

Ngugi wa Thiang'o and National-Consciousness: Re-Reading the Early and the Later Novels from a Postcolonial Perspective

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Abstract

The discourse of national-consciousness in African literature is so pertinent that early and contemporary African writers have “embraced” it with intense, artistic interest and literary enthusiasm. Consequently, in poetry, drama and the novel, critics and scholars have explored varying “faces” of national-consciousness, which on the one hand have opened the readership eye to its ever existence in the texts and equally have enriched the literature and the criticisms of the continent on the other. This paper, as innumerable others explore this discourse in the early and the later novels of Ngugi wa Thiang'o, one of such prolific African writers. These are *Weep Not Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1980) and *Matigari* (1987). The aims are two-folds. First, to unveil the great pertinence Ngugi accords to national-consciousness in his novels. Second, using the postcolonial standpoints of Franz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Kwame Nkrumah for instance, the paper corroborates that while in the early novels Ngugi accentuates cultural and political consciousness, in the same vein, he demonstrates how these two forms of national-consciousness have metamorphosed into revolutionary consciousness in the later.

1. Introduction

The call to national-consciousness is a call to duty — Gideon Boadu & Emmanuel Nii Adutei Baddoo, “National Consciousness in Early Intellectual Works in the Gold Coast” (285).

The above quote epigraph by the duo Ghanaian intellectuals concurs with Franz Fanon's

standpoint as to what national-consciousness ought to be. First, let us turn our earnest attention to the concept of a nation, without whose emergence, national-consciousness wouldn't have been possible. So, in the introductory segment of *Nation and Narration*, Homi, K. Bhabha argues that “despite the certainty with which historians speak of the origins of nations

as sign of 'modernity' of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribe a much more transitional social reality" (1). This for Bhabha therefore expresses the complex nature of a nation as a modern entity. In the words of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin, "the idea of nation is now so firmly established in the general imagination and form of state it signifies, and it is so widely accepted that it is hard to realize how recent its invention has been" (134). Incredible, so, quoted by Homi K. Bhabha in *Nation and Narration*, (1990) the French Orientalist Ernest Renan, addressing an audience at the Sorbonne in 1882 in a lecture entitled "What is a Nation", he opines that nations..... are something fairly new in history. Antiquity was unfamiliar with them; Egypt, China and ancient Chaldea were in no way nations. They were flocks led by son of the sun or by a son of Heaven. Neither in Egypt nor in China were there citizens as such classical antiquity had republics, municipal kingdoms, confederations of local republics and empires, yet it can hardly be said to have had nations in our own understanding of the term (9).

In this paper, Renan traces the rise of the nation-state to the break-up of the classic and medieval empires. He locates its cultural origin in a specifically European political and social environment. The nations were and are deeply unstable formations. This is because they are liable to collapse back into sub-divisions of clan, tribe, language or religious group (Ashcroft et al 134). Early thinkers as Renan argue further were of the view that nations are not natural entities, and the instability of the nation is the inevitable consequence of its nature as a social construction. Constructions of the nation are thus potent sites of control and domination within modern society. This is further emphasized by the fact that the myth of a national tradition is employed not only to legitimize a general idea of a social group (a people) but also to construct a modern idea of a nation-state, in which all the instrumentalities of state power (e.g. military and police agencies, judiciaries, religious hierarchies, educational systems and political assemblies or organizations) are subsumed and legitimized as the natural expressions of a unified national history and culture (135).

In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson defines nation as "a socially constructed community imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group" (6). In other

words it is "an imagined political community" (6). This is because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. Members of the community probably will never know each of the other members face-to-face, however, they may have similar interests or identify as part of the same nation. Members hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity: for example, the nationhood felt with other members of your nation when your imagined community participates in a larger event such as the Olympic Games (7). A nation is a community (7).

According to Bill Ashcroft et al, French Enlightenment though heralded a shift in the theory of the nation. This is a thought that sought to relocate the legitimacy of the modern nation-state in a theory of the people based on the idea of a universal set of principles rather than on the mythic and historical origins. In its strict form, the impulse to create such a Universal vision is transnational and its revolutionary tendency to cross borders can be seen in the effects of Enlightenment thinking on many nations in Europe and in the Americas in the 18th-century. In spite of the conservative reaction that set in throughout Europe after Napoleon's defeat, and the various attempts to resurrect the traditional monarchies, the states that emerged were in various ways based on a modern concept of state-power rather than on traditional ideas of inherited authority such as divine kingship (137).

2. National-Consciousness and the Nation

Let us now turn to the discourse of national-consciousness. National-consciousness connotes a huge feeling about one's country and at one level and at the same time, it means the people and their total ways of doing things. For Fanon, national consciousness is the feeling of all the people in a given state that share important things in common. National-consciousness arises the people's will to be able to see that they are all in "the same boat" and what is good for one is good for all. It enables them to understand that they should not see themselves as members of separate classes or races or tribes. Rather, they should understand that their destinies are bound up with one another (119). For him, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe. Patriotism hence calls people to understand that they are part of something bigger than their own small race, tribe or class. Consequently, national-

consciousness aims to not only develop the nation in question, but also preserves the all-round integrity of the country and the people.

3. National-Consciousness in the Early Novels

In the early novels, two forms of national-consciousness are predominantly evident: cultural and political consciousness. In cultural consciousness, Ngugi narrates Kenyan's profound cultural attachment, so as to safeguard their cultural ways, inherited from their forebears from colonial denigration. In political consciousness, Ngugi portrays Kenya's remembrance of the past heroes and their valiant anti-colonial struggles, Kenya's collective struggle against colonialism, as well as the Uhuru celebrations, as the country marches towards the doors of independence. What is more, Ngugi also portrays the pitfalls of national-consciousness as theorised by Fanon in his *Wretched of the Earth* masterpiece.

In all the three novels, in spite of the British civilizing mission in Kipanga, (*Weep Not Child*), Kamenio (*The River Between*), Thabai (*A Grain of Wheat*), the people demonstrate their deep predilection to their culture. This is why the adult and the old tell stories to the young to inculcate moral values into them and at the same time to expose them to their cultural mores and history. Others encompass songs, proverbs, sacrifices and circumcision. In *The River Between* for instance the Kiama, as a cultural movement is established out of national-consciousness. The rationale behind its establishment as Kinuithia reveals to Waiyaki is "to preserve the purity of our tribal customs and our way of life" (65). It is the consequence of this that this cultural movement denounces the Christians who have abandoned the ways of the tribe and further renounce circumcision. Waiyaki, the novel's hero is an example. In spite of the young man's saviour-rivalry with Kabonyi, the movement's leader, his indictment by the Kiama, for falling in love with Nyamburu, a Christian preacher's daughter, Joshua, and whom he resolves to marry is an attempt by the Kiama to demonstrate the significance of the meaning of their cultural ways, which ought not be contaminated with the western ways, as an expression of national-consciousness. Doing so, thus, amounts to the denigration of their culture, condemned as savage and barbaric by the whiteman, who deemed his culture as superior to theirs. This is because in the words of Fanon, "the colonial situation calls a halt to national culture in almost every field" (191). Fanon's value-

judgement points to the cultural superiority of colonialism in Africa, so much that it condemned the national cultures of African nations in varying degrees of ways owing to their seeming primitiveness.

What is more, making circumcision as the famous and prestigious tribal custom of Kenya by Ngugi and as a significant cultural saga in most of his novels, including the later ones, point to this reality. More than an initiation into manhood or womanhood, circumcision plays another vital role in Kenya's cultural milieu. It was an "important ritual of the tribe. It was at the core of the tribe. It kept people together, bound the tribe. It was at the core of social structure, and a something that gave meaning to a man's life. End the custom and the spiritual basis of the tribe's cohesion and integration would be no more" (*The River Between* 68). Really! Thus, it is this tribal cohesion and integration emphasized by Ngugi that the Europeans hoped to bring to an end for which reason they condemn this pertinent cultural practice replete with so many meanings for Kenyans. In *The River Between*, Livingstone is of the view that "circumcision was wholly evil" (59). Similarly, in *A Grain of Wheat*, Teacher Muniu specifically depicts female circumcision as a "heathen custom" (85), proscribed by the Bible. By this, Muniu subsequently lost his life for denigrating this culture and threatening to penalize the young boy when Kihika later became the Mau Mau leader of Thabai branch, during the Emergency. In the words of Fanon, "to fight for national culture is to fight for the liberation of the nation" (187). By this for Fanon anti-colonial struggle and resistance to free the colonized nations from the tightening shackle of colonialism that chained their freedom by the liberation fighters amounts to freeing the nations from cultural denigration whose foundation lies in national-consciousness. In other words, Fanon concludes that, "if culture is the expression of national-consciousness, I will not hesitate to affirm that in this case with which we are dealing, it is the national-consciousness which is the most elaborate form of culture" (199). So, Fanon has solved the equation here, as he unveils the interplay between national-consciousness and culture in which each is the expression of the other in a broader sense.

Furthermore, the remembrance narrative of the Kenya's historical heroes of the past that spearheaded the liberation struggle under the Mau Mau is national-consciousness motivated. In

Weep Not Child Jomo Kenyatta and Deden Kimathi are mentioned. "One night, people heard that Jomo Kenyatta and other leaders of the land were arrested. A State of Emergency has been declared" (63). This is synonymous with what transpires in *A Grain of Wheat* that "the State of Emergency had officially ended but Jomo Kenyatta and his five compatriots of the Kapenguria trial were still detained in prison" (64). In *Weep Not Child* a boy story-teller tells us that "you see he had written a letter to the police station at Nyeri. I Dedan Kimathi Leader of the African Freedom Army will come to visit you at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday" (67). Subsequently, as the story-teller relates Kimathi turns up in a deceptive passion.

Moreover, in *A Grain of Wheat*, through Warui, a Thabai village elder Ngugi narrates the valiant anti-colonial struggle of some of these leaders and the brutal colonial wrath they encountered all out of national love for Kenya. These are Waiyaki, and Harry Thuku. Waiyaki challenged the whiteman owing to his increasing appropriation of the land and the elders' protest attracted the whiteman's humiliation and suppression. "Waiyaki and other warriors took arms" (12). Consequently, the Mau Mau leader was arrested and buried alive at Kibwezi. Similarly, Harry Thuku, imitating Mahatma Ghandi's none-violence anti-colonial struggle approach through letters which he read to people aloud denounced such things as taxation and forced labour imposed by the Whiteman, as well as the soldiers' settlement scheme which had made many homeless. In the long run, the young Harry was apprehended and he was forced to leave for an exile, all for the profound attachment to the nation. Aime Cesaire writes, "it is the colonized man who wants move forward and the colonizer who hold things back" (25). The truth for Cesaire is not far-fetched, for in the colony, the colonized vehemently desired for a change of life and the colonizer wanted him/her to remain what he/she was and that his/her condition or state would never alter.

What is more, there is also the notion of national unity as an expression of national-consciousness. This is demonstrated in Kenya's peoples' collective struggle to challenge colonialism. The formation of the Kiama is a striking example in *The River Between* which without doubt is born out of peoples' collective unity, as full membership qualification is taking the oath of "purity and togetherness of the tribe" (98). It is

the significance of this unity bound by an oath that Waiyaki's mother cautions the young man when he insists to go on with his romantic relationship with Nyambura. "You must not do it fear the voice of the Kiama. It is the voice of the people" (123). Kiama's goals and mission are coherently stated and according to Franz Fanon "the collective struggle presupposes collective responsibility" (161). True to Fanon, for the fight for independence by the colonized requires a collective effort, as an expression of national-consciousness. Moreover, we see once more an expression of national unity as Kiama metamorphosed into the Mau Mau in *Weep Not Child* and grows stronger in *A Grain of Wheat*. However, the Whiteman's divide and rule to create deep divisions among the Kenyans, which poses a great threat against national unity and of course to the entire anti-colonial struggle still persists even with the rise of the Mau Mau liberation movement. In *Weep Not Child*, Boro laments that "all white people stick together. But we black people are divided. And because they stick together, they've imprisoned Jomo, the only hope we had. Now they'll make us slaves. They took us to their wars and they killed all that was of value to us..." (75). Out of deep wrath and at the top of his voice, Boro shouts, "never! never! Black people must rise up and fight" (75). The first-person plural "we" in Boro's lamentable phrase signifies a collective responsibility of all Kenyans to their nation. Hence, for the valiant freedom fighter only unity and action through the bullet would liberate them from the baleful grip of colonialism and its suppressive forces. This dream and call subsequently become a reality when he and other men run to the forest and take arms against the Whiteman led by him.

It is in *A Grain of Wheat* that the call for unity becomes much stronger, expressing Kenyan's deep attachment to their nation. This began long when in the 1920s; people collectively marched in procession to the Governor General's residence, demanding the release of the detained Harry Thuku. Prior heranto the forest, Kihika preached for unity repeatedly at the railway platform calling for people's collective response to challenge the Whiteman. Subsequently he tries to convince Karanja and Mumbi to comprehend the whole meaning behind his call.

It is a question unity Kihika explained excitedly. The example of India is here before our noses. The British were there for hundreds of years. They ate the Indians' wealth. They drank India's blood.

They never listened to the political talk-talk of a few men. What happened? There came this man Ghandi. Mark you, Ghandhi knows his Whiteman well. He goes around and organizes the Indian masses into a weapon stronger than Bomb. They say with one voice: we want back our freedom. The British laughed; they are good at laughing. But they had to swallow back their laughter when things turned out serious. What did the tyrants do? They sent Ghandhi to prison, not once, but many times. The stone-walls of prison couldn't hold him. Thousands were gaoled; thousands more were killed. Men and women and children threw themselves in front of moving trains and were run over. Blood flowed like water in that country. The bomb could not kill blood, red blood of people, crying out to be free. God! How many times must fatherless children howl, widowed women cry on this earth before this tyrant shall learn (88).

Inspired by national-consciousness, Kihika's preaching mission is designed at stimulating people to unite as Indians did in response to Ghandi's similar call to fight for their freedom and that of the nation in India. However, for Kihika, the Kenyans, as Indians must dispel their fear of the whiteman and infighting a course they must prepare to sacrifice themselves for their fellow brothers and for the nation at large.

We are not astonished at the young man's courageous and valiant efforts, given the inspirational stories Given to him by Warui of past Kenya's revolutionaries the likes of Waiyaki, Harry Thuku and other warriors who by 1900 had been killed by British colonialists, as well as that of Ghandhi in India, with their nations at their tongues and hearts. In reference to Ghandhi, Kihika tells Mumbi and Karanja that listen to him that Gandhi succeeded "because he made up his people give up their fathers and mothers and serve their one mother India. With us, Kenya is our mother" (89). So, when Kihika subsequently becomes the Mau Mau leader of Thabai branch, commanding many fighters in the forest to fight the British colonial masters during the Emergency, the call for unity has not only become a success but has been translated into action. It is against this background that Fanon argues that "colonialism had been shaken in its very foundation by the birth of African unity" (128). Indeed, it was the African's response to the call for unity by the liberation fighters that threatened and crumbled colonialism in the continent. Consequently, he argues further, that "it is

advisable that every able-bodied citizen can at any moment take his place in fighting unity for the defence of national and social liberties" (163). In *Africa Must Unite*, the renowned postcolonial theorist Nkrumah seems to share a parallel view with Fanon which is why he reminds us that "during the struggle for independence we had emphasised the need for national unity for the attainment of freedom, and for enormous responsibilities of statehood that would follow. It was a call for a supreme effort on the part of every citizen" (76). For Nkrumah, the call for unity during the anti-colonial struggle had only not resulted into the attainment of Africa's independence, but it also showcased the responsibility of every citizen in this course fuelled by national-consciousness.

Finally, the use of plural personal pronoun "We" in the novels stand for collective responsibility for all and together with its object form "Us" are associated with national pride of the people. Mumbi's son symbolize the new Kenya, and the mother symbolize the new Kenya in transition. The collective efforts by Gikonyo, Mumbi, General R and Lieutenant Koinandu to amend the flaws of the past committed during the anti-colonial struggle as independence approaches so that the independence celebrations are smoothly celebrated, devoid of any heartedness of one character to another is inspired by the collective love for the nation. Consequently, the stool carved by Gikonyo to his wife Mumbi between whom such mistakes occurred symbolise the successful beginning of the reconciliation that is to come to those who offended or were offended and which will further bind the nation together as independence is about to "romance" it to its bosom.

4. National Consciousness in the Later Novels

In the later novels, the national consciousness in the early novels as expressed in cultural and political consciousness metamorphoses into another form of national consciousness. This is revolutionary consciousness. In the early novels, it is the workers in Europeans' farms and plantations, as well as the masses that are the master architects in planting the seed of national-consciousness and when the plant germinates and grows, they endlessly water it with their hearts, minds and hands: their imperceptible watering cans for the liberation, emancipation and survival of their nation in spite of the temporary setbacks involved. In the later fictions, the master architects are the factory workers,

university students both of whom unite with the masses to liberate the nation from neo-colonialism; get rid of its watchdogs or loyal servants that suppress them and deter the nation to develop, all out of their profound affection for the nation. Karega our revolutionary hero in the *Petals of Blood* observes that “imperialism: capitalism: landlords: earthworms” (344) is a system that has produced insatiable and infamous oppressors who tirelessly feed from the sweat of helpless many. What is more, it is a system with masters at the top in Europe, and their servants at the bottom in Third World, whose prime goal is to make a huge profit in the under-developed world whatever it costs. In other words, it is a system with:

Its ministering angels had hounded his mother to her grave. These parasites would always demand the sacrifice of blood from the working masses. These few, who had prostituted the whole land turning it over to foreigners for through exploitation, would drink people's blood and say hypocritical prayers of devotion to skin oneness and to nationalism even as skeletons of bones walked lonely graves. The system and its gods and its angels had to be fought consciously, consistently and resolutely by all the working people! From Koitalel through Thang'ethe to Kimathi it had been peasants, aided by the workers, small traders and small landowners, who had mapped out path. Tomorrow it would be the workers and peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system of all its preying blood thirsty gods and gnomish angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh (344).

According to Ngugi, neo-colonialism the husband of capitalism which has fathered class distinction, suppression and inequality has masters and servants both of whom are parasites and neo-colonialism which is like the servants' lord requires a sacrifice for the sustainability of the system. The masses and workers are the sacrificial lambs whose exploitation is the blood it drinks. What is more, the neo-colonial overseers in Africa have turned the continent into a prostitute whom they have traded to Europe for their shameless self-gains. In the past, Ngugi argues, during the anti-colonial struggle and resistance the Mau Mau liberation leaders the likes of Thang'ethe, Koitalel and Kimathi who led the workers and peasants to challenge colonialism to a triumphant contest. Similarly, in

post-independent Africa it is yet another union of the masses and industrial workers inspired by the heroic deeds of the past Mau Mau heroes that would lead the war against neo-colonialism and capitalism to a triumphant end.

So, the journey of the people of Ilmorog's earlier to the capital city, or Nairobi, to meet their MP, in *Petals of Blood* who is an embodiment of neo-colonial loyalists' servants/overseers is another expression of unity, stirred by national feeling. Nderi has abandoned his people and his remote, under-developed village Ilmorog, which now requires government's urgent attention, owing to the draught and hunger that bedevils it. The most appealing thing about the trip is that:

from that moment, they forged a community spirit, fragile at first, but becoming stronger as they strove and made preparations for the journey. Women cooked food for the journey, some draining their last grains. Others gave any money they might have saved. Munira, Karega and Ruoro worked on the donkey-cart to make it ready for the great trek of the village to the city (116).

This division of labour among the people of Ilmorog, all in their preparation for the journey to the city is an expression of unity out of patriotic love for Kenya.

What is more, the journey is undertaken in the company of the children as well, who symbolise future responsibility for their village and the country at large. The united Ilmorogians symbolise patriotism and development, while the MP, as well as Kimera, Chui and Mzigo, the three of whom later become the African directors of the Theng'eta Breweries Ltd symbolise among other things national “traitors” who have exploited their people and also sold Kenya to neo-imperialists. The stories of the anti-colonial struggle and long forest treks to launch an onslaught undertaken by the Mau Mau forest fighters led by Ole Masai and N'duguri told to the entire journey delegation by Abdulla who fought side-by-side with these liberation fighters is geared towards not to only encourage the journey delegation to endure the sufferings involved, just as the forest fighters and their leaders endured, but to do for the nation what the past Mau Mau liberation heroes and fighters did for Kenya. This is why Franz Fanon is of the view that “the living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole people; it is the coherent, enlightened action of the men and

women" (165). For Fanon, national-consciousness is the voice of the nation fuelled by unity and the action of all and sundry.

This then brings us to the union of the factory workers, University students and the masses to challenge neo-colonialism and its Kenya's/Africa's "prostitutes" for the people and the nation at large. In *Petals of Blood*, the whiteman's infamous scheme to create divisions among Kenyans has spread to the factory workers as well. The employers of Theng'eta Breweries Ltd pay men a little higher than their women counterparts, they promote some workers, particularly the outspoken to the highest position, they also plant the seed of regionalism so as to enhance tribalism among them all with a view to prevent them to unite:

Suddenly, after six months, people realised that something was happening in this factory. Workers would argue and discuss in groups of two and three very pamphlet was the subject of heated discussion and it would secretly pass from hand to hand in the factory. Except for the few in the inner circle nobody knew the source. But what the pamphlets said was true and so to the workers its origin and source did not worry them. As a first step the workers decided to form a union. The directors and the management were taken by surprise: whence this whizzing noises from those who only the other day were docile and obedient and spent their salaries on Thang'eta fighting among themselves (304)?

Not anymore, for the long-for unity of workers and masses, which the directors of the company so much fear has come in the long run and which leads to their decisive victory over their employers on wage increase. Consequently, it clears the way for all workers in Ilmorog to form a union, including barmaids. Franz Fanon comment that "the people of Africa have recently come to know themselves. They have decided in the name of the whole continent, to weigh in strongly against the colonial regimes. Now the nationalist bourgeoisie, who in region after region has tent to make their own fortunes and to set up a national system of exploitation, do their utmost to put obstacles on this Utopia" (132). Fanon here criticizes the post-independent African leaders who go to any length to prevent people's unity which in turn would be a great challenge to their mis-rule and mis-management. This marks the beginning, as the workers' protest demanding the release of the union's secretary Karega, who is detained, following the murder of

the three Africa's director of the company Chui, Kimera and Mzigo results to police/workers clash or burning. Yet, the formation of the union, the protest, and Abdulla's carefully planned murder of the three directors at Wanja's residence, which he sets ablaze, point to what is to subsequently come.

So, in *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, this union becomes more solid and the revolutionary effort becomes more intense. In *Devil on the Cross*, the workers and peasants, together with the university students form a procession to attack the competitors of modern theft and robbery at the cape, where only seven Kenya's experts in modern theft and robbery would emerge as victorious, witnessed by their seven foreign counterparts from Europe, United States and Japan in Asia. Muturi, Ilmorog's workers' union leader reveals to us what transpires, when he leaves the competition's cave to fetch the Njeruca indigents to halt the competition and attack the competitors, who celebrate the increasing success of neo-colonialism in exploiting the Kenyan's masses, workers and further impoverish the nation at large:

I Muturi wa Kahonia Maithori found the students and the workers already forming a procession, urging all those who live in Njeruca to join them to attack the local thieves and robbers and their foreign friends. I passed on the information I had already collected and I was asked to put in a word. We toured every corner of Njeruca. Whenever anybody learned that I had actually the thieves and robbers bragging, he would immediately go for a stick to join the procession and singing what more can I tell tell you? Bring your horns so that we can trumpet the glory of this great day (204).

Muturi's revolutionary mobilization has succeeded as the Njeruca indigents respond to his urgent call by picking up a stick to collectively fight the neo-colonial agents at the cave. What is more, the slogans taken from the original text carried by their placards demonstrate the temporary victory against neo-colonialism in Africa: "WE REJECT THE SYSTEM OF THEFT AND ROBBERY; OUR POVERTY IS THEIR WEALTH: THE THIEF AND THE WITCH ARE TWINS—THEIR MOTHER IS EXPLOITATION; THE BEEHIVE IN WHICH WE WILL ROLL THIEVES AND ROBBERS DOWN THE SLOPES OF THE HILL OF DEATH HAS ALREADY BEEN BUILT BY THE WORKERS; WHAT'S THE BIGGEST THEFT? THE THEFT OF THE SWEAT

AND THE BLOOD OF THE MASSES!" (203). All these placards slogans unveil the nature of neo-colonialism and its devastating goals. What makes the procession more revolutionary fascinating is that those who do not carry placards carry sticks shoulder high. Gaturia and Waringa's comments, watching the procession by the roadside are too taken aback by this unprecedented union. "This is really an army! Said Gaturia. An army of workers? Waringa asked. Yes, and peasants, and petty traders and students.... led by workers.... And taking the battle to the cave! Gaturia added" (203). Gaturia's and Wangari's dialogue which is brimmed with an emotive mood demonstrates the completion of the long-for and unprecedented union. Their mission is accomplished when they in the long run attack and chase away the local thieves. When the thieves run to their heels, "the workers would run after them shouting: There he is! Hunt him down! Catch thief! Catch thief!" (207). Their foreign counterparts would have suffered a similar treatment if they are not surrounded by their local home-guards and that their cars are much closer as well.

Similarly, in *Matigari*, the strike of workers of the Anglo-American Leather and Plastic Works led by Ngarurowa Kirirowa results into the burning of the effigies of the two director of the company: Robert Williams and John Boy junior amidst protests and cheers. The workers as in the other two later fictions demand for wage increase and good condition of service, given the magnitude of their exploitation by the companies. One of the detained workers tells Matigari in prison about his predicament. "I am a worker he began his tale. I have worked with the company for ages, and the words Matigari has just spoken are absolutely true. I have been a servant to those machines all my life. Look at how the machines have sapped me all my strength. What is left of me? Just bones" (59). Yet, out of sheer injustice, the police, in a bid to halt the workers strike, they humiliate them severely with all assortments of beating. In spite of that, what Ngaruro, their leader valiantly tell them unveil his profound concern not only for the workers but for the nation at large; "foreign exploiters and their local servants must pack up their bags and go. The patriots, Matigara ma Njiruungi, are back, and the workers agree with Matigari's call. He who sows must be the one who reaps! We refuse to be the pot that cooks but never eats the food (60)." According to Franz Fanon, revolution is

mankind's way of life today. This is the age of revolution (*Towards an African Revolution*). He is right, Fanon encapsulates the contemporary reality of the neo-colonial Africa, stressing that it is only revolutionary struggle that would bring to an end, this unjust and diabolical system. In another view, Fanon expounds further that "the essence of revolution is not the struggle for bread; it is the struggle of human dignity. Certainly, this includes bread. And at the base of any revolutionary situation are economic conditions. But beyond a certain point of development on the same basis, it is more important for a people to have guns in hand than to eat more than the year before" (12). According to Fanon, it is harsh economic realities that result into a revolutionary action brought about by capitalism the wife of neo-colonialism which would not have been possible without a gun carried by the masses. Fanon concludes as saying that "If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halt at uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national-consciousness to political and social consciousness. The nation does not exist except in a programme which has been worked out by revolutionary leaders and taken up with full understanding and enthusiasm by the masses" (164). Fanon's message is crystal-clear, for if we desire for national development ever, and we want cease varying degrees of threats that would prevent that, national-consciousness be it political, social, must be our watch-word, particularly the revolutionary consciousness in the age of neo-colonialism, which is embraced by the masses and all patriotic Africans for their liberation against tyranny and the nation at large.

5. The Pitfalls of National-Consciousness in the Early and Later Novels

Influenced by Fanon, Ngugi draws our attention to some of the pitfalls associated with national-consciousness, commencing from his third novel *A Grain of Wheat* in which Kenya attain its independence from Britain. Police shamelessly and openly collect bribe from commercial vehicles on the road. The worst are the politicians, and a striking example is the MP, representing Thabai constituency, who ought to help, secure a loan for Gikonyo and other to purchase a farm belonging to Richard Burton, a settler, leaving Kenya with the proclamation of independence, but eventually he purchases the farm for himself, laying to Gikonyo that the loan is hard to come by. Ngugi here point slightly to some of the post-independent quagmires Africa

is to battle with under the black leaders, national elites, or to use Franz Fanon's popular label, "national bourgeoisie", who at the same time become the neo-colonial servants of the ex-colonial mentors, indifferent to national interest. This is why he reveals that:

Before, independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in the touches bread, land and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of the company of profiteers impatient for their return which constitutes the national bourgeoisie (123).

Fanon's view above depict the infamous character and repulsive attitude of the post-independent African politicians, who before independence they took avalanche of promises to redeem as soon as they formed a government. However, a little while after election, they turn their back on them in addition to being only the sole beneficiaries of the independent dividend. For Ngugi, this is just the beginning of the sound of the warning bell, in his third novel: it is in the later novels, that the bell sounds stridently in the national ear without the slightest sign as to when it will die down.

Thus, in the early novels, Ngugi portrays the beginning phase of the pitfalls of national-consciousness gripping the newly independent African nations of the 50s and 60s. By the 70s however, when he published his fourth novel *Petals of Blood* down to *Matigari*, in the 80s, Ngugi unveils the inexplicably degenerating state of national-consciousness in the Africa, resulting to its profound pitfalls ever. In *Petals of Blood*, Nderi wa Riera avoids his constituency and people and he does nothing at all to help develop the underdeveloped village of Ilmorog, until the delegation visits him to the city to remind him of his national responsibility. Even in that instance, he turns over his peoples' demands as a hypocritical scheme by his enemies to mar his political future, for which reason he orders for the apprehension of Karega, Abdulla and Munira. The worst is when he organizes a deceptive tea party at Ruwai-ni during which he exploits his people by collecting twelve shillings to fund his fallacious water project. He also establishes the Utamaduni Cultural Centre in collaboration with a German to increase his gains through exporting

young girls to prostitute abroad. Franz Fanon is right when he discloses that "in underdeveloped countries, we have seen that no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, and voracious, with the mind of huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial Power hand out to it. This get-quick-rich middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe but its caricature" (144). Indeed, and Kimera, Chui, and Mzigo who are also neo-colonial overseers that exploits their people to enrich themselves and protect their masters' interest at the detriment of their country, Kenya are another "caricatures".

In *Devil on the Cross*, the local Kenya's unpatriotic national figures, yet who ought to be statesmen worthy of emulation that partake in the international competition of modern theft and robbery at Ilmorog, revealing how they have been using the art of cunning, deceit, cruelty and brutalization to exploit the downtrodden masses, and nation demonstrate the magnitude of Africa's post-independent disillusionments as epitomes of the pitfalls of national-consciousness. This is also true to the cruel attitudes of Boss Kihara, Robin Mwaura the informer, the corrupt police and the government that unjustly detain Muturi, Wangari and the student leader for leading the students, workers and the masses to protest attack the local competitors at the Devil's feast. Similarly, in *Matigari*, these pitfalls define some of the dark sides of the government of Ole Excellency Ole that denies its citizens the right of free speech to tell the truth, and injustice is its best style of governance for which reason it apprehends the novel's hero Matigari, the workers leader Ngaruro, the peasant, the teacher and Guthera, the lady that is humiliated by the police, for instance, in addition to the corruption scandal its police are shamelessly involved. Consequently, Franz Fanon laments that:

National-consciousness, instead of being the all embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. The faults that we find in it are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the

cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity (Wretched of the Earth 118).

What Fanon denotes here is that national-consciousness or the love of Africans to their respective nations should fulfil the peoples' high hopes and aspirations under self-government. Alas! It has not, instead however, it brings nothing other than disenchantment and frustration to the people. One reason could be that the post-independent African politicians seem to have forgotten that the love for the nation entail that all are prepared to die so that the nation perpetually exists and progresses. This unprecedented national love should outstrip their self-centredness to enrich themselves at the detriment of the nation and that of the tribe from which they have all emerged in their countries. For Fanon, it is the love for the tribe which is much more than that of the nation by most people in post-independent Africa that in addition brings about great obstacles in achieving national unity as a pillar or staircase to achieving to national-consciousness and above all development of post-colonial Africa as a whole. Let me close with Patrick Parrinder remarks that "fictional narratives give us an inside view of society or nation" (1), as Ngugi has enchantingly provided in his early and the later novels.

6. Conclusion

Therefore, the long-for independence is but a tag: as the priority of the new leaders are no other things than their pockets and bank accounts, but not the nation instead. They are no doubt the theoretical "black skins" wearing "white masks", for which reason they are akin to their colonial and neo-colonial masters. The worst kind of this situation is the little efforts being made by the middle-class to move the nation forth as they too are as corrupt as the leaders at the top, and the masses remain the receiving end of neo-colonial exploitation and tyranny that burns the buttock of the African nations.

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