Chapter: 3

Critical Analysis of Select Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o

3.1: Introduction:

This chapter throws light upon the novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. The analysis will be based on the select novels of Ngugi. The researcher will study *The River Between* (1965), *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1980) and *Wizard of the Crow* (2006). The researcher will focus upon Ngugi’s presentation of disposed and dislocated people. The researcher will apply Foucault’s concept of power and Spivak’s subaltern theory to the study the select novels of Ngugi. The research will help to see that how racial discrimination has womanized the colonized man. The research will also throw light upon Ngugi’s presentation of women characters.

3.2: General Elements of Approach:

In Postcolonial studies Ngugi Wa Thing’o is well known for his most famous critical essay “The Language of African Literature” from his collection of essays *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. He views writing in African language is a process of decolonization since the displacement of a community and of an individual under the colonial clutches resulted from the displacement of native languages. In *Decolonizing the Mind* Ngugi shares his childhood experience in an English-run school in which students were punished if they spoke their native language, Gikuyu, in or near the school:

“One of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate
around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY.”
(Thiong'o, Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature)

For Ngugi English is a language of a dominant class, it is the language of colonizers and writing in English is a mental colonization which demeans the native culture. For him writing in native language is a political act which will lead to decolonizing the African mind. Ngugi, in his novels, fights with the external and internal issues of his society.

The above quotation also reflects power lying within the system. According to Foucault power is constructed within the social activities. If we study the quotation from Foucault’s perspective it helps us to see that Ngugi did not want to use English as it was the language of colonizers. But during colonialism the black people were forced to use English. Whitemen used language as a powerful tool to colonize the native mentally and to make their culture paralyze. According to Foucault people were forced to do things which they never liked. And that is power. Power is already there within the system and discourse helps to bring out the hidden power, the power used to suppress and dominate people. Dianna Taylor in *Michel Foucault: Key Concept* writes about Foucault’s views on power:

“the question ‘What is power?’ is obviously a theoretical question that would provide an answer to everything, which is just what I do not want to do.” (D. Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts)

If we apply the quotation to study the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized, it will definitely help to bring in light the power existed within the relation. The power is already there in the ‘inside’. The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is always unequal as the colonized are suppressed and dominated by the dominant group, by the colonizers. The subordinate group is always forced to do things which they never wanted to do or they never liked. Ngugi emphasizes upon the use of native language because it is difficult to break mental colonization. Even after the end of colonization the effect of it remains as the
power works in structure and gravity. Moreover language speaks through the person. It is not that the subject chooses language but the reality is language chooses the subject. Stainer Kvale writes:

“The self no longer uses language to express itself; rather language speaks through the person. The individual self becomes a medium for the culture and its language.” (Kvale 36)

Here in Foucault’s views the subject is decentred as language comes at the centre. It is the power and effectiveness of language that it helps to see microcosm of macrocosm. Discourse contributes to analyze subjects. Foucault in *The Archeology of Knowledge* writes:

“We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation […] Discourse] is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form […] it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history […] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality.” (Foucault 117)

Language helps to study the system that how it works. Through the binocular of Foucault’s theory if we study Ngugi’s select novels, we can say that Ngugi has tried to express the grave reality of his nation as he covers the time duration from colonialism to postcolonialism and Neocolonialism. In the works of Ngugi the subordinate masses try to resist the dominant group.
3.3: Mutilation of Body:

_The River Between_ (1965), written by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o was first published in 1965. The very critical issue in the novel is female circumcision. Female circumcision is very dangerous for women. This so called ritual is created by patriarchal society and women were forced to pass through this painful ritual. The ritual exploits and mutilates female body. The ritual is commonly accepted by all as it proves a woman’s purity. Mutilation of body is concerned with the mutilation of the body of women, colonized men and land is mutilated. It also explores the life of Gikuyu community which is under the effect of colonialism, mainly Christianity. It depicts the conflict between Christianity and traditional religion and culture between the two world wars. It dramatizes the conflict between the inhabitants of two villages, one dominated by traditional culture and the other representing Christian-influenced culture that has began to replace the tradition. The novel begins with a fight between Kamau and Kinuthia. Waiyaki tried to stop them. They argued:

“Why are you fighting?

He called me names, answered Kamau.

He is a liar. He laughed at me because my father died poor and …

He called my father a convert to the white man.

He is!

You beggar.

White man’s slave.

You…you…” (Thiong’o, The River Between 5)

In these dialogues ‘white man’s slave’ indirectly targets upon the master-slave relation between the Black and White people. The relations are based on power and it is difficult to
escape from power. The arguments between the boys can be taken as prophesy. Later in the novel the tension is at the height as the two ridges faces the conflict between the tribal culture and the new religion. The new religion has overcome the religion of tribe. Even Chege, Waiyaki’s father also warned the tribe against Siriana Missionary Centre. The people doubted him. They asked:

“How do you know?
See them, the butterflies.
Butterflies? You have never left the ridges!
They are there, beyond the ridges, putting up many houses and some taking the land.” (Thiong'o, The River Between 7)

Here the word ‘Butterflies’ is used for whitemen. The white people have come there and attacked upon the native people. Butterflies are colourful and they are attractive. The colonizers also have tools to attract the native people. With the help of the attractive mediums the colonizers wanted to establish power over the native people and control them. The threat of Christianity and British empowerment was already there. Joshua was the man of God and he was against the initiation rites and Chege always talked about the rituals and values of tribe. For Chege and others it was important to learn the ways of the land and to drink the magical ritual of being born again. The gate for this was circumcision. Each and every boy and girl had to pass through this ritual. It was compulsory for them to prove the strength. Waiyaki also went through this ritual and proved his manly strength. Muthoni, Nyambura’s sister, also wanted to be circumcised. Muthoni said:

“Look, please, I – I want to be a woman. I want to be a real girl, a real woman, knowing all the ways of the hills and ridges. (Thiong'o, The River Between 26)

She also said:
“I want to be a woman made beautiful in the tribe; a husband for my bed; children to play around the hearth. Yes – I want to be a woman made beautiful in the manner of the tribe…” (Thiong'o, The River Between 44)

Female circumcision is most often plotted by elder women. Women force other women and girls to go through female circumcision. In male dominated society a woman has to undergo circumcision to idealize a position of hers and her family. No family would pay a bride price for the girl who has not undergone the process of circumcision. This type of policy for the female body is constructed by the patriarchal laws. FGM is constructed to assure that a woman remains ‘clean’ and ‘pure’. So Muthoni’s decision to be circumcised is the reflection of her unconscious mind, her unconscious wish to fix and finalize her position in society.

Muthoni goes against her father and Waiyaki is surprised to know that Muthoni has rebelled against her father. It was compulsory for young girls and boys to be circumcised. The core of the novel is circumcision and the death of Muthoni caused by this strange ritual. As it was the custom in the ridge people sang the songs of initiation. They celebrated this ritual as “circumcision was the central rite in the Gikuyu way of life.” (Thiong'o, The River Between 37).

The ritual of initiation became a celebration for the tribe. Women sang songs of initiation. The circumcision songs break down the boundaries between age and genders as in the songs people celebrate adulthood. Young people freely describe about men-women relations and the scenes of love making. Through songs and narrative structure Ngugi shows hegemony in society and hegemony is the result of power. In the presentation, the Gikuyu women are discriminated since they are described as poor and cruel managers; they are oppressive leaders. In Chege’s narrative of the tribal nation the economic marginalization of women is woven.

“You do not know this! Long ago women used to rule this land and its men. They were harsh and men began to resent their hard land. So when all the women were pregnant, men came together and overthrew them. Before this, women owned everything. The animal you saw was their goat. But because the women could not
manage them, the goats ran away. They knew women to be weak. So why should they fear them?” (Thiong'o, The River Between 15)

Here women are described as dictatorial and they are very poor at managing the domestic animals. From the patriarchal point of view women needed to be overthrown so pregnancy was considered as a weak point for women so men took disadvantage of it. Circumcision songs are linked with disempowerment as in the songs women were compelled to support female genital cutting. The songs are the presentation of women’s oppression with their support. Through the songs women as subalterns are speaking about their bodies.

The whole ritual of circumcision is the creation of culture. When it is the matter of body, bodies are also created by culture. The body also gets marked by cultural identity. Thus, it becomes the sign which tries to impose the idea that culture is nature. This is how cultural artifacts get naturalizing human history. The conception of discourse is linguistic or sociological one so the analyses of the above written quotations reveal that the female body was/is imprisoned by the culture dominated by men. The shapes of the body are given and molded according to the culture so in a male dominated culture women shape/reshape their bodies as per the demand of men. Culture is a mechanism of power and the concept of “Foucaudian bodies” (D. Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts 95) has profoundly influenced feminist theory. Foucault’s concept of power and body helps to study the different ways that women shape their bodies which in actuality create a disorder. Circumcision is also a kind of disorder but people and especially women avoid the danger lurking behind it because this kind of disorder is considered as a discipline in the service of patriarchal, normalizing power. So bodies of women are controlled by the patriarchal culture. Foucault’s concept of power and body matches with Spivak’s views about exploitation of female body and helps to understand it.

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o has written about clitoral dichotomy. According to Spivak clitoral dichotomy is exploitation of women’s (re)production bodies in the ‘Third World’. Spivak points out that how women’s bodies are disciplined in and through in patriarchal social relation. Spivak attracts our attention by emphasizing the thought that how women’s productive bodies are site of exploitation under contemporary transnational capitalism. Spivak points out the significance of
the female body pointing two radical different directions: one is, she wishes to stress the clitoris as the site of a radical excess to the cycle of reproduction of production and second is, to emphasize that the reproductive power of the womb is absent in any account of production in classical Marxist. Muthoni is in the same situation. Circumcision led her to death. Female circumcision is mutilation and exploitation of a woman’s body. This is a regular practice in the Gikuyu community. Muthoni’s wish for the female circumcision reflects her psychological condition as the girls who do not go through the procedure face stigma or inferiority in their culture. This goes with the cultural force which pressurizes a woman to mold herself according to the expectation of male gaze. As women are imprisoned in the chains of culture, they are unable to free themselves from the clutches masculine culture. The female subalterns are constructed within the great game of Imperialism of the ‘First World’ and patriarchal imperialism. Though it is a barbaric activity, it is considered as an ideal thing in a nationalist discourse. Women keep silence though they are exploited and betrayed by the culture because the construction of individual identity guarantees alienation and silence forever. So women forcefully participate in the procedure. The songs support women to raise voice to aggrandize their own marginalization in patriarchal society. The following paragraph shows women’s participation in the ritual:

“Men shrieked and shouted and jumped into the air as they went round in a circle. For them, this was the moment. This was the time. Women, stripped to the waist, with their thin breasts flapping on their chests, went round and round the big fire, swinging their hips and contorting their bodies in all sorts of provocative ways, but always keeping the rhythm.” (Thiong'o, The River Between 41)

Ironically the songs are not mere expressions of the women’s masochistic collusion with patriarchy but enunciations of positive energy as well; Muthoni has rebelled against her father who believes in Christian fundamentalism to undergo a tribal rite of passage. Muthoni is the representative of other girls who might have run away from their homes to participate in the ritual. The rebel of the girls shows that there were many parents who were against circumcision.
The songs and the myths are oral arts and this oral art create an illusion of freedom. The women feel that they are free and they have deconstructed racial hierarchies and the “otherwise strong social code” (Thiong'o, The River Between 41). The women are unaware that the joy of this deconstruction is momentary and after that they will be imprisoned in life time pain or perhaps death, as it happens to Muthoni. As written in *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality*:

“The carnivalesque discourse, implied by Achille Mbembe’s deployment of Bakhtin’s notion of the subversive power of Menippean aesthetics, deconstructs colonial power in African self-fashioning – but in this instance it also intensifies the enslavement of the subaltern, especially the female who thinks she achieves self-fulfillment through genital cutting. Ngugi’s narrative thus ‘writes back’ to colonial laws that arrogantly banned local practices such as initiation rites, but the story also criticizes the use of art to silence women in pre-colonial cultures.” (Mwang 33-34)

The notable thing in the novel is that the missionaries are not interested in improving the condition of women. They never wanted to empower African women. The colonialists present themselves as saviors because they try to liberate colonized women from their oppressed males but in actuality they wish to establish imperial domination. The missionaries are the symbol of power and the dominant group never wanted to improve the condition of the marginalized group as they were just interested in expanding their power. In *Can Subaltern Speak?* Spivak has written, “White men were saving brown women from brown men.” Here white men and brown men are saviors and oppressors of women. The plight of women is caused by colonialism and Spivak actually was interested in unshackling women from colonialist and indigenous oppression. The colonialists have no primary interest in strengthening colonized women and symbolically it is shown through Muthoni’s death. After circumcision she was ill and her genital wound could not be cured even in a hospital which stands for colonial modernity.
“Above beating of drums and jingles, shouts rose from hill to hill to keep awake those who might want to sleep. Tonight was the eve of the initiation day; it would see the biggest of all dances.” (Thiong'o, The River Between 40)

The people did not trust those who were not circumcised even men did not marry girls who in the tribal culture had not gone through the ritual and proved themselves a ‘woman’. Waiyaki loved Nyambura and wanted to marry her but the questions were raised and people asked for the oath and betrayal as Nyambura was not circumcised and she had not proved herself a woman. In circumcision everything was done by a local surgeon. Before the ritual the youth had to have a bath in the cold water of Honia. Waiyaki was waiting for the day to come to reveal his courage like a man. The people believed that this ritual links them with the soil.

“He just stared into space, fear giving him courage. His eyes never moved. He was actually seeing nothing. The knife produced a thin sharp pain as it cut through the flesh. The surgeon had done his work. Blood trickled freely on the ground, sinking into the soil. Henceforth a religious bond linked Waiyaki to the earth, as if his blood was an offering.” (Thiong'o, The River Between 45)

Though Waiyaki is a boy, he is forced to follow the cultural ritual. Circumcision was compulsory for boys and girls. Waiyaki’s condition is just like Muthoni in circumcision. The youngsters have accepted the ritual naturally. Waiyaki’s body is also controlled by the culture. So it shows that the gravity of power is very strong and individuals cannot escape easily from it. Foucault’s concept of power and body is very much helpful to understand the situation of individuals in society.

The village stands between two ridges- Makuyu and Kameno. Although the novel shows the conflict between tradition and Christian-influenced culture, it also hints at the latent conflict between the two ridges on which the village stands. The novel starts when Christianity has caused one village to abandon this practice, so that the Christian villagers on one bank of the
river are now in conflict with the traditional practices on the other side. The entire communities of Kameno and Makuyu are thrown into utter confusion. The gulf between them is so large that even the life giving water of the river Honia became the sign of their physical and spiritual separation. In the midst of this disunity stands Waiyaki, a missionary educated local leader. He believes that education is life. He vainly tries to reconcile the opposing sides through a symbiosis of Gikuyu tradition and western education. He struggles to educate people.

Waiyaki’s father, Chege, sends him to the missionary school to get the education of the white man, which will later prove useful in their fight against the white man’s encroachment: "Arise. Heed the prophecy. Go to the Mission place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites" (Thiong’o, The River Between 20). Though a little mechanistic in its concept of learning, Chege’s message recognizes that in order to combat an enemy effectively, one must know his or her tactics.

Waiyaki goes to missionary school by obeying his father. He acquires education but he is in dilemma because he finds positive sides of white people. But he remains convinced:

"a religion that took no count of a people’s way of life, a religion that did not recognize spots of beauty and truths in their way of life, was useless" (Thiong’o, The River Between 141).

At the same time, he is unable to make his traditional followers see the spots of beauty in the white man's religion; in similar fashion, he is unable to define clearly his ambivalent stand to them. Between his conflicting loyalties to his tribal customs and to the European education, Waiyaki becomes the hostage of opposing sides, with the individuality and freedom of action he clings to seriously clashing with the commitment to communal salvation embodied in his messianic mission. Waiyaki’s school going can be understood in relation to Foucault’s concept of power and knowledge. In his Discipline and Punish Foucault writes that power should not be understood completely in negative term. Power is also productive. In Foucault’s views power comes from the below as “power emerges from the variety of overlapping and intertwined relationships rather than from the sovereign individual” (D. Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key
Concepts 22). For power relations it is necessary to have the rulers and the ruled. The ruled try to resist the rulers. Here Waiyaki wants to use education, knowledge to resist the power of the white men’s government.

3.4: The Cry:

Weep Not, Child published in 1964 is Ngugi’s first published novel. He wrote the novel before he became ‘Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’ because when he wrote it he was known as ‘James Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’. Weep Not, Child is a cry, the cry of the suppressed and voiceless. From the title of the novel it sounds that the mother is giving consolation to her child. It can be said that it the cry of all colonized others. The mutilation of body is so painful that the colonized others cry out in agony.

This novel is an account of his childhood during Mau Mau period. The novel takes the readers into the past and re-creates in the mind the tension and the feeling of Mau Mau era. Mau Mau era was formed to resist and oppose the power of the colonizers. In Foucault’s views, in the first instance, power emerges from the specific, local, individual choices, behaviours and interactions. To form Mau Mau party was the choice of the suppressed class and they thought that it was compulsory to raise voice against the rulers, against the dominant class. In its own time the novel shows us how politics affects the social life, the meaning of family, the meaning of freedom and the hopes of young people. At the same time the novel shows the despair in neo-colonial Kenya. It is the place where the people want to escape from. Hopes die and the meaning of freedom becomes a mere illusion. Written upon the cusp of Kenyan national independence the novel is positioned upon national conflict and national reconciliation. It is the life of Njoroge whose ambition in life is to study. He thinks that education is a key to solve all problems. He wants to study for his family and his nation.

Ngugi has used the technique of storytelling. The children and youngsters are fond of listening to the stories. Ngotho’s family is the centre of the novel. The novel starts with Nyokabi and Njoroge and the discussion of school going. She wants her son to go to school. The dialogues between the mother and the son:
“You won’t bring shame to me by one day refusing to attend school?”

“O, Mother. I’ll never bring shame to you. Just let me get there, just let me.”
(Thiong’o, Weep Not, Child 3)

These dialogues show the vision of Njoroge from his childhood. He wants to live this vision. He sees his as well as the family’s and nation’s bright future in education. For him his mother is an angel of god. He says:

O, Mother, you are an angel of God, you are, you are.” (Thiong’o, Weep Not, Child 3)

The very beginning of the novel shows that as a child he clings to his mother. Though it deals with Kenyan independence, Neocolonialism and the family of Ngotho, the novel starts with a woman, with mother. It is very significant. In this novel there are women characters like Njeri, Ngotho’s first wife, Nyakobi, Ngotho’s second wife, Mwihaki and Julia Jacobo’s daughters, a European woman who comes as teacher at Njoroge’s school, Mrs. Howlands and the Land. The land in this novel becomes a feminine figure. All these women characters belong to the category of subaltern woman.

In the technique of storytelling the barber’s narrative is woven. The barber’s story hits the issue of displacement and sexual possession of women in colonial space and this avows in relation to the land. The barber’s narrative shows the sexual triumph which instrumentalizes black and ‘white’ women in its establishment of a chauvinistic anti-colonial discourse. The anecdote of the barber produces ‘woman’ as a sign which enables the reciprocation of dialogue between male oppressed subjects and as colonial and racist subjects. The barber shares his experience of going to the war. He says that he has visited the land of white people. The barber is very famous for his storytelling. A man is thought as a ‘fool’ if he does not know who the barber is and where his shop is. In the context of poststructuralism and the use of language the meaning
is not inside the text. The word ‘fool’ is used in the context of effeminate. It means the man is a fool in town’s vocabulary.

“A fool, in the town’s vocabulary, meant a man who had a wife who would not let him leave her lap even for a second.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 8)

This is very critical as it is a negative way of looking at and portraying a woman. The above line puts a woman in a power position because she would not allow her husband to leave her lap. Whether to ‘allow’ or not is in her power. The man is passive here. But this can also mean the woman is sexually oppressed as her husband plays with her body. He does not want to leave her for a moment and in such condition she cannot ever be ‘free’. And the third point is the way the author has put a woman in a situation. Ngugi has not written about the man who wants a woman’s company, physical company. With his pen the author has put woman in a very complex situation that from a distance it looks as if she is holding the power but the layers reveal that she is also victimized by the author. So a woman is displaced from the position. War puts Black men in subordinate position as they were forced to fight though it was White men’s war. In colonial context Black men were treated as feminine by White men. Women of the Barber’s narrative and Black soldiers share the problem of victimization. The body of Black soldiers and women are used by those who were in power position. The barber shares his experience of the war. Colonized Africans were forced to fight that war. He says:

“We carried guns and we shot white men.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 9)

With this killing of white men he says that the white men were not gods. The myth of whiteness is broken as colonized were conditioned to think white as powerful but at the war they shot white men and show white men fighting with the white men. To everybody’s surprise the barber says:
“Y-e-e-e-s. They are not the gods we had thought of them to be. We even slept with their women.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 9)

Here the barber makes a point clear that if the white men are not gods then their women are not untouched Madonnas. They accede to intercourse with black soldiers. The barber focuses more on the female body no matter whether it is white or black. He says:

“Not different. Not different. I like a good fleshy black body with sweat. But they are...you know...so thin...without flesh...nothing.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 9)

Here the barber compares the female body just as people compare between two things. Just like children, the way they do with their toys to know that which one is better in a play. He points out that no woman is different in a bed. Here ‘white’ is not something which looks beautiful and pure but it is ugly. As compared to the ‘good fleshy black body’ white female body is nothing. In this sense white woman is disempowered by the black woman. Furthermore the barber says:

“Well! Before you started...you thought...it was eh – eh wonderful. But after... it was nothing. And you had to pay some money?”

“Many! Many who were willing to sell. And that was in Jerusalem of all places.”
(Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 9)

Here the context is of prostitution that white women sell their bodies. If no woman is different in a bed whether white or black then situation of women whether white or black is the same in any culture. White or black but the culture is the creation of masculinity. It shows the
exploitation of white women in white culture. Moreover the barber refers to Jerusalem which was considered a holy place in Christian context. It is the place where, according to Christian mythology, Messiah was crucified. He says that such things happened in Jerusalem. Superiority of Christianity is broken here. Just like the barber Mr. Howland also discovered that “black women could be a good relief.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 128)

When Ngotho looked at a white woman he observed her body and compared her with his wives. He thought and wondered about the white woman’s body because she was thin.

“Ngotho at times wondered if the woman had flesh at all. What did a man want such a wife for? A man wanted a fat woman. Such a woman he had in Njeri and Nyokabi especially when he married them.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 11)

With the contrast of masculine sexual conquest in the barber’s narrative, Ngugi depicts the sexual relations between Italian prisoners and Kenyan women. The barber entertains the sexual possession of ‘white’ women with the disappointing reality that they do not differ from black women in bed. On the other side his narrative shows a vastly different hierarchy of value by showing interracial sexual relations conducted by Kenyan women:

“The Italian prisoners who built the long tarmac road had left a name for themselves because some went about with black women and the black women had white children. Only the children by black mothers and Italian prisoners who were also white men were not really ‘white’ in usual way. They were ugly and some grew up to have small wounds all over the body and especially around the mouth so that flies followed them all the time and at all places. Some people said that this was a punishment. Black people should not sleep with white men who ruled them and treated them badly.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 5)
The passage explicitly analyzes sexual relations as the act which offends against the ‘natural’ divide between the oppressor and the oppressed. These sexual relations are resulted in diseased progeny. However, it is difficult to conceive the Italian prisoners as oppressor the same for Ngoho also because they were oppressed by British masters. Just like Italian prisoners Ngotho is oppressed by black and white masters but at home he tries to be a man. The diseased progeny is a symbol of unnatural intercourse between the foreigners and the black women. Gurnah points out the discrepancies between male and female sexuality in *Weep Not, Child*:

“What the barber and his listeners comment on is that white women for all their grandness will still sleep with black men, a response which implies self-contempt and deference, the triumph of a discourse of conquest. The black having babies which are not “white” in the usual way, on the other hand, offend a deeper sense, of what is moral and clean. Underlying it is the assumption that for women sex is equivalent to submission, which is itself the bedrock of patriarchal authority. The ‘white’ oppressor is indistinct and undifferentiated in this case, different and same: Italian or English, prisoner or settler. And since it was ‘the whites’ who brought calamity on the people, for African women to submit to them is abject.” (Gurnah)

According to Foucault it is difficult to step outside the network of power. Sexual harassment of women has been woven in all patriarchal culture and nobody objects to this system as it is welcomed and accepted by all. The barber’s story describes female body as a thing only. In his story he has not talked about emotions of women. Through the barber’s narrative Ngugi tries to approach the issue of victimization of women but whether he is genuinely concerned with the emotions of women or not is not clear. The narrative objectifies female body and it has been looked at by men. The soul is imprisoned in the female body and a woman has no choice to express herself. The body of a woman has been made a *docile body* (D. Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts 86) in Foucault’s concept.
In *Weep Not, Child* land is gendered. The novel can be read as a celebration and loss of land. All peasants are dispossessed and deprived of their land. The British have come and became the new masters of the land. Land in this novel is personal, social, political and cultural issue. Land is something to be possessed. It starts with Ngotho, a peasant. Jacobo, the black elite, owned the land on which Ngotho lived. In the village only Jacobo was allowed to saw pyrethrum. Here people believed that the man who had land was considered a rich man and if a man had plenty of money, many motor cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich. A man who had nothing and was wearing torn out clothes but had acres of land was considered a rich man and better than the man with only money. Nganga, the carpenter could afford three wives because he had land. Here land is the possession of man just like a woman. Men do not see difference in land and woman and that’s why female body and land has become synonyms of each other. The way they pay money to buy land the same way men pay money to buy a woman and they use and exploit the body. The land was given by the God to Gikuyu and Mumbi, the first man and woman according to African context. The land is connected with the religious past. The God said:

“This land I hand over to you. O Man and woman, it is yours to rule and till in serenity sacrificing, Only to me, your God, under my sacred tree...” (Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child* 25)

Ngotho told this as a story. From this religious and cultural past he came down to personal and talked about his land. Njoroge suddenly asked:

“Where did the land go?” (Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child* 25)

This was the basic and main question of all peasants in the village as many of them do not have land. People like Ngotho love to cling to the past when they had land. To every ones surprised Ngotho said that the prophesy of the old Gikuyu seer Mugo wa Kibiro came true. The old seer prophesied about the white men and warned the tribe. The white men came and took the
land not the whole of it at first and the left out piece of land was destroyed by the big war. So Ngotho said that the land was gone. He grew up working in his own land, the land of his ancestors, as a servant. Boro, one of Ngotho’s sons was always angry with his father and old generation. He became angry when he came to know that the land owned by Mr. Howlands actually belonged to his family. He saw his father as a dispossessed farmer who went to fight the war and came back to see that his land is taken by someone else. Like other young men he also went to fight white men’s war. There he lost his step brother Mwangi. Boro has often escaped death narrowly. Just like his father he has also come back to see that there was no employment for him as there was no land. Boro also struggled to find that for whom or for what his brother Mwangi had died? He was sure of one thing that his brother was killed by white men. His experiences have changed him a lot. He did not believe in any prophesy and he asked his father:

“How can you continue working for a man who had taken your land? How can you go on serving him? (Thiong’o, Weep Not, Child 27)

This is voice of a rebellious man. He wants to resist the power. Resistance is also a part of dominant discourse as it comes from the dominated mass. He no longer wanted to serve white men just like his father. He wanted his land back. For peasants the meaning of freedom was to get their land back. He went to Nairobi to join the freedom fighters. They decided to go on strike. They demanded their land back.

“And that’s what we have gathered here to tell the British. Today, we, with one voice, we must rise and shout: “The time had come. Let my people go. Let my people go! We want back our land! Now! (Thiong’o, Weep Not, Child 61)

It is the voice of all the black people. This shows that land was also a political issue. For displaced peasants land stood for freedom. As land is compared with female body, it is docile and passive like women. In Foucauldian term bodies play a central and vital role in the act of resistance. Body is intertwined with the practice of power and resistance. By getting their land
back the displaced peasants want to get their freedom back. Freedom is also linked with power. In social interaction for people like Ngotho and Boro land was the source of life. Land was their identity. So it was also a social issue. When Jacobo became a powerful man in the land Ngotho lost every contact with his ancestral land. Ngotho knew that his son Boro was right but he could not follow the command of his son because he was the head of the family. For Ngotho loss of land was a spiritual loss.

“And yet he felt the loss of the land even more keenly than Boro, for to him it was a spiritual loss. When a man was severed from the land of his ancestors where would he sacrifice to the Creator? How could he come into contact with the founders of the tribe, Gikuyu and Mumbi?” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 81)

For the black people freedom was to get back their lost heritage. Jacobo was murdered and people had doubts on Ngotho. Boro came to know that his father had taken the blame on his head to shield his son and Boro immediately went to Mr. Howlands home. The fight became personal for Boro. He wanted his land back but Mr. Howlands said:

“This is my land.” Mr. Howlands said this as a man would say, This is my woman.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 140)

For the black people the land was their mother land but for Mr. Howlands it was ‘other’ land. The native people worshiped the land and the white settlers ruled over it. For him the farm was a woman whom “he had wooed and conquered. He had to keep an eye on her lest she should be possessed by someone else.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 139). The body plays a central role in the act of resistance. The same way possession of body plays a major role in holding and establishing power. Mr. Howlands possessed the body of the land so he possessed the power.
In the novel land is a pivotal point of commodity around which the economic and social lives of male characters centre. It is the measure of men’s wealth and social status because the possession of land decides the numbers of wives a man can afford:

“Any man who had land was considered rich. If a man had plenty of money, many motor cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich. A man who went with tattered clothes but had at least an acre of red earth was better off than the man with money. Nganga could afford three wives, although he was younger than Ngotho.” (Thiong’o, Weep Not, Child 20)

Ngotho locates himself within his land. When he talks about his land and a wish to go back to his land it becomes the nationalistic discourse of love for the land. He says:

“We came home worn out but very ready for whatever the British might give us a reward. But, more than this, we wanted to go back to the soil and court it to yield, to create not to destroy. But Ng’o! the land was gone.” (Thiong’o, Weep Not, Child 25)

Mr. Howlands is a man who represents oppressive colonial system. He is the owner of land. Even Jacobo has to serve him because he is a white man. Europeans proved them cunning by grabbing the land of black people. The black people believed that the white men are robbers. For Mr. Howlands the possession of land is a sexual conquest. Boro’s accusation of the land reveals Ngugi’s gendering of the land when Boro says:

“Together, you killed many sons of the land. You raped our women.” (Thiong’o, Weep Not, Child 140)
The exploitation of land is significantly compared with the rape of women and Boro is the savior. The ideological moorings of Ngotho, Mr. Howlands and Boro may differ but the common fact is that the things are expressed within patriarchal discourse and in which women and the land are enabling signifiers. The association of the land with the female subject points to the idealization of the land as a woman and reification of a woman as a palpable entity within culture. The primary injury to the land is the first sign of colonization. The possession of land and woman is symbolically the patriarchal construction of subjectivity.

Black female characters are connected with the land. No doubt, the affinity is informed by the cultural, spiritual and ideological values that Jomo Kenyatta’s cultural nationalist tract, Facing Mount Kenya, attaches to the land:

“Communion with the ancestral spirit is perpetuated through contact with the soil in which the ancestors of the tribe lie buried. The Gikuyu considers the earth as the ‘mother’ of the tribe, for the reason that the mother bears her burden for about eight or nine moons while the child is in her womb, and then for a short period of suckling. But it is the soil that feeds the child for a lifetime, and again after death it is the soil that nurses the spirit of the dead for eternity.” (Kenyatta)

In the above passage Kenyatta had equated the land with Spivak’s concept of the subaltern woman. It shows the generative power of the earth and the Gikuyu autochthony. In colonial fiction the gendering of the landscape was one of the master tropes. Therefore Weep Not, Child shows the equation of women with the land. The novel contains residues of both colonial fiction and Gikuyu nationalist myths. As a result, the gendered landscape is something like ‘consensual trope’ that allows colonial and anti-colonial discourses to contest one another. Like the sign ‘woman’, the land serves simultaneously to unite and divide the colonial self and the colonized other.

Weep Not, Child shows infantilization of women. For example, the protagonist Njoroge wants to be a man.
“Njoroge always longed for the day when he would be a man, for that he would have the freedom to sit with big circumcised girls and touch them as he saw the young men do.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 22)

The distinction is made between girls and women by using the word ‘big circumcised girl’. The distinction reveals the mechanism of gender diminution in the novel. Weep Not, Child is an expression of pain in which Njoroge’s childhood friend Mwihaki cries a lot. She is the daughter of Jacobo. Mwihaki and Njoroge study together in a school. She likes the company of Njoroge and feels secure with him. Njoroge wished her to be his true sister. The mutual attraction of the children and Njoroge’s wish of Mwihaki as his sister is a denial of the possibility of sexual relation between the two. Ngugi has successfully constructed class consciousness in his novel and to maintain it he had not given a chance to love affair between the two as this kind of relationship may collapse the class difference in the society. Mwihaki lacks the strength of other women characters of Ngugi’s novels but she is good and very genuine. She stands alone in the novel and the protagonist who has political vision fails to console her. Njoroge’s inability is a crisis in his masculinity which forces him to attempt to commit suicide. He was rescued by his mother who told him not to weep. In the title of the novel maternal voice can be heard, the voice of the mother gave consolation and sympathy to the protagonist. In Weep Not, Child Ngugi starts with the anti-colonial struggle. The novel is about displaced peasants and dispossessed land. Njoroge, the protagonist of the novel is an unheroic hero. He dreams of bringing change in his community but he is weak and fails in his efforts. Ngugi’s presentation of men creates some contrasting effects because male characters are nervous and incapable of living normal life. They are ‘womanized’ by the writer.

Ngotho is the centre of his family and he has two wives. Ngugi’s women characters in this novel do not speak much as the novel has phallocentric premise. Women characters are given domestic roles. They stay at home and take care of the family. The novel can be read at two levels: politics which stands for the masculine domain and family which stands first for the domain of masculine control and then at lesser level female responsibilities. The upshot of Ngugi’s placement of women in a reactionary discourse is that women are excluded from political dialogue. To be a woman is something shameful in a patriarchal society. There are
interesting structural similarities between the lives of three wives, Nyokabi, Juliana and Suzannah. Nyakobi reacts when Ngotho involves himself in the strike. With the rise of a woman’s voice Ngotho feared to witness the real discord in the home that had been secured. The conversation between Ngotho and his second wife Nyakobi is very significant:

“I must be a man in my own house.

Yes – be a man and lose a job.

I shall do whatever I like. I have never taken orders from a woman.

We shall starve…

You starve! This strike is important for the black people. We shall get bigger salaries.

What’s black people to us when we starve?

Shut that mouth. How long do you think I can endure this drudgery for the sake of a white man and his children?

But he’s paying you money? What if the strike fails?

Do not woman me!” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 56)

The text is two layered as it reveals the position of woman in a family and at political level. Ngotho feels that his masculine strength must be maintained in family as a man. If a woman raises her voice against her husband she must be immediately suppressed. A woman cannot interfere in political affairs. If a man cannot control his wife he is called effeminate and this possibility is feared by all the men. The second meaning is that the text gives the idea of political matter of the time. The black people have gone on strike to knock down the British government. When Ngotho says that he does not want to endure the drudgery of white man and
his children it means that the black peasants were forced to serve the white men. So the position of women in a house and the position of black men in the hands of colonial system is the same.

The second example is of Juliana and Jacobo. Juliana also tried to stop her husband Jacobo but just like Nyakobi her voice was unheard. She burst out sobbing, speaking to herself:

“I have always said that such Ahoi were dangerous. But a man will never heed the voice of a woman until it is too late. I told him not to go. But he would not listen!” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 59)

Jacobo, who plays a subordinate role before Mr. Howlands and is thought of as a savage. Through his character Ngugi presents the so called belief that to prove masculinity a man should not listen to his woman. Ngotho and Jacobo try to be man in their own periphery because outside of it, it was impossible for them to behave like that.

The third example is Mr. Howlands and his wife Suzannah.

Mr. Howlands is a District Officer and has his responsibility to eradicate Mau Mau. It means he has been given duty by the officers of his class. There he is down in a status and has to obey the command. He cannot go back to England as he even never wished so. He was bored by the atmosphere there. He married Suzannah and she also felt the same in England. For them Africa meant hardship and complete break with Europe. She is bored in Africa also. She found pleasure in beating servants. The material manipulation of bodies helps to reveal the conception of power. Beating of servants operates the idea of power and brainwashes the minds of victims. Being a white woman she had power to rule over black men but she was kept away from the political affairs of her country. The narrative voice says:

“But she soon has a woman’s consolation.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 31)
Ngugi here mentions motherhood. In patriarchal society motherhood was praised by men. Ngotho’s wives Njeri and Nyakobi comment subtly and astutely on the unfairness of Jomo Kenyatta’s trial. Nyakobi says:

“I knew he would lose. I always said that all white men are the same. His lawyers must have been bribed.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 82)

Njeri says:

“It is more than that. And although I am a woman and cannot explain it, it seems all clear as daylight. The white man makes a law or a rule. Through that rule or law or what you may call it, he takes away the land and then imposes many laws on the people concerning that land and many other things, all without people agreeing first as in the old days of the tribe. Now a man rises and opposes that law which made right the taking away of land. Now that man is taken by the same people who made the laws against which that man was fighting. He is tried under those alien rules. Now tell me who is that man who can win even if the angels of God were his lawyers…I mean.

Njeri was panting. Njoroge had never heard her speak for such a long time. Yet there seemed to be something in what she had said.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 82)

Ngugi has given a chance to a woman to be involved in the political matters of the country. Njeri is very much articulative in her speech. Her forceful rhetorical speech crystallizes the structure of dominance upon which the colonial administration is predicated. Njoroge’s two mothers are in their own ways resistance heroines and the strongest symbols of cultural identity, community and continuity that the novel offers. Ngugi’s construction of these two women is based on religious and mythical background as they reinforce traditional roles of women as nurturer and homemaker by reinforcing patriarchal privileges.
In the title of the novel, *Weep Not, Child*, ‘child’ is used for the protagonist and throughout the novel Njoroge remains a child. The novel is told from the perspective of a child. In this novel Ngugi Wa Thiong’o has dealt with the conflicts within. Antonio Gramsci used the term ‘subaltern’ for peasants. Ngugi has described the life of peasants in Gikuyu community. Ngugi, in his anti-colonial discourse in the novel, has picked up the issue of land. It shows that how land is connected with political identity. Their land is taken away by the colonizers. Njoroge, the young hero of *Weep Not, Child* find education a key to their problems.

“Education for him, as for many boys of his generation, held the key of the future ... Njoroge came to place his faith in the Bible and with his vision of education life in the future was blended a belief in the righteousness of God. Equity and justice were there in the world. If you did well and remained to your God, the kingdom of heaven would be yours. The tribal stories told him by mother had strengthen his belief in the virtue of toil and perseverance. His belief in the future for his family and the village rested then not only on a hope for a sound education but also on a belief in a God of love and mercy, who long ago walked on the earth with Gikuyu and Mumbi, or Adam and Eve. (Thiong’o, *Weep Not, Child* 45)

The novel throws light on the social tensions present within the community i.e. education and regaining land. The critical issue is of class divisions and land owning by the black bourgeoisie. Mr. Howlands represents repressive colonial system, Jacobo represents black bourgeois and Ngotho represents dispossessed peasantry. The core of the novel is the problem of peasantry as the peasants were deprived of their land through trickery, treachery, or sheer banditry. Ngotho, Njoroge’s father in his personal narrative shares the experience of war as he was forcefully sent to fight the war in which black men like Ngotho had no idea about the enemy. Ngotho came back and found that his land, his property was taken away by Mr. Howlands and Jacobo. Like other peasants Ngotho was aware that he belonged to the exploited group he wanted the recovery of land. *Weep Not, Child* is about the nationalist demand of freedom and restoration of peasants’ land. Ngotho became homeless as he was ordered by Jacobo to vacant his land and the matter turns into a duel between Ngotho and Jacobo. The issue
of land was personal for Ngotho but it was highlighted at the national level. With Ngotho all were involved in the process and the animosity between the colonizers and the colonized, boiled at the surface level. The native people were aware about the horrors and the necessity to take up arms to defend themselves and on to the ultimate determination to shed blood to regain their land, freedom and dignity. In the crucial time Njoroge thought of himself as the savior of the future of the nation:

“the country needs me ... we must get and rebuild the country ... the sun will rise soon”. (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 106)

Njoroge had a political vision and he was aspired to the “task of comforting people”. (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 95)

Njoroge was optimistic in his views and thought that education could change the things but all his dreams were shattered when he was suddenly dismissed from the school. Njoroge was accused of taking and oath and was tortured. The real issue behind this was that Jacobo had been found murdered and Ngotho’s family became the immediate suspects. Ngotho himself had been arrested and castrated on Howlands' orders. At this stage, the social strife Njoroge had been trying to avoid catches up with him and his escapist attitudes could no longer provide him any protection:

“the dreamer and visionary, who consoled himself faced by the difficulties of the moment by a look of a better day to come, is shocked and shown a different world from the one he had believed himself living in”. (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 120)

Njoroge wanted to run away from Kenya with Mwihaki, his childhood friend. He told her:

“Mwihaki you are the one dear thing left to me. I feel bound to you and I know that I can fully depend upon you. I have no hope but for you, for now I know that my tomorrow was an illusion ...”. (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 132-33)

Mwihaki reminded him of the duty and said:
“our duty to other people is our biggest responsibility as grown men and women”.
(Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 134)

Initially Njoroge wanted to save community through his education but later on aware of
his isolation and overwhelmed by his despair, he wanted to commit suicide, but was rescued by
his mother. Njoroge proved himself an uncommitted individual, an individual uncommitted to
his community and committed only to his personal goals which made him selfish but he was
swept away by the social torrents.

Njoroge remains a child throughout the novel, and even if there are hints of rebuke, as the
imperative tone in the title may suggest, there is still more sympathy and consolation in the
maternal voice calling on the child to stop weeping and come home. Weep Not, Child is an
utterance of pain and attempt to silence. It has the tone of consolation in it but the narrative of the
novel- Njoroge’s story- would be impossible to tell without the failures of consolations.

The story of Weep Not, Child reveals the scattered life of the native black people. It is the
effect of the Neocolonialism that the family breaks into pieces. Ngotho’s family suffers death of
his son Mwangi. Like Mwangi there were many who died for the colonial government. Mr.
Howlands’ son Peter was also forcefully taken to fight the war and died. So war was the common
factor from which everyone suffered in the novel. In Neocolonialism Kenya was divided into
classes. Mwihaki belongs to the upper class and Njoroge is a son of a dispossessed farmer.

Sometimes they played. Njoroge was rather reserved. But Mwihaki was more playful.
She picked up flowers and threw them at him. He liked this and wanted to retaliate but he did not
like plucking a flower in bloom because it lost colour. He said:

“Let’s not play with flowers.
Oh, but I love flowers.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 38)

This shows that as a son of a farmer Njoroge cares for the land and its issues and this
indicates the political subtext of conserving land. Moreover the black people are divided. Boro
laments over the situation. He says:
“...All white people stick together. But we black people are very divided. And they stick together, they’ve imprisoned Jomo, the only hope we had. Now they’ll make us slaves. They took us their wars and they killed all that was of value to us...” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 104)

The black civilization is a “wounded civilization” (Naipaul) and rifts were created by the white people. Neocolonialism had given birth to traitors like Jacobo. In this neo-colonial Kenya Njoroge dream turns into despair and towards the end of the novel he works in a shop. Mwihaki is more practical than Njoroge when she says:

“Tomorrow, tomorrow never comes.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 104)

She is aware about the present situation of the country when she says:

“The country is so dark now.” (Thiong'o, Weep Not, Child 116)

In despair Njoroge tries to commit suicide but was saved by his mother. Though the novel has a patriarchal voice and structure it is framed with a woman as it begins and ends with Nyakobi. Perhaps Ngugi never wished to create such a situation but though at the margin a woman is the pivotal point of the novel.

3.5: Multilayered Complexity:

A Grain of Wheat published in 1967 is Ngugi’s most hailed work up to now. The novel is a more complex work. In this novel Thiong’o does not present anything directly. From the beginning to the end the work is full of tension. Moreover in the end the tension is not released but the end gets the readers more tensed. At some extent the novel is difficult to understand as the realities are within the layers. After the mutilation and cry the writer gets more confused. It sounds that it was difficult to find out a solution for Ngugi and so created a very complex work.

The novel portrays a world which is involved in the struggle for impendence which is largely completed. The time is the eve of ‘Uhuru’. The novel swings in past and present. In spite
of optimism and euphoria that Uhuru evokes in the people, it also conjures up soul-searching moments of self-reappraisal, with the past projected large and casting its shadow on everybody. The characters are unable to save themselves from the clutches of the past, the experience so traumatizing and intricately woven into people’s lives that it can hardly be separated from the present. In *A Grain of Wheat* dispossession, betrayal, Mau Mau rebellion, emergency, the Oath, detention camp, suffering, death become the dominant motifs. All the characters have their past. They have their personal history which is mingled with the national history.

In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi has focused upon the postcolonialist nationalist discourse. It is a dirty dish which contains a delicious fish. It is difficult to remember the long list of characters. The novel has endless and confusing flashbacks. These flashbacks create confusions in the readers’ mind that they fail to trace any emerging pattern in the novel. The author comes out in propria persona. Many a times he uses ‘we’ and ‘us’ which is not for the any of the characters. So there is a lack of narrative distance between the author and his subject matter.

“They remembered heroes from our village, too…and underneath it was all the chord that followed us from street to street. Somewhere a woman suggested that we go and sing to Mugo, the hermit, at his hut.” (Thiong’o, *A Grain of Wheat* 232)

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o was closely involved in the Kenya Emergency. He cannot help showing that he suffered emotional and psychological impediments. Ngugi’s imaginative realm is full with the actual history of Kenya. The novel is formless and has a lack of narrative distance. The formless narrative structure of the novel reflects formless and chaotic life of native people in Kenya. The life was not smooth and easy going and in such situation the mind cannot think in harmony and coherence. The characters are illiterate, the novel is directionless and characters are eliminated after immediately being introduced. Mugo is tortured by his fragmented past. He is guilty because he has committed treachery that no one knows. Githogo’s mother is demented by grief, since her only son was killed in the indiscriminate repression against Mau Mau guerillas. Thompson, the notorious white district officer of Rira, is nervous and disillusioned, ready to leave the country before it reaches independence. Mumbi lives estranged
from her husband, Gikonyo, having apparently been unfaithful to him during his detention. *A Grain of Wheat* becomes gradually a panoramic human drama of all races, with its actors either faithful to or betrayers of oaths and causes, struggling among themselves or against inborn contradictory forces. It is complex and unorthodox in narrative technique, theme, and its exploration of the human condition.

Despite of all these there is a thin thread which runs in the novel, Mumbi. She is the thread which connects some characters. She is Kihika’s sister, Gikonyo’s wife and Karanja is passionate to have her in his life. For Gikonyo she is the unchanging reality. She is very strong and perhaps her character can be compared with the emerging nation. She is the real object of race as Gikonyo and Karanja want her in their life. In the time of emergency she finds herself alone in the family as there is no man of the house since Gikonyo is in detention camp. She makes herself ready to do man’s work and starts building up a new hut for the family as the older one was burnt by the white man. The incident throws light on the exploitation of local people by the colonizers. Her character helps us to understand the theme-clusters, meaning and the artistic depth of the novel.

Mumbi is Gikonyo’s wife and Karanja’s child’s mother. Gikonyo comes after six years from the detention camp to find Mumbi the mother of his rival’s child. Gikonyo wanted to come back from the detention camp just for Mumbi and his mother and he was ready to sell his country to the white men for this. The fight then became personal for him. He said:

“At the meeting! Remember? Many of us talked like that because we wanted to deceive ourselves. It lessens you shame. We talked of loyalty to the Movement and the love of our country. You know a time came when I did not care about Uhuru for the country any more. I just wanted to come home. And I would have sold Kenya to the white man to buy my own freedom. I admired people like Kihika. They are strong enough to die for truth. I have no such strength.”

(Thiong’o, *A Grain of Wheat* 67)

He told this to Mugo. It shows that he was aware about the freedom of the self, his personal freedom but was ready to sacrifice the freedom the nation. This all was for his family.
but when he saw that Mumbi has betrayed him, he never wished to know the reality. He started avoiding Mumbi. The extreme point was that he called her a whore. He said:

“I’ll make you shut this mouth of a whore.”

Mumbi told Wangari:

“He calls me a whore, he keeps me in this house as a whore, mother, Mumbi said, in a chocked voice, and how sobbed freely.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 163)

Though Mumbi, in Gikonyo’s absence stands as a support to the family but is abused by him. Gikonyo fails to understand his wife; he fails to see the real reason. Symbolically it is man’s failure to understand a woman’s heart. Things become clear when Mumbi reveals the truth to Mugo. It was because of the news of Gikonyo’s arrival that Mumbi let Karanja to make love with her. It was the time when she was unconscious of the things going on as she was overjoyed with the news. She is objectified by Karanja also.

The following speech of Mumbi constructs the return of the repressed. Her voice is privileged as an excess; an excess which unsettles the fixity with which the novel elsewhere constructs female desire as political misrule.

“What sort of a man do you call yourself? Have you not manly courage to touch me? Why do turn your anger on a child, a little child…she seethed like a river that had broken the dam. Words tossed out; they came in flood, filling her mouth so that she could hardly articulate them.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 146)

Wangari is also involved in the conflict on behalf of Mumbi.

“This does not concern you, Mother!” Gikonyo said.

“Does not concern me?” She raised her voice, slapping her sides with both hands.
“Come all the earth and see what a son, my son, answers me. Does not concern
me who brought you forth from these thighs? That the day should come – hah! –
Touch her again if you call yourself a man!” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 146)

The power is used from both the sides, the ruler and the ruled. The ruler uses power to suppress and marginalize people and the ruled class uses power to resist. Wangari’s speech is to resist the suppression of men. The speech of the mother shows how women were excluded from other works. Through her speech she tells that how the female body is used by men in patriarchal culture. Their only job was to be the mothers of men. Her speech is against the male dominated narrative. In this way Wangari silences Gikonyo’s patriarchal violence by exposing the limits of a discourse that demarcates female subjectivity exclusively within women’s mothering functions. In short, both Mumbi and Wangari forge a subaltern sisterhood that plays devil’s advocate to the patriarchal law.

There are other women characters that have been used and made victims by the male ego. The dialogues between Margery and Dr. Van Dyke also show physical suppression of a woman. Dr. Dyke tells her:

“Let’s go to the back seat,’ he breathed into her ear.

Not today, Van, not today, she whispered weakly.

Today. Now, he said almost pulling her clothes off as he climbed into the back seat.

She followed him obediently, hardly able to speak.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 49)

It sounds like order as the word ‘now’ suggests the tone. Just like Mumbi she is not the wife of Dr. Dyke. Both Mumbi and Margery hate the man after physical suppression because they feel that they cannot face their husbands now. Sexual manipulation became common during colonialism. Ngugi has created a ‘woman’ in his narrative. Through the different perspectives of men it becomes clear that what they think about women. Men had power and knowledge and they used it to humiliate and suppress women. In a patriarchal society to imagine men without
power and knowledge is impossible. In the novel Ngugi talks about women who has/had been rulers.

“The whiteman told of another country beyond the sea where a powerful woman sat on the throne while men and women danced under the shadow of her authority and benevolence.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 10)

For the black people it was difficult rather impossible to believe that in whiteman’s country a woman was the ruler. So the narrative voice says:

“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 did not they know the heroines would return hungry for love and relaxation? Fate did the rest; women were pregnant; the takeover met with little resistance.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 11)

In the patriarchal premise men never give women a chance to rule and if she had the power men conspire to dethrone her. A woman’s role is fixed. Men believe that nothing good can come from the place where a woman is the ruler. Men use women’s body to oppress them as woman’s body is considered as a sign of weakness in phallocentric society and this also includes lack of knowledge. Pregnancy was considered as a weakness on women’s part. The narrative voice says:

“a new Wangu – in England – had been crowned: what good ever came from a woman’s rule?” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 137)
The above sentence shows that a woman cannot be a good ruler. This sentence also positions white men in white culture. The white men have to obey the queen so before the queen their role is subordinate and they do not have power. But it shows that no man can see a woman as a rural, as a master.

Initially, there is hope, optimism about the coming Uhuru. But this optimism for the present Uhuru is only illusion because what turns out is totally unexpected. Uhuru is not taken in its final fulfilled state. To fulfill the dream of Uhuru the people formed Mau Mau party as it was considered as the “voices from the movement” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 9). Here the word ‘voice’ is contextually used as the symbolic meaning of it is that the native people as subaltern started raising their voices against the colonial government. The epigraph of the novel introduces this in Biblical terms. In this novel, Waiyaki becomes the grain of wheat, which gave birth to a political party whose main strength thereafter sprang from a bond with the soil. The parallel between the Gikuyu attachment to the land and the nourishment which the seed draws from the soil is clear. The people here represent the land that nurtured the grain of Waiyaki’s patriotism and made it possible for it to develop into a successful struggle for independence. But the work of the people is far from over, for on the eve of independence, these same people must now be ready to nourish the new seed into true freedom and nationhood. And for this, a new sense of commitment and sacrifice is expected, of reciprocal give-and-take affair on a national scale, so that one generation draws its sustenance from the previous one while preparing the ground for the coming generation. Kihika, the charismatic Mau Mau leader, summarizes:

"In Kenya we want a death which can change things, that is to say, we want a true sacrifice. But first we have to be ready to carry the cross. I die for you, you die for me, we become a sacrifice for one another. So I can say that you ... are Christ, I am Christ". (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 95)

The central and crucial question in this novel is of Uhuru and Ngugi critically examines that whether the people are actually reaping the benefits of Uhuru or they are simply asked to make new sacrifices on the name of Uhuru. People failed to understand the real meaning of Uhuru. General R. addressed the people and said:
“The whiteman went in cars. He lived in a big house. His children went to school. But who tilled the soil on which grew coffee, tea, pyrethrum, and sisal? Who dug the roads and paid the taxes? The whiteman lived on our land. He ate what we grew and cooked. And even the crumbs from the table, he threw to his dogs. That is why we went into the forest. He who was not on our side, was against us. That is why we killed our black brothers. Because, inside, they were whitemen. And I know even now this war is not ended? We get Uhuru today. But what’s the meaning of “Uhuru”? It is contained in the name of our movement: Land and Freedom. Let the party that now leads the country rededicate itself to all the ideals for which our people gave up their lives. The Party must never betray the Movement. The Party must never betray Uhuru. It must never sell Kenya back to the Enemy! Tomorrow we shall ask: where is the land? Where is the food? Where are the schools? Let therefore these things be done now, for we do not want another war…no more blood in my…in these our hands…” (Thiong’o, A Grain of Wheat 217)

The novel is the projection of peasants’ point of view because they are the people who caused the things to happen. The nation reflects peasants’ wilderness and scattered life. There is a hint that the peasants are already becoming disappointed with the turn of events, even if dissatisfaction is not yet endemic. The colonial government tried to suppress the voice of the native by using violence. They started burning the huts of the native people and the people were not allowed to leave the village.

“They told us to remove our bedding and clothes and utensils. They splashed some petrol on the grass-thatch of my mother’s hut….The leader of the homeguards struck a match and threw it at the roof. It did not light, and the others laughed at him. They shouted and encouraged him. One of them tried to take the matches from him to demonstrate how it could be done. It became a game between them…Something gave way in my heart, something in me cracked when I saw our home fall.” (Thiong’o, A Grain of Wheat 136)
Foucault has written that for the power relation it is necessary to have the groups, two minds. According to Foucault power takes the form of a rule or law. The people were forced to leave their homes. It was an order of the government. In the above quote Mumbi throws light on the criminality of the white people. In Mumbi’s personal narrative the experiences of all the natives are involved. The people were the victims of brutal mentality of colonizers. They were forced to leave their land and home. During the time of emergency the people suffered a lot. The colonial government at any cost tries to suppress the voice of the native people. Mumbi, in this quote explains how the native people were exploited by the white settlers.

“We were prisoners in the village, and the soldiers had built their camps all around to prevent any escape. We went without food. The cry of children was terrible to hear. The new DO did not mind the cries. He even permitted soldiers to pick women and carry them to their tents.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 139)

Coming to the end the peasants are disillusioned.

“The revolt of the peasants had failed.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 139)

Ngugi has intentionally used the word ‘Uhuru’. He has used the Gikuyu word so it is difficult to understand by all. The difficulty and failure in understanding the word represent the failure of people to understand the real concept of freedom. After the struggle, sacrifices and deaths of freedom fighters the word became “a subdued voice that sounded like a suppressed cry.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 107). Freedom sounded like an empty silence. The newly independent nation’s commercial and social life was controlled by the Indians and Europeans. “The Africans only came there to sweep the streets, drive the buses, shop and then go home to the outskirts before nightfall.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 60)

They suffered in order to bring about the welfare of all, but with the first signs of Uhuru, ministers have already lost interest in the people. The M. P. of Thabai village is not interested in the celebration of Uhuru with the villagers.
“A crowd of people waited outside the office of the MP because he was not in. But people were used to broken appointments and broken promises. Sometimes they would keep on coming, day after day, without seeing their representative.

‘It is like trying to meet God,’ one woman complained.

‘Why, what do you want to ask him?’

‘My son wants a scholarship to America. And you?’

‘It is just troubles at home. Last Saturday, they came and arrested my man because he has not paid taxes. But how does he pay poll tax? He has no job. Our two children have had to leave school because no money…’

‘Our children have nowhere to go after their primary schools,’ one of the elders was explaining. (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 60)

Life of the native people was scattered because of Neocolonialism. Each day came in their life with a new problem. There was no school for the children of the native people. The life was chaotic. People could not trust each other. The freedom brought new fears and burdens.

Gikonyo and their fellow farmers wanted to own a piece of land where they could settle their family. They worked hard to earn money to buy land from the white settlers but realized that the M. P. had overtaken them and bought the land for himself. As the unfulfilled promises keep piling up, the people's awareness of being trapped in a vicious circle increases until they ‘realize that blackness is not all’. Under colonialism you were rich because you were white, but now you are white because you are rich. Ngugi is concerned with the African’s responsibilities to the nation and he also points out that how the native people failed to fulfill their responsibilities. Kihika was the Mau Mau leader and was betrayed by an uncommitted individual Mugo. Ngugi's treatment of Mugo's treachery is a masterpiece in the psychology of betrayal. Throughout the novel the native people were in misconception that Mugo was the hero and the savior and in Mugo’s character the author shows the failure of all the natives who forgot the national cause in their life.

Mugo, the selfish man, is at the centre of the novel. He wanted to live in complete solitude, in his world of peace and tranquility. While his countrymen are engaged in bloody struggles to rid their land of the white man's repressive and exploitative rule, Mugo convinces himself that aloofness and non-involvement are the safest policies. This conviction is further
strengthened by his belief that "if you do not traffic with evil, then evil ought not to touch you; if you leave people alone, then they ought to leave you alone" (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 194).

Mugo’s past is fragmented. His parents died and he had no one to look after him. He was raised up by his old, drunken aunt who ill-treated him. He was raised in squalor, poverty, loneliness, and in total lack of tenderness. Because of his childhood experiences he grows up firmly determined to succeed and break out of this hellish situation. His past experiences led him to believe that his non-commitment to the national cause will be his key to success. This resulted in his sense of isolation so keen that he refuses to encounter people, avoiding them by choosing an unused path across the fields toward Rungei, where he has his hut.

Unfortunately Mugo could not maintain his state of tranquility for a long time as Kihika entered in his life. Kihika, the Mau Mau leader, had attacked and destroyed a military garrison at Mahee. He has even killed the notorious District Officer, Robson, and is being desperately sought by the local authorities. Kihika took shelter in Mugo’s hut and engendered Mugo’s life by his mere presence. Kihika asked Mugo to head a Mau Mau underground cell in the village and arranged a rendezvous in Kigenie Forest to discuss the matter. Mugo felt bitter and frustrated because his carefully protected, peaceful life was about to be shattered. He felt that Kihika was trying to destroy him out of jealousy:

“Why should Kihika drag me into a struggle and problems I have not created? Why? He is not satisfied with butchering men and women and children. He must call on me to bathe in the blood. I am not his brother ... I have not done harm to anybody. I only looked after my little shamba and crops. And now I must spend my life in prison because of the folly of one man! (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 194)

To preserve his tranquility Mugo decided to betray Kihika and revealed his secretly planned meeting. He felt deep gratitude for the white man as the burden was lifted from his heart but his relief was short-lived and illusory. Things soon turned into a nightmare when he was cast into a maelstrom of guilt engendered both by the betrayal and a shocking discovery of the true nature of the white man. Mugo was arrested and released after Kihika’s arrest and execution. Mugo went back to his solitary state but now it was the solitude of suffering. It was the same
state in which Mugo was at the beginning of the novel, with his tormented mind incapable of finding relief even in sleep:

“Mugo felt nervous. He was lying on his back and looking at the roof. Sooty locks hung from the fern and grass thatch and all pointed at his heart. A clear drop of water was delicately suspended above him. The drop fattened and grew dirtier as it absorbed grains of soot. Then it started drawing towards him. He tried to shut his eyes. They would not close. He tried to move his head: it was firmly chained to the bed-frame. The drop grew larger and larger as it drew closer and closer to his eyes. He wanted to cover them with his palms; but his hands, his feet, everything refused to obey his will. In despair, Mugo gathered himself for a final heave and woke up.” (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 1).

Mugo is considered a hero by the villagers. Once in detention he saved a pregnant woman and this was resulted in imprisonment and torture. People admired his courage. People hailed him by saying that Mugo is another Kihika. They want him to deliver a speech on Uhuru day to honor those who suffered or died fighting for the national cause-martyrs like Kihika. He is believed never to betray the Oath which in fact he has never taken. Freedom of speech is a political freedom. The people insist Mugo to give a speech is the representation of political freedom. Political freedom concerns the liberties one does or does not have as a member of a particular society. Speech is a very strong and effective medium of expression. The people have put Mugo at the centre. They have willingly given him power to address them and lead them. Nobody knew about the reality and because of the people’s belief and expectation Mugo faced turmoil in his inner self. He tried to avoid people but the more he rejected the idea of speaking for them, the more people insisted that he led them on the occasion of the great celebration. They praised his humility, his selflessness and his courage. They sent Mumbi, who is Kihika’s sister and Gikonyo’s wife, to Mugo to convince him to heed the people’s call and speak for them on Uhuru day. By a strange conjunction of events Mugo finds himself with the trust of entire community and particularly with Mumbi and her husband Gikonyo. Gikonyo came back from the detention camp after six years only to find out that his wife, Mumbi, became a mother of Karanja’s child, the Home guard and his former friend and rival. Gikonyo came to Mugo to
reveal that he also had betrayed the oath. Gikonyo was estranged and sick at heart with this odd situation of life. The character of Mumbi is challenge for Ngugi as if she challenges him: ‘catch me if you can’. She lends form to an amorphous novel. The centrality of Mumbi is shown on every turn. Mumbi is a focal personality for Karanja, Kihika and also for Mugo. Mugo’s meeting with Mumbi constituted ones of the dramatic events that ultimately led him to his public confession at the end. Mumbi resembled her brother and meeting her was like meeting the dead Kihika. Mumbi also informed Mugo of the reason behind her estrangement from her husband. In an attempt to bring their hero to accept his public responsibility and led the celebration, Mumbi managed to hold him in her mystical hypnotic power. To her horror and in a manner reminiscent of a drugged individual, Mugo confessed:

I strangled him- I strangled him It is not true- Wake up, Mugo-Kihika was hanged- listen and stop shaking so. I saw him hang from a tree. I did it! I did it! Ha! ha! Ha! That is what you wanted to know. And I will do it again- to you-tonight. (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 184).

Ironically the celebration of the Uhuru was at the same place where Kihika was hanged to death. The people expected Mugo to denounce Karanja as they had a misconception that Karanja had betrayed Kihika. Mugo prepared himself for the speech and went to the place. Mugo confessed:

“You asked for Judas ... You asked for the man who led Kihika to this tree, here. That man stands before you, now. Kihika came to me by night. He put his life into my hands, and I sold it to the white man. And this thing has eaten into my life all these years”. (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 223).

Filled with consternation, people "rose and started talking, moving away in different directions as if the meeting [had] ended with Mugo's confessions ... General R. and a few other elders remained behind to complete the sacrifice before the storm". (Thiong'o, A Grain Wheat 223). The people also resign responsibility and abandon their leader when he most needs them in The River Between, where Waiyaki becomes the scapegoat for the conflict in society and is left
in the hands of the vindictive elders to decide his fate. In both novels the people shirk their responsibility:

“As if the burden of judging their Teacher were removed from them. They went away quickly, glad that he was hidden by the darkness. For they did not want to look at the Teacher and they did not want to read their guilt in one another's faces. Neither did they want to speak to one another, for they knew full well what they had done to Waiyaki and yet they did not want to know”. (Thiong'o, The River Between 152).

Mugo’s confession redeemed his soul and lessened his guilt consciousness.

"as soon as the first words were out, Mugo felt light. A load of many years was lifted from his shoulders. He was free, sure, confident”. (Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat 235).

There are many internal powerful forces which affect the lives of people. At the initial stage it is very much difficult to identify them and when identified the more difficult task is to fight with them. As Dianna Taylor in Michel Foucault: Key Concepts writes that according to Foucault:

“Power is not an institution [or] a structure, nor an individual capacity, but rather a complex arrangement of forces in society.” (D. Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts 21)

3.6: Political Fury and Failed Vision:

*Petals of Blood*, written by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o is published in 1977. This work is more tensed. It reflects the effects of Neocolonialism. The power was replaced. In, *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi shows that the native people used to wait outside the office of MP. The MP was not interested in improving the situation of poor farmers. The farmers struggle to regain the land was endless and the people were given fake promises. In Neocolonialism Black people formed the
government and ruled over their people. The vision of freedom failed. The same problems can be seen in *Petals of Blood* also. Individuals fight with the power existing in the society. *Petal of Blood* presents a very complex structure of society and presents political fury and failed vision in a neo-colonial country. *Petal of Blood* is one of the most complex and extended works of post-independent African fiction. The novel takes the readers back to the historical memory and through the story of four main characters Ngugi retells the story historical past of Kenya and the anti-colonial struggle. Though the technique of flashback and multiple narrative techniques the novel is the detail of metamorphosis of Ilmorog. This metamorphosis is from an agricultural village to an industrialized one. Ilmorog is a fictional village which is transformed by the influences of Neocolonialism. It has become a New Ilmorog in which the masses of the population are marginalized. At the close the novel shows the possibility of political organization by the working classes. Divided into four parts *Petals of Blood* starts with a knock at the door; the knock at the doors of four characters which gives a feeling of suspension to readers. Munira, Karega, Wanza and Abdulla are wanted at the New Ilmorog Police Station. The Police have come to investigate about a murder in Ilmorog. The four of them have come to Ilmorog with a dream but their dreams are scattered in this wasteland. Structurally the novel is a master piece of Ngugi as it swings between past and present. With the personal life of characters the political issue of the nation is involved. The personal and political get mixed in the novel. The novel is a very good example of political discourse and it focuses on the political ideology.

*Petals of Blood* shows Ngugi’s social visions and marks his commitment to the cause of dispossessed. Godfrey Munira is portrayed at the outset as an uncommitted, alienated individual, who chooses not to choose, and thus adopts the position of the "neutral" onlooker on the margins of society. The character of Munira is a complex version of Mugo from *A Grain of Wheat*. At initial stage Murina had anti-colonial stand which was the result of his childhood confusion and sense of loss. Munira, an educated fellow, vaguely senses that something is amiss in his life; he is apparently both attracted to and repelled by the material success and hypocritical religiosity in a family run by too possessive a father. Munira is dislocated from his family and society and has a dream to find out his own way of life. Munira had to obey his father strictly. In his family he felt religious hypocrisy. He felt that the workers are freer than him. The first notable act by Munira was to ask for the transfer to Ilmorog because abandoned and wretched Munira hoped to
escape from his guilt-ridden life. In Ilmorog Munira wanted to avoid involvement and arranged a busy work schedule for him.

"classes all day; a walk to the ridge; then a stroll to Abdulla's place [a small bar]."

(Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 19)

He rarely ventured back home and, when he did, hardly ever stayed more than a night. In Ilmorog his teaching profession failed to protect him from a reality; the reality which constantly presented the alternating series of commitments and rejections. Munira once went out on a nature study and realized a thin line which separates an apparently innocent observation of nature and its possible political implications or interpretations. In front of a worm-eaten flower "with petals of blood," actually "a solitary bean flower in a field dominated by white, blue and violet flowers," Munira attempted to explain the phenomenon away by saying that the students should refer to the color as red instead of blood, that such worm-eaten flowers cannot bear fruit, and that a flower can also become this color if it is prevented from reaching the light. But the pupils continue to question him: "Why did things eat each other? Why cannot the eaten eat back? Why did God allow this and that to happen?" Confronted with these questions, the uncommitted Munira seeks refuge within the four walls of his classroom, swearing never to venture out with the children again:

“Man ... law ... God ... nature: he had never thought deeply about these things, and he swore that he would never take the children to the fields. Enclosed in the four walls he was the master, aloof, dispensing knowledge to a concentration of faces looking up to him. Then he could avoid being drawn in ... But out in the fields, outside the walls, he felt insecure.” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 22).

Munira’s disengagement from both his family and society led him to think that something is amiss in his life and it was impossible to escape from both the collective and individual past by denying their existence. His family background was one of the causes of his alienation and he groped to find something new but feared to find it. Munira’s problem was more social than familial, general and personal. Such a reading corresponds to Ngugi's apparent attempt to
pinpoint, in his treatment of commitment or the lack of it, some of the major obstacles to the full growth and social integration of sensitive Africans. Munira’s world is an image of disintegration, decay and despair. It is an image of crude mercantilism and callous exploitation of the Kenyan peasantry by the national bourgeoisie allied to international forces. Such situation of malaise can inspire not commitment but alienation and apathy in a highly sensitive individual. Despite Munira's insistence on his neutrality as he argued that he was not his brother's keeper. (Thiong'o, Petal of Blood 49), the social malaise underlying his attitude was gradually brought into the open during and after the Emergency Journey to the city. Munira, who took part in this great trek to avoid being left behind, actually participated not only in the strong communal bond spontaneously created between the members of the delegation, but also shared in the collective suffering that the delegation experienced at the hands of both nature and the callous city dwellers. It was this experience that started Munira along the path of full awareness:

“It was the journey, Munira was later to write, it was the exodus across the plains to the Big Big City that started me on that slow, almost ten-year, inward journey to a position where I can now see that man's estate is rotten at heart. Even now, so many years after the event, he wrote, I can once again feel the dryness of the skin, the blazing sun, the dying animals that provided us with the meat, and above us, soaring in the clear sky, the hawks and vultures which, satiated with meat of dead antelopes ….waited for time and sun to deliver them human skins and blood. The journey toward the kingdom of knowledge …” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 117-18)

Ilmoroge is a beast with gaping jaws which swallows youth. It is a big city with its indifferent to rural needs. The delegation here encountered a degree of callousness and inhumanity that bordered on sadism. The delegation were equally poorly treated by a household of foreign priests who denied them food but offered them prayer, and who had come from Christian lands eager to civilize Africa but whose own faith and civilization prompted them to treat their dogs with more respect than they show for the Africans. The darker side of the novel is the cynical and diabolic character of Nderi Wa Riera, the M. P. He had gone out for a business inspection. He was looking for special places where ageing Europeans could buy an African
virgin girl of fourteen or fifteen as in this fallen city hairy-chested old hogs seemed to find peace of mind between the thighs of young women. In this colonial game the natives were denied the right to grow to full flowers in air and sunlight.

In such a society, non-commitment generally becomes a form of rebellion without a clear program, of rejecting what is while lacking a vision of what should be. In effect, this is the attitude of the major characters in *Petals of Blood*, particularly Munira. The turning point in Munira's life from indifference to a real awareness and commitment starts many years after the historic journey that ultimately brings development and change to Ilmorog. As Munira points out in his "mixture of an autobiographical confessional and some kind of prison notes," this change is for the worse: "They went on a journey to the city to save Ilmorog from the drought [but] brought back spiritual drought from the city" (Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* 195). In conjunction with this growing awareness, what Munira hears from Karega about the generalized situation of oppression and exploitation throughout the country finally convinces him of the "overwhelming need and necessity for higher laws, pure, eternal, absolute, unchanging" (Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* 296). His objection to the social rottenness is not political, but religious, with the aspiration to justice transferred from the secular to a different dimension.

From this moment onward, Munira is committed to the vision of a new world to replace the present corrupt one. In effect, under the pressures of full awareness, Munira drifts into irrationality and becomes a fanatic, with all the fanatic's destructive potential. He started to see reality only through the prism of religion, is ready to give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, rebukes himself for having been an outsider, and decides to end this "accident by another accident" (Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* 298). He comes to conceive the world as only a stepping stone for the heaven-bound pilgrim.

Convinced that the world is corrupt through and through, Munira takes it upon himself to bring others "to see the light," "to discover this new world," and, by so doing, to save people from "committing the unforgivable sin of pride. Of thinking that ... workers could change the evil ... could change this world ... contemplating that man unaided by God through Christ could change himself, could change the world, could improve on it" (Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* 299-300). Thus Munira trails Karega and Abdulla to prevent their having contact with Wanja, who has become, in his eyes, the devil incarnate, the Jezebel, intent on men's souls:
“From nowhere, a voice spoke to him: She is Jezebel, Karega will never escape from her embrace of evil. In the dark, the message was clear: Karega had to be saved from her ... save him ... the voice insisted. Munira knew that he would obey the voice. Christ, after all, had beaten the traders who had been spoiling God's temple. What was important was not just passive obedience to the law but active obedience to the universal law of God. It was a tremendous revelation.” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 332)

In the final act of commitment, Munira sets fire to Wanja’s brothel:

“He walked to Wanja's place. It was not he, Munira. He was doing this only in active obedience to the law. It was enjoined on him to burn down the whorehouse—which mocked God's work on earth. He poured petrol on all the doors and lit it up. He walked away toward Ilmorog Hill. He stood on the Hill and watched the whorehouse burn, the tongues of flames from the four corners forming petals of blood, making a twilight of the dark sky. He, Munira, had willed and acted, and he felt, as he knelt down to pray, that he was no longer an outsider, for he had finally affirmed his oneness with the law.” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 332-33)

Munira, who came from the landowning family, the family firmly settled into the middle class, had come to Ilmorog to get a hooting chance of success. He had come to Ilmorog as it was the last station for him to leave behind the life of failure. He wanted to be the doer and was tired of procrastination. Munira’s battle was a battle against the neocolonial society. In this neocolonial society the peasants were entrapped between the ruling classes, their chauvinisms and the mental terror of progressive class politics.

The cast of migrants is fortified by Karega who is unlike Munira. Karega is a doer. Karega has fled the ‘soulless, corrupt Nairobi’ whose slums with their ‘ditches full of shit and urine, dead dogs and cats, dangerous gases and hellish beer’ are the definition of hell on the earth, at least it is the place where Ngugi lived. Because of such situation Karega was consumed by bitterness. He was a school drop-out and failed himself, his mother, and his society. Karega
wanted to change not only Ilmorog but the whole country. Karega asked questions which seemed unanswerable and relentless.

As regards commitment, the character of Karega more closely reflects Ngugi's position. Munira's revolt and fanaticism do not seem to be predicted by his affluent background; the case of Karega is different. He is the prototype of the revolutionary, according to Inspector Godfrey: he is from a very poor background, from a family of which his mother is the sole support. They are among the numerous squatters living on meager wages on Munira's father's property. Before the story begins, Karega has been ejected from Siriana for taking part in a strike and has never had the opportunity to attend university. As in Munira's case, the false values prevalent in society are at the root of his detachment and indifference. However, he is convinced from the beginning that sacrificial commitment is required. When talking to the uncommitted Munira about Mau Mau martyrdom to liberate the country, he says of his own brother's death, "You mean his being hanged at Githinguri? It was a collective sacrifice. A few had to die for our freedom". (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 50) Though a radical, Kihika-type commitment is implicit in this quote, it takes Karega a long time to organize his consciousness into a coherent social vision. As with the other major characters of the novel, the turning point in Karega's radical but passive rejection of neo-colonial society occurs during and after the journey to the city, which convinces him of the need for united action and organized struggle by the oppressed. The journey also introduces him to the lawyer, the ideologue, the man with "an inner light, an inner consciousness" (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 159), capable of uncovering the political aspects of the peasants' plight. Karega learns from him that the exploitation derives from the fact that their leaders have chosen to minister to the "blind and deaf monster of capitalism;" that neo-colonial education obscures "racism and other forms of oppression" and is meant "to make us accept our inferiority so as to accept their superiority and their rule over us." The lawyer describes how his experience of America helped him transcend the narrow racial view of oppression and exploitation and reach a perception of the universal dimension of the problem:

“Then I saw in the cities of America white people also begging I saw white women selling their bodies for a few dollars I worked alongside white and black workers in a Detroit factory. We worked overtime to make a meager living. I saw a lot of unemployment in Chicago and other cities. I was confused. So I said: let
me return to my home, now that the black man has come to power. And suddenly as if in a flash of lightning I saw that we were serving the same monster-god as they were in America ... I saw the same signs, the same symptoms, and even the sickness ... and I was so frightened ... I cried to myself: how many Kimathis must die, how many motherless children must weep, how long shall our people continue to sweat so that a few, a given few, might keep a thousand dollars in the bank of the one monster-god that for four hundred years had ravished a continent? And now I saw in the clear light of day the role that the Fraudshams of the colonial world played to create all of us black zombies dancing pornography in Blue Hills while our people are dying of hunger.” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 165-66)

Later, as Karega wants to learn more about the foundations of exploitation, the lawyer sends him a number of books, cautioning him that the critical issue is choice: "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 ... there can be no neutral history and politics. If you would learn, look about you: choose your side". (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 200)

Karega wanted to learn more about the foundations of exploitation and the lawyer helped him. Karega wanted to fight system from the within. Karega's Marxist ideology and phraseology become more pronounced. He becomes the champion of proletarian struggle and wants nothing for himself, having submerged his own interests in the general interest. He takes it upon himself to organize workers wherever and whenever he gets a job, believing that unity is the key to workers' power. Unlike Munira, who acts out his radicalism by destroying the three business tycoons in the brothel fire, Karega makes it clear to the investigating Inspector Godfrey that he is not concerned with eliminating individuals: "I do not believe in the elimination of individuals. There are many Kimerias and Chuis in the country. They are the products of a system, just as workers are products of a system. It is the system that needs to be changed ... and only the workers of Kenya and the peasants can do that". (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 308)

Karega becomes the herald of change and new possibilities. His political awareness leads him to conclude that no potent or lasting change will be possible unless people are roused from their present alienation by the vision of an attainable society more inviting than that in which
they now live. He outlines the main features of this new world from the standpoint of Marxist class struggle:

“The true lesson of history was this: that the so called victims, the poor, the downtrodden, the masses, had always struggled with spears and arrows, with their hands and songs of courage and hope, to end their oppression and exploitation: that they would continue struggling until a human kingdom came: a world in which goodness and beauty and strength and courage would be seen not in how cunning one can be, not in how much power to oppress one possessed, but only in one's contribution in creating a more humane world in which the inherited inventive genius of man in culture and science from all ages and climes would not be the monopoly of a few, but for the use of all, so that all flowers in all their different colours would ripen and bear fruits and seeds .... Choose brothers and sisters in sweat, in toil, in struggle, and stand by one another and strive for that kingdom.” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 303)

Wanja is a prostitute. Through the character of Wanja Ngugi shows the plight of women in neo-colonial society. Ngugi has shown a woman’s struggle in society parallel with the political struggle. Ironically Wanja was happy to get a job of a barmaid at Abdulla’s shop.

“It will be my first night as a barmaid in Ilmorog.” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 49)

In her narrative Wanja takes us back to her childhood which helps us to understand that why she has chosen to be a prostitute. In her childhood she had a boy friend and her father did not like that. In her speech Wanja has woven the words of her father. She says:

“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! (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 45)
Girls cannot have equal rights as compared to boys. In a patriarchal structure a girl is forced to become and behave like a woman. This role of woman is defined by society. The force brings dissatisfaction and frustration in a woman’s life. The seeds of hatred were there in Wanja from her childhood. She says:

“I silently cursed at this world.” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 45)

Wanja is involved in an act of vengeance. She hates the world and the men who hated her. At school she was exploited by her math’s teacher. He never missed a chance to detain her a little longer at school. The result was she got good marks in that subject but at the same time she was no more a virgin. The crucial situation came when she became pregnant. She ran to her lover to marry him but she was humiliated by him. That’s how started “a tortured soul’s journey through valleys of guilt and humiliation and the long sleepless nights of looking back to the origins of the whole journey”. (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 48) She says:

“At the same time I hated the young man who had been the cause of my suffering. 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.” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 46)

Fire has become a symbol in Wanja’s life. When she was asked about fire she said:

“I suppose it does not matter. But fire is a nightmare in our family. My aunt died of arson. I left Bolibo Bar because a room I rented there was burnt. So you see I have been running away from one fire into greater flames”. (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 382)

This is very much symbolic as fire can be both the preserver and destroyer of life. This incident occurs only in Wanja’s life. Ironically and symbolically a woman always has to give ordeals in patriarchal world even the question asked by students to Munira is also applicable to Wanja’s life. A student picked up a worm-eaten flower and Munira explained to them:
“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 is prevented from reaching the light.”

The students asked:

“Why cannot the eaten eat back?” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood 26)

It can be said that Wanja is that worm-eaten flower who wanted to hit back. She wanted to see the pain the eyes of men. It is the failure of society that Wanja could not live a respectful life.

Wanja's keen insight into the reality of neo-colonial Kenya actually reveals that there is no difference where the worker is exploited, on the plantation, in a factory or sexually used as a prostitute. Here is a prostitute pointing a finger at general prostitution! As F.E.M.K. Senkoro points out, Ngugi does not limit himself to the naturalistic rendering of the prostitute alone. Wanja is portrayed both as “a prey but also as a symbol, a character who is able to scrutinize and penetrate” (Thiong'o, Petals of Blood) the neo-colonial world.

The character of Abdulla is both a relic of the past and the incarnation of a present of frustrated dreams. He is a living monument to what commitment to the national cause involves, having lost all his family, his land and one leg in the struggle. He is also a bitter reminder that those who enjoy the fruits of independence are not those who fought for it. Abdulla's story, though brief, actually spans all the themes of the previous novels: the alienation of Africans from their land and culture; their reaction to this loss in the form of Mau Mau resistance and warfare; the liberation of the homeland and the accession to independence, with all its potential; and the betrayal or destruction of this potential by former nationalist leaders.

The writer is concerned with the plight of Kenyans. The more he portrays their negative conditions of life, the more he is drawn into the struggle to change these conditions.
3.7: Manifestation of Reality:

Ngugi’s *Devil on the Cross* published in 1980, is a novel with female protagonist Wariinga. The novel is dedicated to ‘all Kenyans struggling against the neo-colonial stage of imperialism’. The dedication makes the situation clear that when Ngugi wrote the novel Kenya had new problems. It was falling down and the government wanted to silence the revolutionary voices. The novel is voice of the all Kenyans and Ngugi in a furious tone manifests hostile reality. It is a story of Wariinga’s misfortune. The author wants to tell the story of this woman before the judgment is passed so that the world can know that it was not her fault. Ilmorog had become a waste land, it is hollow and vacuum from the within. The novel starts like this:

“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 other 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 bath, for he can avoid them.

Happy is the traveler 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.

The Devil, who would lead us into the blindness of the heart and into the deafness of the mind, should be crucified, and care should be taken that his acolytes do not lift him down from the Cross to pursue the task of building Hell for the people on Earth…” (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 7)

The first chapter makes it clear that the life in Ilmorog is actually ill, disgraced and shameful. It had become a well of problem, a swamp where an individual cannot come out from. In this novel the characters on one hand defend national cause and on the other hand they fight
for the partisans of corruption and self-interest. In this novel Ngugi is less concerned with an overriding national cause, as he brings into focus the plight of the most wretched victim of African society, the African woman. In this novel the motivating factor is public entreaties on the "Gicaandi Player," also known as the "Prophet of Justice," to "cast light upon all that happened, so that each may pass judgment only when he knows the whole truth ... all that is hidden" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 7). In the second chapter Wariinga’s mother comes to Gicaandi Player and sheds tears. She begs him to tell the story of her beloved child. She begs him to reveal the whole truth.

The novel shows a very strong connection between an individual and prevalent social milieu. In the novel the tortured individuals are black people with the reality, “That which born black will never be white.” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 11). Blackness has become a disease for these people. The author has projected the effect of social reality on an individual and intents to bring out the extreme weight with which reality presses on Wariinga, so that the people can know the whole truth about her, her life. Wariinga is a tortured soul just like Wanja from Petals of Blood. Her beautiful soul imprisoned in the female body is not and can never be free. According to Foucault sexuality exists in society and it is the repressive power of mechanism. Both Wanja and Wariinga are the victims of this repressive power. When Wariinga goes out for a suicidal attempt she hears a voice. The wordings were:

“I mourn over my own body,
The one I was given by God, the All-Powerful.
I ask myself:
When they bury me,
With whom shall I share my grave…?” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 13)

It is appropriate for Wariinga and women in general in Kenya as men were only interested in female body. They never cared for a woman’s heart, emotion but what they wanted was to enjoy sexual relations with them. A woman was forced to accept that she was weak because she was and is a counterpart of man and to prove a man’s masculine strength a woman has to be weak. So the female body became a disease and a sign of weakness for women and it was the reason that women started mourning over their own body. The novel, told from the
perspective of a female protagonist, shows that how a woman struggles and suffers in neo-colonial Kenya. In Foucault’s views there is ontological distinction between experience and discourse. The experience of something and the linguistic explanation of that experience in exact way, are sometimes impossible. Experiences sometimes exceed language and some experiences are completely inarticulate. The body, in Foucault’s conception, represents the dimensions of freedom. But here the body of these two women is imprisoned and made passive as they could not save themselves.

The novel presents a series of vignettes that portray Wariinga as a placid, fragile, simple young woman preyed upon by unscrupulous, ruthless males. Wariinga tells a story using a pseudonym, Kareendi. In the story Kareendi finds her love Kmoongonye. In the imaginary world the lover has no objection with Kareedi’s past and loves her truly. Kareendi says:

“Because I am very lucky, and have looked for and found a Kmoongonye, a young man with modern views, I, Kareendi, will never anger him or argue with him over any issue. If he shouts at me, I will remain silent. I will simply look down like the shy leopard or like a lamb cropping the grass.” (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 20)

Here, though in imagination, Wariinga has created a boundary like for women by sketching out patriarchal system in which women should not express anger while men have right to express their anger by shouting at women. In other words, in patriarchy men can display their anger as it is their right but women are expected to remain calm and silent. Much later in the novel Wariinga says that every where women become victim of male anger, even at work. She says:

“Yes, Boss Kihara and his kind work out their frustrations on us. When they quarrel with their wives at home, they bring their anger to the office; when something goes wrong with their business, they bring all their furry to the office. We are insulted, but we keep quiet because we are supposed to have hearts that are not easily moved to tears.” (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 206)
Here anger is gendered and classed even the difference is created between their wives and middle-working class women. She also says:

“Forth, our thighs. Yes, because except for the lucky few, most of us can get jobs or keep them only by allowing the likes of Boss Kihara to paw our thighs. We’re their real wives…but, of course, not their legal wives! Yes, we are wives installed in a BMW for a weekend drive to an abattoir! After all, there’s a difference between a goat for slaughter and one for gazing. (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 206)

Men can become angry at women as it is their right in patriarchal society and on the contrary women have to be docile and they have to tolerate men’s violence. On the other side the boss’s wives are rich ladies so they do not have to accept anger, while the secretaries and various working-class women do. For example, Wariinga does not know how to articulate even in her imagination.

The Wariinga, at the beginning is at variance with Ngugi's previous female characters. For example, she lacks Muthoni’s assertiveness, Mwihaki’s instant commitment, Mumbi’s mystical power, and Wanja’s strength of character and endurance but at the same time she is so sensitive that she loses consciousness at least three times in the course of the novel. Through the fragility of her character Ngugi’s has projected her feminity.

In neo-colonial Kenya shops and hotels are owned by Indians and Europeans. This rotten environment is a gift of colonialism and Wariinga feels weary of body and soul of Nairobi. The young man who saves Wariinga tells her:

“You are right to be weary,’ the young man said. ‘Nairobi is large soulless and corrupt.’ He moved nearer to Wariinga, leaned against the wall and went on: ‘But it not Nairobi alone that is afflicted in this way. The same is true of all the cities in every country that has recently slipped the noose of colonialism. These countries are finding it difficult to stave off poverty for the simple reason that they have taken it upon themselves to learn how to run their economies from American
experts. So they have been taught new songs, new hymns that celebrate the acquisition of money. That’s why today Nairobi teaches:

Crookedness to the upright,
Meanness to the kind,
Hatred to the loving,
Evil to the good.” (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 16)

In this diseased environment Wariinga goes out in search of job. She shares her bitter experience with the young by creating an imaginative story and an imaginary character of Kareendi who had been warned by her mother and grandmother:

“Be on your guard from now Kareendi. Do not forget that men have stings, vicious and corrosive, the poison of which never leaves the flesh of their victims.” (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 18)

Wariinga’s story is woven in Kareendi’s story. In search of job Kareendi enters in an office and meets Mr. Boss who observes her from top to toe. He tells her to meet him after 5 O’clock and takes her to the Modern Love Bar and Lodging to discuss about job. She goes with him and the next day she is once again out in the city for a job. She meets another Mr. Boss and faces the same questions and situations. The target is Kareendi’s thighs. In this rotten environment "the Modern Love Bar and Lodging has become the main employment bureau for girls, and women's thighs are the tables on which contracts are signed" (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 19). After being dismissed from her secretarial job for refusing the advances of her lecherous boss, Wariinga decides to leave Nairobi for Ilmorog because her dismissal has brought about an avalanche of other mishaps: she is dropped by her boyfriend and is forcibly evicted by her landlord’s thugs. Numbed by events, she sleepwalks or actually loses consciousness and would have been run over by passing cars if it had not been for a stranger.

Mwaura’s song is an abuse to women. In his song he mentions a motorcycle and being a man he says that he is strong enough to break it and the same way he can also break a woman, a woman's body. He does not see a difference between a woman’s body and a motorcycle. It
indicates that man has the full control over a woman’s body and she is supposed to give what is asked by a man. The words of his songs are:

“Young maidens, if I should beg,  
Do not say you’ll get pregnant,  
For as I know how to brake a motorcycle,  
Do you imagine that I could not apply the brakes to you?” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 33)

Mwaura sings the same kind of song for second time. The words of the song reflect the reality that women are expected to be submissive. They have to bear children for their husbands. The song is:

“Maiden, should I ask you, grant me my wishes,  
And do not be stingy about it,  
So that when later you reveal that you are pregnant,  
I will not deny the responsibility.” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 70)

The words of Mwaura’s song match Wariinga’s life. Wariinga started living with her distant aunt. Wariinga called her husband ‘uncle’. The man was happy to work for white people as all black people used to do. Unfortunately like other black people he was not rich so he wanted to climb up a ladder of richness. Wariinga was used by him to reach his goal. Ngugi has used the words “veal” and “spring chicken” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 142) for a female body. So Wariinga was to become veal or a spring chicken for her uncle’s rich old friend from Ngorika. “She was to be the chicken whose feathers would be plucked one by one, leaving the flesh naked and unhampered, soft food or a toothless old man.” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 142). The Rich Old Man started giving her gifts and would take her to long drive, sometimes in the forest where they would play a game of hunter and hunted which was of very much significance. Wariinga thought of this new life as real happiness. The Rich Old Man promised Wariinga that he was ready to leave his first wife for Wariinga’s thighs and breasts. Once while playing the game of hunter and hunted Wariinga misfire and she said that she was fed up with
the game. The Rich Old Man said that the game would never end and he would do hunting all the time. Wariinga asked him:

“But suppose you misfire?”
“No, I’m not like you. I wouldn’t miss you.” (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 145)

The Rich Old Man was obsessed by the game so from that day he would book a room in one of the hotels. The Rich Old Man told Wariinga:

“Wariinga, my dear, how can you foolishly tie yourself to your books when sugar delicacies, and ripe, juicy fruits, and many other wonders calculated to stir the heart and to warm the body are to be found everywhere in Kenya?” (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 143)

In the novel the word ‘sugar girls’ is used for girls and the words like sugar delicacies, ripe, juicy fruits are used for body to encourage sexuality. Soon Wariinga faced the result of it. She was pregnant but was not worried about her future as The Rich Old Man had promised her a secure future. She went to him and told him everything in the evening. That night The Rich Old Man kept mum and had his pleasure but in the morning he taught a lesson to Wariinga. He scolded her for not taking pills or having a coil fixed inside her. The Rich Old Man told her:

“How could you possibly have conceived so soon if I were the only man who went with you? Go away and look for the young man who has got you into trouble, and tell him to marry you or to take you to the forest or somewhere else for an abortion. I thought all along that I was going with a clean schoolgirl, a girl without too many problems, a girl I would have loved to marry, so that she could be balm for my old bones. But instead I picked on Kareendi Ready-to Yield, did I?” (Thiong’o, Devil on the Cross 146)

Wariinga was driven to hell upon the Earth and she gave birth to a girl child, Wambui. She was determined to fight with the life. The new Wariinga has also freely consented to marry
Gatuiria, her close companion during and after the journey to the Devil's feast. On the occasion of his coming marriage, Gatuiria decides to take his prospective bride home. Unlike the journey to Ilmorog, which had been instrumental in raising Wariinga's awareness, the present journey to meet Gatuiria's parents ironically takes Wariinga back to her pre-emancipated stage, for the moment she sets eyes on the old man, she recognizes him as the one who impregnated her many years back, when she was a teenage schoolgirl. To avoid a scandal and to work out an agreement, the old man pretends that he wants to confer with his daughter-in-law. Behind closed doors, he begged her to save his prestige. He denied to marry with her and said:

“Be mine. Remember you once belonged to me. I believe I am the man who changed you from a girl to woman. And you are the mother of my child, although I’ve never set eyes on it.” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 251)

The new Wariinga refused to be submissive when The Rich Old Man told her:

“I knew you would agree! My darling, who I love dearly! My little fruit, my little orange, my flower to brighten my old age!” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 253)

The Rich Old Man tried to tempt Wariinga with promises to give money, comfortable and rich home, and clothes from Europe. He uses all his guile and then goes to the extent of threatening to set a professional killer on her if she turns down his offer of refraining from marrying Gatuiria, an act which he considers as insulting to him. So sure is he about having instilled fear in Wariinga that he does not notice when she brings out the pistol from her handbag and shoots him. The novel actually starts with this killing, at the point at which Wariinga is supposedly arrested and awaits judgment. Though in the last part of the novel Wariinga informs us that she has broken off from her initial feeling of despair and of being socially conditioned by rejecting her stereotypical roles assigned her by the corrupt, male dominated neo-colonial world, it is only when Wariinga personally eliminates the old lecher that she really severs herself from her initial passive acceptance of being preyed upon and takes her destiny in her own hands.

Wariinga is a passive victim, whose waking senses are entirely out of focus with the reality oppressing her. She apparently perceives reality better sleeping than awake. For example,
while the stranger who has saved her is waiting for her to regain her sense, Wariinga, in a monologue, babbles out the predicament of a poor village girl in the hands of a male-dominated world. This story, which is supposed to be a characteristic of the plight of the African woman, not only reflects Wariinga's own predicament but, like Wanja's, shows the inevitable doom awaiting all the women. In her country she had been jailed for three days because she was wandering in the streets in search of job and she was suspected as a thief or a robber. She went to an Indian shop-keeper then to a European who was the owner of a hotel and at last she saw a black man in a shop and went there with hope but she got an unexpected answer from him. He told her that the only job he could offer her was that of spreading her legs, that women with mature bodies were experts at that job. The most stunning aspect of Kenyan society to her is her realization of the complete reversal of values--irresponsibility, corruption and lasciviousness now constitute the rule and virtue the exception.

Wariinga had dreams or nightmares. From her dreams, nightmares or half consciousness it becomes clear that they are directly related to or spring from the general malaise prevalent in her society. However, Wariinga's attitude, at this stage of her development, shows that she is lost in a self-pitying kind of despair. It takes the stranger to point out the danger of such despair and to link her plight with that of the nation as a whole. "Despair," the stranger reminds her, "is the one sin that cannot be forgiven. It is the sin for which we would never be forgiven by the nation and generations to come" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 27). The stranger also gives her a card inviting her to a Devil’s sponsored Feast in Ilmorog, saying: "If you would like to know more about the conditions that breed modern Kareendis [the name she had given the protagonist as she told her own story] go to the feast advertised on the card when you get to Ilmorog" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 28). Here again, it is the stranger that gives direction and meaning to Wariinga's initially hopeless journey of escape, when we realize that she had actually been blindly heading on to the eye of the storm, Ilmorog, the place chosen by the Devil for his feast.

The physical movement implied in the journey to Ilmorog not only teaches her that escape is impossible but also broadens her perspective by bringing her in contact with other Kenyans who, one way or the other, are involved in what is happening in the country. She finds herself with four other passengers in an old Model T Ford Matatu bound for Ilmorog. The truck not only becomes a microcosm of Kenya, but its passengers likewise reveal the struggle of interests going on in the said society. The advocates of self-interest are the man in dark
spectacles and Mwaura, the driver of the matatu. The arguments and views that these travelers express not only stigmatize the side that each has chosen in relation to the general situation prevailing in the country, but are indirectly meant to win over the passive Wariinga. Wariinga and the other passengers learn that this strange feast, after all, "is not a Devil's feast, and it has not been organized by Satan;" rather, it has "been arranged by the Organization of Modern Theft and Robbery in Ilmorog to commemorate a visit by foreign guests from an organization of the thieves and robbers of the Western World ..., called the International Organization of the Thieves and Robbers". (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 78)

Unlike that of Wariinga, the fate of Wangari, the other female character, is meant to expose the general policy of victimization of peasants by the system in place. Wangari is a woman whose farmland had been taken from her because she could not make timely payment for a loan she contracted to send her child to school. Having fled to the city in the hope of finding some odd jobs, she is arrested for loitering and is judged by a white man. Wangari's awareness of Neocolonialism and of the frustration or betrayal of Mau Mau dreams are illustrated in her defense speech:

"Look at me properly. I am not a foreigner here like you. And I am not a vagrant here in Kenya ... Kenya is our country. We were born here. We were given this land by God, and we redeemed it from the hands of our enemies with our blood. Today you see us clothed in rags, but we, the peasants and the workers, are the same people who were around at the time of Kimaathi. Now, look at me closely again. I am not a thief ... If you want to know who the real thieves and robbers are, follow me and I will show you their lairs and caves in Ilmorog. Give me a few policemen, and we'll go right now to arrest the thieves and robbers who have always troubled us. I do not know about Nairobi or other places, but in Ilmorog, our Ilmorog, thieves and robbers do not even bother to hide". (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 44)

Though Wariinga's personal experience gives her first-hand knowledge of the policy of expropriation of poor farmers and of rampant poverty at the national level, she also lacks insight into the underpinnings of her predicament. The journey also enables her to put together the
broken parts of her miserable life alongside those of her fellow passengers. Unable to pay the transport fare, Wariinga's journey to Ilmorog is only made possible by the generosity of her fellow passengers, who also save her from being dumped in the wilderness by their insensitive driver.

Mwaura shares his experience with the others. It was about an American tourist who was an old man. He had with him an African girl. The African girl looked like a school girl. The old man sat with her in the back seat and Mwaura drove them all round Nairoby for an hour or so. The old man did not talk much but all the way he was to keep pressing and pinching the little girl's thighs, and the girl massaged on his face. When the old man would see the girl crying with pain his eyes would light up with happiness. He gave the girl a note of 100 shilling told Mwaura the virtues of Kenya. The old man said: "Kenya is a great country...fantastic wild game...and afterwards fantastic women, so beautiful...Even I, an old man, I can get a chick...I'll come back with even more tourists so that they can see Kenya’s wild game and women for themselves... Truly a beautiful country...stability...progress..." (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 71).

Kenyan women were forced in the profession of prostitutions and bargirls. They were to decorate the white man's bed. Objectification of a woman's body became a source of income. The female body was used to attract customers. In the novel Ngugi has written: "Barmaid moved from table to table, taking orders for drinks. They were all dressed in catsuits of black wool. The suits were form-fitting: they clung to the contours of the girls' bodies so closely that a distant onlooker might have thought that the girls were naked. On the girls' bottoms were fixed small white patches shaped like rabbit is tails. On their breasts were pinned two plastic fruits. Each girl also wore a band around her head on which was written in English: I Love You. The girls looked like apparitions from another world." (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 92). The new Wariinga raises her voice against the situation. She, in an aggressive voice tells Gatuiria:

"The abilities and potential of our women are enslaved to the typewriter, the bar or the beds in those hotels we have put up in every corner of the country for the pleasure of the tourists. How insulting to our national dignity that our women should have become mere flowers to decorate the beds of foreign tourists, so that when they go back home to their own countries, they can praise the generosity of
our women in bed! Is that real praise or contempt?” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 245)

Moreover Wariinga adds:

“The foreigners are not entirely to blame. Even you, the Kenyan men, think that there is no job a woman can do other than cooking you food and massaging you bodies...If you Kenyan men were not so scornful and oppressive, the foreigners you talk about so much would not be so contemptuous of us.” (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 245)

Wariinga presents the real situation in neo-colonial Kenya. Business men started commodification of female body to become rich. Muturi is a trade unionist who becomes the savior of Wariinga. As a partisan of the national cause, Muturi is presented as a trade unionist, or to be more precise, he is a delegate from a secret workers' organization in Nairobi (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 212). He worked for the same company that has dismissed Wariinga, but unlike Wariinga, Muturi lost his job because of his union activities. Muturi also turns out to be the mysterious person who saved Wariinga several years ago when, as a desperate pregnant teenager, she had attempted to commit suicide by standing before an on-coming train. Wariinga was saved from certain death when Muturi intervened and carried her unconscious body from the rails a fraction of a second before the train reached her. She had never known her savior!

Muturi is both the representative of labor unions and the symbol of workers' power. As such, he has a keen awareness of labor problems and a strong determination to stand up to the threat posed by the exploitative forces: "I simply cannot leave our earth to the Devil for him to twirl this way and that as he fancies," he says. "The Devil's feast? I'd like to go to challenge the Devil". (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 73)

During the journey to Ilmorog, Muturi reveals his awareness of corruption and the exploitation of workers, and how he is repelled by it. His view of human life is basically Manichaean, for he sees social conflicts as a struggle between good and evil vying for influence over human beings. To him, human life becomes a battlefield, on which is fought a continuous war between the antagonistic forces. In this war without spectators our choice and the resolute action we take will show the side we are defending (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 54). Once in
Ilmorog, he confirms his determination when he musters workers to attack the thieves' den. Unfortunately, the ill-prepared revolt is crushed in blood, many strikers including Muturi are arrested, and the status quo is maintained.

Gatuiria is a university teacher with a research fellowship in African culture. The object of his research is to compose a "truly national music for our Kenya, music played by an orchestra made up of the instruments of all the nationalities that make up the Kenyan nation that we, the children of Kenya, can sing in one voice rooted in many voices--harmony in polyphony?" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 60). Gatuiria is also aware of what he calls the effect of cultural imperialism that has deprived his country of its national identity. His commitment to a national cause has its meaning in his attempt to find "the roots of our culture in the traditions of all the nationalities of Kenya" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 59). His feverish search takes him to the rural area, where he meets an old man who educates him in folk culture by telling him about the necessary social relevance of folk tales. To illustrate his point, the old man tells Gatuiria a series of stories, one of which deals with an unfortunate peasant who has to carry a parasitic ogre. While the ogre, whose blood-sucking nails are sunk in the peasant's neck and back, is gaining weight, the peasant is near death. Though the latter visits a diviner to help him find a solution to his predicament, he is hesitant to apply the remedy, which consists in pouring boiling oil on the ogre's nails. The lesson from this story is that "nothing good was ever born of perfect conditions" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 63). The second story is Faustian, in the sense that it concerns a man whose lust for worldly possessions makes him sell his soul to the devil, but who is burnt at the stake by the other villagers to rid the village of the diabolic influence of their soulless kinsman. Gatuiria's lack of fulfillment in his research has to do with his skepticism about the existence of ogres, that is, he is unconvinced about the applicability of these stories to society, and unable to see them as more than expressions of fancy (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 67).

Like Wariinga, Gatuiria's awareness of the social malaise increases with the development of events in Ilmorog, and he gradually sees the virtue of courage, involvement and active struggle to oppose social evil, just as he becomes aware of the existence of ogres in society. Gatuiria and Wariinga take the resolute step toward active commitment because of Muturi's call to stand actively on the side of workers and to rid themselves of "the culture of fear" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 205).
Wariinga grows and learns from the experience of the two days, for when we meet her two years later in Nairobi, she has undergone a metamorphosis, and self-reliance is now her motto. The new Wariinga is a car mechanic, "our engineering hero who specialized in motor vehicles and other combustion engines." She is also "an expert at fitting and turning, at forging and welding." She has totally shed the stereotypical image of the placid, submissive African woman, only able to "cook, to make beds and to spread [her] legs in the market of love" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 218).

Unlike the previous novel, where there is the apparent and perhaps naive belief that birds of the same feather flock together, in Devil on the Cross, it becomes almost impossible to discern the partisans of a national cause from the advocates of self-interest, for both become journeying people. The fact that Mwaura, the driver of the matatu, turns out to be a member of the "Devil's angels," (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross) the hooded thugs and agents of private business that evicted Wariinga, is significant in the sense that it points to the equally troubling fact that those running the neo-colonial state represent foreign interests. Mwaura is portrayed as a very sinister character devoid of conscience or compassion for his fellow individuals. As a former Home Guard, Maura is known to have belonged to a notorious killer squad and used to earn five shillings for every Mau Mau sympathizer he killed. He is believed to have recently killed a man because the latter owed him a few shillings. Maura's insensitivity and opportunism are brought out during the journey, both through the threat he makes when Wangari is unable to pay for the journey, and through the self-revealing speech he gives in defense of the choice he has made in life:

Business is my temple, and money is my God. But if some other God exists, that's all right ... I do not examine the world too minutely ... If it leans this way, I lean with it ... The earth is round, and it changes ... Caution is not a sign of cowardice. I do not have many questions to ask. Show me where the money is and I'll take you there! (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 56)

Unlike Mwaura, Mukiraai belongs to the inner circle of corruption. He is the one who provides the information about the famous feast being organized "by the Organization of Modern Theft and Robbery in Ilmorog to commemorate a visit by foreign guests from an organization of the thieves and robbers of the Western World ..., called the International Organization of the
Thieves and Robbers (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 78). As a partisan of exploitation, Mwireri applauds theft, robbery and cunning as a means of showing individual greatness over other individuals. The characters are highly convinced that theft and robbery are the measure of a country’s progress. Because in order for theft and robbery to flourish, there must be things to be stolen ... It is theft and robbery that have made possible the development of the Western world" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 79). He has also placed his faith in "the democratic principle that states that he who is able to grab should be allowed to grab" (Thiong'o, Devil on the Cross 80).

The novel projects the tragi-comic atmosphere of the much publicized feast, actually a competition in which thieves struggle to outdo each other in cunning and mastery of their trade. One small thief is dragged out kicking and screaming--a thief who steals because of need fails to qualify for this particularly important competition and the big shots find such an appearance a slur on their international reputation.

3.8: The Spirit of Change:

Wizard of the Crow is a novel by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. Published in 2006 Wizard of the Crow is a satirical dystopia. The situation was so worse that it was impossible to write about the reality directly so Ngugi’s this work is an allegory. It can be said that this work is a clarion call to all Kenyans to bring the change in their nation. Ngugi has used the technique of disguise to give freedom to characters to act freely. In this novel he uses the voice of common people. He wanted to make the people realize about the urgent need of change. The novel is an allegory set in the imaginary state called Aburiria. The state is ruled by the Ruler. The novel is a political satire and it also focuses on the social life of people. The novel is a very good example of Foucault’s concept of the ruler and the ruled, the existence of power relations within the society. Like Ngugi’s other novels this novel also deals with social issues in a neo-colonial country. Aburiria is politically corrupted and misruled state which transforms the life of people. The beginning is with strange illness of the Ruler of the Free Republic of Aburiria. As Aburiria is a free country it shows the life of people. All the characters are the victims of one or the other situation. They all in individual way try to get a solution of the problem. People pray daily to the Lord before they go to bed. They pray for their safety.
“The Wizard of the Crow made them stop with his second question.
What is the last thing you do before you fall asleep?
We thank the Lord for looking after us and our children the whole day without harm coming our way. Is that not reason enough to make us say thank you to our maker? Makori said.
And especially these days, when there are so many killings in the country, Maritha added.
Nobody is safe, even inside their own houses, Mariko said.
That’s why our very last words are to ask the Lord to look after us in our sleep, Maritha said.” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow 278)

The Ruler stands for the new government. As the name is unknown the Ruler can be any one in any society. He has been ruling for a very long time that he could not even remember when he began his reign.

The distortion of human possibilities is finally embodied in the grotesque transformation of Titus Tajirika, a business man, who overthrows and replaces the Ruler. With the help of plastic surgery Tajirika attempts to change his biological race but fails. *Wizard of the Crow* emphasizes on the bodily monstrosity. The absolute power is vested in the Ruler and as a result of this the ruler’s bodily functions become national news – from “eating, shitting, sneezing or blowing his nose” to “yawing” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow 3). The Ruler’s henchmen also possess the exaggerated features that are necessary to run the political state. Women do not possess a power to run or to rule the state. The Ruler is an appropriate symbol of patriarchy. He rules over Aburiria but apart from that he rules over his wife. He possesses full power to control his wife. His wife Rachael pointed out that the Ruler is the father of the nation and it is unfair if he sleeps with schoolgirls. For this reason the Ruler orders to arrest her.

“The ruler and his wife had fallen out one day when Rachael asked question about the schoolgirls who, rumors claimed, were often invited to the State House to make his bed, where he, like the aging white man of the popular saying, fed on spring chicken. Of course, the Ruler would never admit to aging, but he had not problems with the “white men” comparison, and so he amended the proverb to
say that a white man renews his youth with spring chicken. Imagine how he must have felt about Rachael’s attempt to deny him his fountains of youth! How indiscreet and indecorous of her to ask the unaskable! Since when could a male, let alone a Ruler, he denied the right to feel his way around women’s thighs, whether other men’s wives or schoolgirls? What figure of a Ruler would he cut were he to renounce his right to husband all women in the land in the manner of the lords of Old Europe, whose *droits de seigneur* gave them the right to every bride-to-be?

Rachael thought she was being reasonable. I know you take the title Father of the Nation seriously, she told him. You know that I have not complained about all those women who make beds for you, no matter how many children you sire with them. But why schoolgirls? Are they not as young as the children you have fathered? Are they not really our children? You father them today and tomorrow you turn them into wives? Have you no tears of concern for our tomorrow?” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 6)

The ruler did not like the question raised by his wife so to prove his power he built her a house on a seven-acre plot that he surrounded with a stone wall and an electric fence, in which he stops the time:

“All the clocks in the house were frozen at the second, the minute, and the hour that she had raised the question of schoolgirls; the calendars pointed to the day and the year. The clocks tick-tocked but their hands did not move. The mechanical calendar always flipped to the same date. The food provided was the same as at the last supper, the clothes the same as she had worn that night. The bedding and curtains were identical to those where she had once lived. The television and radio kept repeating programs that were on during the last supper. Everything in the new mansion reproduced the exact same moment.”

A record player was programmed to play only on hymn:
“Our Lord will come back one day
He will take us to his home above
I will then know how much he loves me
Whenever he comes back
And when he comes back
You the wicked will be left behind
Moaning your wicked deeds
Whenever our Lord comes back.” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 8)

According to the narrator, Rachael was to remain inside the guarded mansion until “she
had shed all the tears for all the tomorrows of all the children she had accused him of abusing,
and then the Ruler would take her back to restart life at the exact moment she has fallen from
grace” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 8). The Ruler is thus elevated above the world and is now
in charge of it. There is a sort of deification of the Ruler who has tamed time so he can control all
the events. Once again, Ngugi creates a fairy tale atmosphere in order to accommodate the
Ruler’s hubris.

The taming of time also parodies the long political and economic stagnation in which
postcolonial African dictators have kept their countries over the course of their one-party
system of government. During those one party and one strong man rules, events seemed to enjoy
the myth of eternal return, for they are reenacted every year to refresh people’s memories about
their relevance. Having seized power by coups-d’état, postcolonial African dictators forced their
people to accept them as liberators. Once that was granted, their next move was the falsification
of history by way of changing the Independence Day, destroying their predecessor’s legacy,
inventing new national holidays that symbolize their own political philosophies. Each year the
commemorations of these holidays are identical to the previous as if they were frozen and
retrieved intact. The organizers always made sure that the events, the uniforms, the dances, the
libations, the parades, and the venues, all look exactly the same as the previous ones. In Aburiria:

“The birthday celebration of the Ruler would always start at the seventh hour of
the seventh day of the seventh month, seven being the Ruler’s sacred number, and
precisely because in Aburiria the Ruler controlled how the months followed each
other – January for instance trading places with July – he therefore had the power to declare any month in the year the seventh month, and any day within that seventh month the seventh day and therefore the Ruler’s Birthday.” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow 12)

In the novel Ngugi relates the aspects of Neocolonialism with fallen women characters. The male hero, Kamiti Wa Karimiri’s ex-girlfriend, Wariara is unable to find employment and becomes a prostitute. The heroine Grace Nyawira is also a fallen woman. The novel emphasis upon fallen women and Nyawira, the representative of all women who claims that in the time of economic hardship women become dependent upon men for financial support.

Early in the novel Kamiti proposes Nyawira for marriage. His wish to sleep with Nyawira was rejected by her. She openly says:

“a person refuses to wear a condom in these day of the deadly virus and he still wants to go to the distance, he is my enemy, not my lovemate, and I should not let him touch me. That is why I threw you off, because I thought you were one of those men who think it unmanly to wear condoms.” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow 92)

For the first time a woman wants to have a control over her body. She says ‘NO’ to her lover. According to Foucault the sexual body is not only a docile and passive object of dominant discourses and techniques of power. It also represents the possibility of resistance against such discourses and techniques. By saying ‘NO’ she is involved in an act of resistance. She is not like other women who would behave submissively before their lovers or husbands. Nyawira thinks about her security first. On the other side use of condoms would save her from unwanted pregnancy so by that way it is a rejection of childbearing and motherhood. Nyawira is not like Wariinga who thought that the bed she shared with the Rich Old Man was the bed of roses. Nyawira is a modern woman who knows how to prevent men from entering in the body. Unlike Nyawira, female characters in other fictions allow men to use their body. With the help of these female characters Ngugi seriously deals with the issue of sexism and other issues affecting woman. Nyawira is Ngugi’s most truly feminist character as she does not settle down into a
position which has been instrumentalized. She draws our attention to African female subjectivity as a composite of roles, positions and capacities. Nyawira helps us to study the condition of women in a neo-colonial society in which a woman has to carry the burden.

“Rachael’s fate speaks of volumes: if a woman who had been at the montainship of power and visibility could be made to disappear, be silenced forever while alive, what about the ordinary woman worker and peasant? The condition of women in a nation is the real measure of its progress. You imprison a woman and you have imprisoned a nation, we sang in a song of celebration.” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 253)

The following talk between Kamiti and Nyawira throws light upon the condition of women that how they are treated by men in any society. Women are expected to behave as docile in front of men in patriarchal system. Nyawira mentions women writers of other country who helps to bring in light the pathetic condition of women. Women as subaltern struggle a lot for their voices to be heard as men do not have habit of giving space or turn to women.

“Does rough weather choose men over women? Does the sun beat on men, leaving women nice and cool?’ Nyawira asked rather sharply. ‘Women bear the brunt of poverty. What choices does a woman have in life, especially in times of misery? She can marry or live with a man. She can bear children and bring them up, and be abused by her man. Have you read Buchi Emecheta of Nigeria, The Joys of Motherhood? Tsitsi Dangarembga of Zimbabwe, say, Nervous Conditions? Miriama Ba of Senegal, So Long A Letter? Three women from different parts of Africa, giving words to similar thoughts about the condition of women in Africa.’ ‘I am not much of a reader of fiction,’ Kamiti said. ‘Especially novels by African women. In India such books are hard to find.’ ‘Surely even in India there are women writers? Indian women writers?’ Nyawira pressed. ‘Arundhati Roy, for instance, The God of Small Things? Meena Alexander, Fault Lines? Susie Tharu. Read Women Writing in India. Or her other book, We Were Making History, about women in the struggle!’
'I have sampled the epics of Indian literature,' Kamiti said, trying to redeem himself. 'Mahabharata, Ramayana, and mostly Bhagavad Gita. There are a few others, what they call Purana, Rig-Veda, Upanishads… Not that I read everything, but …"I am sure that those epics and Puranas, even the Gita, were all written by men,' Nyawira said. 'The same men who invented the caste system. When will you learn to listen to the voices of women?’” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow)

In *Wizard of the Crow* Ngugi has taken up fully political vision. The real events of Kenya are coated with the extraordinary and fantastic. Through the narrative Ngugi reveals the current socio-political crisis of Africa. In this novel Ngugi critiques the political situation of his country and the western notion of reality. In this novel Ngugi fuses with fable, fantasy, magic and reality to present the extraordinary situation of Africa. *Wizard of the Crow* depicts the neo-colonial Kenya and brings in light economic mismanagement, corruption, dictatorship, permanent submission to foreign dictate, but goes a bit farther to include the persisting class and gender inequalities in Africa, the predation of the poor countries by global capitalism, as well as a very subtly psychoanalytic explanation of the truth that rules the life of the African elite.

*Wizard of the Crow* tells the story of the Free Republic of Aburiria, a fictitious African country ruled by a dictator known as the Ruler and his sycophantic ministers who are engaged in a Machiavellian power struggle and who enjoy plotting against each other in their desire to win the Ruler’s utmost sympathy. In *Wizard of the Crow* various groups are battling for the protection of their individual interests. Among them: there is the Ruler who is engaged in a fierce battle to cling to his waning power; there are the poverty stricken Aburirian masses who are battling for jobs and the women who are fighting against male domination, both groups led by Kamiti the wizard and his companion Nyawira; and the Global Bank, the representative of the neocolonial forces who are battling for the control of the country’s economy.

Unlike *Weep not, Child, the River Between, and Petals of Blood*, where Ngugi employed social realism to deal with issues directly related to Colonial and Post-Colonial Kenya, *Wizard of the Crow* goes beyond Kenya to address the root causes of the current socio-political malaise in Africa. In this novel, Ngugi employs fabulous realism and satirical magical realism as aesthetics of necessity. He was asked about the present situation in Africa during a September 2000
interview, Ngugi put his head in his hands and said that things were so bad that the only way to write about it was utter fantasy, fable—it was so awful!

The whole political structure in Aburiria rests on lies, and whoever gives a version contradictory to those lies is accused of treason. This is why it is not surprising that the Ruler’s most hated prisoners are journalists, historians, and professors. He calls them terrorists and rumormongers. The reality is that Ngugi himself was jailed. In Aburiria, fantasies and realities are so indistinguishable that their depiction requires a concentrated dose of satire as Ngugi does in this novel.

In this Free Republic, the Ruler is the nation and the nation is the Ruler. He believes that he and the nation are synonymous. Whoever dares believe the contrary has to face his anger as is frequently the case with Sikiokuu and other praise singers in his entourage. When Sikiokuu, in an ecstatic mood speaks about the Ruler and the country as separate entities, he finds himself in one of the most embarrassing situations, where only his acceptance of self-humiliation can save him, as in the scene below:

“Sikiokuu: ‘I want to present you with all the enemies of you, our Ruler, and of the country.’ ‘You little cunt of a man!’ the Ruler shouted angrily. Why do you go on and on about my enemies and those of the Country? Is there a distinction between me and the Country?’ ‘Forgive me, My Lord and Master. I wished only to intone your name twice. As with God above! We know him by many names. O My Lord, you do not know how sweet your name sounds in the years of those who truly believe in you and who know that you and the Country are one and the same.” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 136)

Like the other postcolonial dictators, the Ruler of Aburiria adores flattery, praises, and glorification. The Sikiokuus of all postcolonial African countries know how to play the game in order to continue to enjoy the dictators’ favors. Wizard of the Crow is very near to the reality and Ngugi here exaggerates the realities of the many post-colonial countries.

The hero of the novel, Kamiti is an intellectual with hidden spiritual powers, which he inherited from his grandfather. Even though reluctant at the beginning, he becomes a wizard who
uses mirrors to cure Aburirian politicians from their fantastic ailments such as “white ache.” When we first encounter him, he is lying on a garbage heap, having an out-of-body experience as a bird. Trash collectors mistook him for a corpse and are terrified when the dead apparently arises:

“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 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 body lying on the ground and the mountain of garbage where children and dogs fought over signs of meat and white bones […] I am human, I am a human being, a soul, and not a piece of garbage, no matter how poor and ragged I look, and I deserve respect, he heard himself say time and again as he descended to and repossessed his body.” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 38-40)

This out-of-body experience sets the tone for *Wizard of the Crow*’s concern about the inequalities that exist in the Aburirian society. During Kamiti’s flight over Aburiria, he realizes the ubiquity of the inequalities in all the cities and regions of Aburiria. He notices with surprise that like in Eldares, every town he traverses, “people were hungry, thirsty, and in rags.” “Shacks stood side by side with mansions of tile, stone, glass, and concrete.” He also realizes that he is not alone in his condition of poverty, and even envisions to remain “a bird in order to escape suffering that characterizes human society” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 39).

This flight marks the beginning of Kamiti’s awareness of his responsibility vis-à-vis social and political reformation in his country. He did not like what he saw and thought something needed to be done. Kamiti believes that the first step towards a real reformation must be the healing of the souls, for “damaged souls produced damaged policies, not the other way around” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 62).

As the novel progresses, Kamiti becomes a wizard and uses his magic and healing powers to help the Aburirians. Aburirian politicians and businessmen visit his shrine for divination and cure of their bizarre diseases. Kamiti first displayed a sign that says “Wizard of the Crow, enter at your own risk” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow) to dissuade Arigaigai Gathere,
who was pursuing him and Nyawira, from entering the room they were hiding in. But Gathere went back and upon his insistence Kamiti finally commits himself to magic as the “Wizard of the Crow”, role he plays with Nyawira alternatively. At the center of their magic is the mirror, which they use during their divination sessions. It is a technique that helps the wizard’s patients to discover themselves, because for Kamiti the causes of Aburirians’ bizarre ailments are to be found within each patient.

Kamiti and Nyawira respectively, hero and heroine of the novel have multiple identities which they assume through disguise. Disguise is a technique whereby a character assumes another role, usually involving a change of costume in theater. When Kamiti was tired of looking for a job without success, he disguised himself as a beggar: “He opened his bag, took out some rags, and quickly changed. With a felt pen, he drew lines of misery on his face. In no time he had transformed himself from a respectable-looking job hunter to a dire seeker of alms”. (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 71) At his shrine, he is not the MBA holder looking for a job; he is not the beggar, but the wizard of the crow. Nyawira too disguises herself into various identities. She is the office secretary of Tajirka, the chairman of Marching to Heaven, she is a beggar, a dancer, a limping witch, and leader of the Movement for the Voice of People, as Kamiti puts it: “This woman was chameleon-like. One moment she was a faithful secretary, then a player in the politics of poverty, and even a singing religious fanatic”. (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 87)

Through Nyawira, Wizard of the Crow extends to performance, which creates propitious conditions for the organization of the resistance against the Ruler, Marching to Heaven, gender discrimination, class stratification, and global capitalism. Gikandi defines performance as:

“a means by which society reflects on its current condition, on the members’ relationship with each other and their environment. It enables people to define and/or reinvent themselves and their society and either reinforce, resist, or subvert prevailing social orders. In performance, subversion and legitimization can emerge in the same utterance or act.” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 418)

This is indeed the purpose of the performances by the Movement for the Voice of the People in the novel. In these performances, these women, led by Nyawira, disguise as beggars, cultural group dancers, and singers. The performances have given them the avant-garde role in
the novel. In their individual households they are second class citizens who are abused and humiliated by their husbands. The chief abuser of women is the Ruler himself who has built a maximum security prison for his wife Rachael. Rachael’s treatment epitomizes the plight of all the women of Aburiria and even the nation. Nyawira tells Kamiti that:

“Rachael’s fate speaks volumes: if a woman who had been at the mountaintop of power and visibility could be made to disappear, be silenced forever while alive, what about the ordinary woman worker and peasant? The condition of women in a nation is the real measure of its progress. You imprison a woman and you have imprisoned a nation, we sang in a song of celebration.” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 253)

For this reason, Nyawira believes that the emancipation of Aburirian women is also the liberation of the nation from oppression. The peculiar situation of the Aburirian woman makes her emancipation the emancipation of all the social groups in the nation and even the world. According to Nyawira, The Aburirian woman carries three burdens which make her the most oppressed person in the world: “She is oppressed on account of her color like all black people in the world; she is oppressed on account of her gender like all women in the world; and she is exploited and oppressed on account of her class like all workers and peasants in the world” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 428). Wizard of the Crow takes advocacy of women’s issues to an extreme level in order to tackle the shameful practice of wife-beating. In Aburiria, wife-beating is sanctioned by state law as decreed by the Ruler in his philosophical booklet:

“Magnus Africanus: Prolegomenon to Future Happiness. According to this philosophy: Women must get circumcised and show submission by always walking in a few steps behind their men. Polygamous households should not form queues. Instead of screaming when they are beaten, women should sing songs of praise to those who beat them and even organize festivals to celebrate wife beating in honor of manhood. Most important, all Aburirians should remember at all times that the Ruler was husband number one, and so he was duty bound to set
an example by doing in the country what individual men were to do in their households.” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 621-22)

The satire of the novel reaches its culminating point as Nyawira and her women decide to go on offensive by instituting what they call the people’s court where Aburirian wife-beaters appear before nine women for their trial. Titus Tajirika, whose beating of his wife Vinjinia has become his favorite pass time, is the first man to face the justice of the Aburirian modern woman:

‘Who are you?’
‘A new order of justice created by today’s modern woman. You are now appearing before a people’s court.’
‘I refuse to recognize your authority,’ Tajirika replied with a little bit more defiance.
‘Do not worry yourself. By dawn you will.’
‘Get off my back,’ he said again, annoyed with himself for sounding as if he was pleading.
‘What is this about?’
‘Justice. We are hawkeyed justice. We float in the air, our ears wide open to the cries of women. Now it has come to our ears that you beat your wife night and day.’
‘Listen to me there is no power on earth that can tell me how to run my home.’
‘That might well be so, but man, woman, and child compose a home, and if one pillar is weak, the family is weak, and if the family is weak, the nation is weak. So what happens in a home is the business of the nation and the other way around.’ (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 435)

Nyawira herself is a victim of gender oppression. She had a failed marriage with John Kaniuru, the leader of the youth branch of the Ruler’s party, who married her so he could benefit from her father’s wealth. She also has a failed relationship with her father, Matthew Wangahu, who has disowned her many a time. When she disobeys him and marries Kaniuru, he disowns
her; also when Wangahu learns that she is involved in the protest against Marching to Heaven, he publicly threatens to disown her: “If you do not give yourself up within one week, I say publicly to the whole world, I will no longer call you my daughter, for I am loyal to God in Heaven and the Ruler here on earth” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow 297). The Ruler is the sole beneficiary of all the failed male-female relationships in Aburiria, for every repudiator has cited loyalty to him as the number one reason. Thus, like Wangahu, as Titus Tajirika learns that his wife Vinjinia is involved with the Movement for the Voice of the People, he improvises a press conference where he publicly denounces her:

“Dear Gentlemen of the Press. I have called you here today to tell you and, in telling you, tell the world that I would give up my life for the Ruler. As I am so loyal, how could anyone imagine that I could possibly have anything to do with a worker, a simple secretary, or a simple housewife, subverting the Mightiest of Governments…etc.” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow 229)

Even though this indiscriminate oppression of women by men may give the reader the impression that Nyawira and her Movement of the Voice of the People have a feminist agenda, in reality their agenda transcends feminism and embraces globalism, as evidenced in Nyawira’s appeal to the world:

“Those who want to fight for the people in the nation and in the world must struggle for the unity and rights of the working class in their own country; fight against all discriminations based on race, ethnicity, color, and belief system; they must struggle against all gender-based inequalities and therefore fight for the rights of women in the home, the family, the nation, and the world…” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow 428)

This is the sense of Nyawira’s commitment to organizing women and raising their awareness in order to fight for socio-political reforms in Aburiria. For Nyawira, gender-based oppression is as evil as racism and religious bigotry. This is why her revolutionary movement wants to tackle all form of oppression. To fulfill this task, Nyawira and her Movement of the
Voice of the people use performance to anonymously protest against the excesses of the Ruler and his cronies.

It is written that wife-beating was approved by the law. Wife-beating is also the mutilation and exploitation of body. In Foucault’s views in this repressive system the bodies of women were subjected to “new kinds of discipline in order to make them more useful for mass production and at the same time easier to control.” (D. Taylor 87). The human body becomes like a machine. The system uses the power to control the body and the bodies are expected to follow disciplines. According to Foucault “discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, “docile” bodies.” (D. Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key Concepts 88). The system of law is patriarchal and that’s why the female body is manipulated and objectified. To resist the system and to get freedom Ngugi’s suppressed characters come together and raised their voice against the power. So Foucault rightly says that the power comes from the below.

Through performance or “theater of politics,” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow) as Nyawira terms it, the Movement for the Voice of the People successfully opposes and disrupts all the events related to Marching to Heaven. The success of the Movement for the Voice of the People lies in Nwawira’s acting ability as well as her early interest in politics and social issues. When we first encounter her in the novel, she is recovering from a car accident that nearly took her life. What changed her outlook of the world is the realization that poor people are more humane than rich people. According to the narrator:

“What surprised her then and later when she recalled her near fatality was the number of cars that simply passed her by: no one had stopped to see if anyone was hurt or needed help. The people who hurried to her rescue were the barefooted, mostly. One unloaded his donkey cart to rush her to the nearest medical center many miles away, the donkey announcing their arrival at the emergency room by braying loudly and shitting.” (Thiong’o, Wizard of the Crow 79)

The compassion of the haves not touched Nyawira to the point that she turned her back to the wealth she was born in to embrace the life of modesty, where she can commit herself to fighting for justice and equality and emancipation of women in Aburiria. This is what “caused a
rupture in her relationship with her father” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 80). Before the accident she used to hate the exiled revolutionaries who were fighting for justice. But now, like these revolutionaries, she admits “we cannot leave the fate of the nation to the man-eaters” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 746). But she also admits that the task of healing the nation cannot be done by one person or by any number of people when each is acting on his own. For Nyawira, it is only when all the oppressed people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, region, religion, and tribe, come together and resist their common oppressors that they will bring about social and political reforms in the country. She sums-up her socio-political theory as follows:

“In Aburiria there are those who reap where they never planted and those who plant but hardly ever reap what they planted. The first camp, even with its allies abroad, is small, and yet it is able to lord over the second because it divides it along ethnic and sometimes gender and religious lines. Our movement wants to reverse that. We do not ask people what their tribe is but where they stand in the conflicting interests of the two camps. You have not a say in the ethnicity into which you are born, but you have all the say in the choice of associates. Biology is fate. Politics is choice. No, the life of even the least among us should be sacred, and it will not do for any region or community to keep silent when the people of another region or community are being slaughtered. The wealth of science, technology, and arts should enrich peoples’ lives, not enable their slaughter. We oppose the tendency to make women carry the weight of customs that outlived the contexts that may have made them necessary or even useful earlier. The context is gone but the practice goes on.” (Thiong'o, Wizard of the Crow 725-26)

Wizard of the Crow is an experiment of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o as he has written the novel in Gikuyu language. He emphasizes on the Africanness of the language. His rejection of writing in English is his rejection of Imperialism. For instance, in Decolonizing the Mind, published in 1986, Ngugi explains why he thinks African writers should produce their work in African languages. For him it is absurd for Africans to talk about Africa in foreign languages; he feels that foreign languages cannot adequately talk about issues related to Africa. Ngugi has projected his work in this pattern because it was his personal experience. The native people were forced to
speak English as it was the language of the dominant culture. Foucault has written that speech is a political freedom. In this regards the people were politically not free. Language is a social phenomena and it is used for social interactions, for social activities. Without the native language the tongue was rotten and this caused the death of culture and nation.

In this novel Ngugi emphasizes the plight of masses in post-colonial Africa. He believes that a tiny minority of elite and their foreign allies have hijacked independent African nations and returned them under another form of oppression. He attacks politicians for continuing the colonial exploitation of the masses and denying them freedom. In Aburiria the perpetuation of exploitation of the masses by the ruling class has led to the emergence of two antagonistic classes: the class of profiteers which consist of the ruler and his entourage, and the masses which consist of workers, students, unemployed, and peasants. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the profiteers or the man-eaters, according to Nyawira, are represented by the Ruler, Machokali, Sikioku, Tajirika and their followers, whereas the voiceless, the masses are represented by Kamiti, Nyawira and the Movement for the Voice of the People. The former stands for the failure of the post-colonial elite in Africa whereas the latter stands for hope.

Ngugi focuses upon the very serious problem of unemployment. The degree holders are unemployed and jobless. Despite his degrees, Kamiti has been looking for a job for three years to no avail. In lieu of a job what he gets is humiliation like the one he was subjected to at Eldares Modern Construction and Real Estate, where the chairman Tajirika, after wasting Kamiti’s time with a lengthy interview, ridiculed him. At the end of the interview, pointing to the signboard that reads “No Vacancy”:

“For Jobs Come Tomorrow,” Tajirika tells Kamiti: ‘It is simple. I want you to read loudly what is written on this sign board.’ Even before uttering the words on the board, Kamiti knew that Tajirika was toying with him. But the words came out of his mouth and he heard himself read loudly: No Vacancy: For Jobs Come Tomorrow. ‘There you have read it correctly!’ Tajirika said triumphantly. ‘What is it that you do not understand? Or do you need a Hindi interpreter? On these premises, there is no use for your herbology. Here are your Indian papers. Over there is the main avenue. And now you’ll excuse me, for I have an important engagement in Paradise’.” (Thiong'o, *Wizard of the Crow* 59)
So this is the serious problem in post-colonial Africa where the job-seekers have to choose between bribing the officials and getting the job or remaining jobless forever. Ngugi believes that unless the exploited masses unite and engage a direct confrontation with the exploiters, the status quo will remain forever.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi embarks the reader on a journey during which he fulfills the promises he makes through his multiple narrators. He hardly disappoints his audience; whenever he begins a new story, he prepares his audience to its outcome, sometimes telling them that it is not sure whether the story is true or false. Moreover in *Wizard of the Crow* Ngugi talks about common problems of post-colonial Africans as they all suffer from the common disease, inferiority complex. For the postcolonial African elite, the notion of power is at best complex, and at worst irrational. For them power goes hand in hand with westernization or metamorphosis into whiteness. Thus as Tajirika becomes the Chairman of Marching to Heaven, that desire quickly manifests itself:

“If … my … skin… were… not… black! Oh, if only my skin were white!” […]

As he looked into the future, he suddenly realized that at the rate money was coming in he would end up being the richest man in Africa, and the only thing missing to distinguish him from all the other black rich was white skin. He saw his skin as standing between him and the heaven of his desire. When he scratched his face, daemons within were urging him to break ranks with blackness and enter into union with whiteness. In short, he suffers from a severe case of white-ache.”

(Thiong'o, *Wizard of the Crow* 180)

For the Ruler the global Bank does not respect him because he is black: “If I had been white, would they have done what they did to me/ Or, IF I had been white would they have treated me the way they just did in the presence of my ministers?” (Thiong'o, *Wizard of the Crow* 491)

This yearning is not new. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon uses one of his patients to explain black people’s desire to become whites, as he writes:
“Negro tells me his dream: ‘I had been walking for a long time, I was extremely exhausted, I had the impression that something was waiting for me, I climbed barricades and walls, I came into an empty hall, and from behind a door I heard noise. […]’ When I try to understand this dream, to analyze it, knowing that my friend has had problems in his career, I conclude that this dream fulfills an unconscious wish. But when, outside my psychoanalytic office, I have to incorporate my conclusions into the context of the world, I will assert:

1. My patient is suffering from an inferiority complex. His psychic structure is in danger of disintegration. What has to be done is to save him from this and, little by little, to rid him of this unconscious desire.

2. If he is overwhelmed to such degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a degree to which that society creates difficulties for him, he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation. What emerges then is the need for combined action on the individual and on the group. As a psychoanalyst, I should help my patient to become conscious of his unconscious and abandon his attempts at hallucinatory whitening, but also to act in the direction of a change in the social structure.”

(Fannon 99-100)

People’s wish of becoming white is because of the dominant white culture. The black people started using cosmetics to become white. They also went for plastic surgery to change their colour. This means that Foucault’s conception of power and body very much powerful. The power exists within the system and people shape and reshape their bodies as per the demand of it. So it is difficult to step out of the circle of power.

In *Wizard of the Crow* Ngugi presents ruling class as the enemy and men and women must come together to defeat the enemy. He has covered up all the issues of post-colonial Africa. In general, in his novels Ngugi focuses on the complexity of human character and motivation. Ngugi’s heterogeneous collection of misfits, revolutionaries, withdrawn or merely ideologically alienated men and women, constitutes a barometer of African society.
**Work Cited:**


