Chapter 3

THE WHITE MAN’S POWER AND MAGIC

(Commitment to the Africans)
Colonization is generally taken as a political process perhaps because of the etymological associations with the word ‘colony’. The word ‘colony’ in the sixteenth century was used to mean ‘farm’, ‘settlement’, and ‘landed estate’. The word acquires the derivational farm colonized during the seventeenth century and with the European colonies all over the world, expands into colonized, colonial, colonist and colonization. The term ‘colonialism’ connotes a practice by which a powerful country controls less powerful countries and uses their resources in order to further its own interest, wealth and power. There are many aspects of colonialism like Economic colonialism, Cultural colonialism, Linguistic colonialism. Exploitation and power politics are innate human tendencies that represent the different manifestations of power dynamics.

Many European countries established their colonies in Africa in the nineteenth century. The British settled down in Africa and established their rule. But the native East African leaders never appreciated the British settlement in their country. They waged an independent war called Mau Mau in 1963 and won independence. The leaders who participated in the Mau Mau revolution suffered the pangs of poverty but boldly opposed the settlers’ dominance on them. Ngugi in his writings never hesitated to oppose the British influence on Eastern Africa. He believed in African ethos, values and moral fervour. He becomes vociferous in recording the
exploitation meted out by the Africans at the hands of the Europeans. In his own words,

*I believe that African intellectuals align themselves with the struggle of African message for a meaningful national ideal...the African writers can help in articulating the feelings behind the struggle.*

This passage tells us about Ngugi's commitment for his society.

Ngugi's fictional works vividly record his commitment to the Africans and his strong voice against the whites who indulged in the exploitation of the Africans. He clearly identifies three facets of encounter of the Africans with the European imperialists—slavery, colonialism and Neo-colonialism. His first three novels, *Weep Not, Child, The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat*, deal with the period of slavery and colonialism. In *Petals of Blood, Devil on the Cross*, and *Matigari*, he discusses the Neo-colonial practices that obtain in East Africa. It is pertinent to recall the statements made by Frantz Fanon on the brutal nature of the colonizers:

*In the colonial countries, the spirit of indulgence is dominant at the core of the Bourgeoisie: and this is because the national Bourgeoisie identifies itself with the Western Bourgeoisie from whom he has learned his lesson. It follows that the Western Bourgeoisie*
along its path of negation and decadence without even 
having evaluated it in its first stages of exploration 
and invention...It is already senile before it comes to 
know the petulance, the fearlessness or the will to 
succeed the youth.²

These words throw light on the selfish nature of the white people.

The River Between grippingly discusses how the Africans were 
exploited by the Britishers. The novel tells upon the impenetrable Kenya in 
all its beauty. At first, the Kenyans have had a happy peaceful and united 
life with their traditions and customs which bound them together to their 
land. They believed that the land on which they lived was their God, 
Murunga’s gift to their first parents...Gikuyu and Mumbi. Murunga showed 
them the vast portion of land and told them....

This land I give to you, Oh men and women it is yours 
to rule and till, you and your posterity.³

The River Between powerfully examines the consequences of 
alienation of the people from their land. Mugo wa Kibiro, a great Gikuyu 
sage, prophesied the invasion of the country by the white man. In his own 
words,

There shall come a people with clothes like butterfly. (RB, p.2)
Mugo was ignored by his people in his own day. As his later day heir, Chege, a respectable man of the ridges and descendant of Mugo was chosen. He warned the people of ridges of the arrival of the Europeans. The whites had already set up their houses and took their land in the places of Murungu, Nyeri and Kiambo. But the people never gave credentials to the words of Chege. Though the railway line laid by the whites was running across the country, the people, not knowing about this, whispered

*The white man cannot speak the languages of hills. And knows not the ways of the land.*

The Africans, due to their ignorance and deep belief in their impenetrable nature of the hills, could not forestall the invaders from setting down with their religious, missionary at Siriana, a place situated at the outskirts of Makuyu and Kameno ridges. The novelist rightly,

*succeeds in evoking the atmosphere of ridges chronicling the traditions and customs they embrace.*

The whites occupied the surrounding land and with their religious preachers they were able to convert to their faith quite a few natives like Joshua and Kabonyi. The act of conversion is the first step of colonialism.

Livingston, a leading missionary, visited the hills with a view to giving new life and energy to his followers there, Joshua his agent, carried on his
main work of preaching to the Africans about the existence of one
god....Jesus. Through Joshua, Livingstone was able to convert many
Africans to take to the new faith shedding their faith with the native religion.
Because of the new faith, the old conformity of the African society was
broken. This is brought out symbolically by Ngugi through Joshua’s
building.

*The round thatched huts standing in groups of three or four*
*convey a picture of conformity broken only by Joshua’s house*
*which has a tin roof and is rectangular. The very presence of*
*the house is an indication that the old isolation of Makuyu from*
*the rest of the world was being broken down.* *(RB, p.28)*

The preaching of new values of life through a new religion had a drastically
adverse effect on the old beliefs.

The clash between the two antagonistic ways of life was indeed
most catastrophic and tragic. As a committed writer, Ngugi portrays
remarkably in *The River Between* the tragic predicament of the Kenyans
torn by lacerating conflict, the loss of cultural heritage and identity in the
exploitative colonial context at both the individual and societal levels. In
the words of Arthur Ravenscraft,

*The disinheritance of the Gikuyu religion and tribal*
*culture by white colonialism figures in the novel.*

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The whites began to pour into the interior in greater and greater numbers. The newly built railway lines, the settled land of the whites around Siriana Missionsary and ever increasing number of converts caused their way to spread farther and farther.

The impenetrable thick line that distinguished the outsider from the insider became penetrable. The white people as well as the Indians started business on the Kenya Land. The white government operated from Siriana. The Government administrator were not seen directly but were heard through the missionaries. This was announced to the Makuyu ridges that Government post was soon going to be established there and that the people would be ruled from there. Missionary people also spoke of the taxes the natives had to pay to the white Government in Nairobi. The lands were intact for them. So, the native people did not take serious notice of the ways of the whites or of the taxes being imposed by them.

Siriana Missionary centre started a school. Chege, an embodiment of tribal ideology\(^6\) believed in the ancient prophecy of Mugo that the salvation came from the blood that flowed in him. He thought of imparting his knowledge to his son Waiyaki, whom he named after the greater Gikuyu warrior. He told them

\[\text{Arise, Hear the prophecy. Go to Mission place, learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow}\]
his vices. Be true to your people and ancient rituals.

(RB, p.20)

Chege's speech almost becomes the record of novelist's opposition to the colonizer. Like the novelist, Chege believes in the dictum that the colonized would learn the tricks of the aggressor and use them against the aggressor himself. Like the novelist, Chege is able to realize the kind of education that was imparted as Siriana Missionary centre.

_The learning and wisdom that the people's hope require has such potential to destroy the old ways as to preserve them by fighting the white man with his own weapons._

Ngugi reveals his commitment to the colonized by drawing our attention to the exploitative steps in the field of education followed by the colonizers.

The education imparted to the students in the Siriana Missionary School was mainly directed to advance the interests of the British Empire. The colonizer very much wanted to convert the Africans into their faith and thus assist them to spread their religion. They also wanted the students to help them in the rule of the natives.

Thus, Livingstone pinned his hopes on Waiyaki and saw in him a possible supremacy of their religion and began to condemn the native rituals, customs and traditions. As a committed writer, Ngugi becomes critical of the English education. In his own words,
A is sitting on B.... what kind of education will A want to B to set? In other words, 'A' will want 'B' to believe that he, B has no culture or his culture is inferior. 'A' will want to 'B' to imbibe a culture, inculcate in his values of self doubt and self denigration, in a word a slave consciousness. He will now look up to A, a superior culture.

This passage reveals to us the inherent potentiality that has gone into human psychology. Ngugi also was opposed to the Britishers who considered traditional customs as satanic works. They called Gikuyu god 'the Prince of Darkness'. At Siriana the preaching went on thus:

Those who refuse him are the children of darkness:

Those sons and daughters of evil one, will go to Hell;

They will burn and burn forever more, world unending.

(RB, p.29)

These words frighten the converts like Joshua. It is said that Joshua's whole body shook to the very roots of his being. It is only when he was baptized that he felt at peace and stopped 'trembling'. The effect of such preaching was so much on Joshua that he represented all his life for having married circumcised Miriamu. He did not like his children to undergo such rituals. He felt that they would get contaminated if they listened to the imitation songs. Having got to believe in The Bible and to
give up their traditions. By condemning the nativization in favour of the new faith and by becoming a preacher himself, he was at once, the exploited as well as the exploiter.

Chege witnessed the strength of strange forces of new faith, which influenced many Africans to get converted. He was disappointed for his inability to do any thing in his life time. He feared if his son Waiyaki too might begin to dislike the way of the ridges and its rituals. Infact, he had great expectations on his son to the effect that he would be the saviour of the ridge. Though Waiyaki did not condemn the rituals, the impact of missionary education was clearly seen on him on the day before circumcision. At first, he stood as an outsider though he liked to be involved like the other boys of his age. He grew uneasy to listen to the songs of circumcision sung by the young Kenyan boys and girls. Later, when he was pushed into the circle, dancing around the fire his body mechanically moved rhythmically according to the music of the whistles and horns but the voice of white man's education made him guilty and could not put his soul in it. Infact, he remembered Livingstone and his reaction to it. Ngugi’s commitment is revealed in his vehement comments on the disruptive influence of Christianity on the African life.

*Christianity as an organized religion is corrupt and hypocritical: besides acting as an agent of imperialism, it exercised a highly*
disruptive influence on the African life and was the chief villain
in alienating the African from his own culture. (HC, p.31)

This passage clearly reflects Ngugi's commitment to African tradition and
African culture.

Waiyaki was unable to choose between the two competing faiths in
the community. Despite being well versed in every ritual of the tribes,
Waiyaki was subjected to the influence of the missionary people and white
man's education. Muthoni, the younger daughter of Joshua, was
completely carried away by her father's principles which condemned the
rituals of the tribe. Like Waiyaki, she too believed that the rituals of
circumcision were important to the people who lived there. But unlike him,
she was able to participate fully in the celebrations of circumcision. At the
same time she believed in the foreign faith her parents had embraced.
Waiyaki was surprised to know that Muthoni revolted against her father's
will to get circumcised. He could not think of being a rebel placing himself
in Muthoni's place. With his subjugated mind he was unable to make a
clear choice and hence the chances of his becoming a successful saviour
became less. Infact, he always felt like a stranger in his land and behaved
detachedly from the politics of the land.

As a committed artist, Ngugi grippingly describes the cultural
exploitation of the Africans by the whites. In his narration of the ceremony
of circumcision, he draws a number of elements closely together. In chapters 3 and 4, he describes at length, the importance of the circumcision to the people of Africa. He makes it clear that the act of circumcision is the most central in the Gikuyu way that kept the people together.

_It was the core of the social structure and something that gave meaning to a man’s life. End the custom and spiritual bias of the tribe’s cohesion and integration would be no more._ (RB, p.79)

Obsessed with the foreign faith, Joshua forgot fatherly love towards his daughter Muthoni, when she got infected after cleriodectomy and disowned her for following traditional faith of the land. Even when his health deteriorated he did not move out of his place. Instead, he wanted to plant a curse on her and finally when she died he thought that she deserved it for following satanic ritual.

He thought that this would teach a lesson to the Africans who followed it. The early converts had to prove ‘how Christian he was through rejection of his past roots...so that in Kenya....the missionary robbed people of their soul’. The death of Muthoni had far-reaching circumstances. Livingstone earlier believed in gradual eradication of the traditional customs of the Africans. Inspite of the pressures by his authorities at home and in Kenya he repulsed to adopt rash and desperate
measures. But he realized, after his twenty five years of stay in Kenya, that he was not making such progress. Now Muthoni’s death forever, confirmed the barbarity of Gikuyu customs. He thought...

*Circumcision had to be rooted out if there was to be any hope of salvation for these people...it was Christ who would be fighting the Princess of Darkness through him.* (RB, p.56)

He began to adopt vigorous methods to suppress the Gikuyu customs and decreed a law that circumcised Africans are not allowed to missionary schools. He called him African agents...Joshua and Kabonyi...to help him in the war. Thus, *The River Between* reveals to us,

*the Blackman’s sense of insecurity, his sense of threat to his environs to his method of life.*

Joshua becomes more jealous and adamant in preaching Christian doctrines. Unable to follow completely the new faith, many converts alienated themselves from Livingstone and Joshua, the pro-Christian leaders. A new political organization, ‘Kiama’ was raised to safeguard the traditions. Just as Joshua condemned everything traditional, Kiama attacked everything that belonged to the white man. The people of Kameno and those of Makuyu ridges, who followed different faiths moved away from each other. Thus, conflicts and splits occurred not only in the
psyche of individuals but also in the society. Here, one may recall Achebe’s account of African religion in his novel *Things Fall Apart*.

> How can he when he does not even speak our tongue?

> But he says that our customs are bad; and our brothers.

> He came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay.

> Now he has won our brothers, and out clan can no longer be like one. He has put a knife on the things that held together and we have fallen apart.\(^\text{10}\)

The people of the ridges ceased to talk to one other. The clear edges of life had completely disappeared under the impact of white man’s religious attitude towards the natives.

The problem with the circumcised Africans is that they are not allowed to pursue their studies in the missionary schools run by the West. Waiyaki, a circumcised person, could now carry on his studies as per the missionary laws. So he started a new school – the first one in the foreign faith. Both were the victims to white man’s twin tools – religion and education. Waiyaki shunned all forms of politics and repulsed even to suppress the Kiama activity inspite of his earlier oath, for they might come on his way to educate the people.

> Perhaps the preaching Livingstone, that education was valued
and his boys should not concern themselves with that the
Government was doing of politics, had found a place in
Waiyaki's heart. (RB, p.65)

As a victim to the British Educational system, Waiyaki was unable to understand the politics of the time. In the process to educate the people of the ridges, he had not even been able to see the increasing influence of 'Kiama' to fall on him. Infact, white man's education acted as a hidden wound for him.

Waiyaki tried to reconcile to the Christian faith with the traditional faith of the land. The essence of education was to him a clarion call to unite all the people and to drive out the white settlers. He recalled the nature of work his father has assigned to him in the journey after circumcision. But preoccupied with his education, he lost the track of his goal of ensuing unity in his community. Waiyaki appeared to be in a state of confusion created by the Europeans with their religion.

In this powerful novel, one perceives conflict between tradition and modernity. This is evident from the tragic story of love between the circumcised elder daughter of pro-christian Joshua and the circumcised educated son of traditional Chege. After the death of his younger daughter, Joshua was pre-occupied with preaching Christian principles vigorously to the people and he did not notice the change in his elder
daughter who grew vexed with his new faith that had no humanity. In her own words,

If the faith of Joshua and Livingstone came to separate; why, it was not good. If it came to stand between a father and his daughter so that her death does not move him, then it was inhuman. She wanted the other. (RB, p. 134)

Here, the expression ‘the other’ connotes her love for Waiyaki. Thus, white man’s religion has blinded the early converts like Joshua. His family was completely disintegrated when Nyambura walked out with Waiyaki proclaiming openly her love for him in the presence of the people who came to listen to Joshua’s Christian preaching. It was a lapse on the part of Joshua who as a parent and preacher, was not able to bring up his children in the light of his new faith. He always wanted to show to the people that his was an ideal family and that he would set an example to others.

The conflict between tradition and modernity persists in the institution of marriage. According to the tradition, an uncircumcised man or woman was not eligible to marry within the tribe. The leaders of Kiama wanted the people to punish Waiyaki for violating the oath of Kiama so as to enable other people not to commit similar sacrilege. Waiyaki saw in the union of the two sides a reconciliation of the two faiths. But the people
were not ready to judge it that way. They were confused about the religious conflict that arose because of the new faith. The novelist presents graphically the confused state when the two lovers were placed for the judgement before Kiama.

The crowd rolled back 'Yes' as if the burden of judging their teacher were removed from them. They went away quickly glad that he was hidden by the darkness for they did not want to look at the teacher and they did not want to read the guilt of one another faces. (RB, p.132)

The dilemma of the masses to make a choice between traditionalism and the new faith leads to utter confusion and as a result tragedies occurred. In this context, Werner Glings who conducted research on Ngugi observes:

This confusion as the key to understand Kenyan history from the beginning of European instruction and sets out to explore with the benefit of hind-eight, how the people of the early vital interest. Ngugi's idea of African hero of colonial occupation originated in the pre-independence pro-literary tradition in Kenya.11

This passage reveals to us the harm done by the whites to the African culture. The novelist presents the picture of Gikuyu who stands as a weak willed person. The novelist also expresses his commitment to the Africans
and African society. His commitment is overtly clear and he easily becomes

*a spokesman for a people whose sacred bond with soil caused them to undertake a bloody uprising against the colonial power.*\(^{12}\)

This theme of commitment to the colonized recurs in *Weep Not, Child,* his another powerful novel.

In this novel, the weeping child is at the centre of the novel for he has the fear of being exploited at the hands of others. Here, the child Njoroge has *the sympathy of the others for him.*\(^{13}\)

It is pertinent to recall the comments of Frantz Fanon:

*Decolonization is always a violent phenomena.....its unusual importance is that it constitutes from the very first day, the minimum demands of the colonized who tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up. The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded.*\(^{14}\)

Ngugi comments on this thus:

*He is like Blitzer, the boy in Hard Times only to know a horse in words as a mental abstraction... His education...*
has been used to mystify and obscure reality.¹⁵

The novelist expresses through Njoroge, his commitment to the young Kenyan children who were to grow into responsible Kenyan citizens. He exemplified Waiyaki’s realization at the end of the novel Weep Not, Child that education for the oppressed people is not any education all.

In Petals of Blood Ngugi as a committed writer,

makes an attempt to think alone about the problems of modern Kenya....the sharp contrast between the ill-gotten wealth of the new African middle class and worsening plight of the unemployed workers and the peasants.¹⁶

Munira in this novel, becomes a victim to the imposed foreign faith. He as the son of brother Ezekiel wa Weru, felt that the new faith has no relevance to the situation in which he was living. When he was young he attended circumcision ritual without the knowledge of his father. There he met Wanziru singing and dancing in one of the circumcision dances. He fell in love with her and married her. But after the marriage she changed over to a Christian name Julia, under the influence of Munira’s father and became a good Christian daughter-in-law. Munira did not like her praying in the Christian fashion even when she was in bed with him. So he had the feeling of emptiness in him. He ran way to Illmorog in search of something to fill the emptiness. In the words of the novelist,

he was still a prisoner of his own upbringing and Siriana
missionary education. It was not that he did not enjoy the experience. On the contrary despite that upbringing he knew that there was nothing so great, nothing so joyous as those few seconds of expectation before entry into a woman unknown. (PB, p.72)

This passage tells us about Munira becoming a victim to the colonial religion and education.

As a committed novelist Ngugi continues to exhibit and also record the oppressed feelings of the Africans. The Siriana school produced corrupt officials like Chui, Nderiwa, Kimaria who exploited their fellow Africans. Munira blamed Cambridge Fraudsham, the headmaster of the Siriana school. Fraudsham wanted to mould the people to be sincere subjects of the British Empire to subserve its interests. He played tough with African students, made them salute the British flag every day and pray in choral voice.

In his capacity as the head of Siriana school, Fraudsham worked towards the perpetuation of the white domination while the Kenyans associated education with advancement of political freedom and even economic freedom. The colonial education was meant to obscure many forms of oppression. The purpose of imperialist education was thoroughly
scrutinized and its relevance to the African situation was questioned throughout the novel.

The evil effects of the colonial education are grippingly described in *Petals of Blood*. The effect of colonialism is such that the Christian converts in Kenya are always unsympathetic towards other Kenyans. Ngugi, as a committed writer, cannot understand why the converted Christians behave as the white man’s lackeys. For example, in his *Petals of Blood* Jerrod Brown, the pastor of the ‘All Saints Church’ in New Illmorog, turned away the hungry famished and ailing village from palatial home in the most unchristian fashion. Instead of providing the crowds with food, he discusses at length, spiritual illness. He finds fault with the Kenyans for their spiritual lameness. He says,

*The Bible is then clearly against the life of idealness and begging. This is what is wrong with the country.* (*PB*, p.148)

Colonial education taught the Africans about the Western conquerors, inventors, creative writers and many religious leaders. It bore an evil influence on the Africans. It always wanted the Africans to look up to Livingstone as their saviour and Mau Mau patriots as traitors and terrorists. When Karega in *Petals of Blood* went through the history of Africa, he only found the description of the Africans as wanderers who had no civilization. They were considered as primitives and barbarians. But
they covered up their unequal treatment. Karega said that the writers of history were obedient to the imperialistic masters. He also lamented that their past had a broken civilization because of the white's cultural exploitation.

Gatuiria in *Devil on the Cross* reiterated the same idea as Karega did in *Petals of Blood*. As an African research student in culture, he was sorry that the wisdom and philosophy of their ancestors had to take a back seat in the foreigner’s eyes. The natives were not even able to find books in their national languages. Their native songs, riddles, stories, customs, traditions and everything about the African heritage had been lost to them. Gatuiria rightly observes,

*They cannot go any where to know the history of their country.*

*They are left like a child without present to counsel them.*

We may tune with David Cook and say,

Ngugi in his *Devil on the Cross* seems at all times to sort out the ultimate goal of any committed

*writer....to harness the laws of heart to the dictates of his own consciousness.*

The Africans not only suffered the loss of culture, but also lost their lands to the Europeans during the colonial times. The novelist becomes critical of the political and economic exploitation of the Africans by the
Europeans. For example, in his Weep Not, Child he discusses the colonists who exploited the natives by depriving them of the ownership of their lands and reducing them to the miserable state of workers at their behest, on those lands. Waiyaki says:

*The shame of people's land being taken away, the shame of being forced to work on those same lands, the humiliation of paying taxes to a government that you know nothing about.*

*(RB, p.164)*

These lines which are mentioned casually occupy the centre of stage in *Weep Not, Child.*

As the novel opens we see many natives working in settled areas and in foreign shops to make their living. There is a clear demonstration of fertile lands occupied by the whites allotted for the Blacks. The novelist depicts the confrontation between whites and blacks and the alienation of the lands.

*You could till the land of Black people because it was red, rough and tickly, while the land of the white settlers was green and was not lacerated into small strips.* *(WNC, p.8)*

In Kenya a person with land was considered to be richer than a person with a lot of other material wealth. It was because most of the people live as peasants. The Kenyans had a deep attachment to the land
which satiates them both materially and spiritually. According to Jomo Kenyatta,

The Gikuyu consider the earth as the mother of tribe....

it is the soil that nurses the spirit of the dead for eternity.

Thus, the earth is the most sacred thing above all that
dwell in or on it. Among the Gikuyu the soil is especially
honoured and an everlasting oath is to swear by the earth.\textsuperscript{19}

Naturally any loss of land constituted the greatest disparity and suffering to Kenyans.

Ngugi’s main concern in his novels is the dispossession of the Kenyans of their land. Kamau in Weep Not, Child says:

Yes, Black people have their land in the country of black people. White men have their land in their own country.

It is simple. I think it was God’s plan. (\textit{WNC}, p.49)

In his interview Ngugi says:

\textit{I believe that no Kenyan should be able to sleep with any peace of mind for as long as he knows that what he is feeding upon had been taken from the mouths of thirsty and hungry in Kenya. I also believe that no Kenyan should be able to sleep peacefully for as long}
as he knows that the wealth of the country is still controlled by foreign merchants.20

The whites did not conquer the whole of Kenyan land. They dispossessed the Kenyans of their lands during the two great wars. Ngotho narrated to the barber how he had become a ‘Muhoi’ on his own lands.

*It was the first big war....all of us were taken by force. We made roots...the war ended...My father and many others had been moved from our ancestor’s lands. He died lonely poor man waiting for the white man to go. The white did not go and he died a ‘Muhoi’ on his own land.* (WNC, p.29)

Ngugi easily becomes critical of the colonizers who exploited the Africans during the war. The colonists promised that after coming back from the war they would give back to the Africans the land they occupied. On the contrary, they had occupied even more land by the time the Africans returned from the war. They did not fulfill their promise to the natives even after the second world war. Howlands did not appreciate Ngotho’s attachment to his lands, made him work on low wages and made good profit. The novelist records his views on the double exploitation of the Blacks by the whites thus:

*Black people have been victims of double exploitation. They have been exploited on the level of the working class and the*
labouring, masses. They have also been exploited on the
dimension of race because of the whole colonial context in
which Black and White people have met.21

In Weep Not, Child, Boro, the son of Ngotho, exhibits his anger
against exploitative settlers and Government thus:

The land has been taken away, through the Bible and
sword....the Bible paved the way for the sword...their
forefathers pitied the stranger and welcomed him with
open arms into their fold. (WNC, p.65)

Boro and his brothers were not left with land to live on it. Ngotho’s sons
were scattered to make their living. Ngotho is aware of the fact that
Howlands is responsible for his poor economical conditions. Howlands’s
exploitative and oppressive attitude is brought out clearly during the
emergency. When Ngotho joined the strike to get back his occupied lands
back, Howlands wanted

to bring Ngotho to submissive humiliation....this would be the
crowning glory to his career. (WNC, p.111)

Howlands’s economic condition was not good before Ngotho joined
as a worker in his fields. It was only with his labour that Howlands grew
rich. Instead of giving him reasonable wages, Howlands became
aggressive and thought of cutting him to size. In this context, David Cook observes:

For Ngotho, his white employer, is the ever present perpetrator of the loss he has suffered.²²

Howlands raises his African agent Jacobo, to a chief’s position to arrest Ngotho and his sons even on false allegations. Before Ngotho’s very eyes he got arrested Ngotho’s wives and children. To Howlands, Ngotho became a symbol of evil that stood on his way in his possession of Ngotho’s land.

As was the usual practice with Government agents, Howlands took the law into his hands and harassed and illustrated Ngotho to forcibly extract information from him about Jacobo’s death. He treated Ngotho so cruelly that even the homeguards who worked with him got scared to be in the place where Howlands was harassing Ngotho. Finally Howlands drove Ngotho to death after making him suffer both physically and mentally.

Howlands’s selfish and exploitative nature was clearly exposed when he just utilized the services of Jacobo and did not care to protect him when his life was in danger. Infact, he set the Africans against their fellow Africans. Look at his exploitative nature:

He would use them. The very ability to set these people
fighting among themselves instead of fighting with the white men give him an amused satisfaction. (WNC, p.88)

Howlands was so mean that he got Ngotho's family members arrested by Jacobo. His wife also indulges in the exploitation of the African workers. Whenever Howlands was busy and neglected her, she abused the African farm workers and removed them from work. She and her husband were never conscious that they were usurpers of Ngotho’s land.

The white people arrested Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of the strike, and the people were deprived of leadership for organizing the strike. The Government declared an emergency. Fear gripped the Gikuyu land in the form of curfews, arrests, repressive measures and deaths. Njeri interestingly discusses the Draconial laws of the Whites.

The white man makes a law or rule. Through that law or what you call it, he takes away the land and then imposes many laws on the people concerning that land and many other things all without people agreeing the old days of tribe.

Now a man rises...who can win even if the angel of God were his lawyer. (WNC, pp.84-85)

Even in A Grain of Wheat, the novelist describes the exploitation of the Europeans during emergency period. Howlands and Livingstone were the only prominent people in Weep Not, Child and The River Between
respectively. In *A Grain of Wheat* the number of Europeans increased and with them the intensity of exploitation of the natives also increased. Mr. Rogers, an agriculture officer, wanted to set up a Forest Research Station in the dark Africa but a train at Githima crushed him. Thompson, a white representative, is a typical colonial reader. Ime Ikeidden calls him, ‘A firm grip of the European colonial time’.

According to G.D. Killam,

*In A Grain of Wheat there is a larger community of Whites, British for the most part... and we see the forces of the belief in the civilizing mission with its emphasis as a benevolent paternalism. This theme is consolidated in John Thompson.*23

Thompson becomes an exponent of the ethics of imperial colonialism. According to Ikeidden,

*the embodies for Ngugi that most odious form of political authority, colonialism, so of all his characters it is on Thompson that he pours most scorn.*24

For Thompson, colonization is a process of civilizing the savages of the African continent. He considered it as white man’s burden. He was of the opinion that the darkness and the mystery of the forest led the primitive man to magic and rituals and condemned them on like Livingstone in
Weep Not, Child. He firmly believed that it was with the effort of the Europeans, the wild bushes were turned into modern cities. The irrationality, inconsistency and superstition of the Africans yielded place to the Western principles of reason, order and measure. He planned to reorientate the African people towards the British way of living by altering their social and cultural environment. He held a high opinion about the British and their way of living. His administration for the British is such that he writes down a few lines from Dr. Albert Scheweitzer, 'The Negro is a child, and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority'.

Thompson, a colonial administrator, became a symbol of unmovable white power in Kenya. He considered the Mau Mau movement as the evil one that stood between him and his morals. He considered himself as 'Prospero in Africa'. So he made attempts to suppress Africa brutally. Those who did not cooperate with the white Government were considered as Mau Mau terrorists and were detained. It is pertinent to recall the observation made by David Cook,

Thompson’s hypocritical visions are exposed a sham
and together with them he is shattered and broken. At
the same time he is cuckolded and despised by a forlorn
and unfulfilled wife who has grown tired or playing a
secondary role to his hollow ambitions.25
In *A Grain of Wheat* the white man’s underlying energy caught in senseless mass cruelty is portrayed in detail. There were several detention camps spreading from the Manda islands in the Indian Ocean to the Magata Islands in Lake Victoria. Manda camp housed 18,000 people at a time. The suspected as well as the young men were caught and were sent to the detention camps. Their legs and hands were chained. The sanitary conditions were poor. Mugo said that at Rira camp they were given 8.03 grams of meat per week and 7.03 grams of flour per day. Those who were attacked by typhoid were not given any treatment.

John Thompson who already became popular while working at Yala camp on behalf of white Government was posted to Rira camp. He represented change in the attitude of the white Government just before Uhuru. He changed the way of extracting secrets from the detainees. Earlier, it has been at Rira camp to bury a man naked in hot sand, sometimes leaving him there overnight. Thompson spoke with their detainees individually about homes and family members before trying to extract oaths from them. To attract the needed information from them, he told them that if they confessed they would be allowed to join their family members and be happy. In his attempt to extract information from the detainees at Rira camp, he even began to give treatment to those who were suffering from Typhoid. When he was not able to make Mugo
confess, he resorted to whipping him hard. The novelist avoids excessive details in the description of such oppressive physical torture or pains inflicted on detainees and concentrates on the psychological consequences of the atrocities. Mugo said:

I saw men crawl on the ground... Their hands and feet were chained with iron all the time. Now he spoke in a subjugated voice like a child. Once bottled necks were hammered into people's back side and the men whimpered like caged animals, that lost was at Rira. (AGW, p.208)

The novelist, besides delineating the untold physical and mental sufferings of the people in detention camps, describes the agonies of the people outside the camp. They are not allowed to give refuge to Mau Mau revolutionaries. The remaining members of the family were forced to work in the fields of the white settlers and some to dig trenches. Those who did not work properly were beaten. Look at the sufferings of the natives.

The children of Israel,
When they were in misery
Were made to do work

Harder than done by cow and donkeys. (AGW, p.164)

These lines exhibit 'the resurgence of new socialist awakening'. The novelist also describes the unrest that came into existence during the Mau
Mau rebellion. Every one is under the grip of fear. The individual betrayals are also recorded. Mugo leaves Kihika, a Mau Mau patriot, with the white Government but Kihika wants him join the rebellion. But Mugo expresses his fear thus:

*If I work for him the Government will catch me. The white man has long arms and they will hang me.* *(AGW, p.221)*

The whites dragged a few young people like Mugo and Gikonyo and instilled fear in them to warn them not to act against the white Government. Thus, the fear induced by the whites had far reaching effects on the Africans. At the detention camps Mugo and Gikonyo lived under constant insecurity and fear. They were physically and mentally stalled. At last they were back to their homes just before Uhuru. Because of the affect of such prolonged psychological stress, Gikonyo could not understand his wife in proper light. Similarly the feelings of insecurity haunted Mugo continuously.

Ngugi also dwells upon the harsh rule of the whites before giving independence. They confiscated the land of ever increasing number of detainees. Unfortunately, when the Africans went back from the detention camps they were left without anything to live by. They could not locate their houses for they burnt the whole of Thabai village which itself was shifted to another place. Thus, the white Government confiscated Mugo’s
land on which he pinned hopes. The confiscated lands were sold either to the white settlers or the Black people who were loyal to the white Government.

Ngugi records the group consciousness under exploitative conditions in his novels. In *A Grain of Wheat* he describes the trauma of the villagers of Thabai and in *Petals of Blood* he concentrates on Illmorog and the lives of its residents. In pre-colonial times Illmorog was a purely traditional society untouched by western groups. The peasants reckoned their wealth in land, goats and cows. With imperialistic intrusion, the decline of Illmorog began.

Settlers, colonists and petty Indian traders exploited it. After 'Uhuru', it was no more than a ravished, abandoned ghost of its former self. After the Europeans had left, the African community was nothing but a tangle of disoriented isolated life. The economical exploitation of the Kenyans continued even after it attained independence because of the foreign investments, international corporations and the land occupations.

The novelist becomes critical of the white settlers who exploited the peasants by imposing taxes on land. So even the land owners suffered a lot at the hands of the whites. The yield from their land dwindled. They were now common grass fields as in the past because the settlers occupied most of fertile land. Ngunga’s sons, unable to live on the limited
lands they owned, turned into workers in Europeans' farms. One of them became a cook in a European house. Ngunga felt sad that his grown up sons had to use his hands for cooking in the Settler's home. The peasants after paying the taxes levied by the white rulers in the form of the cattle were reduced to a state of penury. The economical condition and the colonial exploitation of Illmorog had a devastating effect on the lives of the people who

were unable to meet their demands. In the end, they joined the very labouring clan they were trying to avoid by the sale of their lands and property. (PB, p.90)

The severe drought hit Illmorog and its environments. There was neither shade nor rain as the Europeans carried wood, charcoal from Illmorog forest to feed the machines and men. In the words of Munira,

The railway line has eaten the forests; and after accomplishes their task to the two sails were removed and the ground became a road...a kind of road...that gave no evidence of its formal exploitation glory. (PB, p.11)

The forest wealth of Kenya has been taken away by the whites. The trans-African road linking Nairobi and Illmorog had also connected many cities of the African continent. Every corner of the continent was now with the easy reach of international capitalists, robbery and exploitation.
Through these roads, the whites made profits selling their products such as guns, tractors, blades, and diesel engines. This curbed the iron-ore business in Africa. Ngugi focuses his attention on the economical exploitation of the Africans at the hands of the whites.

The economic exploitation of the Kenyans by the Europeans continued in the form of loans by their banks and in the form of international European companies owned by Europeans in neo-colonial Kenya. This economic exploitation continued even after Kenya attained independence with the help of bourgeoisie Africans. In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi draws our attention

*not merely with the wickedness of the oppressors but with the weakness of indigenous people themselves.*

The commitment of the novelists to the fellow Africans who were exploited at the hands of their fellow countrymen is examined in the next chapter.
References

22. David Cook, p.72.
23. G.D. Killam, p.56.
