past" (*Petals of Blood* p. 198) -- the books only add to his pessimism and confusion. His hero, Ngugi tells us, naturally expects that history, for instance, "should provide the key to the present," "that a study of history

should help us to answer certain questions: where are we now? How did we come to be where we are? How did it come about that 75 per cent of those that produce food and wealth were poor and that a small group – part of the non-producing part of the population – were wealthy?” etc. “But instead of answering these,” Ngugi writes, “instead of giving him the key he so badly needed,”

[T]he professors took him to pre-colonial times and made him wander purposelessly from Egypt, or Ethiopia, or Sudan, only to be checked in his pastoral wonderings by the arrival of Europeans. There they would make him come to a sudden full stop. To the learned minds of the historians, the history of Kenya before colonialism was one of the wanderlust and pointless warfare between peoples. The learned ones never wanted to confront the meaning of colonialism and of imperialism. When they touched on it, it was only to describe acts of violent resistance as grisly murders; some even demanded the rehabilitation of those who had sold out to the enemy during the years of struggle. One even approvingly quoted Governor Mitchell on the primitivity of Kenyan peoples and went ahead to show the historical origins of this primitivity, or what he called undercivilisation (*Petals of Blood*, p. 199).

The books on politics, Ngugi further tells us, are not more helpful for Karega to quench his thirst for unambiguous answers to questions such as “what of the resistance of African peoples? What of all the heroes traversing the whole world of black peoples? Was that only in his imagination? (*Petals of Blood*, p. 199):

He tried political science. But there he plunged into an even greater maze. Here professors delighted in balancing weighty rounded phrases on a thin decaying line of thought, or else dwelt on statistics and mathematics of power equation. They talked about politics of poverty versus inequality of politics; traditional modernisation versus modernising traditions; or else merely gave a catalogue of how local governments and central bureaucracies worked, or what this or that politician said versus what another one said. And to support all this, they quoted from several books and articles all carefully footnoted. Karega looked in vain for anything about colonialism and imperialism: occasionally there were abstract phrases about inequality of opportunities or the ethnic balancing act of modern governments (*Petals of Blood*, p. 199).

And “imaginative literature,” Ngugi finally tells us, “was not much different”:

The authors described the conditions correctly: they seemed able to reflect accurately the contemporary situation of fear, oppression and deprivation: but thereafter they led him down the paths of pessimism, obscurity and

mysticism: was there no way out except cynicism? Were people helpless victims? (*Petals of Blood*, p. 200).

In the end, Ngugi's gives his verdict through a fusion of the Lawyer's and Karega's viewpoints. His is indeed an extremely subversive conclusion:

'You [Karega] had asked me for books written by Black Professors. I [the Lawyer] wanted you to judge for yourself. Educators, men of letters, intellectuals: these are only voices – not neutral disembodied voices – but belonging to bodies of persons, of groups, of interests. You who will seek the truth about words emitted by a voice, look first for the body behind the voice. The voice merely rationalises the needs, whims, caprices, of its owner, the master. Better therefore to know the master in whose service the intellect is and you'll be able to properly evaluate the import and imagery of his utterances. You serve the people who struggle; or you serve those who rob the people. In a situation of the robber and the robbed, in a situation in which the old man of the sea is sitting on Sindbad, there can be no neutral history or politics. If you would learn look about you: choose your side.'/ What did he mean look about you? Choose your side? (...) Weren't they all, shouldn't they all be on the side of blackness against whiteness? (*Petals of Blood*, p. 200).

Such a verdict on Western and mainstream modern African literatures, provided within the narrative itself and by an honest, highly educated and absolutely positive character like the Lawyer, indeed leaves no room for doubt that the novel is conceived, at least in great part, as a direct antithesis to such literatures. *Petals of Blood* is thus written, at least partially, in opposition to the modes and ways of writing of Ngugi's Western precursors and neutral African precursors including Lawrence, Conrad and Achebe.

To illustrate this further, such a subversive creative dynamic in *Petals of Blood* can very easily be noted through a cursory re-examination of the narrative's thematic, formal and linguistic components. Thematically and discursively, it is clear that the novel pits Fanonism and Marxism against the Christian and liberal humanism of Ngugi's major precursors, as we have shown in Chapter Four. From the point of view of form, the novel is written through procedures and techniques of socialist art,⁸⁰ and, as we noted, post-modernism, folklore and magical realism as opposed to the "realism," "mysticism," "obscurity," "cynicism" and high modernism of his major influencers, including Achebe, Lawrence and Conrad, (and to his own earlier work, rather directly influenced by such writers as we have seen). Linguistically, *Petals of Blood* discloses a Marxist and popular phraseology and

⁸⁰ For a discussion of Ngugi's relationship with socialist art see, for example, Emmanuel Ngara's *Art and Ideology in the African Novel*, London: Heinemann, 1985. Ngara claims that "*Petals of blood*" is "socialist art par excellence" and extendedly elaborates on the idea. See also Salah Kaci-Mohamed, *Western Ethics and Aesthetic and the Discourses of Liberation in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's A Grain of Wheat, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross*, *op. cit.*, namely Chapter Two.

language thus departing from the formal, solemn, prophetic and grandiloquent language of his precursors and of his own earlier works. Ngugi's search for and movement towards subversive modes of fictional representation in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* has been largely noted by scholars as we argued; it is described typically in statements such as this one:

A defining characteristic of Ngugi's career, especially in its middle period (the 1970s and 1980s) was his search for modes of fictional representation that would mediate the politics of everyday life better than traditional novelistic genres. While he had often privileged the role of the novel as the form most attuned to the process of social change, Ngugi was also aware of the extent to which his early novels had been co-opted into the educational system, where they were valued as outstanding examples of the nationalist imagination. He was compelled to rethink the relationship between the novel and politics. This questioning took two forms. First, Ngugi began to probe the relation between genres and the kind of radical political intervention to which his work was committed. Second, he turned his attention to the language question as a symptom of the crisis in African writing. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), for example, he questioned the assumption that European languages were the natural vehicles for the African imagination, arguing that a literature produced in the language of the colonizer was inherently alienating.⁸¹

Subversion in *Petals of Blood* is, furthermore, not noticeable only in these broad considerations. In fact, it permeates up to the details of Ngugi's fictional language and literary devices in this novel (and the subsequent ones), affecting the use of metaphor and symbol for instance. Notably, Ngugi recuperates in his subversive works typically Conradian and Lawrentian metaphors – namely “binary oppositions” such as “light” versus “darkness,” “whiteness” versus “blackness,” “sun” versus “moon” – and employs them with a view to inverting the logic in which these binary oppositions are employed in the sources.⁸² A common subversive practice of Ngugi's from *Petals of Blood* onwards is indeed to turn some of Conrad's typical metaphors against him, namely those which serve Conrad's ethnically conscious discourse. Thus, while “blackness” and “darkness” whenever they are mentioned in Conrad's work, for instance, are “shown as weighting heavily on the characters in question ‘like a stone’,”⁸³ as David I. Ker notes with reference to *Nostramo*, it is, very clearly, “whiteness” and “light” that

⁸¹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, from *Encyclopedia of African Literature*. ISBN: 0-203-36126-1. Published: 07–10–2003. ©2009 Taylor and Francis. URL: http://www.bookrags.com/tandf/ngugi-wa-thiongo-tf/#bro_copy.

⁸² «Binary opposition» is Hans Bertens' term to refer to the «basic mental operation» which «consists in the creation of opposites». Hans Bertens, *The Basics of Literary Theory*, Oxon: Routledge, 2001, p. 62.

⁸³ David I. Ker, *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*, *op. cit.*, p.

have such effects on the character's and peoples in *Petals of Blood* and Ngugi's subsequent works. We have argued in Chapter Two that, in some examples, this is part of Ngugi's intention to differentiate himself from Lawrence, but it also seems to respond to a desire to use elements of Conradian metaphor, (light being equally a key Conradian symbol) in order to subvert Conrad's ethno-conscious discourse which greatly relies on the same metaphor. And while, on the other hand, "[l]ight as a metaphor" is used by Conrad to signify and emphasise "clarity of vision" of his characters for instance, it is night and darkness that are given this function in *Petals of Blood*. With Ngugi in this novel and after, darkness – this very significant Conradian metaphor – is clearly a symbol of beauty, peace, harmony and the intellectual consistency of the characters. The metaphors in the following passage, illustrate this as well as Ngugi's use of sombre colours as metaphors for positive values. Here he does it very powerfully:

If Wanjia had been patient and had waited for the new moon to appear on Ilmorog ridge – as indeed she had been instructed by Mwathi wa Mugo – she and Munira would have witnessed one of the most glorious and Joyous sights in all the land, with the ridges and the plains draped by a level sheet of shimmering moonlit mist into a harmony of peace and silence: a human soul would have to be restless and raging beyond reach of hope and salvation for it not to be momentarily overwhelmed and stilled by the sight and the atmosphere (*Petals of Blood*, p. 67).

The presence of moonlight here – in spite of the fact that the moon as a symbol is often used antithetically to the sun as a symbol – the main source of light and main symbol of light in Western literature – could have provoked our reticence as to Ngugi's intention to celebrate darkness and blackness in response to Conrad's celebration of light and whiteness. But Ngugi soon ascertains his point to "[re]turn the colonial gaze," by inverting the significance of colonialist symbolism and that the reference to the moon is actually part of that point. Thus immediately after the above he adds: "Even without the moon Ilmorog ridge, as it drops into the plains along with Ilmorog river flows, must form one of the greatest natural beauties in the world" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 67). And then, a few pages later, he gives us an image in which Ilmorog, the allegory to the land of black people, battles with the sources of light, the allegory to European civilisation, where the point of the metaphor is again obviously the triumph of the Ilmorog ridge, its revenge over the sun, symbolically slaughtered by the ridge at twilight, the "hour of darkness." The passage, it should be pointed out, is such an act of 'turning of one of colonialist literature's most typical and powerful weapons' of xenophobic propaganda, the use of the metaphor of light and darkness in favour of light, against such a racist discourse:

It was not only under the floodlight of the moon that made Ilmorog a wonder! There was also something soft and subdued and beautiful about Ilmorog ridge between the hour of the sun's death and the hour of darkness. For an inexplicable reason the low, billowy Donyo hills seemed to rise and to touch the sky. Standing anywhere on the ridge one could catch sight of the sun delicately resting on the tip of the distant hills which marked the far end of the grazing plains. Then suddenly the sun would slip behind the hills, blazing out a coppery hue with arrows of fire shot in every direction. Soon after, darkness and mystery would descend on the plains and the hills. The ridge, unless the moon was out, would now suddenly become part of that awesome shadow (*Petals of Blood*, p. 71).

And when such darkness is "shown as weighing heavily on" the characters in question 'like a stone', as with Conrad, it is meant as an irony to stress the assimilation, excessive individualism, and the general inconsistency of such characters. Thus, only Munira, the assimilated and egocentric fanatic, "relished twilight as a prelude to that awesome shadow" and "looked forward to the unwilling emersion into darkness," for him to "be part of everything: the plants, animals, people, huts, without consciously choosing." For, for him, "to choose involved effort, decision, preference of one possibility, and this could be painful" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 71). Clearly, the significance of the symbolism of darkness and light in *Petals of Blood* and the subsequent works is oppositional to its canonical significance in English literature and in Ngugi's own early work where Mukami, the heroine in "The Fig Tree" "plunged into the lone and savage darkness" ("The Fig Tree," *op. cit.*, p. 70).

Similarly, while "silver," for example, – a very recurrent Conradian motif – is in Conrad's *Nostromo* for example a noble substance which stands for "noble" (Western) values; it is in *Petals of Blood* implied as part of artificial and destructive, imperialist, forces. It certainly is, for instance, part of the false "metallic promises" of the cities which the novel charges of having emptied Ilmorog of its young and spiritual substance. Comparing the use of metaphor in *Petals of Blood* and *Nostromo*, David I. Ker establishes an interesting parallel of how the use of specific metaphors in these novels helps to uncover the writers' point of view amidst the multiple voices through which they speak in these narratives. Ker mentions "fire," for example, as a metaphor that is as important for Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* as "silver" is for Conrad in *Nostromo*. But while Ker notes that Ngugi does not employ this metaphor exactly as Conrad employs silver, he fails to mention that Ngugi's aim is adversarial to Conrad's aim. Ker presents fire in *Petals of Blood* as a sacred cleansing force, which is not to be excluded as possibility, in view of its being the means of the execution of the novel's antagonist for instance. But he fails to notice that fire in *Petals of Blood* is essentially part of Ngugi's anti-imperialist allegorical arsenal (together with other metaphors such as light and the white colour). For fire in *Petals of Blood* destroys the

lives of characters such as Wanjia's aunt, Wanjia herself and Munira. Fire seems only ironically associated with baptism and cleansing as regards Wanjia and Munira. It is rather fire's natural symbolic opposite, rain, that is associated with Wanjia as a positive symbol. Contrary to fire which devastates her life both literally and symbolically, rain is surely a blessing for her. It is a metaphor of her expectations of fertility and life:

Wanjia was possessed of the rain-spirit. She walked through it, clothes drenched, skirt-hem tight against her thighs, revelling in the waters from heaven. She would at times sit or stand still on her hut's verandah and look, wonder-gaze, at her life in droplets of rain falling from the roof (*Petals of Blood*, p. 196).

The "waiting earth," its "readiness," after being fertilised by rain, we are told, "powered Wanjia's wings of expectation and numerous desires. Feverishly, she looked out for tomorrow, waiting, like the other women, for earth to (...) be thrust open by the naked shoots of life" (*Petals of Blood*, p. 196).

In the next example, fire and rain emerge as diametrically opposed metaphors:

Even the rain that fell after a month after all the charitable individuals and organisations had packed their bags and returned to the city, was, later for Munira, the way God chose to reveal himself in all his thunderous and flaming glory (...) But for Nyakinyua, Njuguna (...) and the others who knew about Mwathi's power, the rain had clearly been God's response to sacrifice and it signalled the end of a year of drought. They heard Africa's God wrestling with the gods of other lands. They heard and listened in wonder to god's fearful roar and the clashing of their swords which emitted fire from heaven (*Petal of Blood*, p. 195).

As can be noticed, Ngugi associates images of fire with the "imperialist" notion of "God's glory" as something "flaming and thunderous." In such a view of things glory itself lies in the power to intimidate, devastate and dominate. At the same time, Ngugi links the idea with Munira's alienation owing to his internalisation of such a notion as a "native intellectual" and an indoctrinated Christian fanatic. Thus, even in rain he sees 'fire.' For him, rain is "the way God chose to reveal himself in all his thunderous and flaming glory." To the villagers, on the other hand, the same "fire from heaven" does not inspire "flaming glory" but fear and images of war. It stands for an unwanted and violent, but necessary and decisive struggle of "Africa's God" with invading "gods of other lands." For them, it is rather rain that stands for the best that there is in the concepts of God and God's power: the gift of life, and the power to restore it (opposed to capacity for destruction symbolised by fire and allied with Munira's idea of God and

with imperialism). Rain, for Ilmorogans, is “sperms” from heaven, announcing respite after struggle and harvest after sacrifice. Rain in *Petals of Blood* is not merely fire’s symbolic opposite: as in nature, it is its superior foe, a part of the novel’s promises of the people’s victory over “the bourgeoisie” and the triumph of life over fatality.

As to the sun, light, and whiteness, they are here as weighty and counterproductive a triad as is the triad moon, darkness and blackness in the colonialist symbology. All three metaphors, light, silver and fire, which David I. Ker fallaciously argues Ngugi uses in imitation of Conrad, are thus ‘borrowed’ only with the intention to subvert, not to imitate or recycle, Conradian metaphor in fact. Importantly too Ker’s interest in the use of Conradian metaphor in *Petals of Blood* aims to show how Ngugi employs “the multiple perspective” in imitation of Conrad. This does not seem very accurate as well. It seems very clear that what Ngugi wants to do by means of this and other Conradian techniques is deliberately to write in opposition to Conrad’s oversimplifying, and sometimes “racist,” discourse on Africa. Even from the strictly aesthetic standpoint, it is, as we argued, out of an “authenticating urge,” that he mainly does it. A major aspect of *Petals of Blood* is that it relies indeed “on creative impulses rooted in the people and the proletariat and a corresponding opposition to creative impulses arising from other classes and ideologies” to quote Raymond Williams.⁸⁴

This subversive creative dynamic goes on to become manifest in *Devil on the Cross*. We will not argue much further about how this novel rebels against “the Western canon,” for it is clear enough that through its language, form and content, it displays, more than just a subversive attitude, a genuine storm of cultural criticism – an artistic fury – against Western literature and culture and the institutions which perpetuate them in Africa. Of all Ngugi’s fiction, this novel is exceptional from this standpoint. Though it continues to draw on the narrative modes and techniques of Ngugi’s earlier – Western and modern African – influencers as we have seen, its language, form and content obviously make of it a reactive and emotional narrative written in response to what Ngugi identifies as Western cultural, economic and political injustices. It is almost pamphlet, written by a writer then himself in prison because of such injustice, and in defiance of that injustice: “It was natural that, as I sat in Cell 16 at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison in 1978, I should have been thinking of the novel as the means of my defiance of the intended detention of my mind and imagination.”⁸⁵ Here the exercise of subversion is so clear that one can agree that “Ngugi’s own radical views and involvement in Kenyan politics shape his literary work into weapons of revolution and rebellion, rather than objective text that truly embodies

⁸⁴ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford U P, 1977, p. 203.

⁸⁵ Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind*, *op. cit.* p. 71.

current conditions in the country.”⁸⁶ Whereas in *Petals of Blood* Ngugi's method of subversion is to strike a balance between realism and Marxism, the main tendency in *Devil on the Cross* is to sacrifice realism for ideological clarity. Even if the story's style remains a blend of formalized realism and more linear genres and styles from the East African oral tradition, there are more sequences where Ngugi resorts to the latter than to ones in which he uses the former. Elements of subversion are as numerous as they are obvious, and they affect almost every aspect of the narrative. Parts of the story where the writer describes events or characters without intention to influence the reader's judgement and interpretation – as in the first few chapters of the story – are relatively rare. Otherwise the work is typically witty and satirical, forthright in its language and moralising in its content and tone. The writer intervenes in the narrative frequently and directly, and he simply manipulates point of view to express his own point of view. Also, the novel is written in a “clear and linear style,” one which Volkoshinov and Bakhtin would call “authoritarian” or “rational dogmatism.”⁸⁷ Although this is also somewhat the case in *Petals of Blood*, never a novel written before by Ngugi has been as “schematic” as *Devil on the Cross*. As in his play *I Will Marry When I Want*, he has made the novel out of binary oppositions, and like the other elements of subversion cited above, such oppositions are there mainly to emphasize the author's protest against the hegemony of Western culture on his country and Africa in the most direct and simplest of ways.

Written in Gikuyu, in a style that is more linear than elaborate, in a form that is near to those oral traditional African cultural forms, and largely privileging content over form and discursive clarity over the usual scepticism and ambiguity of the novel genre, it is equally clear that *Devil on the Cross* is also written in subversion of mainstream modern African literature, that is, in subversion of Ngugi's modern African precursors with, in the lead, Chinua Achebe. Ngugi says it clearly in an explanation of the motives behind the change of “commitment” and “tradition” embodied in *Devil on the Cross*, in his essay “The language of African Fiction” in *Decolonising the Mind*:

The brilliant minds of a Chinua Achebe, a Wole Soyinka or a Kofi Awoonor went not to revitalise the African novel but to create a new tradition, that of the Afro-European novel (...) the African novel was further impoverished by the very means of its possible liberation:

⁸⁶ Jenie Williamson, Happy Hinmann, and Lanell Williamson's commentary on “*Devil On The Cross*” published in “Contemporary British Literature: Britain and Africa,” URL: < <http://www.english.ilstu.edu/ekstone/219/syllabus.html> >, p. 8/10.

⁸⁷ In Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin – The dialogical Principle*, trans. by W. Godzich, Manchester UP, 1984, p. 75.

exposure of its would-be practitioners to the secular tradition of the critical and socialist tradition of the European novel (...).⁸⁸

As its very title indicates, *Devil on the Cross* is a partly hilarious and partly satirical parody of Christian culture as a whole, its institutional arsenal and all that Ngugi came to regard as its products, including modern African literatures written in European languages, and the work of Ngugi's main literary father, Chinua Achebe.

C. Muses

As we noted, there is, besides the oedipal creative dynamic discussed in the previous section, another major type of creative dynamics in Ngugi's fiction. This is what we have called metaphorically Ngugi's "Muses," that is, for reminder, sources of inspiration and creative processes of his that can be regarded as being entirely his own. They can be regarded as elements of his own "imagination complex" to recall Wallace Stevens' term. As we explained at the beginning of this chapter, this dynamic does not arise from anxieties of influence and indebtedness in the immediate – intertextual or intra-poetic – senses, but from the writer's experience with the so-called 'extra-textual' world and with extra-literary disciplines. As we also specified, these Muses of Ngugi's can be divided into two according to the division proposed by Paul Frye: the logo-genetic Muse, that of the production of literature by language, and the socio-genetic Muse, 'responsible' for the production of literature by social, historical and economic factors, distinguished from the 'psychogenetic Muse' – or the oedipal creative dynamic explored in the previous section.

C. a. The Logogenetic Muse

This is one of the most crucial aspects of invention in Ngugi's fiction – an area in which he has made some of his most significant contributions to literature. As is well known, language has a special importance for Ngugi, and logo-genetic creativity certainly has an importance for the novelist that is proportional to such concern with language. Like the oedipal creative dynamic, the search for creativity by language is both synchronic and diachronic in the case of Ngugi. That is, it can be observed in a typical and personal use of language in all his narratives, in gradual changes in his fictional language across his career, as well as in drastic transformations – or

⁸⁸ Ngugi, *Decolonizing the Mind*, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

ruptures – in his approach to language and to the language of African fiction and literature in particular at points in his career (first in *Petals of Blood*, then in *Devil on the Cross*). It is relevant to recall before developing this idea that this “logo-genetic Muse” of Ngugi’s is not seen here in the radical sense. That is, it is not seen in the sense in which logo-centric theorists of intertextuality such as Barthes and Derrida conceive of it. It is not simply the fictional language of his narratives minus the linguistic legacy of Anglo-Saxon and African literature in such language. From our perspective, logo-genetic creativity in Ngugi’s narratives concerns all types of creative work which Ngugi has achieved by language, including the use of the very language that he has internalised and inherited from previous Western and African literatures. Except when there is evidence of plagiarism and other more moderate forms of influence studied earlier, the words and grammatical structures which form Ngugi’s narratives, including those he acquired by reading Western and written African literatures, belong to those narratives and to Ngugi. Arguing otherwise would be too radical an exercise which, as we explained, would be an intervention into the philosophy of creativity rather than in literary creativity. In general, notwithstanding the language in which the given novel by Ngugi is written, these words and grammatical structures are not seen here as results of “transmission of [linguistic] motifs between authors,” but as results of “transmutation of historically given [linguistic] material.”⁸⁹

That said, in respect to Ngugi’s own philosophy about the decisive nature of the relationship between language and literature, it is important to distinguish between the general type logo-genetic creativity achieved in the English language novels and carried on in the novels written in Gikuyu from the specific type of logo-genetic creativity achieved in the Gikuyu language narratives. One cannot read Gikuyu, and one is not familiar with Gikuyu culture, so as to contend to determine with precision what new elements of logo-genetic creativity Ngugi has achieved in the works he wrote in Gikuyu in comparison with those he wrote in English.⁹⁰ Therefore, all one can hope is doing one’s best in describing and comparing these two distinct aspects of logo-genetic creativity, trusting in the validity of the English translations.

Though writing quality fiction in Gikuyu and Kiswahili is perhaps Ngugi’s most consequential and original linguistic achievement to date, logo-genetic creativity in his work is not limited to just that. As we

⁸⁹ Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁹⁰ Knowing this language and this culture is indeed important here. We can have a clear idea on this importance by considering some of the footnotes in the English translations of the works written originally in Gikuyu. For instance, Ngugi tells us in one of those footnotes that “it must be remembered that in Gikuyu the word “heart” means many things: soul, spirit, conscience, mind, inner man, essence and so on” (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 49). In another instance we are told: “Kamoongonye is a character in a Gikuyu ballad about a young girl whose father wants her to marry Waigoko, a rich old man with a hairy chest, while she prefers her choice, a poor young man, Kamoongonye” (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 20).

suggested, it did not begin with the novels in Gikuyu. Such a claim does not contradict, as it might seem, Ngugi's argument that African literature should normally be written in African languages. Clearly, Ngugi's point on the question of language is not that an African writer cannot possibly achieve creativity, nor even that it is impossible for him or her to write about African worlds effectively – that is, to represent them authentically, with faithfulness to their specificities – through European languages. His point is only that, in the case of Africa, writing in European languages would be a politically negative act. For him, that would further perpetuate the “imperialism of language” and the hegemony of the Empires over Africans and their countries against which he writes in, among other places, *Decolonising the Mind* and *Moving the Centre*.⁹¹ In all cases from our perspective, which is committed to neutrality in analysis, as we insisted, it is clear that Ngugi has already determined the quintessence of his fictional language – he has marked out his own, special diction, phraseology and typical grammatical structures for example – right from the beginning of his career. He has delimited his basic glossary and distinctive grammatical style – his ‘thesaurus and grammatical territory,’ so to speak – since his very first short stories. If Ngugi had not yet revealed all his skill as a creative writer in those youthful and tentative short stories, he had already revealed in them a large part of his linguistic originality and logo-genetic creativity. Certainly, he has enriched and enhanced the personal glossary and grammatical style offered in those early narratives continually. However, the core of that linguistic style is there in all his narratives, including those composed in Gikuyu and Kiswahili.

Apart from the tendency to recycle the language of the English canon and previous African literature which characterises his work in English, it seems plain that Ngugi also draws on the English language spontaneously. That is to say, he also uses it simply as a language that is available to him and that has been communicated to him, what is more, by media other than creative literature. In other words, he also uses English as part of the common human linguistic reservoir, and as part of his broad multilingual personal and linguistic “competence,” to recall Chomsky's word, and not just out of literary influence. For it would not be realistic to think that Ngugi has Shakespeare, Dickens, Lawrence, Conrad, Achebe, or Fanon in mind each time he uses an English word, or whenever he composes a grammatical structure, be they ‘common’ or highly “differentiated.” Better, though it is very important to have in mind Ngugi's Anglo-Saxon precursors when we meet word-symbols for instance that are typical of his Anglo-Saxon and Anglophone precursors in his narratives (such as the sun with reference to Lawrence and darkness and light with reference to Conrad) it would be

⁹¹ See any of the essays in *Decolonizing the Mind*, *op. cit.*. See also the essay entitled “Imperialism of Language: English, a Language of the World?” in Ngugi's *Moving the Centre*, *op. cit.*, p. p. 30 - 42

none the less excessive to think that even this is all the time due to literary influence. The sun, the moon, light, darkness, remain, in the end, simply natural elements with, moreover, symbolic significances in all cultures, and not just in English literature. Similarly, words such as “tribe,” “wrestler,” “oracle,” “priest,” “hut,” “calabash,” – and structures such as “he cleared his throat” he “poured a little beer on the ground in sacrifice to the spirits of the ancestors” – etc. – ” recurrent in both Ngugi’s and Achebe’s works – can be inspired from Chinua Achebe, but they also are common to the African world and not Chinua Achebe’s or any African writer’s property. Their presence in Ngugi’s works can sometimes be due to analogy, which should not be ignored in comparing African literary works as we pointed out previously. Ngugi’s description of his childhood home shows the importance of not ignoring this phenomenon when we consider his relationship in matters of language with Chinua Achebe for instance:

My earliest recollection of home was of a large courtyard, five huts forming a semicircle. One of these was my father’s, where goats also slept at night. It was the main hut not because of its size but because it was set apart and equidistant from the other four. It was called a thingira. My father’s wives, or our mothers as we called them, would take food to his hut in turns.⁹²

In some of Ngugi’s works, mainly *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, Ngugi’s metaphorical African style is indeed quite different from Achebe’s. In contrast to Ngugi in the latter works, Achebe, or even Tutuola, never typically say “Now her body was covered with light and dark spots like the Guineafowl” (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 11), or “Her heart was beating loudly, like the repeated hoots of an owl” (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 148). Such expressions are typical of traditional African fables and other oral forms of expression. Unless there is evidence to the contrary, therefore, the use of words and structures, which belong to Africa at large, by Ngugi, should normally be seen as a systematic and individual linguistic practice of his.

Only a few Anglophone African writers, such as Achebe, Tutuola and Okot p’Bitek can be said to have preceded Ngugi in what can be considered as one of the greatest and most creative linguistic achievements in twentieth century African literature in English, namely that of conveying (traditional) “African speech” through “English words.”⁹³ It is not that such writers have over Ngugi the creative advantage of having invented the practice. In fact, Tutuola has not really invented the linguistic style that is often associated with him. If anything he has developed to a full narrative length a technique that writers before him used more moderately and more sporadically. For

⁹² Ngugi, *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*, London: Harvill Secker, 2010, p. 9.

⁹³ See Gabriel Okara, “African Speech ... English Words,” in *African Writers on African Writings* (p. 137 - 39), “G. D. Killam (ed.), London: Heinemann, 1973.

example, Mark Twain uses very much the same type of Afro-English as Tutuola with reference to the character of Jim, the African slave in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. And, as with Tutuola, Twain does it in the intention of capturing the particularity of Jim's African speech and "mind-style."⁹⁴ In addition, the English of the narrator in Twain's novel reflects the mind style of a little boy from a very specific region of America and specific period and specific social class just as the English of Tutuola's work reflects the mind-style of a drunken African individual. Actually, Twain keeps shifting between a variety of 'odd' and ungrammatical "Englishes,"⁹⁵ according to the region, age, race, gender, social class, and even function of the character who is speaking at a given occasion in his novel. One could not ignore the analogies between Tutuola and a whole category of writers, including Shakespeare, for the purpose of rendering reality as it is, would have recourse to usages of English that would reflect its reality as it is. The literary merit of Tutuola in this sense is that he has only generalised a rather common practice of creative writers "who have always been wary of resorting to popular forms of speech" and to render "peculiar lexicon, unorthodox syntax and outlandish pronunciation."⁹⁶

If a writer can be said to have really invented an African version of English it would be Achebe, who, unlike Tutuola, seems to charge 'English English' itself with African meaning. In that sense, only Achebe can be said to have a creative advantage on Ngugi. He has that competence to transform English, as if 'from within,' into what can be described as Afro-English, and that no other Anglophone African writer can really claim to possess. Be that as it may, Ngugi's main linguistic achievement in terms of 'the Africanness of English' (in the novels he wrote in English) is certainly different in essence from both Tutuola's and Achebe's Englishes. He is perhaps not, like these writers, a champion of the practice of capturing pure Africanness through English. It can even be said that Ngugi's English is not 'authentically African' as much as the 'Englishes' of those other writers are, and that, when this occurs, it is due to the inspiration and influence of those masters of African English. Compared with the languages of *Things Fall Apart* and *The Palm Wine Drunkard*, there is perhaps more Englishness, though not necessarily less Africanness, about the language of the narratives which Ngugi has produced in English.

None the less, Ngugi's achievement with the English language is still African and, what is more, unique of its kind in that sense. Indeed, it would

⁹⁴ Roger, Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁹⁵ For a detailed discussion of "Englishes," used here simply to indicate great variations of the English language that come from its adaptation by different writers and/or communities, see, for instance, David Crystall's *English as a Global Language*, Cambridge UP, 1997.

⁹⁶ Albert S. Gerard, Preface to Chantal Zabus's *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel*, Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: 1991, p. p. iii-iv.

not be exactly accurate to believe that Ngugi's English is simply 'non-African' or even that it lacks Africanness because of its difference from Achebe's and Tutuola's models, or even in view of the fact that it *sounds* less authentically African in comparison with the languages of those authors. In fact, Ngugi's English is 'Africanised' in large measure, and the whole point seems to be that it springs from a vision of Africa that is slightly different and more recent than the Africas of Achebe and Tutuola. It is, in contrast to Achebe's and Tutuola's 'Englishes,' rooted more in post-colonial and contemporary Africa's realities and less in its remoter realities. Also, Ngugi's 'nativised' English, including in the English translations of his works in Gikuyu, reflects a perspective that is turned towards the present and future rather than firmly in the past as in the examples of Achebe's and Tutuola's Afro-Englishes. In comparison with Ngugi's African English, Achebe's African English could even sound unrealistic and archaic with reference to the linguistic reality in present-day Africa. There is even a way in which Ngugi's English is African where Achebe's and Tutuola's Englishes are not, namely the fact that it captures the Kikuyu world. This can be noted even in Ngugi's earliest works. The language of the first two novels, mainly *Weep Not, Child*, is very much like Achebe's in some of its aspects: like Achebe's, it attempts to incarnate African anthropological, cultural and social originalities, and of the typical African mind style, for example. We cannot fail to notice the great affinity between Ngugi's English and that of Chinua Achebe in examples like this one:

Later in the evening Kamau came to Nyokabi's hut./“Tell us the story.”/“Now, now, don't be troublesome,” Nyokabi said./ It is a bad woman this. If I had been my father, I would not have married her.”/ Kamau like teasing Nyokabi. Tonight his teasing sounded forced/ (...)/ Ngotho was given food. He began to eat (...) The children could not joke in their father's presence. Njoroge broke the silence. /“Tell us a story. You promised, you know.”/“You children! You never ask your father to tell you stories. Tonight he will tell you.”/ If you all come to my Thingira, I'll tell you one or two.”/ Njoroge feared his father. But it always made him feel good to listen to him (*Weep Not Child*, p. p. 22 – 23).

But it is also a fact that the kind of Africanness which Ngugi's English conveys is generally different from that conveyed by Achebe's English. It is different in that it captures the core of the Gikuyu world: the Gikuyu mythology, environment and mentality at the epoch in which the novel is set, as just noted. The next citation exemplifies this very well: it shows how Ngugi's English definitely is African in a way Achebe's English is not:

But in the darkness, at the foot of Kerinyaga, a tree rose. At first it was a small tree and grew up, finding a way, even through the darkness. It wanted to reach the light, and the sun. (...) This was Mukuyu, God's tree.

Now you know that at the beginning of times there was only one man (Gikuyu) and one woman (Mumbi). It was under this Mukuyu that he first put them (...)/ There was a big drought sent to the land by evil ones who must have been jealous of the prosperity of the children of the Great One. But maybe also the children of Mumbi forgot to burn a sacrifice to Murungu. So he did not shed His blessed tears that make crops grow. The sun burnt freely (...) Cattle died and people shrank in size. Then came the white man as had long been prophesied by Mugo wa Kibiro, that Gikuyu sir of old. He came from the country of ridges, far away from here. Mugo had told the people of the coming of the white man. He had warned the tribe. So the white man came and took the land (*Weep Not, Child*, p. p. 23 – 25).

The example is outstanding, because it represents what Michel Riffaterre would identify as the “matrix” of Ngugi’s fiction and of his fictional language as a whole, not just *Weep Not, Child*. It thus illustrates Ngugi’s most individual and most typical use of English, and not only a secondary and sporadic way in which he draws on it as is the case in the previous example. And, as can be observed above, we are undeniably before a very special model of indigenisation of English. Roughly, it is a model of indigenisation that relies on the hybridization of vocabulary, phraseology and grammatical performances derived from the myth, history, symbology, culture, geography, and the social and economic lives of the Gikuyu, and the English legacy. In fairness to Ngugi, therefore, it should be recorded that he too is a master of African English of a sort, one who uses, like Achebe and Tutuola, a special kind of nativised English.

More importantly perhaps, there is a way in which Ngugi’s English can be said to be more creative, not just more original, in comparison with Tutuola’s English and Achebe’s English. While Achebe and Tutuola’s Englishes “safeguard,” therefore mime, the spirit of traditional African languages and lives, Ngugi’s English retains only the essence of the Gikuyu language and world. In contrast to Achebe and Tutuola, it provides ‘refreshed’ versions of typical African languages, mind-styles and life. By the same token, it captures Africanness under new, more realistic aspects. The worth of Achebe’s and Tutuola’s Englishes is mainly their ability to take us into remote and peculiar pasts of Africa and provide an image of it as it once used to be, almost as in discursive historical accounts. The merit of Ngugi’s English, on the other hand, is its capacity to render an Africa that is less peculiar and remote, inseparably present and past, and to *invent* an Africa that is inseparably mythical and real. David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe claim that Ngugi “has already made a distinct mark on English” in other ways which they summarise as follows:

Since Ngugi was aiming at a wide readership for whom English was a second language, it was essential that he should develop a style that should be neither ‘difficult’ nor laborious. A fair number of African authors have

set out with the same aim in view. Ngugi has made of his quest something very different from any of his contemporaries. It is given to only a few outstanding writers to reach a simplicity which is neither elementary nor a reduction of language to bald outlines, but which is distilling of all the main possibilities of tongue so as to arrive at a clarity which has both subtlety and richness. Black is a supreme example. In a different context Ngugi is a notable instance.⁹⁷

Analysing language in archetypal passages of Ngugi's, the critics disclose the writer's typical linguistic structures and practices, after which they conclude that the main distinctive feature of his linguistic style is a specific way of "patterning" his prose "gently but firmly." They pinpoint facts which suggest that the writer's main logo-genetic creative tendency is combining a phraseology that is personal to him, with definite techniques such as "balances, repetitions, parallels, contrasts: of word, of phrase and clause, of sentence and paragraph." Importantly too, they describe highly sophisticated mechanisms which they describe as "fibres" "binding the texture of the prose," and argue that these too are unique and idiosyncratic aspects of Ngugi's work with language.⁹⁸ The critics also consider elements such as the way "proverbs are spoken in clusters" in Ngugi's novels, the special "impact of the oral tradition" on them, and the novels' creation of "their own social terms" to be other central factors that make his language original.⁹⁹ Cook and Okenimkpe's suggest that the search for creativity by language is permanent to Ngugi, concluding that he "does new things with each language he employs, and in some small degree changes it permanently in adapting it to his own needs and individuality."¹⁰⁰

*

The question of which of Ngugi's novels in English and those in Gikuyu perform best in literary terms can only be a peripheral one. Still, his novels in Gikuyu enclose major achievements from the linguistic standpoint that are different from the achievements of the works in English. Here, it would have been an invaluable advantage if one were familiar with the Gikuyu language and Gikuyu culture. In fact, what is needed to make a proper analysis of this question and an objective judgement on the nature and quality of the language of these novels is a mastery of that language and native knowledge of that culture.¹⁰¹ However, a reading of the English

⁹⁷ David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 186.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 178

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*.

¹⁰¹ In fact one of Ngugi's aims is to use his fame and prominence as one of the greatest and most famous novelist of our times clearly to draw academic interest toward the Gikuyu, and to 'learn' the language.

translations of the Gikuyu novels is enough to notice deep differences in language in comparison with the earlier narratives. There are continuities with the language of the novels written in English, but the linguistic idiosyncrasies and originalities that the Gikuyu novels present in comparison with the previous novels and with the usual language of prose fiction at large also are manifest.

Indeed the language of the Gikuyu novels is unusual, experimental and interesting enough to be considered as a further seminal contribution by Ngugi to African literature and to the language of literature at large. Ngugi is not the first African author to write in an indigenous African language, but he is certainly the first to produce (written) creative literature, of a specific and very interesting kind, in Gikuyu. *Caitani Mutharabaini* (*Devil on the Cross*) was, as Ngugi reminds us in "The Language of African Fiction" in *Decolonising the Mind*, "the first novel of its kind in scope and size in the Gikuyu language."¹⁰² This, for itself, is a great and original achievement. This is at least because, even if Ngugi does not invent all the linguistic devices and practices in these works, his achievement is no less important than to be that of a masterful transformation of linguistic elements belonging to one kind of cultural practices, oral literature and speech, into another, different kind of cultural practices, namely written expression and literature. The product can neither be called written literature nor oral literature but something in between, Gikuyu "orature." We consider that such an experiment is successful because (even in the English translations of his Gikuyu works) Ngugi succeeds to make us realise a sharp difference between the language of these works and the 'conventional' language of literature. It is also a success because it did not prevent Ngugi's Gikuyu fiction from being widely read and acclaimed by the Gikuyuphone readerships and audiences, not to mention the reception which the English translations received both in Africa and the West. *Devil on the Cross*, for instance, "went into three printings on its original Gikuyu publication" only two years after it came out,¹⁰³ and it received at least as much critical and academic attention as the novels Ngugi wrote in English. And, apart from such an acknowledgment of the high literary quality of these works, such literary quality can be verified in these works' ability to sublimate situations. For instance, the sublimating effect of the following statement of the griot/narrator of *Devil on the Cross* seems beyond question: "No. I shall not proceed at the same pace as before. The seeds in the ground are not all of one kind, so I will change the pace and manner of my narrative" (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 125). The language of the following passage also has a "defamiliarising affect":

¹⁰² Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁰³ See the comment on the back cover of the 1982 African Writers Series Heinemann edition of *Devil on the Cross*.

I wish I could even approach his manner of telling it, the way he raised and lowered his voice, for instance. But no, I can't even try. The kind of education bequeathed to us by the whites has crippled the wings of our abilities leaving us limping like wounded birds (*Devil on the Cross*, p. p. 62 - 63).

The fact that a work such as *Wizard of the Crow* is written in Gikuyu has not in the least prevented it from being a remarkable work; it is perhaps the most significant of Ngugi's achievements thus far.

What distinguishes the language of the English translations of the Gikuyu novels is mainly its reflection of some characteristics of indigenous African languages in general and Gikuyu in particular. This is not merely because "ancient rhythms of traditional story-telling are used in counterpoint to written styles,"¹⁰⁴ or because such language reflects the simplicity of traditional African speech and grammars – for example, the tonal and rhythmic qualities of traditional African languages distinguished from the "stresses" and musical qualities of English. Because these Gikuyu narratives are literary works produced by one of the greatest aesthetes, moralists and theorists of language of our times, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the main merit of their language is that it embodies some of the best that can be done and said in an African language, namely some of the best cases of African-style linguistic beauty and wisdom. This can be noted in the opening of even the 'inferior' *Devil on the Cross*¹⁰⁵:

Certain people in Ilmorog, our Ilmorog, told me that this story was too disgraceful, too shameful, that it should be concealed in the depths of everlasting darkness./There were others who claimed that it was a matter for tears and sorrow, that it should be suppressed so that we should not shed tears a second time./I asked them: How can we cover up pits in our courtyard with leaves or grass, saying to ourselves that because our eyes cannot now see the holes, our children can prance about the yard as they like?/Happy is the man who is able to discern the pitfalls in his path, for he can avoid them./ Happy is the traveller who is able to see the tree stumps in his way, for he can pull them up or walk around them so that they do not make him stumble./ (...) I, even I, Prophet of Justice, felt this burden weigh heavily upon me at first, and I said: The forest of the heart is never cleared of all its trees. The secrets of the homestead are not for the ears of strangers (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 7).

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*.

¹⁰⁵ Even if this is only one important aspects of the novel's language and style (and even as the same opening notes definitely remind us of, Frederic Nietzsche, in, say, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, namely on account of the prophetic style and the interrogative attitude of the passage.

On the one hand, the grammatical type, the vocabulary, the tone and the cognitive mode of such a passage reflect those of typical African speech in general. On the other hand, they reflect the typical speech, the cognitive style, and the typical mode and tone of eloquent African people – artist-intellectuals/griots – in specific, especially when they intervene on important and solemn occasions. What we have in a passage such as this one is, more precisely, a combination of simple grammatical structures and simple vocabulary, normally favoured by traditional African people, uttered, as is typical of wise men in Africa when they intervene on important circumstances, on a confident and serious mode, and a solemn mood and tone. The main style of argument is polemics, a method also cherished in traditional African speech, and perhaps preferred by traditional Africans to pure platonic logic and argument, though African speech and the passage in question are not free from platonic reason. We do not need to go beyond the first sentence in the above citation to notice these facts. A sentence such as “Certain people in Ilmorog, our Ilmorog, told me that this story was too disgraceful, too shameful, that it should be concealed in the depths of everlasting darkness” clearly exemplifies those premises. In this structure there is a combination of two short simple sentences that convey with clarity a crucial, though simple, idea, namely “certain people’s” (the native bourgeoisie and native intellectuals) pretence that a story (*Devil on the Cross*) should not be told because it is presumed “shameful” by them. The vocabulary is again down-to-earth yet very effective in revealing Ngugi’s idea of the African mentality; it stresses key values such as the tendency among Africans to value honour and righteousness, to apprehend “shame” above all, and to abhor ambiguity, malice, hypocrisy and injustice. The sentence is yet as important as to anticipate what comes on in the rest of the story. The words are said in a serious and polemical mode and on a prophetic tone, as facts about the content and the punctuation of the sentence – the repetition of the words “too shameful” and “Ilmorog” in two successive appositives, and the use of the pronoun “our” for instance – reveal.

Also, language such as the following, a little further in *Devil on the Cross*, cannot fail to put the reader in an ambiance of ‘written African performance.’ That is to say, it presents us with a form of artistic expression that is at the crossroads between a form of drama, namely African masquerade, and the novel – an innovative cultural form which is one of Ngugi’s most original practices:

The moment the voice fell silent, I was seized, raised up and then cast down into the ashes of the fireplace. And I took the ashes, and I smeared my face and legs with them, and I cried out: /I accept! /I accept! Silence the cries of the heart. Wipe away the tears of the heart /The story is an account of what I, Prophet of Justice, saw with these eyes and heard with these ears when I was borne to the rooftop of the house (*Devil on the Cross*, p. 8).

Such language conveys very particular types of speech-performance, mind-style, imagery, action and atmosphere. We are clearly not before an example of any 'common' kind of novelistic language, not even before language such as Achebe's or Tutuola's, where what is valued is linguistic and semantic sophistication and realism. The kind of language used here is not "stressed" as the English language is. It is "tonal" like African languages.¹⁰⁶ What we have here is a kind of orature-performance, in which sublimity is achieved by vocal and rhythmic effects – such as the quick, abrupt and continual change in the griot's tone of voice in the above quoted passage –, semantic simplicity and clarity plus amusing visual effects, and not by the musical harmony and abstract sophistication of the structures of the conventional language of fiction. This too can be noticed in several considerations in the above-quoted extract. The shortness of the utterances and the quick and repetitive – indeed abrupt – changes in their punctuation (rapidly changing from simple affirmative to exclamative) conveys sudden lowering and rises in the pitch and tone of voice. They convey "internal rhymes, assonances and dissonances,"¹⁰⁷ seen as marks of eloquence in African languages and adopted as poetic devices in traditional African oral literature and poetry. Linguistic and semantic simplicity can be seen in the shortness and great simplicity of the sentences used. And when there is need for a combination of simple sentences, either for semantic or aesthetic purposes (such as avoiding the monotony that would result from too long a sequence of simple sentences), we are offered a series of such simple sentences joined together in the simplest of logical connections, the coordinator "and." This can be observed above in: "I was seized, raised up and then cast down into the ashes of the fireplace. And I took the ashes, and I smeared my face and legs with them, and I cried out." Notice how the tendency to avoid repetition and the eagerness to diversify the logical links between utterances valued in conventional written literature, is replaced by devices that are opposite to them, that is, they are replaced here by pointed redundancy in diction and in the logical links between utterances. This is one of the ways in which English linguistic literariness is replaced by African linguistic literariness. The differentiating effect is created here through vocal and rhythmic devices.

In *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*, we have a similar type and quality of fictional language, which is, furthermore, enhanced in these novels. Linguistic practices of the same type, carried out with more subtlety and skill characterise the language of *Matigari*. The novel is equally committed to African languages and "orature," as we are told by Ngugi who "dedicates" it "to all those who research and write on African orature; to all those committed to the development of literature in the languages of all the

¹⁰⁶ Chinweizu *et al*, *Towards the Decolonization of African literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

African peoples” (*Matigari*, p. vi). Furthermore, it is a new tale “based on an oral story” as Ngugi also tells us at the beginning as well (*Matigari*, p. vii). Thus an aspect of the language of this novel perpetuates the new tradition initiated in *Devil on the Cross* as can be noticed with particular clarity in the dedications and other before-words that precede the main narration. But the novel is, on the other hand, different from *Devil on the Cross*, and such difference is noticeable above at the level of language. Indeed *Matigari* is “dedicated,” on the other hand, “to all those who love a good story” (*Matigari*, p. vi). Though its language is partly like that of the preceding novel and partly like that of the novels in English, it can be argued that the kind of language in which the novel is written belongs to none of these linguistic families. It is indeed unprecedented as it is made of a harmonious fusion between the two types of language, the type of African language found in *Devil on the Cross* with all the experiments described above and language distilled, in a more mature and free way than ever before, from the Lawrentian, Achebean and Fanonian linguistic styles, vocabularies and phraseologies described in the previous chapters. Illustrative examples of this can be found in any part of the story, but some of the best cases are found in the last chapter, mainly the last few paragraphs of the story. The following citation from near the end of the story is an illustrative example; it is a typical instance of the culmination of the language of Ngugi distilled from his indigenous as well as ‘foreign’ linguistic experience and competence:

Everywhere in the country the big question still remained: Who was Matigari ma Njutuungi? Was he dead, or was he alive?/Under the mugumo tree, Muriuki dug up all the things that Matigari had hidden./He took out the pistol and the cartridge belt. He counted the bullets. Then he took the AK47 and gazed at it. He dug out the sword and laid it on one side. Finally he picked up the AK 47 and slung it over his shoulder. He stood for a while under the Mugumo tree./And then he heard the sound of hoofs nearby. His heart skipped a beat. But it was only a rideless horse. It galloped past him. It stopped for a brief while and gazed at him. Then it disappeared into the forest./Muriuki watched the rain as it fell. His glance swept the banks along which he stood. He looked across the river and beyond to the other valleys, other ridges and other mountains./Far, far away, he heard the distant sound of the siren as it called out to all the workers./He recalled the night of the workers’ strike. And suddenly he seemed to hear the workers’ voices, the voices of the peasants, the voices of the students and of other patriots of all the different nationalities of the land, singing in harmony: Victory shall be ours! Victory shall be ours!/Victory shall be ours!/Victory shall be ours! (*Matigari*, p. 175).

This is indeed an original and harmonious combination of the experimental language of *Devil on the cross*, and the more usual language of the earlier narratives. This can be observed in the linguistic and grammatical simplicity

characterising the passage, and the tropes of performance and orature (as identified previously) which such language conveys.

For example, consider the simplicity of a word such as “AK 47” and its repetition (two times). Note also the simplicity of the structure “the voices of” and its recurrence (three times), and the notable shortness and plainness of the sentences in general. Consider, as well, the crowd’s cry, “victory shall be ours!,” and its reappearance (four times), at the end of the citation. All this recalls and the tropes of orature and performance of *Devil on the Cross* – the oral and African character and aesthetics of its language, as explained before. On the other hand, we have a more conventional type of fictional language that is much like that of the novels in English. This can be noted in symbolic and mythical language, and metaphoric reference to landscape, as in “*mugumo* tree,” “rideless horse,” “river” and “valley,” and in the use of relatively sophisticated constructions such as “He looked across the river and beyond to the other valleys, other ridges and other mountains.” This is reminiscent of the Lawrentian language of the shorts stories, *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*. Also more conventional is the use of revolutionary language (words such as “AK 47,” “pistol,” “cartridge belt,” “bullets,” “peasants,” “workers” and “workers’ strike”) evocative of Marx and Fanon, and reminiscent of an important aspect of the language of *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*. As the above implies, what is unique and remarkable about the language of *Matigari* is not merely the simultaneous presence of these various linguistic styles and elements, but the way ‘different languages’ and modes of expression are merged with such harmony as in this example, and, indeed, in the story as a whole. Such harmony is rather missing in *Devil on the Cross*.

Concerning *Wizard of the Crow*, it is helpful to go back to a passage which we quoted previously in Chapter Three to illustrate Ngugi’s resemblances with Chinua Achebe, to see how the linguistic style of this novel displays important further idiosyncrasies:

But when the old man began to speak it was clear that he had difficulty in pronouncing Swahili words for the Ruler, Mtukufu Rais, calling out instead Mtukutu Rahisi. Horrified at the Ruler’s being called a Cheap Excellency, one of the policemen quickly whispered in the old man’s ear that the phrase was Mtukufu Rais, or Rais Mtukufu, which confused him even more. Coughing and clearing his throat to still himself, he called out into the microphone, Rahisi Mkundu. Oh, no, it is not Cheap Arsehole, the other policeman whispered in the other ear, no, no, it is His Holy Mightiness, Mtukufu Mtakatifu, which did not help matters because the old man now said, with what the old man thought was confidence, Mkundu Takatifu. At the mention of “His Holy Arsehole,” the multitude broke out in hilarious laughter, which made the old man forget what he had wanted to say, and he stuck religiously to the phrase Rahisi Mkundu, which made Machokali quickly signal that he be removed from the microphone (*Wizard of the Crow*, p. 18).

Briefly reconsidering this passage would be particularly illustrative of our point here. First of all, a passage such as this one – which is in many ways typical of the language, mode and style of *Wizard of the Crow* – would dismiss any claim that the language of Ngugi's Gikuyu fiction, at least for *Wizard of the Crow* itself, lacks literariness. First it exemplifies one of the central factors that make a work sophisticated and literary, namely its sublimity. The passage sublimates indeed, for its very particular humour for instance, a humour achieved with language games. The word games in this passage testify, in themselves, to a literary proficiency in all three languages which the passage involves – Gikuyu, English and Swahili. Achieving such first-class humour through the three languages testifies to an ability to move easily to and fro these languages, and to a capacity of integrating them that are estimable and hardly paralleled in African literature. Note, furthermore, how such language-based first-rate humour is not just maintained throughout the passage, but is increased and accelerated as reading progresses. Ngugi sublimates us, he controls us, in this way to the point that he could make us suffocate with laughter had he continued that way. In consideration of these facts it is fair to affirm that Ngugi is a master – a *Mwalimu* – of every language in which he writes indeed, at any rate in this outstanding achievement of his.

C. b. The Sociogenetic Muse

A reading of Ngugi's autobiographies, *Detained: a Writer's Prison Diary* (1981) and *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* (2010), reveals that the writer has a "Socio-genetic Muse," besides the "psychogenetic" and "logogenetic" Muses studied previously. That is to say he is one of those writers who "speak of being true to their subject, of capturing reality, of evoking a way of life," and who respond to "a world outside of textuality."¹⁰⁸ Many of our claims in the previous chapters imply that Ngugi produces his works partly by drawing on social, historical and political factors. For instance, the nature of the historical elements in his narratives shows that they are inspired by real events in Kenya's history even if their presence in the narratives is simultaneously inspired by the work of Chinua Achebe and other historical literature. Similarly, analogies between sociological and political facts in colonial and post-independence Kenya and Africa and elements of Ngugi's narratives proves that the presence of such facts in his narratives cannot be justified only by the influence of Frantz Fanon for example, but also by Ngugi's inspiration by those facts as extra-textual

¹⁰⁸ Jay Clayton, "The Alphabet of Suffering: Effie Deans, Tess Durbeyfield, Martha Ray, and Hetty Sorrel," in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (37 - 59), Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 53.

factors. Ngugi's sociogenetic Muse in those senses can easily be inferred from our arguments in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Thus, the aspect of the sociogenetic creative dynamic in Ngugi's narratives which will be focused upon here is not the impact of such general historical, social and political factors, but the impact of events in Ngugi's personal life on his narratives.

Much of the biographical information revealed in Ngugi's autobiographies leaves no room for doubt that he draws "elements of his fiction from his own life and family background,"¹⁰⁹ and that he does so profusely. The integration of biographical material in fictional narratives is a very common literary practice; it is far from being an invention of Ngugi's. Also, the presence of material of this kind in a work of fiction, especially as heavily as in Ngugi's fiction, is not necessarily a quality from a literary standpoint: the role of a creative writer is 'normally' to invent interesting fictive stories and to tell them with eloquence and finesse, and not to 'recount his own life' to his readers as it were. As it happens, Ngugi has an autobiographic tendency, which pervades almost every level of his creative writing, from story and plot, to setting, to point of view to characterisation and themes. Furthermore, the biographical elements in his fiction can be seen as marks of both its originality and creativity. They are marks of the originality of his fiction because they are unique by definition, since they belong to the writer's *individual* experience. And they can be considered as pointers of Ngugi's creativity because they are harmoniously merged in the narratives; generally, they are narrated, incorporated and transformed in ways that do not allow suspicion about their autobiographic derivation, unless they are discovered in material exterior to the stories. It is noteworthy that this practice decreases as the writer progresses in his career, and the latter narratives are obviously more imaginary than the earlier ones.

There is a set of facts pertaining to Ngugi's personal life which have had particularly decisive impacts on his creative imagination. They have marked him deeply enough to have inspired all his narratives (either positively or negatively). The first noteworthy factor is his relation to his father. Much as in the case of Shakespeare,¹¹⁰ Ngugi is haunted by the image of the father. That is, he is a writer in whose imagination the father occupies a very significant space. The shadow of Ngugi's father, Thiong'o wa Nduku, is indeed omnipresent in his narratives. Ngugi's account about his father in *Dreams in a Time of War* reveals that he has kept a few good reminiscences of him, but that the general image that he retained of him is an extremely negative one. Ngugi describes his father as a "proud, aloof patriarch,"¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ For an idea of the importance of this aspect of Shakespeare see, for example, Peter Razzelle's *William Shakespeare, The Anatomy Of An Enigma*, London, Caliban Books, 1990. See in particular the first seven chapters (p. p. 1 - 73).

¹¹¹ Ngugi, *Dreams in a Time of War*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

who, except for a short “phase” of material ease that he went through, has been rough and rude to his wives and children. Even when he tells us about some of his best recollections of Thiong’o, Ngugi’s tone is pervaded with irony and bitterness:

I had a vague early childhood recollection of his kraal, a space surrounded by a fence of wood (...) images of his coming home in the evening leading his enormous herd of cows in to the vast kraal (...), and then (...) he would go to his thingira, equidistant to those of his four wives (...) He was not a great storyteller but he was keen on teaching us good eating habits, like not biting off more than we could chew, and not swallowing what was only hastily chewed. Take your time, the food is not going anywhere (...). My father had one of the best smiles ever, but his laughter could also be ironic, sinister sounding at times, when he was reacting to matters of which he disapproved.¹¹²

Ngugi talks about a tragic and total transformation in his father’s material situation and social position. His father was, as he writes, a man “who had everything” and “had lost all.” The father’s “low sinking,” Ngugi further tells us, was accompanied by a drastic change in his treatment of his wives and children. And although Thiong’o had four wives and many other children, a fury that came with his material and social downfall descended brutally on Ngugi’s mother and her children in particular:

Although we all feared our father, I had never once seen him beat a child. If anything, he had been very strict about mothers beating children; he discouraged it, a very unusual attitude in those days. Also unusual was that he had seldom beaten his wives, yet he commanded their respect and his word was law. Now he engaged in domestic violence, particularly against my mother.¹¹³

Ngugi reports that his father has been extremely harsh to him personally – in fact he denied him as one of his children – and clearly suggests that that fact has been determinant as to his interest, as a writer, in the stories of the Old Testament:

One day my brother and I were playing with our siblings in an open space (...) My father suddenly turned up. He stood at a distance and beckoned my brother and me to accompany him. My father had never called me to him before, let alone come all the way to a field outside our homestead to do so. We ran to him, sure that he was going to tell us news of our mother’s return./I want you to stop playing with my children. Go follow your mother, he said, pointing in the general direction of my grandfather’s place./We did not have a chance to say farewell to the other children and

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. p. 87 - 8.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 91.

tell them that we had been banished from their company and from the place that up to then had defined our lives. But before leaving home, I was able to dash into my mother's hut to retrieve my school material, among which was my beloved torn copy of stories from the Old Testament.¹¹⁴

Such a relationship with the father and such an image of him can explain several facts of the first importance in Ngugi's fiction.

For instance, it would explain the omnipresence of the father, as a concept, in his stories, and nearly always as a negative notion. The best fathers in Ngugi's narratives (Mumbi's father for instance) receive very little treatment or are treated with apathy. But this occurs only rarely. Typically, Ngugi's protagonists are either fatherless orphans,¹¹⁵ or individuals abandoned or denied by their fathers, and, whatever the case, the father is often considered with aversion. He is, as in Ngugi's own experience, often an evil person, an "aloof and austere patriarch," a mean and materialist individual, usually presented as the fundamental cause of the troubles of the heroes and heroines of his narratives, as the original cause of their psychological and social misery. In the short story, "A Meeting in the Dark," for example, the hero's (John's) father, even as he recalls Okonkwo and his treatment of Nwoye, seems to be at the same time a detailed and only slightly modified dramatisation of Ngugi's own father and the terror he seemed to have exerted on him while a child:

John saw his father look at him hard, seeming to read his face. John sighed, a very slow sigh. He did not like the way his father eyed him. He always looked at him as though John was a sinner, one who had to be watched all the time (...) John guiltily refused to meet the old man's gaze and looked past him apparently to his mother who was quietly peeling potatoes. (...) John shrank within himself with fear. But his face remained expressionless. He could hear the loud beats of his heart. It was like an engine pumping water (...) He thought: "Why does he torture me?" Why does he not at once say he knows" (*Secret Lives*, p. p. 55 - 56).

In *A Grain of Wheat*, we are told almost nothing about Gikonyo's father, and all of Gikonyo, Mugo and Karanja are fatherless orphans – like Ngugi. Like Ngugi still, these protagonists are painfully brought up by single and lonely mothers, or, else, by single and lone females (as in the case of Mugo). Equally evocative of Ngugi's experience with his own father is the fact that the misfortunes and misery of Munira, Wanja and Karega in *Petals of Blood* and those of Wariinga and Gaturia in *Devil on the Cross* are caused by authoritarian and wicked fathers who, as is the case with Ngugi still, denied

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. p. 95 - 96

¹¹⁵ Ngugi on the other hand exploits such an absence of the father to convey a Fanonian discourse as explained in Chapter Three.

them for material and social considerations. Some scenes in Ngugi's stories such as the scenes of domestic argument and violence in *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* – those between Gikonyo and Mumbi, between Wanja's parents, Karega's parents, and Wariinga's parents for example – seem to have to do with Ngugi's internalisation of very similar scenes of domestic violence which took place in his father's household during his childhood. Even as they are partly results of Achebe's influence in the ways which we highlighted earlier, they sound at the same time as dramatisations of facts such as those Ngugi relates in the following passage from *Dreams in a Time of War*:

My father decided that the harvest was his to dispose of, even to sell. My mother, used to the independence of her household, firmly refused. One day he came home, picked a quarrel with her, and started beating her up, even using one of the walking sticks that my half sister Wabia used for support, till it broke into pieces. My brother and I were crying for him to stop. Mother was screaming in pain. Despite their fear, the other women tried to restrain him, beseeching him to stop, screaming in solidarity, for all the world to hear, that their husband had gone crazy. As he turned toward them in fury, my mother managed to slip away with only the clothes she wore, and fled to her father's house, my grandfather's, leaving behind her goats and harvest.¹¹⁶

Other considerations in Ngugi's stories seem to have much to do with his childhood reminiscences of his father. These range from details to general facts. Among such detail, one can mention the scene (quoted previously) where Wanja's dying father, whom she comes to visit after a long absence from home, begs her money to buy liquor. That scene seems to be an imaginative incarnation of the following biographical fact:

It was painful to see him waiting for the end of the week to demand the wages that his daughters, my sisters, had earned for working in the pyrethrum fields of Lord Stanley Kahahu or in the tea plantations in the White Highlands. They would dodge him, some even escaping into marriage.¹¹⁷

More general aspects of Ngugi's novels can very well have been inspired by his experience and his relationship with his father. Among those which seem to have had some of the most significant effects on his creative imagination is a feeling of estrangement and foreignness which, he suggests, has always obsessed him, but was worsened by his father's denial and expulsion of him from home in his childhood:

¹¹⁶*ibid.*, p. p. 93 - 94.

¹¹⁷*ibid.*, p. p. 92.

The expulsion was, if not from paradise, from the only place I had known. I was baffled more than pained. My mother had always been the head of the immediate household, so home would always be wherever she was, and in that sense I was headed home to Mother. But it is not a good thing to have your own father deny you as one of his children. The move deepened my sense of myself as an outsider, a feeling I had harboured since I learned that the land on which our homestead stood was not really ours. I had been an outsider at Kamandura, where it seemed that others belonged more than I did, and at Manguo upon moving there. Now I was an outsider in my father's house.¹¹⁸

This can explain why Ngugi's protagonists – Mugo and Munira, to mention only them – often are “outsiders” both in the literal and symbolic meanings of the word, and why they are in search for social recognition. It would also explain his concern with that particular aspect of the experience of the Jews as narrated in the Old Testament. Among the other, more general impacts of the image of Ngugi's father and his experience with him, is the scorn for polygamy and patriarchy, and the pro-feminist sympathies, which his stories display. The impact of Ngugi's father seems to have mattered enough for him even to explain, however partially, the very fact of his interest in the psychoanalytic dimension of character, even if the influence of Freud (via Achebe), Lawrence, Conrad and Fanon is seminal in that same respect as we have seen. Facts such as those Ngugi reveals above are even of the kind to provoke an author's very first interest in creative writing.

If the anti-patriarchal characteristic of the discourse of Ngugi's fiction is a consequence of the negative image of his father, his pro-feminist sympathy seems to be inspired by the very positive image he kept of his mother on the other hand. Ngugi narrates his mother in *Dreams in a Time of War* as a total contrast to his father in terms of human qualities, and of the care and affection she provided to her children – to him in particular. He describes her with great emotion and sympathy, as a woman of many qualities, mainly combative and humane qualities, which, he suggests, have inspired in him optimism and dream. Ngugi seems to have learnt the word struggle, and to have inherited his belief in struggle as the very essence of life, so central to his moral discourse, from his mother. Despite her great poverty, and despite a context of war and conflict, she made it in life thanks to her struggle, hard work and optimism. Ngugi says that his mother succeeded to insure him affection, compensating the father's absence and securing him and his brothers and sisters a life of dignity. To him, in particular, she offered additionally the opportunity of having had a very distinguished and high quality education. The main way in which she counted in inspiring his life and fiction is summed up in these words with which Ngugi closes his childhood memoir:

¹¹⁸*ibid.*, p. 97.

A few minutes later (...) I see a billboard with banner letters so personal that I think it must have been for me alone. WELCOME TO ALLIANCE HIGH SCHOOL. I hear my mother's voice: Is it the best you can do? I say to her with all my heart, Yes Mother, because I also know what she really is asking for is my renewal of our pact to have dreams even in a time of war.¹¹⁹

It seems that Ngugi's mother, Wanjiku, inspired the combative and humane qualities of his works, and, perhaps too, many of the courageous and steadfast female protagonists of his narratives.

Apart from Ngugi's recollections of his parents, other bibliographical elements that have been particularly significant in shaping his imagination, and that have had very direct repercussions on his novels, include the experience of his elder brother, Wallace Mwangi (or Good Wallace), and a whole range of details related to the repercussion of Wallace's experience on the whole family. Many elements relating to the latter's experience are dramatised, mainly in *A Grain of Wheat*, though this is not done with reference to a single character or a single element in this novel. For example, Wallace was an "efficient carpenter," like Gikonyo in *A Grain of Wheat*. In another instance, the following very much recalls the pre-detention part of Gikonyo's experience with family and friends:

Wallace had gotten married to the beautiful Girl Guide from Banana Hills, Charity Wanjiku, and they were blessed with Muturi, their first child. It was interesting to see Wallace, the efficient carpenter, become a family man, a tender father, always anxious to come home to his wife, gazing at the newborn as if he could not believe that he was their flesh and blood. Before the birth of his son, he still lived the bachelor life he was used to, sometimes spending the night elsewhere with his peers. But now we saw him almost every night, which also made us feel more secure and united as a family.¹²⁰

Wallace's story has apparently inspired many other elements in *A Grain of Wheat*. His becoming a Mau Mau has been particularly crucial for Ngugi, as it drastically transformed the life of the family. The event changed that life suddenly from tranquil to tragic, and in a way that exemplifies individual and family life during the emergency situation in Kenya. One of the most important characteristics of Ngugi's discourse, its ambiguity as to issues relating to the emergency and colonial situations in Kenya, seems to be caused by the division of members of his family between Mau Mau fighters and agents of the colonial administration:

It is strange that when I wake up in the morning, everything looks the same: the sky, the land, the neighbourhood. And yet everything has

¹¹⁹*ibid.*, p. 256.

¹²⁰*ibid.*

changed. Tomorrow when I go to school, or read a newspaper, or talk with Mzee Ngandi and hear of Mau Mau and their heroic deeds or deaths, the talk will not be something abstract, happening far away in the forest of Nyandarwa and Mount Kenya. I will be thinking of my brother whom I have loved: his hard work, his determination, his imagination, his love and loyalty to friends. I will be thinking of Joseph Kabae, who had earlier taught good Wallace how to type, and now teacher and student are on opposite sides of the conflict. Yes, I will be thinking of the split in my father's house with two of Wangari's sons, Tumbo and Kabae, working as agents of the colonial state and their half brother out in the mountains trying to bring down the colonial state. Ah, yes, brothers who love one another, now at war.¹²¹

Among many other biographical facts dramatised in *A Grain of Wheat* one can cite, in addition, the death of Ngugi's deaf and dumb sibling, Gitogo, about whom Ngugi writes:

A few days later we learned that some people had been killed, one of the casualties being Gitogo, my half brother, the last born of Wangari's sons. His case was tragic (...) He started running, following the example of others. Being deaf, he did not hear the white officer shouting simama, stop. They shot him in the back.¹²²

The writer's description of this half brother of his corresponds indeed to the character that bears this name in *A Grain of Wheat*:

I remembered Gitogo as a regular jovial presence at the storytelling sessions at his mother's hut, despite the fact that he could not hear. A handsome youth, Gitogo had a winning personality and never did any harm to anybody. He was always ready to come to the aid of all, particularly when it came to lifting heavy loads. I was sad to hear of his death.¹²³

Every statement in *Dreams in a Time of War* seems to have been dramatised in a way or other in his narratives, and the instances to illustrate the sociogenetic side of Ngugi's creative enterprise seem too numerous to be mentioned all here.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy, for it is one of the most moving, is Ngugi's reminiscence of early childhood in his father's homestead. The force with which he describes that shows that his artistic temperament, his creative imagination, his attention to landscape and nature, to detail and to psychoanalysis, his love of innocence, his sense of righteousness, his love of art were already born very long before he discovered Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, Peter Abrahams, Chinua Achebe,

¹²¹*ibid.*, p. p. 213 - 214.

¹²²*ibid.*, p. 208.

¹²³*ibid.*, p. 209.

George Lamming, Karl Marx and Frantz Fanon. It shows that what Lawrence, Achebe and Fanon, and Ngugi's other literary fathers have done to him, in the end, is only to provoke the repeated "rebirth" under slightly different forms of an artist who was already born in childhood. For isn't it such an eloquent claim that Man's tragedy is that he was once a child, as Nietzsche has said?:

But there are aspects of the old homestead that will always be part of me:
the storytelling sessions, daily interaction with the other children where
alliances changed from time to time; fights and tears even. Some of the
scenes flitted across my mind: the games we played, the songs we sang,
and the dances in the yard welcoming rain for it meant blessing and made
the children grow. At the sighting of raindrops we dashed into the yard,
formed a circle:
Rain may you fall
I offer you a sacrifice
A young bull with bells
*That sound ding dong.*¹²⁴

¹²⁴*ibid.*, p. p. 97 - 98. The song in the quotation is used, with a few changes, in *Petals of Blood* where children are depicted playing and imploring the rain to fall singing: "Rain pour down/So I'll slaughter you/A young bull/And another/ With a hump/ Hump, Hump!" *Petals of Blood*, p. 196.

Conclusion

Influence/intertextuality is intrinsic to literary creativity, since scholars from Aristotle and Plato to Roland Barthes and Harold Bloom agree that a literary work's significance lies essentially in its relations to other works. Ngugi, as we have seen, is far from being an exception to this crucial and universal fact. His fiction is heavily indebted to the works, authors and traditions studied earlier. As it has been argued, a more rewarding approach to Ngugi's fiction requires an examination of its sources of influence with an eye to understanding the creative dynamics and processes by which it is composed.

Ngugi's fiction, from "Mugumo" to *Wizard of the Crow*, is related intertextually to the work of D. H. Lawrence. On the whole, Ngugi is indebted to Lawrence's neo-romanticism, namely to his inseparably mystic and empirical cognitive orientation and imagination, his view of the world through nature, his writing by symbol and myth, and to many of the methods and techniques that Lawrence uses in this pursuit. Like Lawrence's works, Ngugi's narratives strive to transcend the gap which separates the world from the soul, and "blood knowledge" from "mind knowledge." Such an aspect is as much a distinctive quality of Lawrence's writings as it is a central characteristic of Ngugi's fiction, and it is quite clear that Ngugi owes this crucial aspect of his work to Lawrence.

Thus, like Lawrence, Ngugi strives to endow his characters with *souls* and not just with psychological and mental profiles. Furthermore, he has followed Lawrence's method in doing so in all his narratives. This method consists of depicting characters that are potentially sensitive and psychically fragile, and attempting to seize them in "states of estrangement" – ones of extreme emotional and physical exhaustion and "intuitional reasoning" – by making them undergo stern physical and emotional experiences, and then describing them with "words of estrangement." Awareness of this aspect of Ngugi's relationship with Lawrence is of a tremendous hermeneutic importance. It is the more so because the spiritual dimension of Ngugi's characters is likely to be mixed up by readers with their psychological and mental aspects. Indeed it has often been put on the impact of literary modernism's, particularly Conrad's, concern with psychological affliction on Ngugi, linked with the influence of Frantz Fanon, or, else, mistaken for mere mimicry of folly and neurosis as has been done with reference to Mugo for instance. Ngugi's relationship with Lawrence in terms of interest in "the spirituality of things" can also be observed in the central place which the twin themes of love and sexuality and all sorts of regenerative

phenomena – processes of “rebirth” and “renewal” – occupy in his work. Ngugi is not interested in these themes for their own sake. Like Lawrence, he uses them as powerful signs of, and windows on, the human soul and “the spirituality of things.” For Ngugi as for Lawrence, “life possesses a findable ecstasy which, for many of us, is only discovered during sexual rapture” to recall James Wood’s words. It is this, and not mere mimicry of sexual desire and activity, that would justify Ngugi’s frank rendering of sexuality as “popular myth” seems to hold it in the case of both writers.

Also, Ngugi views the world largely through nature, like Lawrence. Though nature is not as present in his narratives as it is in Lawrence’s work, he uses it in the same ways and for practically the same end as Lawrence. In the work of both writers, nature functions as “a character in itself,” and as a “mentor and nurse” for the characters. It also plays the role of “guide” and “lamp” that reveal a character’s secret desires and innermost nature, and help assess the characters as detailed in Section Three, Chapter Two. The use of symbol and of myth are other major elements of style which Ngugi shares with Lawrence, and other crucial ways in which his fiction dialogues with Lawrence’s work. Ngugi seems to have been inspired by Lawrence in using specific symbols such as the sun and the soil. In Ngugi’s earlier narratives, the sun has just the same symbolic significance and the same functions as in Lawrence’s symbology; it is part of a Lawrentian cosmic and spiritual philosophy, and always an echo of his neo-romantic style. From *Petals of Blood* onwards, the same symbol is still omnipresent, though it becomes part of subversive discourses aiming at the dislodgment of the Anglo-Saxon trope by the Marxist and the African oral traditions. Ngugi continues to dialogue with Lawrence (and other Western writers such as Conrad) in these novels through such symbols as detailed in Section Four, Chapter Two, and the second section in Chapter Five.

About myth, Ngugi is again heavily indebted to Lawrence both in terms of the nature of the myths that he typically uses and the roles which they play. He uses Christian as well as pagan myths in the way of Lawrence. Concerning Christian myth, while Ngugi’s drawing on it (and Christian typology at large) is likely to be perceived as an effect of the Bible, it is, as we have seen, more likely to be due to the double impact of the Bible itself and that of Lawrence. The Christian myths to which Ngugi refers time and again are the same as those Lawrence uses typically: Creation, The Fall, Resurrection, Exodus, Crucifixion, and sub-myths related to them. The logic in which the Christian myth is used is the same with both writers: a logic that is critical, even parodist, of institutionalised Christianity, but which ultimately conveys a similar – unorthodox and cosmic – version of Christianity. Such logic is part of the broader spiritual philosophy which Ngugi and Lawrence have in common. Moreover, Christian mythology is merged with pagan mythology along processes which the two authors share together, and, with both of them, this is done within the same (holistic and

cosmic) perspective on the world and on art. The two types of mythology are merged together, in harmony, into new mythical units which both writers use as central mythical parallels to the plots and subplots of their respective narratives. Whether conventional or created, myth serves the same purposes in the works of Ngugi and Lawrence: semantically, it works as a “vehicle of social satire,” and as a medium to “communicate Salvationist hopes.” Aesthetically, it is a literary device that adds symbolic depth, metaphorical quality, prophetic tones – artistic finesse, in brief – to their stories and discourses as detailed in Section Four, Chapter Two.

Ngugi's fiction is also to be read through its dialogical and intertextual connections with the work of Chinua Achebe, his foremost (African) literary father, mainly with *Things Fall Apart*. Ngugi's relationships with Achebe are complex, and they touch on various types of influence. These range from inspiration of a direct and profound kind as explained at the beginning of Chapter Three, to more or less direct types of (intertextual) allusion, rewriting and borrowing which affect each of Ngugi's novels and every aspect of them. On the whole, Ngugi owes Achebe his vision of African literature and fiction primarily as art, but with a pointed didactic dimension. This vision of literature borrows from Western liberal and Christian humanist literature but is at the same time characteristically adversarial to it. Among the major more specific ways in which Ngugi's fiction dialogises with Achebe's “ethnic novels” is their engagement with Africa's history. Ngugi seems to have learnt from Achebe how to play, as a creative writer, the role of the “novelist as teacher,” but more specifically how to play that of “the novelist as historian.”

Like Achebe, Ngugi believes that African history is a priority for an African writer, and there is complicity between them on the task of recording African histories through fiction. There is, in any case, great likenesses in the ways they treat Africa's history in their works of fiction. Ngugi seems to conceive of that undertaking as one of furthering the task which Achebe has started, by dramatising the history of parts of Africa and periods of its existence other than those which Achebe had dealt with. He does in his narratives a ‘work of memory’ on the Kikuyu and Kenya which is certainly nuanced but is very similar in scope and kind to that Achebe did on the Ibo and Nigeria. Ngugi's depiction of the African past resembles Achebe's depiction of it in matters of faithfulness to historical fact and to the mode of realism, that is, in that African history is rendered by both writers with considerable historical realism. Thus, like Achebe's African past, the past of the African communities that Ngugi depicts is complex; it is neither an Eden nor a “heart of darkness.” On the one hand, it has its “imperfections,” and, as in Achebe's works, such imperfections consist of violent practices, typically human-blood sacrifice, and oppressive traditions such as patriarchy and polygamy. On the other hand, it is, on the whole, an

interesting and happy past in spite of those imperfections. Part of Ngugi's indebtedness to, and dialogism with, Chinua Achebe is his great concern with colonialism (as a sub-theme of African history), as well as the problematisation of the question as explained in the section we entitled "The Anxiety of Colonialism" in Chapter Three. Ngugi is, in addition, greatly and directly indebted to Achebe in terms of characterisation. His typical character schemata are almost identical to Achebe's in many ways as explained in Chapter Three, Section Four. Ngugi also typically "transplants the minds" of Achebe's characters (such as Okonkwo, Nwoye and Ekwefi) into his own characters, by applying to them the fundamental psychosexual principles made popular by Sigmund Freud and his daughter, and by following Achebe's method of doing it with considerable faithfulness.

Furthermore, Ngugi targets the same objectives as Achebe through his treatments of African history and colonialism, and his use of Achebean character schemata. These objectives are: firstly, to show Africans that the trouble with them and the main cause of Africa's underdevelopment is the loss of their sense of dignity and self-respect, and that this is due to flaws in their pre-colonial cultures but mainly to colonialism; secondly, to help them regain that sense of dignity and that self respect; thirdly, to respond adequately and compellingly, that is with realism and artistic eloquence, to the discourse on Africa held by colonialist literature and media which oversimplifies and distorts the images and realities of Africa. From this perspective, many elements of Ngugi's discourse on colonialism, and elements of his trope such as his portrayals of colonial types – often associated with the impact of Joseph Conrad – seem to be in reality results of Achebe's influence. Or, at least, as we argued in Chapters Three and Five, they are consequences of a double dialogism with both writers. As Ngugi has remained faithful to Achebean realism and subtlety throughout his career, he has progressively moved away from that starting from *Petals of Blood*, toward a more direct and more subversive discourse, a more linear style, orality and the use of native languages as detailed in Chapter Three and Chapter Five. But, as with Lawrence, the shadow of Chinua Achebe is never really absent from his fiction, including *Wizard of the Crow*.

To Fanon Ngugi owes the lyrical, prophetic and pamphleteering style in parts of *A Grain of Wheat* and the later novels, as well as much of the content of Fanon's theory as developed in *Black Skin, White Masks* and its sequel *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon's theory has three different but interlocking and inseparable sides: the psychoanalytic, the psychiatric, and the socio-political sides. All three aspects of the theory have had a powerful impact on Ngugi's fiction from *A Grain of Wheat* onwards. Ngugi's indebtedness to the socio-political part of Fanon's theory is significant, but it is already documented and well known, and so it has been treated as a matter of fact here so as to save space for dealing with his indebtedness to the other two aspects.

However, as we insisted in the introduction to Chapter Four, awareness of the complementary and the inseparable character of all three aspects of the theory is crucial, from the hermeneutic point of view, in reading both Fanon and Ngugi, and for understanding Fanon's impact on Ngugi properly.

Ngugi brings into play at least six key Fanonian psychoanalytic and psychiatric notions. Four of these notions are applied in detail to the portraits of the protagonists in *A Grain of Wheat* and, more synthetically, in the subsequent works. The first two are "Negro-psychopathology" and "Negrophobia" or "anti-black white racism." Ngugi has applied these two psychoanalytic notions scrupulously, as we have seen, to build crucial aspects of his characters in *A Grain of Wheat*, namely mental aspects of characters such as Mugo, Karanja, Wariinga, John Thompson, Margery Thompson, Dr Lynd and Dr. Van Dyke which (mental aspects) pertain to the colonial and war situations of the novel. Two other Fanonian psychoanalytic notions adopted by Ngugi are "the psychology of the national bourgeoisie" and "the psychology of the native intellectual" which Fanon develops in *The Wretched of the Earth*. These concepts are applied again in their detail in *Petals of Blood*, and, with more concision, in the subsequent novels. They are used with reference to characters such as Nderi wa Riera, Kimeria, Ezekiel, Chui, Mzigo and Munira in *Petals of Blood*, and to the petty-bourgeois stereotypes in the same novel and the later ones.

As to the impact of the psychiatric side of Fanon's theory (as developed in *The Wretched of the Earth*), it can be observed in Ngugi's dealing with "the pathology of the tortured" in the colonial and liberation-war context of *A Grain of Wheat*. It can also be seen in his depiction, or at least suggestion, of the "pathology of atmosphere" or "collective madness" in the colonial, neo-colonial, and/or an anti-colonial war contexts of all his novels. In *A Grain of Wheat*, the pathology of atmosphere is depicted through stereotypes of "wretched of the earth" such as Githua and Gitogo. It can also be seen through the mental disturbance of the main black protagonists. "The "pathology of the tortured is applied, in the same novel, to individuals such as Gatu, Gikonyo and Mugo, detained in concentration camps and tortured by the British colonial authorities. In the later novels, mainly *Petals of Blood*, the pathology of the atmosphere is suggested through the wretchedness and mental instability of practically all the characters due to neo-colonial realities. To fathom Ngugi's novels from *A Grain of Wheat* to *Wizard of the Crow* effectively, it seems absolutely necessary for the reader to be fully aware of these affiliations as described in Chapter Four.

These facts, detailed throughout the first four Chapters, are crucial *per se*, since they describe major ways in which Ngugi's fiction conveys significance with reference to the works of at least three of his foremost precursors. Furthermore, they can constitute a solid basis for further exploration and understanding of how Ngugi's fiction relates to the three literary traditions

to which those writers belong, and which they represent well. But that is just one of two important aspects of his narratives, the other being the marked and continual search for creativity which those narratives display as explained in Chapter Five. This is not to say that Ngugi's intertextual affiliations with his predecessors as studied throughout the first four chapters are signs of his imitativeness or lack of inspiration as we specified. That would be far from being exact, and would be in contradiction with the very perspective on influence and intertextuality adopted in this work.

The point is that Ngugi's relationship with his literary fathers is, on the one hand, more complex, troubled and changing than the above allows. On the other hand, Ngugi has composed parts of his works through creative dynamics and processes that do not depend on influence and intertextuality in their strictly 'intra-literary' and "intra-poetic" senses. In fact, Ngugi seems to write by reference to two major types of creative dynamics as detailed in Chapter Five: an "Oedipal," or "psychogenetic" dynamic, reflecting his search for creativity through struggle with his influences, and a "Musial," non-Oedipal, creative dynamic, standing for his search for creativity in extra-textual inspirations. Extremely and continually anxious about influence, he "clears imaginative space for himself" through struggle with the influence of his literary fathers. And, being one of those writers who "respond to a world outside of textuality" and who draw elements of their fiction from their own lives and family backgrounds, he also creates fiction outside of the processes of intertextuality and literary influence.

Concerning the "Oedipal" type of creative dynamic, it affects two sorts of creative processes which we have called literary "recycling" and "subversion." About the processes of recycling, they can be observed in three types of literary practices of Ngugi's: borrowing, allusion and rewriting (or adaptation). Regarding borrowing, it consists of little inspired reproductions of aspects of Achebe's, Lawrence's and Conrad's works, as many of the examples mentioned in the first four Chapters can testify. Two facts are noteworthy about this type of exercise in Ngugi's narratives. The first is that he refers to this practice mainly in his early works, namely the first short stories and first two novels, *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*, though it is still notable in *A Grain of Wheat* and, less and less importantly, in all the subsequent novels. The second fact is that Ngugi borrows from other writers typically 'with eclecticism;' that is to say, he never borrows sizeably from a single source but from many sources in a single work of his. That makes even direct borrowing a problematic question in his case, as we explained.

The second major exercise by which the process of recycling (or reprocessing) is carried out in Ngugi's fiction is intertextual allusion. This takes two distinct aspects which we have called "second-degree-creative allusion" and "first-degree-creative allusion." Second-degree-creative

allusion consists of reproductions of Lawrence's and Achebe's typical allusions which show considerable creative effort and addition on Ngugi's part. Such creative effort and addition consist, in this case, principally of adaptations of the 'borrowed' allusions to the new historical and fictional settings, plots, discourses and logic of Ngugi's narratives. First degree creative allusion consists of more or less successful uses of the Modernists' allusion. In the early works, that is up to *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child*, this type of allusion is used from a somewhat complex but mainly conformist – say imitative – perspective. This perspective appears motivated by visionary considerations rather than by the search for style or endeavour to innovate technically. In *A Grain of Wheat* and the later works, it is used from more creative and personal perspectives, and with more and more originality and success. Thus, intertextual allusion in *A Grain of Wheat* is 'truly modernist', that is, its presence and use in this work responds to the search for individuation that is inherent in the philosophy of modernist allusion. In *Petals of Blood* and the later works, intertextual allusion is used from approaches that are even more experimental and personal which vaguely correspond to the postmodernist view and practice of it. What applies to allusion also applies to the practice of rewriting, the second significant procedure by which Ngugi "recycles" previous literature – chiefly the Bible, but also Lawrence's, Achebe's, Conrad's and Joyce's works, and Marxist literature. It is noteworthy here that the procedures of first-degree and second-degree creative recycling occur simultaneously in *all* Ngugi's narratives. However, his use of second-degree-creative recycling decreases regularly with the increase of first-degree-creative recycling, revealing a diachronic character of Ngugi search for creativity besides its synchronic aspect. That is, this stands not only for his struggle with his precursors in writing each of his individual works, but also for the persistence of such struggle throughout his career hitherto.

Another important type of Oedipal creative dynamic that can be observed in Ngugi's fiction is that of subversion. Subversion of elements of colonialist culture and ethics – that is, writing against them – started to occur 'timidly' since Ngugi's beginning in literature with his adoption of elements of Achebe's art. Such art is, by definition, rather adversative of colonialist literature, though the discourse by which it strives to subvert that literature is characteristically subtle and ambiguous, and the trope by which it does it is largely borrowed from that same literature which it challenges. However, the subversive creative dynamic becomes more overt and central in *Petals of Blood*, and, more importantly, in *Devil on the Cross*. These novels are composed following a more resolute rebellious attitude against the discourses of the Western and "Afro-Saxon" literary fathers of Ngugi's, including Lawrence and Achebe. They display a clear intention to displace the kind of trope which those writers stand for by the African and Marxist, or, in one term, the Afro-Marxist tradition. Thus, Frantz Fanon (and writers

such as Karl Marx, Emile Zola and Leo Tolstoy) came to oust and replace Lawrence, Achebe and Conrad as the seminal direct inspirations of Ngugi, in terms of discourse and form. Bourgeois aesthetics are subverted and replaced by socialist realism and socialist art, and high modernism is abandoned for a simpler and more popular kind of trope recalling postmodernism. The Lawrentian neo-romanticism of the earlier stories is largely replaced by the much less slippery pragmatism of Marx and Fanon, and Lawrence's cosmic philosophy seems mocked by parodies of his symbols which (parodies) turn their significances upside down. From *Petals of Blood* onwards, "darkness" and "blackness" definitely replace "whiteness" and "light" in standing for virtue and beauty, and, in *Devil on the Cross*, the Christian 'official' symbology, typology and logic are not just parodied but seem travestied. Achebean discursive subtlety is literally satirised by the narrator of *Petals of Blood* and is replaced, in parts of the novels, with ideological frankness and clarity worthy of Fanon's and Marx's pamphlets. From *Devil on the Cross* onwards, much of the language and forms of artistic expression, the kind of Afro-European trope, which Ngugi has inherited from Achebe, is dislocated by the Gikuyu language and trope of the new commitment of a now 'circumcised' Ngugi to put it in a very symbolic word of his.¹

Besides this Oedipal creative dynamic, Ngugi also writes through two other major types of dynamics, namely the logo-genetic and the sociogenetic ones. The logogenetic dynamic – the production of literature by language – is crucial to Ngugi in view of his interest in language and the processes by which it is related to literary discourse and to culture. As is the case with the Oedipal creative dynamic, the search for creativity by language elements and structures is both synchronic and diachronic as regards Ngugi. That is, it can be noticed in a special type of language use found in all his narratives, in gradual changes in the language of his fiction as it progresses, as well as in genuine ruptures in his approach to language at points in his career (first in *Petals of Blood*, and then in *Devil on the Cross*). Though writing fiction in Gikuyu and other African languages (namely Kiswahili) efficiently is Ngugi's most spectacular linguistic achievement to date, logogenetic creativity is not limited to just that in his work. It did not begin with the novels in Gikuyu, and it is not limited to these works. Ngugi has determined the core of his fictional language – his special diction, phraseology and typical grammatical structures – right from the beginning of his career. If he did not yet reveal all his skill as a creative writer in his youthful short stories, he has already exposed in them the core of his linguistic style. In view of special, original and interesting aspects of that style in comparison with both Anglo-Saxon and African writers, and of continual enhancement and enrichment of his

¹Circumcision for the Gikuyu, as Ngugi insists to remind as, marks the passage from childhood to full and unquestionable adulthood.

language and linguistic practices as described in Chapter Five, it is fair to say that Ngugi has even “made a distinct mark on English” in the narratives that he wrote in English.

One such special aspect by which Ngugi has made a distinct mark on English is the fact that the English of his fiction has an African quality which is quite unique, i.e. which is quite different from both Tutuola's and Achebe's ‘Englishes.’ Unlike Achebe and Tutuola, Ngugi is perhaps not a champion of the practice of capturing traditional African speech through English words. It can even be said that his English is not ‘purely’ African as much as the ‘Englishes’ of those other masters of African English are. Compared with the language of *Things Fall Apart* and that of *The Palm Wine Drunkard*, there is perhaps ‘more Englishness’ about the language of the narratives which Ngugi has produced in English. That, nevertheless, does not mean that there is less Africanness in Ngugi's English. Ngugi's achievement by the English language, though different in the main from the kind of work that Achebe and Tutuola did with the same language, is undeniably African still, and it is unique of its kind from that point of view. The whole point is that it reflects a vision of Africa that is slightly different from Achebe's and Tutuola's. Ngugi's English conveys a sense of an Africa which is more recent in comparison to the Africas embodied by Achebe's and Tutuola's ‘Englishes.’ His English springs more from the post-colonial and contemporary realities of Africa and less from its remoter conditions. Also, Ngugi's nativised English reflects a perspective that is turned towards the present and the future, rather than one that is perhaps ‘purer’ but, on the other hand, ‘regressist’ such as those conveyed by Achebe's and Tutuola's ‘Afro-Englishes.’ There is even a way in which Ngugi's English is African in a way that Achebe's and Tutuola's Englishes are not. This is the fact that it captures life in Kikuyu land, in particular, and in definite epochs. In fairness to Ngugi, therefore, it should be recorded that he too is a master of African English of a sort, one who has created an original kind of African English. This specific language is made of vocabulary, a phraseology and grammatical performances derived from the very special mythology, history, symbology, culture, and geography of the Gikuyu and, simultaneously, from an approach to the English language itself that is, all in all, personal to Ngugi.

The language of (the English translations of) the novels written in Gikuyu presents continuities in comparison with the language of the novels written in English, but it also displays critical originalities. Furthermore, such novelties are interesting from a literary standpoint. The language of the Gikuyu novels is unusual, experimental and interesting enough to be considered as a crucial creative contribution to African literature and to the language of literature at large. Ngugi is not the first African author to write in an indigenous African language, but he is the first to produce written creative literature of quality in the Gikuyu language. As he says, *Devil on the Cross* is “the first novel of its kind in scope and size in the Gikuyu

language.”² This, for itself, is a great and original literary achievement. Another creative merit of the Gikuyu-language novels from the linguistic viewpoint is that they are the products of very sophisticated and original operations of transformation of linguistic elements belonging to one form of expression and art – African spoken language and oral tradition – into another, very different one – written expression and literature. What distinguishes the language of the English translations of the Gikuyu novels is its reflection of characteristics of indigenous African languages, Gikuyu in particular, even if many such characteristics must have been lost in the processes of translation. In all cases, the language of the translations conveys the simplicity of traditional African grammars, and the tonal and rhythmic qualities of African languages distinguished from the stressed and musical qualities of English as explained. And because these Gikuyu narratives are literary works produced by one of the greatest aesthetes, moralists and theorists of language of our times, their language also embodies some of the best that can be said and done in an African language. It represents some of the best examples ever of African-style linguistic beauty, eloquence and wisdom.

Much of the biographical information revealed in Ngugi's autobiographies, namely the recent one, *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*, leaves no doubt that very much of his fiction is inspired by facts in his own life and family background. Ngugi certainly creates by transforming such real facts into parts of his narratives as explained in the last section of Chapter Five. The insertion of autobiographical material into fictional narratives is a very common literary practice; it is far from being an invention of Ngugi's. Also, the presence of such material in a work of fiction, especially as importantly as in Ngugi's narratives, is not necessarily a quality from the literary point of view, the role of a creative writer being 'normally' to invent interesting fictive stories and to tell them with detachment, and not to indulge in autobiography. As it happens, Ngugi has a marked autobiographic tendency, which pervades almost every aspect of his creative writing, from story and plot, to setting, to point of view to characterisation and themes. He has indeed a genuine sociogenetic, particularly autobiographic, Muse which cannot be ignored. Furthermore, the biographical elements in Ngugi's fiction can be said to constitute significant mark of the originality of his novels. They are marks of the originality of his fiction because they are unique by definition: they belong to the writer's *personal*, therefore singular, experience. And they can be seen as signs of Ngugi's creative talent, because they are merged in the fictive elements of his narratives in ways that are interesting. It is only when we read Ngugi's biographies and autobiographies that we realise the

² Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

autobiographical significance and origin of much about his stories. It is noteworthy that reference to this type of creative practice decreases as Ngugi progresses in his career, as the latter narratives are obviously far more imaginary than the earlier ones. A work like *Wizard of the Crow*, for instance, is pregnant with fantasy and other imaginary elements, and with meaning. It is too sublimely artistic to be just an autobiographic novel, even though Ngugi as a very special human being – as an artist – one of the greatest that have come out of Africa – is *fully* there.

Bibliography

A. Primary Sources

a. Fiction by Ngugi

1. Novels:

Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Weep Not, Child*. London: Heinemann, 1961.

_____. *The River Between*. London: Heinemann, 1965.

_____. *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967. Revised 1986).
Revised Edition, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2002.

_____. *Petals of Blood*. London :Heinemann, 1977.

_____. *Devil on the Cross*. London: Heinemann, 1980.

_____. *Matigari* (1987). Trans. By Wangui wa Goro. Heinemann
Educational Publishers, 1989.

_____. *Wizard of the Crew (Murogi wa Kagogo)*. A translation from Gukuyu
by the author. London: Vintage Books, 2006.

2. Short Stories:

_____. "The Return," Published in David Cook (Ed.), *Origin East Africa – A Makerere Anthology* (53 - 59) London: Heinemann, 1965.

_____. "The Village Priest," Published in David Cook (Ed.), *Origin East Africa – A Makerere Anthology* (59 - 65) London: Heinemann, 1965.

_____. "Gone with the Draught" Published in David Cook (Ed.), *Origin East Africa – A Makerere Anthology* (65 - 71) London: Heinemann, 1965.

_____. "The Fig Tree," Published in David Cook (Ed.), *Origin East Africa – A Makerere Anthology* (71 - 76) London: Heinemann, 1965.

_____. « A Meeting in the Dark », a short story published in *Secret Lives, Short Stories by Ngugi wa Thiong'o* (55 - 70), London : Heinemann, 1975.

3. Plays:

I Will Marry When I Want. London and Nairobi: Heinemann, 1982.

b. Essays, Interviews and Miscellaneous Statements by Ngugi

1. Essays:

Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Culture and Politics*. London: Heinemann, 1972.

_____. *Writers in Politics*. London: Heinemann, 1981.

_____. *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*. London, Nairobi and Ibadan: Heinemann, 1981.

_____. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: Heinemann, 1986.

_____. *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. London: James Curry, 1993

_____. *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa*. London: Oxford UP, 1998.

_____. *Something Torn and New*. New York: Basic Civitas, 2009.

_____. *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir*. London: Harvill Secker, 2010.

_____. "Europhonism, Universities and the Magic Fountain: The Future of African Literature and Scholarship." (1 – 11) *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 31, N° 1, Spring 2000.

_____. "Chinua Achebe: A Man of the People." (279 - 82) C. L. Innes and Berth Lindfors (eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*. London: Heinemann, 1979.

_____. "On David Cook." (1 - 2) *Research in African Literatures* - Vol. 35, No 1, spring 2004.

2. Interviews:

_____. Interview with Denis Duerden, January 1964. (121 – 131) Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse (eds.), *African Writers Talking*. London: Heinemann, 1972.

_____. Interview with Aminu Abdullahi, January 1964. (121 – 131) Denis Duerden and Cosmo Pieters (eds.), *African Writers Talking*. London: Heinemann, 1972.

_____. Interview with Charles Cantalupo. Publishes in *Left Curve*, no. 23, Csaba Polony (ed.), Left Curve Publications (ISSN: 0160-1857), URL: <<http://www.leftcurve.org/LC23webPages/ngugu.html>> , 1999.

_____. Interview with Harish Trivedi and Wangui wa Goro (2003). (399 - 413) Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks*. London: James Currey, 2006.

_____. "Interview with Anita Shreve"(1977). (71 - 75) Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks*. London: James Currey, 2006.

_____. Interview in *The Litblog co-op* (<http://lbc.typepad.com/blog/>). "Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his Own Words," February 7, 2007, URL: http://lbc.typepad.com/blog/2007/02/qa_ngugi_wa_thi.html.

3. Miscellaneous Statements:

_____. Quoted in Henry Akubuiro, "How Achebe Inspired Me," <http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/literari/2006/jun/04/literari-4-06-2006-001.htm>.

_____. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of African Literature*. ISBN: 0-203-36126-1.
Published: 2003–10–07. ©2009 Taylor and Francis. URL:
http://www.bookrags.com/tandf/ngugi-wa-thiongo-tf/#bro_copy

C. Secondary Sources

a. *Theory and Criticism*

Achebe, Chinua. *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* – Heinemann International, 1989.

_____. "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation." *Nigeria Magazine* No. 81, June 1964.

Achour, Christiane and Simone Rezzoug. *Convergences critiques: Introduction a la lecture du litteraire* (1985). Second edition, Alger: OPU, 2005.

Akin, Ömer, Cem Akin, and John P. Heinz. « On the Process of Creativity in Puzzles, Inventions, and Designs » (123 – 138) *Automation in Construction*, Vol.7, No 2. Publisher: Elsevier, January 1998.

Akubuiro, Henry. "How Chinua Achebe Inspired Me." *Daily Sun-Voice of the Nation-Literari* (Online), Sunday, June 4, 2006. URL:
<http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/features/literari/2006/jun/04/literari-4-06-2006-001.htm>. 2006.

Akwani, Obi, O.. "Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, A Book Review." Published online by IMDiversity, Inc., at IMDiversity.com., 2006.

Alumona, Victor S.. "Portrayal and Criticism of Culture and Societal institutions in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Journal on African Philosophy*, Issue 3, 2003.

Andrews, William L.. "Inter(racial)textuality in Nineteenth Century Southern Narrative." (298 - 318) Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (eds.), *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*. London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

Arab, S. A.. "The Conradian Inheritance in the African Novel." (101 – 108) *The European Legacy*, N°1. The International Society for the Study of European Ideas, 1996.

Angard, Laurent. "Le hors-sens de la vérité : mythe et littérature." *Acta Fabula*, Vol. 7, No 6, URL: <http://www.fabula.org/revue/document1744.php>. Novembre-Décembre 2006.

Asante-Darko, Kwako. "Language and Culture in African Postcolonial Literature." URL: <http://clwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb00-1/asante-darko00.html>. March 2000.

Ashaolu, Albert Olu. "J.P. Clark: His Significance as a Dramatist." (177 - 199) Oyru Ogumba and Abiola Irele (eds.), *Theatre in Africa*, 1975.

Aylesworth, Gary. "Postmodernism." Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. URL: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/postmodernism/>, Winter 2010.

Barber, Karin "African-Language Literature and Postcolonial Criticism." (3 – 30) *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 26, No 4, winter 1995.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." (142 – 48) *Image-Music-Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

_____. "Degré zéro de l'écriture." *Racine, club français du livre*, 1960, chap. III. *Essais critiques*, Paris: Seuil, 1963.

_____. *S/Z*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

_____. "From Work to Text." (155 – 64) *Image-Music-Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

Baxandall, Michael. *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1985.

Bensemmane, M'hamed. "Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: Narrating Leadership and Social Order." (75 - 90) *Al Adab Wa Lughat*, N° 3, June 2008.

_____. "The Role of Supernatural Beliefs in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*." (29 – 39) *Langues et Litteratures*. Algiers: OPU, 1990.

Bertens, Hans. *The Basics of Literary Theory*. Oxon: Routledge, 2001.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973). Second Edition, New York: Oxford UP, 1997.

_____. *A Map of Misreading*. New York: Oxford UP, 1975.

_____. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994.

_____. "A Meditation upon Priority." (1156 - 1160) *The Critical Tradition*. In Paul Fry, "Lecture 14: Influence." Department of English, Yale University published: Aug. 10, 2010, recorded: February 2009. Videlectures.net.URL:<http://videlectures.net/yaleengl300s09_fry_lec14/>. Media consulted on January 26th 2011 at 18:17.

Boeree, C. George. *Personality Theories* - "Sigmund Freud" (1856 – 1939). URL: <http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/freud.html>. C. George Boeree, 1997, 2006 and 2009. Consulted on 14/04/2010.

Bonnie, Roos. "Re-historicizing the Conflicted Figure of Women in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*." *Research in African Literatures*, June 22, 2002 (online). URL: http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-25414372_ITM Extracted on April 20, 2010.

Bolton, Kerry. "D. H. Lawrence." *OswaldMosley* (Website). <http://www.oswaldmosley.com/dh-lawrence.htm>.

Breidlid, Anders. "Ngugi's *Matigari*, a Non-Materialist Discourse and Post-Modernism." *The Australian Journal of Trans-national Writing* (online). Flinders University, South Australia. <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/humanities/exchange/quodlibet/>.

Brink, André. "Interrogating Silence: New Possibilities Faced by South African Literature." Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (eds.), *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy: 1970-1995*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

BookRags. "Symbolism Study Guide: Introduction." In *Lit Guides. BookRags and Gale's For Students Series*, Thomson Gale, a part of The Thomson Corporation. URL: <http://www.bookrags.com/studyguidesymbolism/intro.html>. 2006

Cantalupo, Charles. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o – Texts and Contexts*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1995.

_____. *The World of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. Trenton: Africa world Press: 1995.

Cherki, Alice. "Preface" to Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre*. (7 - 15) in Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (1961). Paris: La Decouverte/Poche, 2002.

Clarke, Richard L. W., "Rev. of Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*." Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1967. E-text, in *Aclanet* (Website). URL: <http://www.umass.edu/complit/aclanet/FanonBW.html>. Extracted on April 23, 2010.

Clayton, Jay and Eric Rothstein. "Figures in the Corpus: Theories of Influence and Intertextuality." (3 - 36) Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (eds.), *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*. London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

Clayton, Jay. "The Alphabet of Suffering: Effie Deans, Tess Durbeyfield, Martha Ray, and Hetty Sorrel." (37 - 59) Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (*op. cit.*). 1991

Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, Ihechukwu Madubuike. *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*. London: KPI Limited, 1985.

Cook, David and Michael Okenimkpe. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings*. London: Heinemann, 1983.

Crone-Barber, Katie. "What's Wrong with Africa?" Edited by Liam Geoghegan. Additional Research by Ellie Veryard. In *New Histories, The Free Online History Magazine*. URL: <http://newhistories.group.shef.ac.uk/wordpress/wordpress/?p=651>. 18 April 2010.

Crystall, David. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: CUP, 1997.

Culler, Jonathan. *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.

Dorn, Paul. "Turning Toward the World: Ngugi's Petals of Blood." Originally written for ENG 631: "Post-Colonial Literature," taught spring 1999, at San Francisco State University by Prof. Loretta Stec. URL: <http://www.runmuki.com/paul/writing/ngugi.html>. Extracted on June 25, 2010.

- Doring, Tobias.** *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Duerden, Dennis and Cosmo Pieters.** *African Writers Talking*. London: Heinemann, 1972.
- Duff, William.** *An Essay on Original Genius* (1767).
- Dibattista, Maria.** "Review of Virginia Hyde's *The Risen Adam: D.H. Lawrence's Revisionist Typology* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1992)." Article Archives: URL : <http://www.articlearchives.com/humanities-social-science/religion/1030258-1.html>.
- Egejuru, Phanuel Akubueze.** *Towards African Literary Independence: A Dialogue with Contemporary African Writers*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Emenyonu, Ernest** .Quoted in David Kaiza, "Achebe - Why He Was No Literary Genius." *The East African* (Nairobi): David Kaiza, 25 February 2008. Distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com). URL: <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200802251873.html>.
- Eliot, T. S..** *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920), 7th edition, 1950.
- _____. "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (In *The Critical Tradition*, p. p. 537 - 41). In Paul Fry's "Lecture 14: Influence" (*op. cit.*).
- Emerson, R. W..** *Nature* (1836). George McMichael *et al* (eds.), *Concise Anthology of American Literature* (445 - 472). Macmillan: New York and London, 1985.
- Encarta, Microsoft Online Encyclopedia** 2008. "D. H. Lawrence." URL: <http://uk.encarta.msn.com>. Microsoft Corporation, 1997 - 2008.
- Fanon, Frantz.** *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Trans. Constance Farrington. London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1965.
- _____. *Les damnes de la terre* (1961). Paris: La Decouverte, 2002.
- _____. *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

_____. Quoted in Petri Liukkonen (author) & Ari Pesonen. "Frantz Fanon"-Amazon. Com. URL: <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/fanon.htm>. Extracted on April 20, 2010.

_____. Quoted in Henning Melber, "Beyond Africanity? – An Introduction." (19 – 24) S. B. Diagne *Identity and Beyond: Rethinking Africanity*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001. URL <<http://www.ladocfrancaise.gouv.fr/documentation/bibliotheque/bibliographie/Afrique.html>>.

Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). London: Penguin Books: 1990.

Fowler, Roger. *Linguistics and the Novel* (part of the series *New Accents*), Terence Hawkes (ed.). London : Methus and Co., 1977.

Foucault, Michel. "The Discourse on Language." Appendix in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

_____. "What is an Author?" Revised version. Trans. Josué V. Harari. (141 - 60) Josué V. Harari (ed.), *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1979.

Fry, Paul . "Lecture 14: Influence." Department of English, Yale University published: Aug. 10, 2010, recorded: February 2009. Videlectures.net. URL: <http://videlectures.net/yaleengl300s09_fry_lec14/>. Media consulted on January 26th 2011, at 18:17.

Gerard, Albert S.. "Preface." (iii – iv) Chantal Zabus, *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel* Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: 1991.

Gikandi, Simon. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000.

_____. "The Growth of the East African Novel." (231 – 46) G. D. Killam (ed.), *The Writing of East and Central Africa*. London: Heinemann, 1984.

_____. *Reading the African Novel*. Kenya: Heinemann, 1988.

_____. "Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture." (3 – 8) *Research in African Literatures* - Vol. 32, No 3, Fall 2001.

Gillard, Garry. *Formal Aspects of Fictive Narrative in Africa* (E-text). Chapter 2: "Spatial aspects – *The River Between*." URL: <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~gillard/AfrNarr/ch2.html>.

Goater, Thierry, Sophie Marret et Pascale Renaud-Grosbras (eds.). *Lectures et écritures du mythe*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006.

Gordimer, Nadine. *The Black Interpreters: Notes on African Writing*. Johannesburg: Raven Press (Pty) Ltd., 1973.

Gouirand, Jacqueline. "D.H. Lawrence et le monde méditerranéen- Le symbolisme solaire dans la fiction des années 20." *L'Appel du Sud dans la littérature et la culture anglaises au XXe siècle* (1991). *Revel* revues électroniques de l'UNS – plate-forme pépinière. URL: <http://revel.unice.fr/cynos/document.html?id=1155>.

Greenwald, Andy. "Postcolonial Feminism in Anthills of the Savannah." *African Postcolonial Literature in English*. The Postcolonial Web. URL: <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/achebe/greenwald3.html>. Last modified 21 March, 2002. Extracted 10 March 2011, 01:44:06 GMT.

Guardian, The (Online). Saturday June 14, 2008. (guardian.co.uk. Guardian News and Media Limited, 2008). URL: <http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,,2285537,00.html>.

Gugelberger, Georg M. "Blake, Neruda, Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Issues in Third World Literature." (463 – 482) *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4, Winter, 1984. Penn State UP. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246506>.

Gurnah, Abdulrazak. "Introduction" to the 2002 Penguin Edition of *A Grain of Wheat*. London: Penguin Books, 2002.

Holcombe, C. John. "Allusion in Poetry." *Textetc*, 2007. URL: <http://www.textetc.com/traditional/allusion.html>. Extracted on December 30, 2010.

Howards, W. J. "Themes and Development in the Novels of Ngugi." *The Critical Evaluation of African Literature*, 1973. Quoted in C. B. Robson, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. London: The Macmillan Press ltd., 1979.

Huser, France. "Picasso Face a ses maitres." (94 – 95) *Le nouvel observateur* (magazine), No 2175. 13 - 19 July, 2006.

Hyde, Virginia. *The Risen Adam: D.H. Lawrence's Revisionist Typology.* University Park: Penn State Press, 1992.

Ikiddeh, Ime. "Ngugi wa Thiong'o: The Novelist as Historian." ...

_____. "Forward" to Ngugi's *Homecoming*. In *Homecoming* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o London: Heinemann, 1972.

Innes, C. L. "A Source for Arrow of God: A Response." In *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* (244-45). C. L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors eds. London: Heinemann, 1978.

Irele, Abiola. "The Criticism of Modern African Literature." (9 - 24) Christopher Heywood (ed.), *Perspectives on African Literature*. London: Heinemann, 1971.

Jabbi, Bu Buakei. "Influence and Originality in African Writing." (107 - 23) *African Literature Today*, N° 10, 198?.

Jahn, Janheinz. *A History of Neo-African Literature: Writing in Two Continents* (1966). Trans. from German by Oliver Coburn and Ursula Lehrburger. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1968.

Jakobson, Roman. "Linguistics and Poetics." (32 - 57) David Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory – A Reader*. London and New York: Longman, 1988.

Johnston, William. *The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

Journal of Asian and African Studies. "Ngugi and the world of christianity: a dialectic." *Gliath* (Website). October 2004. URL: http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-4364804/Ngugi-and-the-world-of.html.

Jeyifo, Biodun. 1988. "Ben Okri." (277 – 281) Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed.), *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature, 1700 to the Present, Volume 2*. Lagos: Guardian Books, 1988.

Kaiza, David. "Achebe-Why He Was No Literary Genius." *The East African*, (Online), Nairobi, Nigeria, 25 February 2008. Distributed by AllAfrica Global Media, allafrica.com, URL: <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200802251873.html>.

Kariuki, Emmanuel. "Kikuyu Myth of Origin." The Hub Pages Inc.. URL: <http://hubpages.com/hub/Kikuyu-Other-myths-of-Origin>. Extracted on 7 February, 2011, at 19: 39.

Kehinde, Ayo. "Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Novel." (372 – 386) *Nordic Journal of African Studies* (online) 12 (3): (2003). URL: <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol12num3/kehinde3.pdf>.

Ker, David I.. *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000.

Kessler, Kathy. "Rewriting History in Fiction: Elements of Postmodernism in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Later Novels." (75 - 90) *Ariel, A Review of International English Literature*, 25: 2, April 1994.

Killam, George Douglas. *An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi*. London: Heinemann, 1980.

_____. *The Writing of East and Central Africa*. London: Heinemann, 1984.

_____. *The Novels of Chinua Achebe*. London: Nairobi and Ibadan, 1969.

Killam, G. D. and Ruth Rowe. *The Companion to African Literatures*. London: James Currey, 2000.

Knabb, Ken. 'The Relevance of Rexroth (1990). Chapter 2: "Magnanimity and Mysticism." Reprinted in *Public Secrets*. URL: <http://www.bopsecrets.org/ps/rexroth2.htm>. Extracted 2 July 2008.

Kristeva, Julia. "Theory of the Text." Quted in "Intertextuality" by Christopher Keep, Tim McLaughlin, Robin Parmar. *The Electronic Labyrinth*. URL: <http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0278.html> (as retrieved on 3 Dec 2006, 00:45:11 GMT).

Lawrence, D. H.. *Apocalypse*. Mara Kalnins (ed.),Cambridge UP, 1980.

_____. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*. Quoted in F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition. George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948). London: Chatto and Windus, 1962.

Leavis, F. R.. *The Great Tradition – George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948). London: Chatto and Windus, 1962.

Leggat, Alexandra. "My Love Affair with D. H Lawrence." *The Danforth Review* (online).

URL: <http://www.danforthreview.com/features/essays/dhlawrence.htm>.

Lovesey, Oliver. "Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Postnation: The Cultural Geographies of Colonial, Neocolonial, and Postnational Space." (139 – 168) *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* - Volume 48, Number 1, Spring 2002. URL: muse.jhu.edu/journals/modern_fiction_studies/v048/48.1lovesey.html.

_____. "The Exiled Artist Writes Back: Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the Postcolonial Intellectual." *The Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies*. URL: <http://ocs.sfu.ca/aclals/viewabstract.php?id=307>. Last modified: October 1, 2006.

Loftin, Christine. "Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Visions of Africa." (261-79) Derek Wright (ed.), *Critical Essays on Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, New York: GK Hall, 2000.

Maina, Oscar M.. "Mirroring the Subtext: Postmodernism in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*." Publication: Nairobi : Kenya United States International University 2008, vol. (67 - 74).

Marx, Karl and Frederic Engels. "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1848). English ed., 1888. Trans. S. Moor in cooperation with F. Engels. (98 – 137) *Marx / Engels: Selected Works*, vol. 1. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969.

Maybin, Janet and Michael Pearce. "Literature and Creativity in English" (?) At <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/tasters/e301/objects/d3840.pdf>, extracted Wednesday December 15, 2011, at 12:25 pm.

Mazrui, Alamin and Lupenga Mphande. "Orality and the Literature of Combat: The Legacy of Fanon." (229 – 248) Derek Wright (ed.), *Critical Essays on Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. New York: GK Hall, 2000.

Mazrui, Alamin. "The Patriot as an Artist." (73 – 90) G. D. Killam (ed.), *African Writers on African Writing*. London: Heinemann, 1973.

Meddeb, Abdelwahab. "The Palimpsest of the Bilingual: Ibn Arabi and Dante." *Du bilinguisme*, Paris: Denoël, 1985.

Moor, Harry T.. *D. H. Lawrence: The Man and His Works*. Trenton ,London and Sidney: Forum House Publishing Company, 1969.

Nazareth, Peter. *Literature and Society in Modern Africa*. Nairobi: EAP Bureau, 1972.

Ngara, Emmanuel. *Art and Ideology in the African Novel*. London: Heinemann, 1985.

Nicholls, Brendon. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Gender, and the Ethics of Postcolonial Reading*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010.

Nnolim, Charles. "A Source for Arrow of God." In *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* (219-43). C. L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors (eds). London: Heinemann, 1978.

Nwagbara, Uzoechi. "Changing the Canon: Chinua Achebe's Women, Public Sphere and the Politics of Inclusion in Nigeria." *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.3, no.3, September 2009.

Obiechina, Emmanuel. *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novels*. Cambridge UP, 1975.

Ofori Akyea, E.. "Traditionalism in African Literature J. P. Clark." In *Perspectives on African Literature*. Christopher Heywood ed.. London: Heinemann, 1971.

Ogude, James. *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*. London: Pluto Press, 1999.

Ogundele, Wole. "Natio, Nation and Postcoloniality: The Example of Ngugi." *Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Texts and Contexts*. Charles Cantalupo (ed.) Trenton (N.J.): Africa World Press, 1995.

Ogunsanwo, Olatubosun. "Intertextuality and Post-Colonial Literature in Ben Okri's "The Famished Road." (40 – 52) *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 26. No. 1. *New Voices in African Literature*, Spring, 1995. Published by: Indiana University Press. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820086>

Okara, Gabriel. "African Speech ... English Words." (137 - 39) G. D. Killam (ed.), *African Writers on African Writings*. London: Heinemann, 1973.

Oyowemola, Oyekan. "Discourse on Gender: Historical Contingency and the Ethics of Intellectual Work." (1 – 15) *West Africa Review*. 3. 2 (2002).

Podis, Leonard A. and Yakubu Saaka. "*Anthills of the Savannah* and *Petals of Blood*: The Creation of a Usable Past." (291 - 309) *Challenging Hierarchies: Issues and Themes in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Leonard A. Podis and Yakubu Saaka (eds). New York: Peter Lang, 1998,

- Pope**, Alexander. "Essays on Criticism." In Paul Fry's "Lecture 14: Influence" (*op. cit.*).
- Pound**, Ezra. *ABC of Reading*. McClelland and Stewart, Ltd (Canada), 1934.
- Povey**, John. "The Novels of Chinua Achebe." (97-112) Bruce King (ed.), *Introduction to Nigerian Literature*. New York: Africana Publishing Co.
- Razzelle**, Peter. *William Shakespeare, The Anatomy Of An Enigma*. London: Caliban Books, 1990.
- Reader**, John. *Africa - A Biography of the Continent* (1997). London: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Reed**, John. "James Ngugi and the African Novel." (116 - 21) *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol.1, 1965.
- Riffaterre**, Michael. "Syllepsis." (625 – 38) *Critical Inquiry*, No 6, 1980.
- _____. "Interpretation and Undecidability." (227- 42) *NLH*, No12, 1981.
- Roberts**, Julian. "Melancholy Meanings: Architecture, Postmodernity and Philosophy" (130 - 149), in *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, Nigel Wheale (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Robson**, Clifford B.. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. London: The Macmillan Press ltd., 1979.
- Roscoe**, Adrian A.. *Mother is God: A Study in West African Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- Rothstein**, Eric. "Diversity and Change in Literary Histories." (114 - 145) Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (eds.), *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (*op. cit.*).
- Said**, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Sander**, Reinhard and Bernth Lindfors (Eds.), *Ngugi wa Thiong'o Speaks*. London: James Currey, 2006.
- Sansom**, Ian. "Allusion." A contribution in *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*, 2005.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Black Orpheus*. Published in 1984 as a preface to Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Anthology of Negro and Malagasy Poetry in the French Language*.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Preface" to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Trans. Constance Farrington. London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1965.

Soyinka, Wole. *Opera Wonyosi*. London: Rex Colings, 1981.

Smith, Jad. "Volkish Organicism and the Use of Primitivism in Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent*." Republished by permission of the *D. H. Lawrence Review* 30:3, 2002. URL: www.eiu.edu/~agora/Dec03/JSmithall.htm.

Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Cambridge UP, 1976.

Spurling, Hilary. "Review of *Song of a Goat*." *The Spectator*, 21 September, 1965.

Stratton, Florence. *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Stanford Friedman, Susan. "Weavings: intertextuality and the (Re)Birth of the Author." (146 - 81) Clayton and Rothstein (eds), *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (*op. cit.*).

Stevens, Wallace. (*Ano.*). Quoted in Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (*op. cit.*).

Sutherland, John. *50 Literature Ideas You Really Need to Know*. London: Quercus Publishing Plc, 2010.

Tanger, Marilyn Elaine. (Abstract to) *Romantic Nature in the Major Novels of D. H. Lawrence* (PhD Thesis: Purdue University: 1981). At Purdue e-pubs. URL: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/dissertations/AAI8123714/In>.

Templeton, Wayne. *States of Estrangement: The Novels of D.H. Lawrence, 1912 - 1917*, Whitestone, 1989.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *Mikhail Bakhtin – The dialogical Principle*, trans. by W. Godzich. Manchester UP, 1984.

Ure Mezu, Rose. "Women in Achebe's World." *The Womanist* (online). The Institute for African-American Studies, 1995. URL: <http://www.uga.edu/womanist/1995/mezu.html>. Extracted April 20, 2010.

Uzoechi, Nwagbara. "Changing the Canon: Chinua Achebe's Women, Public Sphere and the Politics of Inclusion in Nigeria." *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.3, no.3, September 2009.

Wauthier, Claude. *L' Afrique des africains: inventaire de la Negritude*. Paris: Seuil, 1964.

Wheale, Nigel. "Modernism and Its Consequences Continuity or Break?." (15 - 32) Nigel Wheale (ed.), *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

_____. "Formal Experiment or Conventional Form?" (24 - 25) Nigel Wheale (ed.), *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

_____. "Postmodernism: from Elite to Mass Culture?." Nigel Wheale (ed.), *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

_____. "Paradigms of the Postmodern." (3 - 14) Nigel Wheale (ed.), *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Williams, Patrick. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. Manchester UP, 1999.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford UP, 1977.

Williamson Jenie, Happy Hinmann, and Lanell Williamson. "Devil On The Cross." "Contemporary British Literature: Britain and Africa," URL: <<http://www.english.ilstu.edu/ekstone/219/syllabus.html>>

Wood, James. "Heavenly creatures." *The Guardian* (Online), Saturday March 10, 2007. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/mar/10/fiction.dhlawrence>.

Woods, Tim. *African Pasts; Memory and History in African Literatures*. Manchester UP, 2007.

Woodard, Komozi. *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (Leroy Jones) and Black power politics*. The University of North Caroline Press, 1999 (E-text: Google Books). Extracted on June 25th 2010.

Young, Edward. *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759).

Zabus, Chantal. *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel.* Amsterdam-Atlanta: GA, 1991.

b. Main Narratives, Poems and Plays Discussed, Cited and/or Mentioned in Comparisons

Abrahams, Peter *Song of the City* (1945)

_____. *Mine Boy* (1946).

_____. *Wild Conquest* (1950)

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart.* London: Heinemann, 1958.

_____. *No Longer at Ease.* London: Heinemann, 1960.

_____. *Arrow of God.* London: Heinemann, 1964.

_____. *A Man of the People.* London: Heinemann, 1966.

_____. *Anthills of the Savannah.* London: Heineman, 1987.

Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968).

_____. *The Healers* (1978).

_____. *Fragments* (1969).

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger (L'Etranger)* (1942).

Cary, Joyce. *Mister Johnson* (1939).

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness* (1902).

_____. *Under Western Eyes* (1911).

_____. *Nostromo* (1904).

_____. *Lord Jim* (1900).

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield* (1850).

Djaout, Tahar, *Les chercheurs d'os* (1984).

_____. *Les vigiles* (1991).

Ekwensi, Cyprian. *Jagua Nana* (1961).

_____. *Jagua Nana's Daughter* (1993).

_____. *People of the City* (1954).

_____. *Beautiful Feathers* (1963).

Eliot, T. S.. *Waste Land* (1922).

Feraoun, Mouloud. *Les chemins qui montent* (1957).

_____. *Le fils du pauvre* (1954).

_____. *Jours de Kabylie* (1954).

Haggard, H. Rider. *King Solomon's Mines* (1889).

Joyce, James. *Ulysses* (1922).

_____. *Dubliners* (1914).

Kenyatta, Jomo. *Facing Mount Kenya* (1937).

Laye, Camara. *The Radiance of the King* (Le Regard du roi)(1955).

Lawrence, D. H.. *The Rainbow* (1915). Cambridge UP, 1989.

_____. *Women in Love* (1921). London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1996.

_____. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence.* In F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition – George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948), London: Chatto and Windus, 1962.

_____. *The Plumed Serpent* (1926). Cambridge UP, 1987.

_____. *Twilight in Italy.* London: Heinemann, 1956.

_____. "Flowery Tuscany" in *Phoenix*. London: Heinemann 1936.

_____. "Lies about Love" (poem).
judithpordon.tripod.com/poetry/d_h_lawrence_lies_about_love.html -23k –

_____. "Sun." In *The Collected Short Stories of D. H. Lawrence*. London: Heinemann, 1974.

_____. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). Cambridge UP, 1993.

Mammeri, Mouloud. *La Colline Oubliee* (1952).

Naipaul, V. S.. *The Mimic Men* (1967).

Nietzsche, Frederic. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-85).

Niane, D. T.. *Soundjata, An Epic of Old Mali (Soundjata, l'épopée mandingue)* (1960).

Nwankwo, Nkem. *My Mercedes Is Bigger Than Yours* (1975).

Okri, Ben. *The Famished Road* (1992).

Ouloguem, Yambo. *Bound to Violence (Le Devoir de violence)* (1968).

Schwartz-Bart, André. *Le dernier des justes* (1959).

Sembene, Ousmane. *Xala* (1974).

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest* (1611)

_____. *Hamlet* (1602).

Tutuola, Amos. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952).

_____. *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* (1955).

c. Unpublished Material

Kaci-Mohamed, Salah. (Unpublished) "Interview with Dr. Brendon Nicholls." (University of Leeds, 25 March, 2008.)

_____. Interview with Pr. N. J. Roberts." (University of Sheffield, 19 March, 2008.)

_____. *Western Ethics and Aesthetics and the Discourses of Liberation in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's A Grain of Wheat, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross*. Magister Thesis, University of Algiers, 2005; Supervised by M'hamed Bensemmane, Professor.

c. Anonymous Material

Anonymous author. A review of Charles Cantalupo's *The World of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, Africa world Press: 1995."Barnes and Nobles." URL: <<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/The-World-Of-Ngugi-wa-Thiongo/Charles-Cantalupo/e/9780865434592#TOC>>.

Anonymous author. A review of James Cowan's *D. H. Lawrence and the Trembling Balance*. Penn State Press ,820 N. University Dr. USB1, Suite C, University Park, PA 16802, info@psupress.org. URL: <http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/0-271-00692-7.html>.

التأثر و البحث عن الإبداع عند نقوقي (ملخص)

نتساءل في هذه الدراسة عن قضية التأثر و البحث عن الإبداع عند نقوقي. و تعتبر قضية التأثر و الإبداع إحدى المسائل الجوهرية في الأدب، فهي من أكبر التحديات التي يواجهها الكاتب والقارئ على حد سواء، والتي تحدد معنى النص الأدبي و قيمته الفنية في نفس الوقت. و هي بذلك تمثل موضوع استكشاف مثالي في النقد الأدبي. هذه الأهمية في حد ذاتها كافية لإثارة الاهتمام بدراساتها بالنسبة لأديب بأهمية نقوقي.

وليس هذا السبب الوحيد الذي يدعو للاهتمام بهذا الموضوع. رغم أهمية مسألة التأثر و الإبداع من وجهة نظر أدبية، فهي مهمة لحد بعيد في النقد الأدبي الإفريقي. أقل ما يقال أنها عولمت كقضية هامشية في حوار تحظى فيه إيديولوجية الأدب و سياسته بالأولوية كلها. هذا لا يعني القول أن النقد "بعد الاستعماري" سلبى كله. فلهذا النمط من النقد نقاط قوته، و هو أثرى الدراسات الأدبية ببعض أرقى المساهمات، و هذا العمل مدين له إلى حد كبير. لكن، في أشكاله النموذجية، يعاب عليه تأثيره على فهمنا السليم للأدب الإفريقي، فهو يقدم نظرة على العالم لا تعدو أن تكون "شمولية و قطبية"، وأنتج صورة "هزيلة و معوجة عن التجربة الاستعمارية" على حد قول الناقدة كارين باربر.

وإذ عانت الرواية الإفريقية عامة من تداعيات هذا النوع من النقد، يعتبر نقوقي بحق من أكبر ضحاياه. فنظرا لاهتمامه بالقضايا الإيديولوجية و السياسية كمواضيع وميادين للإبداع، غالبا ما استقطبت رواياته هذا النمط من النقد في بعض أسوأ أحواله، مستعرضا قراءات لنصوصه الأدبية كما لو كانت نوعا من الكتابة الخطابية لا أعمالا أبداعية فنية.

و نحن إذ نحاول الابتعاد عن هذا النمط من النقد، نحاول تقديم قراءة بديلة لأفانصيص و روايات نقوقي تعتمد على صيغة اكلكتية لنظرية التأثر المعاصرة. فنتساءل، من جهة، عن المذاهب، الكتاب و النصوص التي كان لها تأثير في أعمال نقوقي، و عن المواقع و الطرق النموذجية التي يتجلى فيها ذلك التأثر. من جهة أخرى، نتساءل عن مفهوم الإبداع عند نقوقي، عن الحركات و الأنظمة النموذجية التي يتجسد من خلالها ذلك المفهوم في أعماله، و عن تطوره من رواية إلى أخرى.

وتحوي هذه الدراسة خمسة فصول، خصصنا أولها لبيان رؤيتنا "لازمة" التأثر و الإبداع، و وضع الإشكالية في سياقها الضمني و النظري الصحيحين. مما نركز على محاولة إبرازه هنا تعريف مفهوم التأثر كما نراه، و تفسير سبب اختيارنا معالجة موضوع التأثر و البحث عن الإبداع عند نقوقي بناء على منظور اكلكتي لماهية التأثر، عوضا عن تبني إحدى نظريات التأثر أو التناسل بأشكالها الراديكالية. كما نحاول بلورة منظورنا للموضوع من خلال مناقشته في سياقه الإفريقي عن طريق مناقشة مدلولاته بالنسبة للمذاهب النقدية المهيمنة في الأدب الإفريقي، و إبراز أهميته المضاعفة في هذا السياق بالذات. و نحاول كذلك، في آخر هذا الفصل، بيان معنى المسألة بالنسبة لتجربة نقوقي الأدبية خاصة، مع محاولة الخروج بفرضية واضحة المعالم عن التأثر و البحث عن الإبداع عند نقوقي في إطار نظري.

وفحوى هذه الفرضية أن لنقوقي، من جهة، ثلاثة منابع تأثر أساسية هي المدرسة الانجلوسكسونية، المدرسة الإفريقية الحديثة، والمدرسة الماركسية، يجدر استكشاف كل منها عن طريق تحاليل موضوعية لعلاقاته التناسلية مع ديفيد هاربرت لورنس، تشينوي أشيبي و فرانتس فانون. من جهة أخرى، تتميز تجربة نقوقي بكونها تجربة بحث ملح و مستمر عن الإبداع، عن طريق تفاعله مع تأثير أولئك الأدباء و تلك المدارس، إلى جانب استلهامه لجوانب من أعماله من عوالم و عوامل لا تتعلق بالتأثر بمعناه الأدبي الخالص.

وخصصنا الفصول الثاني و الثالث و الرابع لدراسة التأثر عند نقوقي تطبيقيا، بتسليط الضوء على علاقاته بكل من لورنس، أشيبي و فانون. و يتجلى من استكشافنا لعلاقة نقوقي بلورنس، في الفصل الثاني، أنه مدين لرومانسية لورنس الجديدة (أو "نيو-رومانسيته"). و يلاحظ ذلك، كما نحاول التوضيح، في اعتماده، كما لورنس،

على محض الخيال كروية للرواية، على النظر للعالم عن طريق الطبيعة، على الرمز و الأسطورة كأسلوب للكتابة، بالإضافة لإتباعه الدقيق – بل وحتى محاكاته – للتقنيات التي استعملها لورنس في سبيل ذلك.

ومن تحليلنا لروابط نقوقي بأبائه الأدبيين، أشيبي، في الفصل الثالث، يتبين أن نقوقي أخذ عن هذا الأخير، أولاً، نظرتة العامة للرواية كنوع فني يختلف عن المفهوم الغربي للرواية بتحميله بعامل إضافي، وهو العامل "العملي" أو التعليمي. و يبدو أن نقوقي تعلم عن أشيبي أيضاً كيف يلعب دور "الروائي كمؤرخ" بجدارة، أي انه أخذ عنه ليس فقط فكرة التاريخ لإفريقيا عن طريق الرواية، لكن أيضاً كيف يفعل ذلك بواقعية أشيبي وتأنيه ورسانيته، كما تخلص إليه مقارنتنا لطرق وأهداف معالجة قضية التاريخ و موضوع الاستعمار في أعمالهما. هذا، و يلاحظ كذلك اعتماد نقوقي ذات الخطط التي يعتمد عليها أشيبي عادة في تقسيم و بناء الشخصيات على الصعيدين العام و السيكولوجي، خاصة تلك التي استعملها في كبرى رواياته، "الأشياء تتلاشى".

فيما يخص الفصل الرابع، نحاول من خلاله تسليط الضوء على تأثير نقوقي ب "فرانتس فانون"، محاولين إبراز طبيعة ذلك التأثير. و بالأخص، نحاول جلب النظر إلى اعتماد نقوقي على نظرية فانون بتطبيقها لتجسيد جوانب هامة من شخصياته. فمن الملاحظ أن نقوقي، و منذ اطلاعه على أعمال فانون، قد لجأ لاستعمال تفسيرات هذا الأخير و وصفه للاختلالات العقلية و السيكولوجية المتعلقة بالعنصرية والاستعباد والناجمة عنهما في سياقات الاستعمار، الحرب الاستعمارية، و "الاستعمار الجديد".

أما الفصل الخامس، و هو الأخير، فخصصناه لاستكشاف مفهوم الإبداع و طرق البحث عنه وتجسيده في أعمال نقوقي. وما لاحظناه بصفة عامة في هذا السياق أن لنقوقي ديناميكيته إبداع، تتمثل أولاًهما في الإبداع عن طريق التفاعل و "الصراع" مع منابع تأثيره، والثانية في الإبداع خارج أنظمة التأثير بمعناه الشعري المحض. و الملاحظ أن الإبداع بالطريقة الأولى يتجسد فيما سميناه بديناميكية "التدوير" أو "إعادة الصياغة" (الرسكلة)، وفي ديناميكية "الثورة" أو "التمرد" على مصادر الإلهام و التأثير و النصوص الأم. و يلاحظ تواجد كلا الديناميكيتين معاً في كل أعمال نقوقي، رغم أن لجوءه إلى الأولى يتناقص تدريجياً بينما يزايد اعتماده على الثانية بالانتقال من رواية إلى التي تليها. أما عن الإبداع المستقل عن مفهوم التأثير عند نقوقي، فيظهر في استلهامه لأجزاء من رواياته و أقاصيصه من عوامل اجتماعية، تاريخية، اقتصادية، و أوتوبيوغرافية، بالإضافة إلى إبداعه بالاعتماد على عامل اللغة بمدلولها العام المستقل عن التفاعلات الداخلية (أو التناسية) للأدب و الشعر.

وعلى العموم، تخلص هذه الدراسة إلى التالي: كونه مهووس بقضية التأثير و البحث عن الإبداع، كثيراً ما لجأ نقوقي للصراع مع مصادر الهامة و أبائه الأدبيين بغرض "تهيئة فضاء خيالي خاص به" بتعبير هارولد بلوم. فرغم استلافه لبعض الأجزاء و التقنيات من أعمال سابقه، يبقى الطابع المهيمن لعلاقاته التناسية النموذجية مع ملهميه إبداعياً على العموم. وهي تتجلى بحق كعلاقات "استجلاب مستحق"، وعمليات "تحويل أجزاء موروثه تاريخياً"، لا كعمليات محاكاة أعمال سابقة (كما قيل). من جهة أخرى، وبحكم انه أحد أولئك الأدباء الذين يستجيبون لعالم خارج النصوص الأدبية و علاقاتها البيئية، وأحد أولئك الذين يستلهمون الكثير من حيواتهم الشخصية و العائلية، كثيراً ما عمد نقوقي كذلك إلى الإبداع خارج عمليات التأثير الأدبي و دواماته.