Offering Alternative Social Systems

1. Neo-colonialism

Modern European colonization of black Africa began as a process of economic exploitation. It was motivated by the need for labour and raw materials for the factories and plantations of Europe and America. So slaves and goods were shipped to the metropolis and finished products sailed back to the colonies. This exploitative machinery of colonialism functioned under the supervision of the colonial armies and the police after suppressing and oppressing the peasantry. Ngugi regards the period from 1895 to 1963 as the period of “classical colonialism” in Kenya which was marked by “the exploitation of Kenya’s natural resources and the exploitation of Kenyan labour by European capital” (Writers 119). During this period Kenya like her African counterparts became a coveted “source of raw materials, the source of cheap labour and also a market for European goods” (Writers 119). So what Gitutu remembers in Devil on the Cross sums up the situation. The whiteman “‘stole the people’s fertile lands... He robbed people of the labour of their hands’” (102). Thus as Ngugi says in Decolonising the Mind, “The real aim of colonialism was to control the people’s wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed...” (16). He
regards imperialism as "the rule of consolidated finance capital . . ." (Decolonising 2).

The process of colonization restructured the economies of the colonies. It disrupted the native farming systems of Africa which were centred around a subsistence economy in which land and labour were not available for exchange. As colonization was the process of the industrializing West's search for man and materials, it promoted a capital-centred agricultural production in which raw materials would be available in the market for exchange. Colonial expansion mounted to its full tide during those days when Europe was in need of the manpower and raw materials of the pre-industrial spaces for the demands of its industrial growth. In Colonialism/Postcolonialism, Ania Loomba says:

... European colonialisms . . . produced the economic imbalance that was necessary for the growth of European capitalism and industry. Thus we could say that colonialism was the midwife that assisted at the birth of European capitalism, or that without colonial expansion the transition to capitalism could not have taken place in Europe. (4)

Thus colonization accelerated not only the exploitation of the wealth of the colonies, but also the transition of European economies into capitalist economies. It was, in
fact, a shipping of agrarian Africa's wealth to industrial Europe to build the Western civilization. Colonization in its early phase had only one motive--downright economic exploitation.

If colonialism was merely the conquest and control of other people's territories, political independence would have meant its termination in the colonies. But as it functioned also as an economic system of controlling markets (Europe fixing the price of the raw materials and fixing price tag on finished products) it lingered even after independence. Kofi Awoonor says in *Breast of the Earth*: "Sitting on vast resources, the African nations can hardly make ends meet because the economic systems in which they are forced to exist cannot and do not operate in their favor [sic]" (46). So most of the African nations that became independent in the nineteen-sixties could only fly flags of political independence. Their economies were dependent on Europe. This economic control of the European capitalist economy on the ex-colonies is an aspect of neo-colonialism.

The term neo-colonialism which was first used by Kwame Nkrumah in the title of his book *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965) denotes a high degree of economic influence over an ex-colonies' affairs by foreign business interests. Though the term now is used to refer to any kind of control over the former colonies, it is more
related to and connected with forms of economic control. Ngugi regards neo-colonialism as an extension of the imperialistic exploitation of Africa's masses. He says:

Neo-colonialism then means the continued economic exploitation of Africa's total resources and of Africa's labour power by international monopoly capitalism through continued creation and encouragement of subservient weak capitalistic economic structures, captained over, overseered by a native ruling class. (Writers 24)

Fruits of 'Uhurn'

In the nineteen-sixties most of the colonies in Africa won independence, except a few like Portuguese Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe and South Africa. But the euphoria of independence did not last long and the unity of the nationalist crusade began to crumble in the very eyes of those who led it. The newly independent democracies found themselves under the grip of neo-colonialism, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. Political inefficiency and economic instability became the rule of the day. The national bourgeoisie who took over the batton of power from the colonial masters degenerated themselves into self-serving villains. As Chinua Achebe says in "The African Writer and the Biafran Cause," "The old white master was still in power. He had got himself a bunch of black stooges to do his dirty work for a
commission” (82). To the majority of Africans independence did not bring any fundamental changes. “It was independence with the ruler holding a begging bowl, and the ruled holding a shrinking belly” (Ngugi, “The Writer” 4).

Thus political independence left Africa at the doors of IMF and at the mercy of the multinationals. The movements of independence brought in only a change of masters. The new black leadership took over the privileges of the vacating colonial powers and soon black faces appeared in Mercedeses plying on the streets of Africa. Gareth Griffiths says in A Double Exile: “When it became clear that the new ruling elite had no intention of distributing the new wealth fairly . . . the stirrings of discontent began” (41). As a manifestation of this mounting discontent, a succession of military coups began in 1965. Zaire, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Mali, Uganda and many more African countries experienced military coups.

One of the major concerns of the postcolonial novelists is to contend the forces of economic control and exploitation. His works reflect the intense economic, political and cultural struggles in his society. A writer has no choice other than to choose one side in this struggle. Ngugi says:

What he can choose is one or the other side in the battlefield: the side of the people, or the side of those social forces that try to keep the
people down. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics. (Writers xii)

By analysing and criticizing neo-colonialism in their novels, Ngugi and Armah make clear whose side they are in this intense struggle.

Neo-colonialism and its resultant evils are the leitmotifs in the early novels of Armah. His *Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* deals with the attempt of the unnamed protagonist, the Man, to remain honest in the midst of the mass corruption in Ghana which is a neo-colony. The Man tries to hold his ground in a society where theft is "the national game" (*Beautyful* 129). It is a society craving for the gleam of foreign goods and under the grip of the sickness of consumerism. It is a society which mimics Western styles and accumulates Western goods. The death of the old order has created a moral vacuum. Through the symbols of dirt, filth, urine and shit, Armah presents a society that is knee-deep in corruption. There is enough dirt in the environment that the sweeper has to do the cleaning thrice a day. Through the metaphor of the physiological evacuation cycle, Armah presents a society's mindless consumption without production. It is a society that will consume those who are not ready to consume. You eat or you are eaten is the new ethic. A taxi driver in the novel makes clear the country's dependence on imported
goods: "... it seems everybody is making things now except us. We Africans only buy expensive things’’ (Beautyful 140).

The Man is an ordinary railway clerk at Takoradi. The Man is aware of the rampant corruption in his country and keeps himself aloof from the comforts that a ‘Kola’ would bring. His wife Oyo and her mother nags him for not moving with the current and the whole society dismisses him with contempt and brands him a misfit. His behaviour, though absolutely normal, is abnormal for his society. Armah contrasts the Man with his childhood friend Koomson who is now a Minister. He appropriates national wealth and has connections with big business tycoons. With all his moral depravity, corruption and selfishness, Koomson represents a whole nation in the neo-colonial swamp.

The novel closes with a symbolical evacuation process in which the nation expels all its filth and dirt. After the coup, Koomson escapes through a latrine hole. Koomson is now the party’s scapegoat to cleanse itself of all its past sins. Derek Wright says in “Totalitarian Rhetoric: Some Aspects of Metaphor in Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born”: “In the novel’s ritualistic finale, the ills of the Nkrumah regime, in the form of Koomson, are carried out to sea, and, after a purificatory/immersion, the man returns to land . . . (217-18).
In *Fragments*, Baako returns to Ghana after studying creative writing for five years in the United States. On landing in Accra, instead of going home, he goes to a hotel. As he has come unannounced, there is no usual fanfare at the arrival lounge. He had always been haunted by the demands made on a ‘been-to’ and he knew that he would not be able to live up to the expectations of his family. Baako sums up the situation to his Porto Rican psychiatrist girl friend, Juana: “The member of the family who goes out and comes back home is a sort of charmed man, a miracle worker. He goes, he comes back, and with his return some astounding and sudden change is expected” (*Fragments* 146). A young man going abroad is expected to return and distribute products of Western technology--radios, cars, refrigerators--to his family. But Baako returns with nothing in hand except a guitar and a portable typewriter. The girl at the baggage check in counter in Paris is surprised to see a black man with a light suitcase. She says: “Your bag is not very heavy” (*Fragments* 57). One of the first things that Baako’s mother asks him is “When is yours coming, Baako?” (*Fragments* 101). Armah presents a mass of people waiting for the elite traveller to bring home the newly acquired prosperity and European style life. In their eyes their black man becomes a white man with money and power. America for them, is the far-away land where everything is taught and anything can be bought.
By tracing Baako’s attempts to get a job, Armah pictures the corruption, nepotism, bribery and the moral vacuum in neo-colonial Ghana. Baako finds it difficult to get a job as he was not willing to offer bribe. The Junior Assistant to the secretary of Civil Services tells him: "'You can come and see me when you decide you want me to help you'" (Fragments 110). Later when Baako narrates this incident, Ocran, his art master, tells him that the whole civil service is corrupt because it is run by the "'so-called elite of pompous asses trained to do nothing'" (Fragments 116). And after a visit to the Principal Secretary’s house, Ocran tells Baako that the establishment is thoroughly corrupt and inefficient. "'I hate these stupid Ghanaian big shots. They know things don’t work, but they’re happy to sit on top of the mess all the same'” (Fragments 119).

Armah pictures Baako as a man of strong morals and a dogged determination to fight evil. He wants to help in the nation-building by using his creative powers to foster confidence in the people. Working with Ghanavision, Baako finds it difficult to use his potential for his country. He finds his honesty being put to test. As an artist he has to maintain an objective impartial stance on issues of public importance. But he realizes that the artist is also a civil servant. He discovers that he does not fit into the ethics of modern Ghana which values all those things that he disliked as a student in America.
Baako finds that the modern ethics limits his obligation to his immediate community—the family, unlike in the past when the individual was affiliated to the larger community the ethics of which were framed for furthering the interests of the whole community. Baako finds himself torn between loyalty to his family and loyalty to his community. Baako fails to fulfil his loyalties to his family and thus is branded a failure. Unable to hold on Baako is “forced gradually into catatonic withdrawal” (Griffiths 63) from where madness is not too far. In the end Baako finds it difficult to convince himself of the rightfulness of his moral stand. This ultimately leads to his madness. As D. S. Izevbaye says in “Ayi Kwei Armah and the ‘I’ of the Beholder,” “… Baako’s progress to full madness is intensified by the family’s general lack of real regard for individual feeling” (235).

Armah presents a community that is not creative or innovative enough to produce, but engages in imitation and consumption. This leads to a kind of apathy and inertia. An ordinary Ghanaian waits for things to be done for him. He takes on things as they come his way and shows no initiative or leadership. The PWD engineer tells Baako: “... I joined the PWD twenty-three whole years ago. I was patient, and waited, that’s why I have my present post” (Fragments 199-200). This engineer represents Ghana which waits to get things done for it as it lacks creative
thinking and independent enterprise. Thus Armah presents a neo-colony which is under the grip of a new dis/order which privileges the individual at the expense of the community and the family at great loss to the larger community. It is a society in which people deal with one another on the basis of material gain or loss. Armah attacks the indiscriminate craving for white goods which indirectly binds the Ghanaian economy to European capitalism.

In his novel A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi hints at the evil of neo-colonialism even though the novel has the 'uhuru' celebrations in its background. A sense of betrayal overtakes the people to see that independence has not brought in the expected results. Those who deserve positions are denied them and those who fought for the land are still landless. So Gikonyo asks:

"But now, whom do we see riding in long cars and changing them daily as if motor cars were clothes? It is those who did not take part in the movement, the same who ran to the shelter of schools and universities and administration."

(Grain 60)

Corruption has already set in. Bribery has become the order of the day. Gikonyo as a trader knows the direction the new nation is moving to. He buys vegetables and transports them to Nairobi. He knows that it is a lucrative job "especially if you oiled smooth with money your
relationship with the traffic and market police who could always create trouble for African businessmen” (Grain 52). The cashier of the bus in which Gikonyo travels to Nairobi to meet the M.P. gives a few shillings for tea to the police so that the bus can carry the two extra passengers.

Monopoly Capitalism

In his novels, Petals of Blood, Devil on the Cross and Matigari, Ngugi pictures the dehumanizing effect of neo-colonialism and monopoly capitalism. Ngugi identifies the real enemy of Africa as monopoly capitalism, “whose very condition of growth is cut-throat competition, inequality, and oppression of one group by another” (Homecoming xv). In Petals of Blood the alliance of the capitalist forces--Kimeria (businessman), Chui (administrator), Nderi (politician) and Waveru (church leader) put the people down and demolish Old Illmorog which was green and hopeful into a wasteland of sun, dust and sand and set up a police station, a church and a government office to exploit and keep people under restraint.

The four main characters--Munira, Abdulla, Wanja and Karega--are victims of the new class of exploiters. They seek exile in Illmorog. Munira, though he is the son of the rich and powerful Brother Ezekiel Waveru, opts out of a successful career and lands as a beggarly primary school teacher. His participation in the strike at Siriana closes his chances of mobility to affluence and to a higher social
berth. He leaves his wife and family and takes refuge in Illmorog. Wanja represents the sexually-exploited female who in the end turns out to be the agent of retribution. The most pathetic figure is Abdullah who has lost a leg in the freedom struggle and fails to get even a small piece of land he has been fighting for and ends up as a footpath vendor of oranges and sheepskin.

In Devil on the Cross Ngugi furthers his theme of criticizing neo-colonialism and monopoly capitalism. He defines capitalism through Mwireri as "the system based on the theft of the sweat and blood of workers and peasants . . ." (Devil 166). Ngugi's blunt attack on capitalism finds its expression in the arrangements made in the cave near Illmorog where the thieves and robbers of Kenya gather to elect "the most skilful in the art and science of modern theft and robbery" (Devil 119). In this Devil's Feast, each participant has to mount the platform and narrate how he first started stealing and robbing and has to suggest a most modern and ingeneous method of exploiting the poor. He has to suggest means to strengthen the partnership between black capitalists and their white counterparts. The winner will be appointed "the watchdog of foreign-owned finance houses and industries . . ." (Devil 119). The master of ceremonies suggests: "Today's competition is the whetstone on which to sharpen our fangs and claws to enable us to gnaw at other people's wealth
in unity and peace . . .’” (Devil 87). After narrating the details and the rules of the competition, the master of ceremonies invites the leader of the foreign delegation from the International Organization of Thieves and Robbers (IOTR) to talk to the native thieves and robbers. Ngugi satirizes the unity between the African and European capitalists and the African’s willingness to feed on the left-over. “‘They eat the flesh and we clean up the bones . . .’” (Devil 86). Ngugi suggests that independence has only brought a change in the colour of exploiters, not in the system of exploitation.

In Devil on the Cross Ngugi pictures that the law and the police are on the side of the exploiters. Wangari, the poor woman, brings the police force to the cave where the Devil’s Feast is going on. Pointing to the thieves and robbers, she tells the police superintendent to arrest them. She says: “‘These are the men who have always oppressed us peasants, denying us clothes and food and sleep’” (Devil 196). But the police superintendent on seeing the Master of Ceremonies and other capitalists starts “begging for forgiveness in a trembling voice” (Devil 197). He confesses that he has come thinking that “‘it was the ordinary small-time thieves and robbers’” who are hiding in the cave bragging of their feats. Soon the police force chain Wangari who now asks them: “‘So you, the police force are the servants of one class only?’” (Devil
The charge against her is that she is "'spreading
rumours and hatred and planting seeds of conflict in a
country that is committed to peace and stability'" (Devil
195). As Gatuiria says Wangari has made the mistake of
"'going to look for her lost sheep with the henchmen of the
thief who had stolen it . . .'" (Devil 195). On hearing
the news of Wangari's arrest Muturi says that the peace and
order which the police and the law protect is the peace and
order "'of the rich, who feast on bread and wine snatched
from the mouths of the poor . . .'" (Devil 204).

The whole government machinery is against the people.
The mass media, for instance, distorts the truth to suit
the politics of the party in power. The rally of the
peasants, workers and students that chased the thieves off
their carnival was brutally dispersed by the military and
the police. Gatuiria tells Waringa the exact death toll.
"'Five workers were killed by the forces of bourgeois law
and order. And the workers killed two soldiers'" (Devil
214). What incited Gatuiria was that the Illmorog radio
station announced the news after censoring it to their
advantage. Gatuiria says:

'This morning the Illmorog radio station didn't
even mention the death of the five workers and
the many fatal injuries. But the same radio
station found time to tell listeners about the
death of the two soldiers and the death of
Mwireri wa Mukirai.' (Devil 214)
Thus a major concern of both Ngugi and Armah is criticizing neo-colonialism and capitalism.

**The National Bourgeoisie**

Political independence in the African countries resulted in the Western educated middle class assuming positions of power in the government and in the administration. But this national bourgeoisie who took over the charge of the administration from the colonial administrators degenerated themselves into self-serving villains. Instead of leading the newly independent economies through the proper channel, they turned themselves into agents of Western capitalist interests. They found themselves incompetent for the task of offering future directions to the national economy despite their Western education. Ill-equipped for any production, they promoted the consumption of Western goods.

In his *Wretched of the Earth* Fanon says that the national bourgeoisie is incapable of leading the struggle against the vestiges of imperialism in the newly liberated African democracies. They will identify themselves with their Western counterparts from whom they have learned their lessons. They have no interest in production, invention, labour or nation-building. They will be demanding the nationalization of the economy. "To them, nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the
colonial period" (Wretched 122). They will function as the agents of the neo-colonial enterprise. “The national middle class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediary” (Wretched 122). This mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation. It consists of being “the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neo-colonialism” (Wretched 122). Fanon reveals his distrust in the leaders of the nationalist movements who after independence would become profit makers. He says:

Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared . . . the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers. . . . (Wretched 133)

Self-serving Villains: The Bourgeoisie Rulers

The national bourgeoisie as politicians began to use their office to further their personal interests. They used the public funds as their personal property. Their selfishness made them incapable of offering themselves as role models to their people. Many of the prominent African writers have criticized the African power-elite and hold them responsible for the crumbling of the African democracies.
Chinua Achebe published a pamphlet before the 1983 elections in Nigeria, entitled *The Trouble with Nigeria*. In it he takes stock of the post-independence leadership crisis in Nigeria and warns the leaders that it is time for them to change the tune. The pamphlet begins with the statement: “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership” (1). Throughout the pamphlet Achebe speaks of a strong leadership as the only means of delivering an independent African nation out of its political quagmire. The trouble with Nigeria is social in nature, but its cause can be raked down to its men at the top. “Nigerians are what they are only because their leaders are not what they should be” (10).

Ngugi shares Achebe’s views and regards the new leadership as incapable of leading Kenya out of the neo-colonial social malaise. So the lawyer tells Karega: “But we, the leaders, chose to flirt with the molten god, a blind, deaf monster who has plagued us for hundreds of years’” (Petals 163). In *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary* Ngugi dwells on the struggle between 1961 and 1968 within the Kenyatta led Kenyan African National Union (KANU) regarding the economic direction Kenya should opt for. “The comprador bourgeoisie which had been growing in the womb of the colonial regime desired to protect and enhance its cosy alliance with foreign economic interests” (*Detained* 53). Consequently in the nineteen-seventies there
was a marked discontent among the intellectuals, and a growing realization that the KANU government had closer relationship with Western capitalist interests than with the population of Kenya. There was a growing disillusionment on the part of those who fought bravely for independence during the Mau Mau. People were discontented with the KANU leaders who owned big factories and vast stretches of fertile lands and lived like the former colonial administrators. The poor had neither the land they fought for nor a job to live on. And any kind of resistance was brutally put down. Ngugi says that the Kenya of the nineteen-seventies found the comprador bourgeoisie unleashing a reign of terror on the workers, students and intellectuals. Many prominent political leaders like Mboya and Kariuki who opposed the ruling clique within the KANU were murdered under suspicious circumstances.

Ngugi regards the ruling elite as the enemy of the people. "A political characteristic of this class is its discomfiture with the masses" (Writers 24). In an interview given to Raoul Granqvist in Imea on 22 September, 1982 Ngugi expressed the same opinion. According to him, the neo-colonial ruling minorities in most African countries are isolated from the people. "They see the people as their enemy, because they . . . serve foreign interests which are obviously hostile to the people of the country" (Ngugi,
“Interview” 45). So Ngugi believes that the struggle for a total economic and political liberation would mean “a continued intensified struggle against the comprador ruling class through whom imperialist interests continue to dominate the lives of millions of peasants and workers of the developing world” (“National Identity” 175).

In Ghana, Nkrumah’s leadership also turned out to be a kind of civilian dictatorship like Jomo Kenyatta’s in Kenya. Armah suggests in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born that Nkrumah’s leadership fails to send the fruits of freedom down to those who fought for it. The Teacher remembers the pre-independence days when Nkrumah was the embodiment of the promise of a new Ghana. “The promise was so beautiful” (Beautiful 85). He enjoyed massive support. He captured the people’s heart and minds. But his revolutionary zeal waned after independence and he turned his back on the promises he had made and he was not the only one whom power had corrupted. The teacher asks:

‘After a youth spent fighting the white man, why should not the President discover as he grows older that his real desire has been to be like the white governor himself, to live above all blackness in the big old slave castle?’ (Beautiful 92)

The neo-colonial bourgeoisie get a fictional treatment in the novels of Nguţi and Armah. This class is
represented by self-serving politicians, 'been-tos,' selfish church elders, corrupt administrators, real estate sharks, black marketeers etc. Both writers regard the national bourgeoisie as the neo-colonial accomplice of foreign capitalist interests.

The M.P. in A Grain of Wheat, Nderi wa Riera in Petals of Blood and Koomson in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, represent the new breed of national politicians who after winning the elections turn their back against their constituencies. Ngugi and Armah present a new class of the power elite who betray their promises and exploit their voters. The M.P. in A Grain of Wheat is the prototype of the nationalist leader who degenerates himself into an expert manipulator. Gikonyo and five others decide to buy jointly a small farm of a settler, Mr. Burton. Gikonyo travels all the way to Nairobi to meet the M.P. to get a loan for this co-operative enterprise. The M.P. promises a loan to Gikonyo. But later Gikonyo comes to know that “Mr. Burton had left Kenya for England. The new landowner was their own M.P.” (Grain 147). Ngugi suggests that the M.P. was in fact not serving his people but serving himself. The M.P. represents the new leadership of corrupt politicians who run to Nairobi immediately after the election and are rarely seen in their constituencies. But they come back occasionally “with other national leaders to address big political rallies” (Grain 54).
Similarly Nderi wa Riera, the M.P. in *Petals of Blood* represents the national politician of a neo-colonial African state whose mission is to appropriate the national wealth as much as possible. He also returns to his people only during the elections but maintains “business connections with many at the top” (*Petals* 185). There was a time when he too was a man of the people. “He would champion such populist causes as putting a ceiling on land ownership; nationalization of the major industries and commercial enterprises . . .” (*Petals* 174). But following independence Nderi “dropped out of circulation in small places” (*Petals* 174). He can now be seen in special clubs or in newspapers. He has a huge farm in Rift Valley, has connections with the tourist industry and has “shares in several tourist resorts all along the coast” (*Petals* 174). Though he is a strong advocate of African culture and black authenticity, he believes in the black/white alliance of the exploiters of the world. He is “experienced at political manoeuvering” (*Petals* 176) and is not at all troubled by any complaints from his constituents because his area is so remote from the city.

Koomson in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* represents the nationalist leader of the freedom struggle who after independence turns out to be the antithesis of all that he and his party stood for during the nationalist crusade. In the past Koomson was a dock-worker and was a
true representative of the working class. He was a "big, rough man, a man of the docks well liked by men of the docks" (Beautyful 88). He had "toughened, callused hands" (Beautyful 88). But soon he rises in his party to the position of a Minister who relaxes on weekends with young virgins in some "hired place paid for by the government" (Beautyful 90). He is busy serving the nation. For him, the week is filled with killing work. "Speeches to prepare. On moral uplift. Socialism. Revolution. Dedication" (Beautyful 90). The Man when he shakes hand with the Minister was surprised at "the flabby softness of the hand. Ideological hands, the hands of revolutionaries leading their people into bold sacrifices . . ." (Beautyful 131).

After managing for himself a safe position in the eschelons of power, Koomson uses his office as a means for accumulating valuable goods and distributing favours to his family and immediate relatives at the expense of the wider community. Koomson gains a quick upward mobility in party ranks only because he is ready to compromise on values. He appropriates national funds and regards the National Commercial Bank as his private property. He buys an expensive fishing vessel and registers it in the name of Oyo, the Man’s wife, to avoid himself directly doing business. He lives in a posh area and owns costly furniture, fittings and gadgets. The State Furniture Corporation furnishes his house. His wife wears costly and
imported dress and jewellery. He arranges a scholarship for his sister-in-law to study dress-making in England. In short Koomson represents that brood of politicians who were given power because they were "good at shouting against the enslaving things of Europe . . ." (Beautyful 149). But once they sit in power they use "the same power for chasing after the same enslaving things" (Beautyful 149). For him, as for any other politician in a neo-colonial state, his political office is an opportunity for "making as much money as he could as quickly as he could . . ." (Beautyful 109).

Conveyer Belts of Western Cargo: The Bourgeoisie 'Been-tos'

In Fragments, on his way back home, Baako meets Brempong on the aircraft. He is a typical 'been-to' who represents the neo-elite middle class. Armah presents him as a contrast to Baako. Brempong knows that the community has changed and so he dances the new dance. He is the 'been-to' who brings the expected cargo for his family and so is received with a lot of show and fanfare at the arrival lounge. He has been out of Ghana for eight years, most of the time in Britain. So he knows the country like the back of his hand. He boasts to Baako: "'Every time I go out I arrange to buy all I need, suits and so on. It's quite simple. I got two good cars on this trip. German cars, right from the factory, all fresh'" (Fragments 65). Showing a lighter he asks Baako, "'where in Ghana would you
find a thing like this?" (Fragments 66). He tells Baako that returning empty-handed to Ghana is a waste of time. So he makes as many trips as possible out of Ghana and ships in as many goods as possible. During the present trip, he has shipped a deep refrigeration plant in which his mother can keep as much as "a whole bull slaughtered in her yard for Christmas" (Fragments 76). He tells Baako that it is an opportunity and those at home should benefit from it.

The ritual welcome given to Brempong at the airport by his relatives with his fat sister in the lead shows much about the family’s expectations of a ‘been-to.’ It reveals the change that has come over the communal ethics and outlook. A crowd of relatives and friends welcomed Brempong. Three men held Brempong high above their heads. The crowd tried to get closer to him “shouting, some singing in an ecstatic, emotional confusion” (Fragments 81). Brempong’s sister squeezed through the crowd and asked the three men to set him down. When his feet touched the floor, the fat woman opened a bottle of champagne and poured the drink over Brempong’s shoes while the admiring crowd murmured approbation. She then led him to the limousine, walking over rich and glittering cloth spread over the floor and she called out in ecstasy: “‘Come, my been-to; come, by brother. Walk on the best. Wipe your feet on it. Yes it’s ‘kente’ and it’s yours to tread on.
Big man, come!" (Fragments 85). Through Brempong, Armah criticizes the national bourgeoisie’s dependence on foreign goods and their readiness to function as carriers of cargo which indirectly hints at the economic dependence of newly-independent African States.

**Bourgeoisie Administrators**

Asante-Smith in Fragments and Chui in Petals of Blood represent the national bourgeoisie holding very high and powerful administrative positions. Asante-Smith is the Director of Ghanavision for which Baako works. In their departmental meeting Asante-Smith turns down Baako’s scripts as drama. He is not ready to spend any tape on such stuff and reserves the tapes for celebrations like the Founders Day or the Liberation Day. Asante-Smith is the elite administrator who is not ready for any new experiment and is only concerned with his own professional advancement. For him the concept of neo-colonialism is a fabrication and political independence is real independence. He ignores issues like economic self-reliance. Asante-Smith represents the elite in power who have only a superficial understanding of the neo-colonial situation. Asante-Smith ultimately triumphs over Baako and this leads to Baako’s resignation. The triumph of Asante-Smith is Armah’s sharp criticism of the neo-colonial bourgeoisie who are unwilling to give up their short-sightedness, stubbornness, greed, selfishness and
sycophancy. As O. S. Ogede says, Armah pictures Africa as "a continent where the elite who supplanted the white colonialists tied the national economies to the West and have remained consumers of Western cultural artefacts, which they continue to misuse" ("Patterns" 543).

In Petals of Blood Chui emerges as the leader of the striking students at Siriana. He is expelled from the school. But his stay in South Africa and America makes a new man out of him. Following another strike demanding Africanization of the curriculum, Chui replaces Cambridge Fraudsham as the headmaster. The students are in a mood of jubilation as they are going to have a black headmaster. But on arrival Chui appears "a black replica of Fraudsham" (Petals 171). He says that "there would be no hasty programme of Africanisation . . ." (Petals 171). Instead of destroying the prefect system, he injects it with new blood. Karega remembers how British literature, history and European science have been drummed into their heads with even greater fury. The students organize another strike against Chui. But he calls in the riot squad who crush the rebellion. Ngugi pictures Chui as the black administrator who struggles to keep intact a system left behind by the colonial masters. He represents the bourgeoisie elite who promote Western values while doing lip service to Africanisation.
The Comprador Bourgeoisie

In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi parades the comprador bourgeoisie with unprecedented ironic satire. After the first competitor—a petty thief—has been chased off the stage, Gitutu mounts the stage. Even though he has not inherited much as ancestral property, Gitutu has inherited cunning as his birth-right and using it he has risen from a penniless court-clerk to a real estate shark. He is the one who has mastered "the holy commandments of a man-eat-man society" ([Devil](#) 102). He literally translates into his life the advice of his dying father. "A career of theft and robbery is the only one for anybody who calls himself an adult’" ([Devil](#) 102). He earns money by buying the land of the settlers and selling them as tiny plots to the residents of the village at exorbitant prices. He boasts of having made big money out of the land that is not his. The money has come from the people and no drop of his sweat has fallen on the land. He admits: "I myself had only switched things from one hand to the other. I had done a bit of multiplication and put the answer into my pocket’" ([Devil](#) 106).

Kihaahu, the lanky womanizer, makes money from major social welfare areas such as education, housing and local government. Before ‘uhuru’ he had been eking out a living as a primary school teacher, struggling with chalk dust and eating ‘ugali with salt as soup’ ([Devil](#) 110). He knows
that only schools advertising Westernized programmes can attract Africans. The labels such as ‘European Principal,’ ‘foreign standards,’ ‘English medium,’ and ‘foreign language’ attract Africans. So he uses all these to attract black status-seekers. He says: "I opened four other nursery schools in Nairobi, using the same trick of employing aged or even crippled white women as principals and buying white mannequins to stand in for real white children" (Devil 113). Now as Chairman of the local housing committee, he can pocket huge amounts as commission for fixing building contracts to foreigners. In two years time he could amass millions in return for the money he had spent over the county council election. All the money came from the very people who had voted for him. He is thankful to the Kenyan people for their blindness, their ignorance and their inability to demand their rights which make it possible for "the clan of man-eaters, to feed on their sweat..." (Devil 117).

Nditika is an expert at smuggling and blackmarketing. He believes in the "Holy Trinity of theft: Grabbing, Extortion, and Confiscation" (Devil 177). When his workers went on strike, he dismissed all of them on the spot and went to the village and brought new hands. He regards the village as the granary for the new labour. He admits that his "success at stealing and robbing has been restricted
to the field of smuggling and the black market" (Devil 177). He smuggles out of the country precious stones and rare animal skin. He does this with the help of his foreign partners and with the connivance of the native customs personnel. Another business trick he plays is hoarding food so that when a famine comes he can "sell the food back to the very people who grew it" (Devil 178). He agrees to Gitutu's revelation that mass famine is jewellery for the wealthy. Though he has not completed primary school, he employs arts graduates as his clerks. He says: "'Education is not property'" (Devil 179). He believes that what is most profitable to African thieves is partnership with their foreign counterparts. He says: "'... what's profitable to us is our partnership with foreigners. Let's strengthen it'" (Devil 179).

Thus by criticizing the corruption, economic dependence, moral vacuum and the emerging bourgeoisie in the neo-colonial African States, Ngugi and Armah make clear that they are on the side of the people against their exploiters. A writer's responsibility does not end with taking a side and waging a battle against those social structures that put the people down. A mere rejection of repressive and exploitative machinery alone will not serve any purpose unless the artist envisages a future free from these and offers alternatives to the existing reality.
2. Socialism As an Alternative Social System

Georg Luckacs says in *Writer and Critic and Other Essays*:

The genuine categories of literary forms are not simply literary in essence. They are forms of life especially adapted to the articulation of great alternatives in a practical and effective manner and to the exposition of the maximal inner potentialities of forces and counter-forces. (21)

So a work of art challenges existing reality and offers alternatives that are available at a specific time, or conjures up alternatives that may either be antagonistic or complementary to the available ones.

Offering alternative social systems is a counter-discursive strategy used both by Ngugi and Armah. If capitalism is Africa’s enemy, a means of uprooting it is putting forward a social system antagonistic to it. If capitalism functions as a discourse and marginalizes the poor, a negation of it would amount to a counter-discourse. Both Ngugi and Armah are on the side of the people and fight the forces of neo-colonialism and capitalism. They contrast the socio-political order of neo-colonial Africa by juxtaposing it with alternative social arrangements. While Ngugi puts forward socialism as an alternative social system and speaks of the unity of the wretched of the
earth, Armah offers 'the way' of reciprocity and a return to the pre-colonial egalitarian African past as an alternative.

Ngugi believes that socialism is the most viable economic system for black Africa under neo-colonial exploitation. His novels are clashes between two antagonistic forces--capitalism versus socialism, comprador bourgeoisie versus the workers and peasants and the haves versus the have-nots. Ngugi clubs foreign capitalists and their neo-colonial collaborators as one class and all the forces of liberation--peasants, workers, women, youth and the unemployed--as another class. The struggle for Ngugi is not the blacks against the whites, but the have-nots against the haves. As he says in *Homecoming*, "the new tribalism of African society was that of haves and have-nots" (xvii). Ngugi is unhappy over the fact that many African writers speak or write on this issue with a tongue in cheek attitude. Recommending socialism as an alternative social system, Ngugi writes:

"[A]n African writer who often can see the shortcomings of the neo-colonial economies, the consequent distortion of values, the fascism in so many neo-colonial ruling classes, is at the same time scared of encountering socialism as an alternative social system." (Writers 79)
The confrontation between monopoly capitalism and the forces of progress has its roots in the history of European colonization. Ngugi says that the real enemy during Africa’s independence struggle was “monopoly capitalism, whose very condition of growth is cut-throat competition, inequality, and oppression of one group by another” (Homecoming xv). Referring to the literary response of black Africa during the first phase—the cultural nationalist phase—Ngugi says in “The Writer in a Neocolonial State” that the writers were ill-equipped to meet a potent foe—capitalism. They did not treat imperialism as “an integrated economic, political and cultural system...” (4). Ngugi believes that colonialism and neo-colonialism form the imperialistic stage of capitalism and hence Africa must break off with capitalism. He regards capitalism as anti-human and is unhappy to see that most of the African countries have adopted the same system by rejecting Africa’s traditional economic system. Ngugi firmly believes that a completely socialized economy is necessary for the salvation of Africa from the exploitative forces.

In Ngugi wa Thiong’o: An Exploration of His Writings, David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe observe three clear cut phases in the growth of Ngugi’s political ideology, starting with a moralist-humanist phase and leading to a socialist revolutionary phase. 1. “An early period,
stretching to about the end of Makerere in 1964, when he evinces an essentially moralist-humanist outlook on human affairs . . .” (208). 2. “An intermediate phase . . . a period of maturing vision in which interests are narrowing down to . . . Mau Mau, capitalism, socialism, nationalism, etc.” (208). 3. “The present time, marked by a corrosive disillusionment with the emerging social faces of independent Africa . . . and a bitter revulsion against an emerging African middle class” (208).

Ngugi’s transformation to the second stage of socialist convictions may be traced back to his Leeds days (1964-67), when he was working for his masters degree in the Caribbean Literature. During this period he fell under the influence of the British socialist, Arnold Kettle, who was his supervisor. He was also influenced by student leaders like Alan Hunt. His extensive travels around England and Europe helped him to investigate the roots of industrial strikes in England. He learned that capitalism which led to class divisions was responsible for these strikes. During this period, he read Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth. All these combined together to shape Ngugi’s socialist ideas which we find emerging in his A Grain of Wheat. Though the novel is not explicitly socialist, as Ngugi writes within the framework of the history of Kenya, it contains issues like disillusionment of freedom, hoarding of wealth, impoverished peasantry,
emerging bourgeoisie, manipulation of public funds, betrayals, corruption etc. We are told that a new order has already started its exploitative strategies and as far as the common man is concerned, the situation is going to be bleak. We also read of an approaching peasant revolt. "The revolt of the peasant was near at hand" (Grain 13). So as Peter Nazareth says in "Is A Grain of Wheat a Socialist Novel?," "if we look at the novel closely, we will discover that it is socialist by implication" (151).

In the third phase of his political ideology, which starts in the mid-seventies, Ngugi has moved towards a reactionary socialist orientation. He is no more a pacifist. He is not content with merely picturing the neo-colonial Africa and criticizing the bourgeoisie. His writings enter the 'liberation phase' and contain not only what neo-colonialism has done to Kenya, but also how to get out of it. So in Petals of Blood he speaks with socialist fervour of working class unity, strikes, marches and revolutions and even of acts of violence which he believes will liberate the masses. He recognizes workers, peasants and women as the most important sections in the society --the producers of national wealth.

Since the publication of Petals of Blood certain events in the life of Ngugi led to his bitter resentment against the government and against the intellectuals. Ngugi was arrested on 31 December, 1977 for writing and
staging a play in Gikuyu—Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want). He was held in detention in Maximum Security Prison in Kamiti. He was deprived of his post as the Chairman of the Department of Literature at Nairobi University. All these let loose his resentment against even his own colleagues. In the preface to his Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary Ngugi criticizes the intellectuals as 

"(P)etty-bourgeois intellectuals at the university who hide ethnic chauvinism and their mortal terror of progressive class politics behind masks of abstract super-nationalism, and bury their own inaction behind mugs of beer and empty intellectualism about conditions being not yet ripe for action. (xxi)"

Detained is a valuable document of the socio-political conditions of neo-colonial Kenya. In it Ngugi displays his militant indignation against the comprador bourgeoisie led Kenyatta regime. He lashes mercilessly at Kenyatta for his megalomaniac civilian dictatorship, for forgetting the poor and for aligning with Western economic enterprises. Ngugi sees Kenyatta government as the mouth-piece of Anglo-American capitalism. "Ideologically Ngugi has now moved much closer towards adopting the dialectics and outlook of an avowed Marxist" (Cook and Okenimkpe 224). In the novels he has written after his detention, Devil on the Cross and Matigari, Ngugi employs virulent ironic satire to
expose the machinations of the comprador bourgeoisie and puts forward his thesis that a total reordering of the economic structures is imperative for any neo-colonial state. Ngugi has put on the mantle of revolutionary socialism.

An outcome of Ngugi’s socialist orientation is a feeling of class consciousness. For him the human race is horizontally divided into the exploiters and the exploited, the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, the hungry and the overfed, the bourgeoisie and the working class, the urban elite and the rural poor. In *Writers in Politics* he regards the present economic structure as a class structure and therefore the society is “characterized by opposing classes with the dominant class, usually a minority, owning and controlling the means of production” (9). He believes that as long as there are classes “a truly human contact in love, joy, laughter, creative fulfilment in labour will never be possible” (*Writers* 79). Ngugi says that all Kenyan intellectuals, students, workers and church leaders should work together to denounce and struggle against all the economic, political and cultural forces that exploit the workers and peasants.

The black/white antagonism of the cultural nationalist stage now develops into a struggle between the workers and peasants of Africa against their native exploiters. Under neo-colonialism, the economic and political struggle
assumes a class character. It cuts across national boundaries also. Ngugi now speaks of the alliance of the workers of the world against the forces of global capitalism. He says:

It is now African workers and the peasant masses, together with progressive intellectuals, patriotic elements, students and their class allies from other parts of the world, pitted against the native ruling class and its international imperialist class allies. (Writers 26)

Ngugi pins down his hope on the masses whose united force alone will be able to confront capitalism. It is out of this faith that he joined them in cultural activities which are vital resources for liberating the masses. It was this belief that led Ngugi to the writing and performance of his play in Gikuyu, Ngaahika Ndeenda. He knows that the country's future is in the hands of the peasants and workers. He knows that they will be "at the forefront in the struggle against imperialism and foreign domination, indeed against the suffocating alliance between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the local pro-foreigner comprador class" (Writers 31). In the interview given to Raoul Granqvist, Ngugi says that their work at Kamiriithu Community and Cultural Centre was a collective enterprise which involved factory workers, peasants, university
students, school teachers, secretaries and so on. As he says in *Detained*, Ngugi loves to hear "the voices of the people working on the land, forging metal in a factory, telling anecdotes in crowded 'matatus' and buses ..." (8). Ngugi agrees with Frantz Fanon's view that in the colonial countries "the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain" (*Wretched* 47).

Ngugi's revolutionary socialist ideas find their full potential in his last three novels starting with *Petals of Blood* (1977) which, in fact, is his political testament. In it he openly negates capitalism and all its values. The principal characters at various stages in the story assert their belief in a social order other than capitalism. For instance Karega pictures capitalism as prostitution. He tells Munira and Wanja: "'We are all prostitutes, for in a world of grab and take, in a world built on a structure of inequality and injustice, in a world where some can eat while others can only toil . . . we are all prostituted'" (*Petals* 240).

In *Petals of Blood*, there are two clearly marked groups of people--the urban elite and the rural poor. Man is no longer just the black African, but the exploiter and the exploited. Kimeria, Chui, Nderi, Mzigo, Waveru and Jerrod represent the exploiters while Nyakinyua, Muturi, Njuguna and others represent the rural poor. The principal characters Wanja, Abdullah, Karega and Munira have also
been exploited at different stages of their lives. The novel, in fact, is a story of class struggle. We find the rural poor (workers and peasants) mobilizing to meet the threat of the bourgeoisie elite. The novel is a severe criticism of the black imperialists. In "Cyclical Patterns in Petals of Blood" Florence Stratton says that the novel makes it clear that "all people belong to one of two groups, the exploiters or the exploited" (115). Illmorog is a metaphor of the whole world where humanity is cut into two opposing groups. Old Illmorog which was green and hopeful is converted into a wasteland of sun, dust and sand in order to industrialize it. The bulldozers that demolish the property of the poor villagers symbolize the forces of capitalism creating havoc in a pre-industrial village, turning farmers into day-labourers. It is the alliance of the capitalist forces of businessmen, church elders, administrators and politicians that is behind this transformation. The Trans-Africa Road that cuts across the village symbolically cuts the people into two classes. Now in Illmorog there are separate areas for the rich and the poor. One is the residential area of bank managers, farm managers, county council officials "and other servants of state and money power" (Petals 280). There is also New Jerusalem, "a shanty town of migrant and floating workers, the unemployed, the prostitutes and/small traders in tin and scrap metal" (Petals 280-81).
The class division and exploitation Ngugi describes in *Petals of Blood* is not limited to Kenya alone or between blacks and whites. Ngugi is more concerned with the unity of the peasants and workers across tribe and borders. He speaks now of one race—the race of exploited workers. The lawyer says:

'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 meagre living. I saw a lot of unemployment in Chicago and other cities.'

(Petals 165)

Joseph tells Abdullah that he has read about the unity and uprise of workers and peasants in other lands. "'I have read about the people’s revolutions in China, Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, Guinea, Mozambique... Oh yes, and the works of Lenin and Mao...’" (Petals 340). Ngugi here universalizes the theme of class conflict and class war. Joseph represents the emerging force of the exploited getting ready for a battle for liberation. Joseph tells Abdullah: "'You fought for the political independence of this country: I would like to contribute to the liberation of the people of this country’" (Petals 339).
In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi uses Karega to suggest that a restructuring of the existing social order would be possible only through a socialist revolution. Karega is the son of Mariamu, a farmer on the farm of Brother Ezekiel Waveru. Karega has been expelled from Siriana for leading a students’ strike demanding more Africanization. Now he moves round Kenya working on plantations, on the docks or in factories. Wherever he works, he tries to mobilize his fellow workers against their overlords. He drifts to Illmorog and Munira employs him in his school. But he leaves the school due to certain misunderstanding. But towards the end of the novel, he is seen at New Illmorog as the Secretary General of the Thenge’ta Breweries Workers Union. He unites the workers and prepares them for collective action.

Karega is agitated over the inhuman exploitation and the brutal suppression of the poor by the capitalists. He wonders how it has become possible for a few greedy stomachs to put down a whole community. He believes that it is the system that need be changed. The struggle has to be against capitalism, not against the capitalists. He says:

‘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’s the system that needs to be changed . . . and only workers of Kenya and the peasants can do that.’

(*Petals* 308).
Karega believes that the workers and peasants are no longer ready to bear the oppression. Gone are the days when the capitalists can thrive on the sweat of the workers. When Wanja tells him of the KCO plan to kill him and destroy his organization, Karega tells her: "... we, the workers, the poor peasants, ordinary people, the masses are now too awake to be deceived... we shall no longer let others reap where they never planted..." (Petals 326). Genuine liberation, according to Karega, will come when all the black toiling masses carry a jembe in one hand and bullets on the other. History offers him the evidence. He remembers: "And China was saved, not by singers and poets telling of great past cultures, but by the creative struggle of the workers for a better day today" (Petals 301).

The novel ends with the hope of liberation for the masses. The young girl, Akinyi, who meets Karega in the prison, symbolizes the hopes for a better tomorrow. The workers have already protested against Karega’s arrest. Akinyi tells Karega that the workers “‘are planning another strike and a march through Illmorog’” (Petals 343). All workers of Illmorog and all the unemployed, the small farmers and the petty traders will join hands to protest. The novel closes with the expectation of a socialist revolution overthrowing class structures and inequalities in the society.
A system that bred hordes of round-bellied jiggers and bedbugs with parasitism and cannibalism as the highest goal in society. . . .
The system and its gods and its angels had to be fought consciously, consistently and resolutely by all the working people. . . . Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system of all its preying bloodthirsty gods. . . . (Petals 344)

The last sentence of the novel hints at the future solidarity of the oppressed. Karega murmurs to himself looking to the future: ‘‘Tomorrow . . .’’ and he knew he was no longer alone” (Petals 345).

Thus since the publication of A Grain of Wheat Ngugi’s socialist orientation has taken an upswing. He is no more a pacifist but a revolutionary. In Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Clifford B. Robson says that with Petals of Blood Ngugi’s political position changes. “He has moved towards greater militancy, advocating direct action through the marchers and the figure of Karega. . . . Ngugi is no longer a socialist moderate, but a radical and revolutionary writer” (135).

In Devil on the Cross, Ngugi furthers his theme of offering socialism as an alternative social system. His
socio-political orientation is more confident now. He wrote his novel in his mother tongue Gikuyu as a part of his strategy to speak to the peasants and workers of Kenya in order to enlighten them on the need for a workers' unity to resist economic and cultural imperialism. He dedicates his novel to all Kenyans struggling against the neo-colonial stage of imperialism. And the novel is in the form of an oral narrative.

In *Devil on the Cross*, Muturi as a champion of the working class goes about the country organising workers and inspiring them to join the army of revolution. In his own words, he is "'a plumber, carpenter and mason'" (Devil 38). He is the leader of the forces engaged in "the revolutionary overthrow of the system of eating and being eaten" (Devil 188). When Wariinga asks him to tell about himself, he says: "'I'm a delegate from a secret workers' organization in Nairobi. But don't ask any more questions. Wherever I am, I am working for that organization'" (Devil 212). He has been fired from the Champion Construction Company for organizing the workers and demanding a pay-rise.

While the competition is going on in the cave to select the biggest thief of the land, Muturi is busy awakening the poor workers and the penniless unemployed to follow him so that "'he could show them where all the thieves and robbers of the people's wealth had gathered to
compete to see who had stolen most from the people’” (Devil 157). They march to the cave to chase away the exploiters. It is a long procession of women, men and children. “Many had rags for clothes. Many more had no shoes” (Devil 202). The people carry placards bearing slogans like “WE REJECT THE SYSTEM OF THEFT AND ROBBERY” and “OUR POVERTY IS THEIR WEALTH” (Devil 203). The others carry sticks on their shoulders which appear as guns. Looking at the marchers Gatuiria and Wariinga agree that it is an army of workers, peasants, petty traders and students. The students of the schools and the university also have joined the procession. Muturi comments: “... some of our educated youth have opened their ears, and they have started listening to the cry of the people!” (Devil 204). When Gatuiria warns him that the police will arrest him, Muturi says: “We shall not run away. For us workers, there’s no turning back . . .’” (Devil 205). He is convinced that exploitation will continue as long as people are afraid of guns and clubs. And the only cure is “‘a strong organization of the workers and peasants of the land, together with those whose eyes and ears are now open and alert’” (Devil 205).

When the workers’ army reached the cave, the thieves and robbers started running. “[T]he owners of the palaces and mansions in Illmorog’s Golden Heights were chased by the Njeruca shanty dwellers” (Devil 207). The people roared like lions and succeeded in clearing the cave off the
native exploiters and the robbers from Western Europe, the USA and Japan. After a few minutes not a single robber was left in the area. “All of them had managed to flee, as if they had suddenly grown wings of fear” (Devil 208).

The people now gather outside the cave where the leaders address them. Muturi addresses the people as ‘clansmen.’ He says: “‘Friends--or perhaps I should call you clansmen, for we who are gathered here now belong to one clan: the clan of workers...’” (Devil 208). The Illmorog students’ leader who speaks next offers his support to the workers and peasants in their just war. The next speaker is the Illmorog workers’ leader who leads the workers’ anthem which the crowd joined in singing, raising their voices in unison and making the ground tremble. The anthem was the clarion call for the liberation war against neo-colonialism. They sang: “I believe that we, the workers, are of one clan, / And hence we should not allow ourselves / To be divided by religion, colour or tribe” (Devil 210). The crowd was soon dispersed by the police and the military. Five workers were killed and Muturi, the student leader and some others were arrested.

Through the narration of the procession and the gathering, Ngugi conveys the message that there is no substitute for the collective force of the masses against which nothing can hold on. While entrusting his gun with Wariinga, Muturi asks: “‘Did you see the power of a people
united? Those thieves were armed, but none was able to use his gun because they were terrified by the eyes and the massive roar of the crowd'" (Devil 211). Though the police and the military enlist a victory for the bourgeois rulers, a long-term victory awaits the marchers in future. They will reach it only through mass action and by spilling much blood if it cannot be helped. Ngugi has a strong faith in the miracles that are possible through the alliance of "'The Holy Trinity of the worker, the peasant, the patriot...’" (Devil 230).

Ngugi hints at the moral power of the rural poor by presenting the fearlessness and the calmness of Wangari who brings the police superintendent and his men to the cave. Wangari arrests the attention of the crowd with her immense courage. She calmly walked up to the platform and silenced the whole crowd with the power of her eyes. Her eyes were flames of fire and she "'did not betray the slightest trace of fear...’" (Devil 196). Everyone in the cave was "'transfixed by the electric power of Wangari's words’" and her voice had "'the power and the authority of a people's judge’" (Devil 197).

Matigari is Ngugi’s second novel written in his mother tongue. Matigari also contains the features of an oral narrative. The novel is based partly on an oral story about a man looking for a cure for an illness. Here Ngugi narrates how the oppressed class consisting of the patriots
who survived the war, women, workers and youth wage a second war for liberation against neo-colonialism and the comprador bourgeoisie.

Matigari declared war with Settler Williams who had been exploiting him for long. Matigari tended the estates, but Settler Williams took home the harvest. Matigari built the house, but Settler Williams slept in it. It was a world in which "the tailor wears rags, the tiller eats wild berries, the builder begs for shelter" (Matigari 21). Tired of this exploitation, Matigari told Settler Williams: "The builder wants his house back. Get out of my house. You have hands of your own, you cruel and greedy one. Go build your own!" (Matigari 21-22). Matigari took the settler’s gun and pointed it at him. But John Boy, the settler’s black servant, suddenly emerged from the kitchen and saved his master. Matigari ran to the forests. He spent many years in the forests fighting Settler Williams. Finally the settler died and Matigari prepared his homecoming. "He hoped that the last of the colonial problems had disappeared with the descent of Settler Williams into hell" (Matigari 3). Matigari buried his AK47, his pistol and his sword and wore a girdle of peace made from the bark of a tree. He decided to look for his family and together with them to enter his house. He dreamt: "We shall all gather, go home together, light the fire together and build our home together" (Matigari 6).
Matigari searched for his people. He saw a child—Muriuki—in the garbage heap and saved him from the bullies. He saved a barmaid and prostitute, Guthera and at the gates of a nearby factory they met the leader of the workers, Ngaruro. They searched and searched. At last Matigari found his home. He was happy to enter his house because there was no threat of Settler Williams. But to his surprise John Boy Junior and Robert Williams stopped him at the gate and questioned him and asked for proof of his ownership. John Boy Junior said that he had bought it from Robert Williams, the son of Settler Williams. Matigari recognized John Boy Junior. Matigari asked him:

'Where did you two meet? We used to think that you educated ones would stand firmly against the whites-who-reap-where-they-have-not-sown. What did you do in Europe? Where did this friendship between you and the clans of the white parasites come from?' (Matigari 50)

Robert Williams brought the police and Matigari landed in a dark prison cell. But he managed to escape from the cell. He saved the other prisoners also. Soon he became popular among the people and he became the topic of talk for all. Nobody knew who he was, but they all knew that he had such powers that no one could dream of.

Obviously, Matigari represents all the patriotic peasants who fought in the Mau Mau War of Independence.
Settler Williams represents the colonial forces and John Boy is the native collaborator. Robert Williams stands for the neo-colonial forces that have returned to Kenya and John Boy Junior who runs a factory in collaboration with Robert Williams represents the comprador bourgeoisie. The patriots who fail to get even a piece of land for which they fought have to widen their base by aligning with other oppressed groups like women and workers and then fight for their rights.

Ngugi’s concern in this novel is also the unity of peasants and workers. The workers are now conscious of their rights and are ready to unite and fight for better working conditions. So in the meeting convened by the Minister of Truth and Justice to settle the dispute between the workers and the factory owners, Ngaruro, the workers’ leader says:

‘Ours is a dispute between labour and capital.... We are not asking for other people’s property. We are only asking for adequate remuneration for our labour. The labour of our hands is all we own. It is our only property.... We are withdrawing our labour from the market until the buyer agrees to meet our price.’ (Matigari 109)

Ngugi suggests that there is need for another war for genuine liberation. “‘The difference between the robber and the robbed can only be settled in struggle’” (Matigari 114). But this war has to be fought by the new alliance of
patriot-peasants, workers, women and youth. Matigari with his new found compatriots has succeeded in burning down neo-colonialism and the comprador bourgeoisie and has escaped unhurt.

Ngugi’s revolutionary socialist stance is bolder and clearer in his last novel. He has shown the forces of revolution winning the battle. Matigari had earlier told the Minister and all the forces of repression that he would never stop fighting for the products of his sweat and he was sure that one day the land would return to the peasant and poverty and sorrow would be vanished from the land. Matigari warned Robert Williams and John Boy Junior:

‘And you, imperialist, and your servant boy . . . your days are numbered! I shall come back tomorrow. We are the patriots who survived: Matigari ma Njiruungi! And many more of us are being born each day. John Boy, you shall not sleep in my house again. It’s either you or me and the future belongs to me!’ (Matigari 124)

Ngugi suggests that the battle can be won only when all the oppressed join together as an overwhelming force. The novel ends with Muriuki arming himself with the weapons buried by Matigari. Muriuki heard “the workers’ voices, the voices of the peasants, the voices of the students and of other patriots of all the different nationalities of the land, singing in harmony: victory shall be ours!” (Matigari 175).
3. 'The Way' of Reciprocity As a Viable Alternative

Armah also offers an alternative social system as a counter-discursive strategy. His project is to offer a healing therapy to the African psyche under the discursive power of economic and cultural imperialism. Armah also stands firmly on the side of the people against their exploiters. But his social vision differs from that of Ngugi even though the fundamental tenets are the same. Armah is resentful of the neo-elite who are after Western solutions to Africa’s problems. He believes in the unity of black Africa and attacks without any reservations the powers of divisiveness. His novels do not end up as mere analytical criticisms of neo-colonialism. He offers a viable alternative social system in his last two novels and attempts a recreation of the past for reconstructing the future. Hugh Webb says in “The African Historical Novel and the Way Forward:"

Each work of art arises out of the particular alternatives of its time. In the modern African historical novel the attempted dynamic rendering of these alternatives . . . is an important motivating formal principle. It is clear that African novelists proceed from this principle to create literary works that . . . give significant insights into the potentialities of a fictional treatment of historical material. In the
African historical novel, the articulation of socio-political alternatives is well under way.

(24)

In “African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific,” Armah speaks of the need for an African perspective for Africa’s problems. He bitterly attacks the power-elite who are cut off from the traditions of the tribe due to their exposure to Western values through education. They have turned out to be greedy, unimaginative and incapable of offering a proper social direction to Africa. They subscribe to an ethic “that has everything to do with consumption and notoriously little to do with production of any sort” (15). Armah believes in a solution that is African. He belongs to that group of African writers who believe that social changes in Africa have to be attempted without resorting to any alien philosophy such as Marxism. In “The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis,” Armah says: “Revolution and communism are phenomena and concepts of universal occurrence. They have been known and experienced in different parts of the world during different periods of history” (37). Pre-colonial Africa also like other human societies has experienced revolutionary changes during the course of its historical development. Such changes on many occasions have caused the emergence of a socialist society. So there is no need for importing a theory to analyze and solve the problems of
Africa. Armah says that the love of Marxism is another evidence of Africa's neo-colonialist love of European products. Wole Soyinka says in *Myth Literature and the African World* that Armah's vision "consciously conforms to no inherited or imposed religious doctrine and attendant ethics, frees itself of borrowed philosophies in its search for a unifying, harmonising ideal for a distinctive humanity" (110). Armah's vision is secular and human. His alternative is indigenous and life-giving.

In his two historical novels, *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*, Armah offers an alternative social system -- 'the way.' He does not clearly define the system, yet his message is clear. Armah asserts that the cause of Africa's misery is that the people have lost remembrance of 'the way.' Consequently they have been for long "following the falling sun, flowing to the desert" (*Seasons* xi) and moving to their burial. So the need of the hour is to recapture 'the way' which the people have lost due to internal fissures and external pressures. In *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah explores when and how 'the way' was lost and in *The Healers* he offers a case study of a healing therapy that Africa is badly in need of.

In *Two Thousand Seasons* when the story begins only a few remember that there was a time when all the blacks were united. The novel tells how manipulation, greed and collaboration led to the loss of 'the way.' The plot is
centred on the last two hundred seasons when the twenty disciples of the 'fundi,' Insanusi, commit themselves to the return to 'the way.' Armah does not exactly define what 'the way' is. It remains an unidentified ideology. But we understand it through the actions, through the occasional hazy utterances of the seers, through the debates among the protagonists and through the negative alternatives presented. Armah conveys his message by contrasting 'the way' with the whiteness, aridity, insatiability and infertility of the desert from where the Arab predators came. 'The way' is the opposite of death, destruction, greed, accumulation and exploitation. The goal of 'the way' can only be achieved by destroying the white destroyers. Armah suggests that the principal characteristics of 'the way' are unity, reciprocity, connectedness, egalitarianism and peaceful co-existence.

Our way is reciprocity. The way is wholeness. Our way knows no oppression. The way destroys oppression. Our way is hospitable to guests. The way repels destroyers. Our way produces before it consumes. The way produces far more than it consumes. Our way creates. The way destroys only destruction. (Seasons 39)

'The way' is a vision of the unity of the black races that have had a horrid night of suffering. So a return to 'the way' is necessary to draw directions for tomorrow.
Armah suggests that all black races were one in the past. "That we the black people are one people we know" (Seasons 3). This unity enforced a spirit of communalism and humane values which helped in the progress of the community. Into this peaceful, united and productive community came the Arab predators and the European destroyers. It was a community that was healthy and hence there was no need for a healing therapy. "The people using all things to create participation, using things to create community, that people have no need of any healer's art, for that people is already whole" (Seasons 202).

Armah maintains that the community is the essence of social existence in Africa. Armah is no more concerned with alienated individuals as in his first three novels. He is concerned with collective participation and communal spirit. The liberation gang of twenty, register a victory against the exploiters only through a collective endeavour. The narration is also done in the way of a griot speaking for the group using the collective plural 'we.' Though the narrator is one of the twenty, he speaks not only for the group of twenty but also for the community. The identity of the speaker is not revealed because the individual is unimportant and what is paramount is the community. We understand that he belongs to the core group of freedom fighters. His voice is loud and clear but Armah purposely hides his identity.
D. S. Izevbaye says in “Ayi Kwei Armah and the ‘I’ of the Beholder” that the plural voice is suitable for the theme of *Two Thousand Seasons* because for an oppressed community suffering becomes “less unbearable when shared” (241). Armah conveys that community means sharing of suffering and hopes. He contrasts ‘the way’ of communalism with the modern selfish individualism. As Edward Sackey comments in “Oral Traditions and the African Novel,” the choice of the communal ‘we’ has “an African aesthetic explanation” (398). The choice stresses the traditional African philosophy of communalism which is also “the basic philosophy of ‘the way, our way’” (398). So the choice can be seen as a rejection of individualism which is alien to ‘the way.’

In *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah juxtaposes the socio-political situation of contemporary Africa with the pre-colonial indigenous way of life—‘the way.’ The black race has lost its touch with the traditional value systems due to fragmentation. “There is no beauty but in relationships. Nothing cut off by itself is beautiful” (*Seasons* 206). Armah’s solution is the creation of a fictional black society consisting of as many ethnic groups as possible from sub-Saharan Africa. ‘The way’ therefore is a union of the blacks mobilized against everything non-black. Isidore Okpewho says in “Myth and Modern Fiction: Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*” that the final
chapter of the book—entitled "The Voice"—"is a veritable appeal from a voice in the wilderness exhorting the race to embrace a way of life that ensures for them the only true salvation" (16). So 'the way' is "the articulation of values that will enable the African peoples to move forward, collectively and fruitfully" (Webb 32). It is the coming together of the blacks to resist oppression as they did in the past.

Reciprocity is another characteristic of 'the way.' Reciprocity means giving and taking and thus maintaining healthy relations of mutual respect and trust. If there is an imbalance between giving and taking, or if they are separated death and destruction follow.

Receiving, giving, giving, receiving all that lives is twin. Who would cast the spell of death, let him separate the two. Whatever cannot give, whatever is ignorant even of receiving, knowing only taking, that thing is past its own mere death. It is a carrier of death. (Seasons xii)

So a community that gives without taking digs its own grave and a community that takes without giving is degenerate. Reciprocity, therefore, is giving and taking in equal measure. When the predators came as beggars asking for sustenance, the people of Anoa gave them generously. They gave without taking. Anoa had to warn the people: "'Return
to the way, the way of reciprocity’” (Seasons 16). Anoa reminded them of their way of reciprocity. She said: “Reciprocity. Not merely taking, not merely offering. Giving, but only to those from whom we receive in equal measure. Receiving, but only from those to whom we give in reciprocal measure’” (Seasons 17). But the people did not listen to Anoa’s warning and thus became the victims of the takers. The people forgot that giving without taking was not generosity, but a preparation for self-destruction.

Here Armah contrasts ‘the way’ with alien exploitative social systems that take from others without giving anything in return. Those who fall victims to this system of exploitation find it difficult to wriggle out of it. ‘The way’, therefore, is the antithesis of the destroyers’ way of taking without giving. It is the way to death. “The destroyers take. That is their way. They know nothing of reciprocity. The road to death--that is their road” (Seasons 7). Armah suggests that the Arabs and the Europeans could exploit the Africans because the people upset the balance between giving and taking. Hence the predators and destroyers continued taking away their wealth. Now they have even forgotten that they had such a life-giving ‘way’ in the past.

Another feature of ‘the way’ is connectedness. It means knowledge of relationship among all the members and communication among them. It also means interconnections
between the past, the present and the future. Armah explains connectedness by speaking of its opposite—unconnectedness—which is fractured vision, fractured hearing and fractured thinking. Unconnected sight sees only the immediate present and separates the past and the future from the present. Unconnected hearing also listens only to "today's brazen cacophony, takes direction from that alone and stays deaf to the whispers of those gone before... (Seasons 8). Unconnected thinking is broken reason which is concerned only with the moment's release and does not care "to connect the present with past events, the present with future necessity" (Seasons 8). All unconnected things are victims of death. Unconnectedness is the destroyers' 'way.' "Our vocation goes against all unconnectedness" (seasons 8).

'The way' had a clearly defined political system. It was an egalitarian system in which land was held in common and each member did his share of the work. All worked for the welfare of the community. Individual ownership of land was unheard of and the people were not materialistic. 'The way' did not encourage hoarding of wealth. It did not encourage consuming more than what was needed. Armah suggests that 'the way' is opposed to the system of hoarding of wealth which deprives a large group of their due. 'The way' therefore is a social system opposed to capitalism. Hence it is socialism. The novel, therefore,
"urges the return to true socialism on the part of all Africans..." (Izevbaye, "Ayi Kwei Armah" 241).

The religion of 'the way' is also contrasted with Islam which is the predators' religion and Christianity which is the destroyers' religion (Seasons 3). These religions insist that certain myths are truths. The people of 'the way' also have innumerable creation myths. But they do not regard these as "sure knowledge" (Seasons 3). They have not learned the trick of making sure knowledge of things that are "impossible to know in any such ultimate way" (Seasons 3). "We are not stunted in spirit... we are not Christians that we should invent fables a child would laugh at... we are not Muslims to fabricate a desert god chanting madness in the wilderness, and call our creature creator" (Seasons 3). When the missionary came, he brought fables. But the people of Anoa told him that they too had similar fables with which they entertained children -- "fables of gods and devils and a supreme being above everything" (Seasons 96). The people of 'the way' believe that the supreme being is nothing other than the energy, will power and determination of the people. They believe that there is a spiritual force powerful enough to shape the physical universe. But that force is not something cut off, not something separate from them. It is an energy in them, strongest in working, breathing, thinking together as one people (Seasons 96).
The return to 'the way' will help in constructing the future on solid foundations. Going back to 'the way' is not for marginal comforts. It is not a nostalgic remembrance, but a way forward. 'The way' backwards will take the people to the beginning of 'the way' from where a march to future could be organized. 'The way' will save the people from "courting despair so as to spare itself the necessity of action" (Seasons 204). So a return to 'the way' will help the community to tap the full flowing energy of the past and use it to prepare for the future. A community that is healthy sees beyond the present.

So by contrasting 'the way' of the people with 'the way' of the destroyers, Armah contrasts the egalitarianism of the traditional African communities with the tremendous materialism and capitalistic greed of the present.

Ayi Kwei Armah asserts a past whose social philosophy was a natural egalitarianism, unravelling events which produced later accretions of the materialist ethic in order to reinforce the unnaturalness, the abnormality of the latter. (Soyinka 112)

Armah's 'way' is a road to spiritual values. It represents the values of a pre-capitalist communal society which was founded on peaceful co-existence, generosity and unity. It produced more, not to hoard but to meet the needs of the sick, invalid and old. Hence it is the opposite of the
present capitalist exploitative economic system. Chinyere Nwahunanya says:

Armah suggests that there was an African ideal before the advent of Arab and European colonialism, an ideal that sustained precolonial Africa. This ideal took the form of an egalitarian philosophy that formed the pivot of all social organization and social interaction. (550)

If 'the way' is recaptured it can function as an agent of liberation for the black race against the white death.

In Two Thousand Seasons Insanusi, the master healer, shows 'the way' to the revolutionary core group. In The Healers a fraternity of healers are engaged in recapturing the pre-colonial egalitarian social order. The social system which the healers themselves practice and work to bring about is 'the way' Armah speaks of in the previous novel. The healers find the community disintegrating and they withdraw to the forests where they try to re-create 'the way' of co-existence, reciprocity and communalism. They are the inspirers who are engaged in a war with the manipulators. The novel presents two antagonistic groups -- the inspirers and the manipulators. The inspirers such as Damfo (the master healer), Densu (the hero), Asamoa Nkwanta (the General of the Asante Army), Araba Jesiwa (the princes of Esuano) and other healers follow 'the way.'
They are engaged in a war with the manipulators such as Ababio, Governor Glover, General Wolseley, other Generals and collaborators.

Densu represents those forces still existing in the society that believe in communal welfare and search for a social system in which the community stands above individual considerations. He is not interested in individual glory which goes against the communalism of the past. Excessive individualism will lead to the breaking up of a community. He is dissatisfied with the system of choosing a single winner and glorifying him. So in the ritual games he surrenders his chances of becoming the winner and allows Prince Appia to win the games. He asks: "Why should everything have to end in a senseless victory for one isolated individual? What meaning could such a ritual give the community, turning it as it did into a defeated mass, all worshipping a lone victor?" (Healers 39). The picture of a society separated into small groups of competitors "brought ugly pictures to his mind . . ." (Healers 39). Densu visualizes "a community whose members would be free to work together . . ." (Healers 39). So Densu opts out to be the winner. He recognizes that his vocation is healing. Healing is a group activity in which individual heroism is of little value. Armah uses the technique of a collective voice addressing the audience also to suggest the primacy of the community over the
individual. The collective voice invokes the master of eloquence: "Send me words, Mokopu Mofolo. Send me words of eloquence" (Healers 52).

The healers are engaged in bringing all black races together. Healing is putting dismembered pieces together. But the whites are busy dividing the people so that they can rule with little resistance. The healers are also engaged in preparing the future, using the lessons of the past. Damfo says: "'A healer needs to see beyond the present and tomorrow. He needs to see years and decades ahead’" (Healers 84). The healers’ way is also opposed to unconnectedness. The healer must see, hear and think properly rather than using power or enjoying its fruits. He must be ready to forego power and all that power brings. So Damfo tells Densu: "'... he who would be a healer must set great value on seeing truly, hearing truly, understanding truly, and acting truly’" (Healers 81). Damfo represents the healers’ hope of bringing together all black people. He tells Asamoa Nkwanta: "'We were one in the past. We may come together again in the future’" (Healers 176). They regard disunity as a disease which needs healing. Damfo tells Densu that when different groups within a community clash against each other it is a disease. The highest work that a healer can do is uniting all the blacks and it would take years to complete the task. Damfo tells Densu: "'There will always be work for
healers, even when the highest work is done. That highest work, the bringing together again of the black people, will take centuries’” (Healers 83).

So in The Healers, Armah presents a community of people committed to restoring the pre-colonial way of egalitarianism and peaceful-co-existence. It is by living that life in the forest that they work to heal the people who are under the grip of the manipulators. Armah contrasts the lifestyle of the healers with the greed, individualism, materialism, manipulation and disunity of a community divided by the machinations of the white intruders and their native collaborators.

Thus Ngugi’s revolutionary socialism and Armah’s traditional egalitarianism function as potent counter-discursive strategies to meet the challenge and discursive potential of neo-colonialism and monopoly capitalism. They envisage a future free from the present ills, if the masses join hands with committed intellectuals and artists.