

Trauma, Betrayal and the Resistance: A Marxist analysis of
Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* and *Matigari*

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Abstract/ Executive Summary

This paper aims to discuss Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novels, *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and *Matigari* (1986), by examining the class exploitation of the Kenyan people both during the colonial rule, and in the postcolonial Kenyan landscape. In doing, this thesis explores the economic structures that confine the working class into a system of oppression under corporate greed, the betrayal of the government and local elites of the Kenyan society who took up the mantle of class exploitation granted to them by the ex-colonisers, and the mental colonisation and trauma that emerges from continued subjugation. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's stance on these class and power dichotomies will be highlighted in the paper, as he emphasised the need to form a resistance in the wake of oppression and to fight back against injustices that still persists before and after the Kenyan independence.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan political writer and an activist whose novels, plays and essays mainly consist of commentary regarding the socio-economic and political reality of his home nation. His works exposing neo-colonial hypocrisy sparked outrage among those in power due to its strong political messages against the government, resulting in his imprisonment in 1977, as well as the banning of his books such as *Matigari*. In Ngũgĩ's novels we see the residual effects of colonialism in a postcolonial setting, and how in most cases, discrimination is encouraged and perpetuated at an institutional, economical, and psychological level. Ngũgĩ identifies the shortcomings of the Kenyan society in the neo-colonial world, and the struggle for regaining one's rights and autonomy in an upward battle against the system. In the pursuit of a decolonised nation where freedom and justice prevail, literary expression and the social responsibility of artists, writers and thinkers are paramount to achieving this goal by addressing the societal issues that still bind men in chains.

1.1 Purpose of this Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to carry out a Marxist reading of the novels *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and *Matigari* (1986), and analyze the depictions of how social conditions determine the trajectory of one's life, the constraints such situations place on the sufferers on a physical and mental scale, and how development and independence from colonial rulers had little impact in regards to dismantling systematic oppression, as the same practices persist under a new name. The generational trauma of the Kenyan as a result of colonisation, and the trauma that is still inflicted and aggravated in the wake of neo-colonial hierarchy, is a betrayal enacted on Africans by both foreign imperialists as well as their own people. Equality, therefore, will never come to light unless there are serious institutional reforms and

restructuring, and this kind of social transformation will only prevail after successful resistance and revolution. In this thesis I will try to demonstrate how the factors of psychological trauma, betrayal and resistance are all parallelly correlated in both the colonial and neocolonial world, necessary steps that must be taken in order to attain Ngũgĩ's vision of overturning the structural status quo. An uprising against the establishments, and the abolishment of the capitalistic system, according to Ngũgĩ, is the only answer that will bring about social and economic welfare to the working classes.

The two novels chosen were published two decades apart, and depict two different time periods of Kenya, one still under the colonial rule, and one that is in its neocolonial era, and by analysing these two novels I wish to illustrate the point that the realities portrayed in both novels are not that different, considering the coloniser-and-colonised dynamic has transformed into the bourgeoisie-and-proletariat dynamic and continues to dominate over the lives and decisions of the novels' characters. Discussions centred around nationalism, patriotism, alliance and solidarity with one's people versus the betrayal and selling off of brothers, in the backdrop class, race and religious confines, construct the basis of both texts. The relationships between the characters are hardly straightforward, there are complicated family ties, tests of loyalty, physical torture, and mental trauma inflicted by enemies and those considered trustworthy. A Marxist reading of the texts therefore determines the state of being of the Kenyan people and their search for liberation, it uncovers the political history of the land and how it is connected with the psychological imprisonments of workers and ex-slaves, and it provides a foundational basis for the resistance-centred mentality which Ngũgĩ emulates in an effort to bring back autonomy and a sense of agency to his people. When people's rights are leveraged for material gain, there is a stark absence of humanity in such exchanges, and the labour and bodies of black people are still subject to exploitation, and

Ngũgĩ's novel are a portrayal of the ideological actuality behind religion, violence, sexual exploitation, and the corruption that exists in the heart of neo-colonialism.

And so, I have connected both these texts to the issues aforementioned, and have proceeded with the philosophies of Marxism as well as Frantz Fanon's ideas of Marxist criticism as well the application of those political philosophies in within Ngũgĩ's works. I compared both primary texts and have pointed out the commonalities that exist between them, showcasing that neo-colonialism is just as detrimental to the Kenyan people's self-autonomy as colonialism was, and how the unceasing effects of betrayal, oppression and trauma stack up and evolve into a response of resistance.

1.2 Contextual Background of *Weep Not, Child* and *Matigari*

Weep Not, Child was published in 1964 under the name James Ngũgĩ, becoming the first ever novel published by an East African author. The Mau Mau Uprising, the conflicts that emerged between the white settlers and the colonized Kenyans, and tensions pertaining to race and class make up the fabric of the novel itself. The setting is in Kenya following the period of Emergency in 1952 to 1960, just shortly before the Kenyan independence, when Kenya was experiencing resistance by the Mau Mau fighters, leading to many violent clashes. The heavy oppression that Kenya undergoes during the State of Emergency is emphasised on in the novel, as the Mau Mau refuse to bend the knee to the colonisers. Even after independence had been achieved, the memory of the Emergency and the Mau Mau war was forever etched into the Kenyan experience, and this conflict is a major focal point in many of Ngũgĩ's works. The connection between rebellion, people, land and nature is a connection also strongly prevalent in *Weep Not, Child*, providing a discourse that challenges oppressive regimes and the rights of protestors.

Similarly, in *Matigari*, there are constant indirect references to the Mau Mau struggles, even though the story takes place after the colonial independence. Our protagonist Matigari, is displaced from a proper time and setting, however there is a clear understanding that the contents of the novel discuss the neo-colonial situation in Kenya, but the lack of a confirmed setting allows Matigari to simultaneously exist in two periods of history one before and one after the colonialism rule has ended. The displaced time also lends to the book (and its protagonist) a kind of fantastical legacy in which his story is able to resonate across various nations and people.

Ngũgĩ's novels are often linked with the topics of oppression and dissent, with economic warfare at the backdrop of physical warfare. This spirit of exerting one's rights and carving out a path of justice is a quality that blazes within Ngũgĩ's character; the flint Matigari sparks to life, ignites the rebellious spirit of other character's around him, as he is representative of the patriots, the struggle for independence and continuous struggle after, he embodies the spirit of the people itself though he may appear to them as an unrecognizable stranger.

The search for Truth and Justice, is a never-ending search, but it prompts various group of subjugated people to question the reality of their own situation, and Ngũgĩ as a political writer wrote towards the audience he was writing about, as an intellectual he engaged with the people instead of placing them in a sense of literary alienation. The peasants and the workers are the subject of his writing, and the peasants and workers likewise benefit from it, as Ngũgĩ advocates for them in face of authoritarian governments where freedom of speech is limited. The pain of these people emerged from the struggle for self-autonomy as their dreams of a postcolonial future had been betrayed. When the Kenyan government had established a one-party state, and began arresting and disposing of protesters and contesting

political voices, Ngũgĩ spoke up on behalf of those wronged at the risk of his own life and livelihood by taking on a Marxist stance on Kenyan political affairs.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

For the purpose of this paper, the majority of the research is based on books and articles published by scholars sourced from the online database JSTOR. The amount of research surrounding Ngũgĩ's works is expansive, and I attempt to build upon this research and seek to connect the common threads linking trauma, betrayal and rebellion, and the domino effect these elements provoke in society at large. The main foundation of this paper is based on the theories of Marx and Engels, and their Marxist principles, as depicted in *The Communist Manifesto*. Moreover, these Marxist theories are further built upon using the postcolonial theories presented by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. This research will be further expanded upon in the next chapter of this paper.

A large bulk of the secondary research conducted for this paper is based around the topic of neo-colonialism and community. Josef Gugler, discusses Ngũgĩ's neo-colonist stance, and analyses his call to bring together the fighters and the peasants of the community to face what he calls a "common enemy", identifying it as the "urban elite", and points out their betrayal; "the promise of independence has not been fulfilled. The patriotic fighters of the past have been betrayed, the flower of suffering has borne no fruit for the men and women in the villages and the city slum" (330). Gugler further identifies how Ngũgĩ's "traces the pattern of exploitation back to pre-colonial times" as "after colonialism, we now witness the emergence of a political regime that is authoritarian and corrupt, the rise of the robber barons, and the proletarianisation of the masses" (331-332). Abdulrazak Gurnah's ideas also emphasises the same points of the now identified enemies of the people, referring to them as the "white settlers and black authorities who represent Western capitalism and its comprador lackeys. *Matigari* ultimately repudiates any route to "liberation" that falls short of an armed uprising", as he reiterates the point that nothing but a mass uprising would amend the

situation at hand (169). In her article, Katherine Williams takes a different approach in analysing Ngũgĩ's depiction of neo-colonialism, as she criticises the conventions of the colonists that have been destructive to the Gikuyu culture, and while she acknowledges the power of words, she too sees the merits a revolution can bring, "Words can serve as political tools, as they do in the song that celebrates Matigari and exaggerates his prowess. But they cannot replace revolutionary action in the battle against neo-colonial oppression" (60).

Tanure Ojaide, when discussing Ngũgĩ's first novel explores how he "has made the relationship between people and their land the major focus in many of his works, especially in *Weep Not, Child*" while emphasising how "The Gikuyu loss of land in colonial times was highly resented" (49-50). Colonialism had allowed people's ancestral lands to be snatched from their very hands and given to undeserving white officers. This contention between ownership of land gave rise to civil unrest "Land gave impetus to the Mau Mau insurrection against British colonialism which ushered in Kenyan political independence" (50). R. N. Egudu notes how white colonisers often employ black people as lackeys to carry out their bidding, as a betrayal is enacted upon one's own race, "in *Weep Not, Child* that Jacobo has become a tool in the hands of the white man to be used for destroying not only the Mau Mau movement but also the entire people" (434).

The postcolonial dilemma has also been commented on by Neil Lazarus, as he writes "independence seems to have brought neither peace nor prosperity to Africa. Instead, it paradoxically has borne witness to social and economic stagnation" and how the people "quickly began to perceive that their 'revolution' had been derailed... they came to see that the 'liberation' they celebrated at independence was cruelly limited in its effects" the liberation that was put into effect only benefited the bankers and lawyers, and not the common civilians themselves (51-52). Writers who pondered upon the weight of their situation and the subsequent betrayal became like Ngũgĩ's, and "chose to reaffirm their social

commitment even in the darkest moments of the postcolonial night” not giving up on the eventual destitution they envisioned for the country (55). Ngũgĩ in *Writers in Politics* states as much when he writes “We writers and critics of African literature should form an essential intellectual part of the anti-imperialist cultural army of African peoples for total economic and political liberation from imperialism and foreign domination” (31). James A. Ogude brings to light Ngũgĩ’s intentions with his writing, the ultimate Marxist message behind his works, and how he wishes to bring the deprived Kenyan people to the centre, drawing to attention the injustices experienced by the subaltern “At the heart of Ngugi's thesis is his contention that Kenya's working people, the workers and peasants, are marginalised, if not totally ignored, in the country's narrative history. Ngugi, therefore, seeks to intervene and salvage the history of the subaltern from the ruins of colonial plunder” (86). Ogude states that much of Ngũgĩ’s texts are linked to the ideas of Fanon pertaining to postcolonial theory “A dialogical reading of Ngugi's texts... links his concept of history to dependency theory discourses in Kenya and Frantz Fanon's conceptualization of the post-colonial revolution in Africa” (87).

One of Ogude striking observations is related to the imagery of land as depicted in Ngũgĩ’s novels, calling it a metaphor that sets the allegorical ground for economic and social progress/regression, and the need to liberate this land through resistance; “A metaphor for flux, land is the agent for social change and economic mobility - the agent for social transformation within society. Indeed, the themes of resistance to, and collaboration with, colonial institutions are all linked to this metaphor” (90). The most exploited group in society are those that have been robbed of their property, and this is a common theme that binds both the protagonists in *Weep Not, Child* and *Matigari*, as they have been economically deprived of their rights to ownership. The relationship between art and politics is also questioned by M. M. Carlin, who believes that this relationship is significant when discussing African

independence, observing that Ngũgĩ's treatment "of these issues and events, carries that answer-and in particular, his treatment of violence"; in the sense that the implicit violence within the pages is present in real life as a kind of undercurrent to the Christian hopefulness which is continually expressed by the characters (53). Christine Loflin analysis Ngũgĩ's Marxist attitude and how that plays into his depictions of character's cultural beliefs as well as the economic system; she remarks upon the rarefaction of people in novels "the cycles of human life are seen as intricately interwoven with the cycles of production" (83). The Kenyan businessmen are operating under the western notions of capitalistic gains and are thereby "trying to impress their European masters" (89).

This colonial robbery is discussed by Yvonne H. Ochillo, as she explores the conditions of the Kenyan people in *Weep Not, Child*, and the importance of regaining one's inheritance and birthright "Their land was taken from them and their children were left without inheritance. They were forced to serve their gaolers, but they are now determined to retrieve their land and rid themselves of the ignominies that are heaped upon them" (272). These capitalistic structures that exist are instrumental to the betrayal of African people by the hands of their own people, as it further promotes colonial ideologies of ownership and exploitation, as Byron Caminero-Santangelo writes, "colonial and capitalist structures and ideology lead directly to betrayal because they suggest that the only important bonds between people are based on a colonizer/colonized model or on business contract" this technique is used to keep the people divided "suppressed" and takes away other forms of "bonds" bringing about an ideological disarray/disunity as the people lack that common sense of shared responsibility (144).

One of the tendencies of the coloniser's gaze is to perceive African plains as unoccupied territories though that is far from the case. Tirop Simatei discusses this pattern of thought present in Mr. Howlands' character in *Weep Not, Child* relating it with the need to

possess this soil calling it “a hegemonic impulse that underlies the process of imperial annexation of territory” (86). Likewise, the existence of empty space is called into question, and despite what colonial concepts would like us to believe, these lands were not unmarked and unclaimed but have a history rooted deep into the nation’s tribal culture, “a landscape already defined and mapped by local histories, myths, and memories of bequethal and ownership” by the Kenyan (87). Simatei calls the violence depicted in *Weep Not, Child* an “ironic violence” that is a kind of violence must “destroy in order to create” something new from the ashes of revolution, an idea that Ngũgĩ echoes following Frantz Fanon sentiments and reaction towards systematic injustice, coinciding with the notion that colonial violence can only be dismantled using same response of violence (89). Matigari brings to light the necessity of what is dubbed a “a second armed struggle, this time against the neocolonial state”, whereas previously the violence was a means of regaining independence from colonial rule, now it takes shape as a response to economic and political oppression. As Oliver Lovesey defines its “National rebirth, a material second coming, depends on the will of the masses, and Matigari... enjoins active participation: in its last lines people from all walks of life and all Kenyan nationalities sing a song of victory” (151). He questions globalisation and how it is rather deceptive in nature, how on a surface level it promises less restrictions, in reality the purpose of globalisation is to be another facet of exploitation as it is “reconfiguring repressive national boundaries, may permit a yet more totalized imperialism, colonialism, and hegemony. If globalisation is just something the developed world does to the “Third World”, then the reconfiguring of nations may promise a yet more devastating exploitation” (160-161).

D. Salituma Wamalwa in their paper analyses Ngũgĩ’s use of ideology, specifically centring on the “epistemological method of Marxian dialectical materialism and the concrete universal approach to concept development” and how he combines his approach and critical

theory into creative pieces (10). In the paper there is a strong analysis of how Ngũgĩ develops a Marxist approach and combines it with his artistry to tackle an abundance of social issues plaguing the public and their concerns, expressing these concerns within the fields of literary criticisms by writing about “the relationship of literature and society, ideology and society, the writer and his commitment, and the form and content of varied literary forms” (11). Wamalwa believes that Ngũgĩ took on the “task as a Kenyan is to apply the issues of liberation as outlined by Fanon to the particular situation of post-colonial Kenya” (12). And how he accomplished such feats despite the threats to his own life, because in Kenya, criticism of governing bodies and regimes during that period was “conceived as a threat to the status quo and justification for the arrest, trial and incarceration of the artist or critic”

(13). Wamalwa was particularly interested in how Ngũgĩ’s ultimate aim was to expose the “submerged history” of the Kenyans thereby refuting the government propaganda by going “against the official version of prosperity, peace and democracy which the rulers seek to delude the people into believing” (18). The critic Paul Tiyambe Zeleza also notes how Ngũgĩ “straddles the rural and urban landscapes and power- scapes and deals with the plight of both peasants and workers” and Ngũgĩ’s own version of the holy trinity composed of “peasants, workers, and patriots” (24).

Scholars like Ian Glenn and Mark Mathuray further comment on *Weep Not, Child* and Ngũgĩ’s exploration of wealth. Glenn writes how for Njoroge, the protagonist of *Weep Not, Child*, “there is a clear acknowledgment that his desire for education is linked with a desire for status and wealth, a wish to emulate Jacobo, the wealthy black Christian farmer, and to regain his father's ancestral lands taken over by Howlands, the white farmer” (Glenn, 56). When Mathuray discusses *Weep Not, Child*, he observes the hunger for social change within the thematic imageries in the novel, that “there is a bristling tension between the idea of prophet-inspired social change and the idea of change brought about by social crises and

trans-subjective historical forces” (42). Similarly, he noted the political imagery and symbolism in *Matigari* as well, considering that the novel “ends at a mugumo and the sacred value of the tree is cast wholly domain of radical political activism” (47). David Maughan-Brown in his paper illustrates the ways that land became a point of tension as well political and racial exploitation of the original possessors of the land, that the very people who were the owners became the labourers, being deprived of their connection to their heritage and soil, “many Gikuyu peasants were forced to become wage-labourers working for white farmers on their ancestral land - as fictionalized in *Ngotho* in *Weep Not, Child*” (3). According to him, “The economic, social and political discrimination” led way to resentment towards the colonisers and breached into all aspects of “Kenyan colonial life”, leading to the formation of the Mau Mau movement, a “response to years of frustration at the refusal of the colonial government to listen to demands for constitutional and land reform” (4).

Gbemisola Adeoti attempts to examine “the task of re-defining Africa’s past and present in Ngugi’s novels” and the value it adds to world literature (2). Adeoti in their article highlights how colonial policies were instrumental in changing the political system and economic system, redefining the attitudes towards commerce, agriculture and education, replacing it with a capitalistic mindset that ultimately served to further the Western agenda. Eric Nsuh Zuhmboshi in his essay also discusses this new capitalistic system, which is later inherited by the government of Kenya after independence, which took on a more authoritarian route similar to that of the British monarchy the Kenyans previously served under, and how this new leader, satirised as “His Excellency Ole Excellence” in *Matigari* still maintains deep pockets and connections with the Western leader and is serving under their thumbs “still in close ties with Western nations such as Britain and America, who are the former colonial masters of the country... the regime of His Excellency Ole Excellence supports this country for the benefit of its members and not for the entire citizenry” (23). He

has essentially, sold out his own people for political reign and, and “for personal security and to the detriment of his citizens” (26). This is the ultimate betrayal of the African people, when their own leaders begin to see them nothing more as pawns, as pieces of equipment in the factory. The entire identity of the oppressed class has been reduced to their roles as “workers” by the dominant class. In Ngũgĩ’s novel, we see this kind of exploitation is only possible for the lackeys who have turned traitor to their fellow countrymen, acting as subordinates for those in power. In *Matigari* the Anglo-American Leather and Plastic Works Company is owned by Robert Williams, the representative of his late father who was a colonist, with his deputy John Boy Junior, a Kenyan citizen overseeing his operations and carrying out his master’s orders just as previously seen in the colonial times. New institutions of slavery had been set in place, plantations had been replaced by factories, as foreigners held the country with an iron strong grip, their western corporations marking the city with big names such as Barclays Bank, American Life Insurance, and British-American Tobacco. All things considered, it is safe to say not much has changed before and after colonial independence, with capitalism and exploitation on the rise, black voices and rights were still being trampled on, and economic greed and power remained prevalent across all public and private institutions breeding injustice.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o plainly states his opinions on Marxism in the preface of his book *Moving the Centre*, connecting it to his ideas of humanism “to paraphrase Marx, will human progress cease to resemble the pagan idol who would drink nectar but only from the skulls of the slain?” Ngũgĩ considers this primitive need for human kind to take advantage of his own brethren, and questions when human empathy be advanced enough to understand the horrors of exploitation. As a writer deeply concerned with the politics of his home nation, he considers it a personal responsibility to “correct the imbalances of the last four hundred years” (xvii-xviii).

3.1 Marxism and Postcolonialism

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o believes that exploitative, capitalist Kenyan leadership only serves to sell off one's own nation to please the old colonial master, keeping international corporate giants happy. The same kind of poverty and hunger reigned in the streets, both in the colonial and postcolonial times, and so the idea of slave labour was just disguised with the title of “liberation”, as peasants and workers were left to fend for themselves in a brutal, merciless environment, as the same methods of servitude persisted in the wake of independence. There was a kind of the binary opposition, of the people residing in two ends of the spectrum, the urban elites versus the peasants, wastefulness and indulgence versus starvation and landlessness, the bourgeoisie versus the proletariat. Ngũgĩ did not want to feed into the literary cycle that wrote about the elite classes, simply for the consumption of these elite classes, he instead made his work approachable to the peasants, making them his target audience, in order to advance the fight towards the direction of social activism. Ngũgĩ's

sympathies lie with the peasants and the labourers, and it is their tale he writes about, his works were never for the elite classes.

From *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx's theories on social structures and class structures can easily be discerned, as well as the influence of these social structures in the ideologies of the people and how those ideologies dictate all aspects of life, including literature. The socially constructed ideas of politics, finances, values and social norms are a defining part of how we perceive ourselves in context to the world at large and our relationships to the social classes. These social beliefs construct our subconscious thinking and dictate that we should follow these structures blindly, making us more receptive to accepting the current structures as the natural status quo. Marx argues that this kind of ideological brainwashing is the foundation of capitalist societies, making workers blind to their own predicament and exploitation, and should workers even become aware of their unjust situation, the laws and enforcements in place prevent them from taking any action, as the entire society is constructed around prioritising the advancement of the capitalists.

This leads to what is known as the alienation of the workers as they become severed from the products of their own hard work, labour or craftsmanship. Everything they create belongs to the employers by default, and they simply become tools of production in a mechanised, depersonalised factory system. The system itself forces the workers to work with meagre compensation in return, and the worth of an entire human is reduced to the labour they can provide; this commodification of the human being breeding misery in society. Class exploitation is the result of this lack of suitable compensation, as the unequal power between those at the top of the pyramid and those at the bottom of the barrel is established and the gap is widened. The workers do not own land and have little means of feeding themselves, that is why they have no option but to work under these bourgeoisie, and despite the horrid working contracts, are unable to escape oppression.

Literature holds substantial weight in the formation and cultivation in the ideological beliefs of its readership, and so writers are never free from the responsibility of representation, just as they are not free from their own ideological positions, their work will always reflect their status and mindset. Class, economic struggle, attitudes towards materialism, always emerge in literary works, and showcases it as a product of the specific era or location it was written about or written in. According to Marx's perceptions, all of human history can be surmised as the struggle between classes, with one group oppressing another. And in order to end this reign of oppression, the workers themselves need to be empowered, and power has to transfer into the hands of the people, instead of class structures that exist to sustain the power imbalance. Analysing the trajectory of the capitalist society, the tensions between the two opposing groups will eventually boil over in the emergence of total systematic revolution, as workers will unionise and band together for their rights, leading to a classless society. And so, writers like Ngũgĩ used literature as a tool for social change, that revealed the hypocrisies of the bourgeoisie class and advocates for worker rights that would lead to a fair and balanced society.

Ngũgĩ's stories represent the class conflict present in society by combining both Postcolonial and Marxist approaches, to discuss the current political climate and the tradition of oppression taking place. While both *Matigari* and *Settler William* are fictional, their conflict is symbolic to the history of continual colonial exploitation that still carries ripples till the present day and age. Just as the colonised must replace their colonisers, similarly the oppressed workers must also replace and overthrow the elites. The disillusionment revolving around independence in a post-colonial world is felt heavily, as the power model of master and slave, owner and worker has been modified to serve the neo-colonial era. Dissent is therefore a key theme of Ngũgĩ's novels, as he examines and extrapolates power relations and its effect on the individual psyche. Ngũgĩ believes the struggles of the African proletariats

must be captured and represented within literature, and it is a writer's duty to show commitment towards the achievement of peace and prosperity for those under the struggle. African people must take back power into their own hands and dismantle the current system of production for the sake of justice.

3.2 Fanonian Discourse

Ngũgĩ has taken inspiration from much of Frantz Fanon's ideas of racial politics and national identity and has incorporated those concepts into his works. Fanon in his writings often explored the culture of colonial exploitation and the psychological impacts of it on the colonisers as well as the colonised, thereby painting the picture of how an anti-colonial response is central to the decolonisation process. Fanon examines how the material conditions of one's life such as unemployment and poverty contribute to psychological factors springing from humiliation and alienation, and when the entirety of a nation faces this kind of dehumanisation, it throws them into a crisis. Ngugi applies Fanon's ideas of class consciousness and conceptualises these theories into his fictional writing centring the political practises in Kenya. He likens the restoration of the rights of the people to the process of complete decolonisation, not just independence, as the Kenyan elites are still able to exercise control over people in their social, political and economic lives, and exploiting them to appease foreign governments and western businesses. This ideology of exploitation and profit maximisation is the by-product of colonialism, and remains just as powerful as ever, as the head of the state, the ministers, the judiciary, religious institutions all part take in these discriminatory practices.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon highlights how violence is used as a model of survival for the colonised, and how they are left with no other option than to either remain colonised or to respond with rebellion, "The colonized subject discovers reality and

transforms it through praxis, his deployment of violence and his agenda for liberation” (21). The colonial environment itself has the tendency to perpetuate racism and oppression, and is destructive to the cultural identity of the African people and their psychology. Fanon was untrusting of the bourgeoisie class, and saw them as a part of the colonial structures in place, despite them being of African birth. He therefore sympathised with the peasantry and believed that if they could organise themselves and arrange a revolution, they would be able to successfully take down the colonial structures. He discussed how colonisers utilised physical violence themselves, and made the dehumanisation of black men into a common practise, reducing it to just a black body, resulting in the psychological breakdown and frustration of the Africans. Moreover, he writes how “the colonized world is a world divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations” and how law enforcers were utilised in keep the dissenters in check through intimidation, even though they are being deprived as the “famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal and light” (3-4). Due to the ongoing subjugation, physical abuse and humiliation faced by the colonised, in order to regain their Self and their autonomy, they form a resistance and act out in turn through anti-colonial violence. Therefore, violence is used as a liberating force, as it is a response to the violence the oppressed face at the hands of the oppressors. And so, the only way to overcome this system of enslavement is to go against the regime “violence of the colonized unifies the people. By its very structure, colonialism is separatist and regionalist... Violence in its practise is totalizing, national” (51). And we can observe a response of this nature, violence as a means of resistance in both of the primary texts analysed for this thesis, *Weep Not, Child* and *Matigari*, as the impressionability of Fanon’s ideas are quite clear in Ngũgĩ’s writings.

Chapter 4

Textual Analysis of *Weep Not, Child*

Weep Not, Child, Ngũgĩ's first published novel, and it straight away delves into the power struggles- between the businessmen, the colonial landowners, the Kenyan accomplices who have failed their people, and the farmers, the labourers and peasants- in a landscape where the obsession with wealth and property instigates one to abandon their own people. This novel is set just shortly before the Kenyan independence, when colonial powers were still in play. The reason this particular novel was chosen, was to highlight that the realities of this world and the world of *Matigari* after independence, are scarily the same brutal reality. The structures which promote societal imbalances, allow the mutilation of land in both novels, as business, religious and cultural institutions all become perpetrators in this national crime. One of the key themes and motifs constantly under discussion in *Weep Not, Child* is the subject of land itself. The land had been seized by the British powers, who perceived the African soil as unmarked and unclaimed, and therefore deprived the rightful inheritors of the land. Oftentimes multinational companies took over these lands to use as plantations or set up factories, built on the labour of peasants. The bourgeoisie elites collaborated with these international organisations, recruiting the help of the army and the police to set up their dominion of corruption, snatching away the legacy and rights of the African people. In *Weep Not, Child* these tensions broke out as a cry for liberation rose up with the development of the Mau Mau uprising against the colonists present in Kenya. The society had been split into two opposing sides, the fighters who sought to avenge versus the bourgeoisie or the loyalists. And so, the 1950s was marked by armed struggle between these two camps, as violence, trauma and death ensued, throwing the nation into a state of emergency.

4.1 Trauma

Trauma is the natural result in a society that is fuelled by greed and financial progression, as one brother is betrayed by his own brother. In this novel we see instances of murder, torture, and brutality as people are snatched from their very homes and are killed in a forest in the dead of the night. Njoroge the protagonist of the novel cannot do anything as he helplessly witnesses his life falling apart in shambles, as his father Ngotho loses authority within his own family, and is subject to both physical and mental humiliation, and his brothers are either dead or soon to be helplessly killed one by one. As the novel progresses fear and guilt envelop Njoroge's life, as we follow his journey from childhood to adulthood, we witness his psychological breakdown due to numerous traumatic events, forcing him to relinquish his dreams of a better future as his reality transforms into a living, inescapable nightmare. The tone of horror and hopelessness sets in, as the reader too is exposed to the sense of disillusionment concerning the injustice that becomes commonplace in the novel. The only way for the characters to break free from their current predicament is to band together and bring about liberation, however, because there are certain people that will always fall prey to temptations, they will choose the path of self-fulfilment turning their backs on their nation and its people. These people, dubbed as traitors, become agents of exploitation, furthering the dysfunction caused by colonialism for personal gain.

The novel begins with an attitude of hope, as we see the world through Njoroge's eyes as a child, a more naïve viewpoint, as he envisions elevating his family and rectifying the environmental issues through hard work and determination. And so, the contrast between this Njoroge and the one at the end of the novel who is on the brink of suicide is jarring juxtaposition. Children in their naivety are optimistic about the change and improvement of their conditions, because their psychological perspective still remains unmarred by the disappointments that lie further along their path. This idea will soon be shattered by the

experiences he undergoes, as everything he had valued thus far, be it love, education, ambition, family or faith, is taken away from him one by one.

From the very first scene of the novel, Njoroge's family's social class is brought into question, immediately marking him as a different entity than the privileged ones, as we read about an exchange taking place between him and his mother, regarding him joining school:

There was a little silence till she said, "We are poor. You know that."

"Yes, Mother." His heart pounded against his ribs slightly. His voice was shaky.

"So you won't be getting a mid-day meal like other children."

"I understand." (Thiong'o, 21)

The division between the rich and the poor has already been illustrated on the opening page of the novel as the young Njoroge is accepting of his situation, with the knowledge that education was a luxury he felt lucky to be exposed to, considering the lower status of his family. The fact that he is "poor" and will not have the same kind of access to meals during the school period, already places him into a more inferior position, and from early childhood raises the stark awareness of this inferior social status.

He viewed education as a means to climb out of this inferior position, not only for himself, but to benefit his entire family, as he feels the burden of responsibility for supporting his family members, and this motivational spark becomes his inspirational drive in the beginning stages of the novel. The sentiment is echoed by one of his brothers as well, who becomes a carpenter's apprentice, as he plans on pursuing a career where he will be able to trade the goods of his labour to provide for the family, as he reassures his younger brother Njoroge "Everything will be all right. Get education, I'll get carpentry. Then we shall, in the future, be able to have a new and better home for the whole family" (22).

Despite Njoroge being the main protagonist of the novel, it often does shift to other characters' inner monologues, and the readers receive glimpses of the internal struggles and history of other characters. For example, when we first hear from Njoroge's father Ngotho, we learn his story of participating in the war, and the psychological implications of having to serve the European army as a boy, in a war that had nothing to do with his people, "Somehow the talk reminded him of his own travels and troubles in the First World War. As a boy he had been conscripted and made to carry things for the fighting white men" (30). In the Second World War however, two of Ngotho's sons had been conscripted, but only Boro had returned, with the other son having been killed in battle, an emotional loss neither Boro nor Ngotho could recover from. Black bodies were seen as tools by the colonisers, deployed as they saw fit, however the personal losses brought about by these traumatic events only left the African with resentment and anger.

We see more instances of Njoroge's awareness of his own social standing, especially in comparison to others, such as Jacobo's daughter Mwhaki, whom he formed a friendship with, and who would later develop into a love interest, an unrequited love because of their social and circumstantial differences "It was sweet to play with a girl and especially if that girl came from a family higher up the social scale than one's own" (35). Even as a child his acute dissection of his own ranking compared to Mwhaki's prestigious one is evidence of how class structures affect the psyche of children from the moment they are able to discern differences. When Njoroge's mother became aware of this friendship she grew concerned for this very reason "She did not want her son to associate with a family of the rich because it would not be healthy for him" (36). Njoroge's mother Nyokabi's internal thoughts are also fascinating and reveal her perceptions of class and education, including hidden insecurities and envy of those who possess money and power. "It was to her the greatest reward she would get from her motherhood if she one day found her son writing letters, doing arithmetic

and speaking English”, she equated success and prestige to the idea of achieving the standards set by the English colonisers, it was what she had looked up to and what she hoped her son would be able to emulate in his career and education, thereby bringing honour to the family (36). When her thoughts wander to Juliana, the wife of the local elite, we see simple longings for material success and goals in life, “Juliana was the wife of Jacobo and she must surely have felt proud to have a daughter who was a teacher and a son who would probably be flying to foreign parts soon. That was something. That was real life” (36). She was one of those dreamers, who was in constant craving for a better standard of living, and felt restrained by the unfortunate cards she had been dealt with, and so internally she “yearned for something broader than that which could be had from her social circumstances” (36). She felt shame in having to live as peasants and serfs, on land that her family had no legal claim to, land from which they might be thrown out at any given moment “would they as a family continue living as Ahoi in another man's land, a man who clearly resented their stay?” (37). She grapples with so many worries, pertaining to their class and social condition, on top of the existing trauma of bearing the loss of her son which had “hurt her much. Why should he have died in a white man's war? She did not want to sacrifice what was hers to other people”, and yet despite her wishes, by the end of the novel, she loses almost all of her family members at the hands of systematic injustice (37).

As mentioned previously, land is essential to the conversations surrounding the core of the novel, whether or not one possessed land, was a defining factor of one's identity. “Nganga was rich. He had land. Any man who had land was considered rich. If a man had plenty of money, many motor cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich” a person's station did not only take into consideration his financial status, it was instead his status of ownership that lent him authority and respect (41). This mentality was established when the colonisers first set foot in the African continent, and they seized the land by force, slowly

claiming it for themselves, and offering them as prizes to whoever vouched for their loyalty to the European masters.

The novel never underestimates the importance of property in the characters' lives, and how much of their existence hinges on this crucial aspect of being in possession of it, every other aspect of life seems to pale in comparison, even education. The value of education in Ngunjiri's opinion is based on whether or not it will lead to the retrieval or accumulation of lands, "Education is everything," Ngunjiri said. Yet he doubted this because he knew deep inside his heart that land was everything. Education was good only because it would lead to the recovery of the lost lands" (64). Obstacles are stacked against the person who does not possess these lands, and the absence of it is detrimental to achieving a happy and fulfilled life, "mere salary without a piece of land to cultivate is nothing. Look at Howlands. He is not employed by anybody. Yet he is very rich and happy. It's because he has land" (69). Happiness is therefore directly equated with the weight of importance and self-autonomy land provides a person, because they no longer have to be "employed" in order to earn a living, they can just passively indulge in luxuries without hard work.

Ngunjiri was not as jaded as his father was, because unlike Ngunjiri, he still believed in the power of education and the transformative abilities a proper education can have in life, despite all the hardships taking place around him, Ngunjiri threw himself more passionately into his academic pursuits, perceiving it as the light that would lead him out of the dark tunnel. "Through all this, Ngunjiri was still sustained by his love for and belief in education and his own role when the time came... Only education could make something out of this wreckage", since he directly refers to the circumstances of his environment as a wreckage, he shows extreme sensibility towards his nation's situation, and is not stuck in a blind bubble of attaining scholarship without incorporating activism elements, rather he plans on implementing his education to make a change in society; therefore, his initially his idea of

resistance against the social atrocities is through academic learning (120). “He would one day use all his learning to fight the white man, for he would continue the work that his father had started. When these moments caught him, he actually saw himself as a possible savior of the whole God's country” (120).

His visions of this kind of future are short lived, as his story takes a dark turn, as the tensions in the country grow more and more severe. European soldiers started arresting and killing possible dissenters that might be associated with the Mau Mau revolutionists, and Njoroge’s home becomes a place brimming with danger and anxiety, with the haunting feeling of uncertainty emanating from every person, as they brace themselves for the situation to worsen, “some European soldiers were catching people at night, and having taken them to the forest... when their backs were turned they would be shot dead in cold blood” (123). Even breaking curfew would lead to arrests, as the European soldiers kept the citizens under eagle eyed surveillance. Soon enough the tragedies would escalate, as Jacobo who had a personal vendetta against Ngotho, had his wife and son arrested, while Ngotho was powerless to do anything, left with the feeling that he had failed his family. He was even falsely accused of murder and was imprisoned and physically tortured as a result, not only breaking him physically but mentally. Njoroge has to come to his own lack of power and control over the situation, despite his strong ideals he had to face the reality that “His family was about to break and he was powerless to arrest the fall” (164). When he finally has to face his father again, he finds a man complete crumbled from within, one driven mad to lunacy due to the torture he had experienced, on the brink of death, and Njoroge is forced to question his own eyes “Could this be the father he had secretly adored and feared? Njoroge's mind reeled” (169). One by one, members of his family had been targeted and removed, and the fighting spirit that waged within Njoroge died out as he began to realise his helpless state “He recalled Ngotho, dead. Boro would soon be executed while Kamau would be in prison for life.

Njoroge did not know what would happen to Kori in detention. He might be killed like those who had been beaten to death at Hola Camp” (182). The bright academic man became a mere shell of the person he used to be, tragedies stacked on top of tragedies had made him disillusioned and resentful of his own life, and when he see children, still smiling their eyes full of light, he understood the contrast of how far he fell from where he used to stand “They were coming from school. Njoroge saw their hopeful faces. He too had once been like this when he had seen the world as a place where a man with learning would rise to power and glory” (175). The brutality under these oppressive systems had taken from Njoroge all that he had held dear, his mental and material destruction was made complete as he had “lost faith in all the things he had earlier believed in, like wealth, power, education, religion” (182). Njoroge was rendered completely powerless, his mind on the brink of collapse, as he internalises the blame for the tragedies he undergoes, psychologically degrading himself using the word coward.

In the final scene of the novel, he tries to commit suicide by hanging himself, but the attempt is made unsuccessful due to his mother who had intercepted the act. We see a man who has nothing left to live for as his final words to himself as the novel ends is “You are a coward. You have always been a coward. Why didn't you do it?... Because you are a coward” (184).

4.2 Betrayal

When discussing the theme of betrayal in the novel, we must first analyse how such a concept was created in the African tradition in the first place. In the pre-colonial times, African societies operated on the idea of the common good, was no man was deprived without reason, but when the Europeans entered into the continent, and started seizing their

property and established a hierarchy introducing envy, greed and resentment, conflict and division arose as the African people began to suffer.

One of the main antagonists of the novel is Jacobo, a Kenyan black man, who had lorded over people of his own race due to the fact that he was an informant of Mr. Howlands and remained subservient to the British man in order to acquire special favour. Jacobo values himself above the other Kenyans in the society, and lords over the rest, selling out his own people for personal benefit. He idolises European standards and practises and in one instance when Njoroge enters his home, he feels just as out of place as he would have felt in a British home, with a kind of inferiority complex considering his lower background, “He did not like looking at it for a long time because he had always feared that Jacobo or Juliana might come out only to see him staring at their European household” (132). During a conversation between Njoroge and his brother, they discuss Jacobo’s son and the privilege he has access to, that being an education in England, a standard that is seen as a sign of success.

“Well, you see, I was thinking that if both of us could learn and become like John, the big son of Jacobo, it would be a good thing. People say that because he has finished all the learning in Kenya, he will now go far away to...”

“England.” (23)

The real tragedy lies in the fact that Jacobo has only been handed such people by the colonisers themselves, and he had taken over land which did not belong to him. Ngotho’s family lands had been taken into the custody of the British, where he was later forced to work as a serf, denied his rightful claim to ownership “Jacobo owned the land on which Ngotho lived. Ngotho was a Muhoi. Njoroge had never come to understand how his father had become a Muhoi” (33).

Conversations surrounding the power relationships between different kind of black men became one of the central elements of the novel, and we see how despite being a black man himself, Jacobo treats other black men like servants, as people that are beneath him, and the insight into this kind of mistreatment by one's own race is commented on by Kamau, Njoroge's brother:

“Blackness is not all that makes a man,” Kamau said bitterly. “There are some people, be they black or white, who don't want others to rise above them. They want to be the source of all knowledge and share it piecemeal to others less endowed... A rich man does not want others to get rich because he wants to be the only man with wealth... That's why you at times hear Father say that he would rather work for a white man. A white man is a white man. But a black man trying to be a white man is bad and harsh.” (42-43)

Racial solidarity cannot exist in a society that promotes class disparity. Ngotho when reflecting on his life, speaks about how these Kenyan men were forcefully recruited into the British military to fight in the World Wars, and when the war was finally over, he expected to be rewarded for his contributions in the war “We came home worn out but very ready for whatever the British might give us as a reward. But, more than this, we wanted to go back to the soil and court it to yield, to create, not to destroy” (48). Rather when he came back, he experienced total betrayal, their lands and homes were seized by British soldiers and were given instead to high officials of England, forcibly removing people from their own property, and that is how Ngotho's father died without ever retrieving his lands, “The land was gone. My father and many others had been moved from our ancestral lands. He died lonely, a poor man waiting for the white man to go” (48). Njoroge, upon hearing these words, is completely taken back, as this is the first time that it was revealed to him that the land he and his family are serfs on, land that now belongs to Mr Howlands, used to originally belong to his family.

The entire British empire was based on these kinds of lies, deceptions and deprivation of birth rights, they sought, plundered and conquered as they saw fit, and despite their lofty promises, always ended up giving black people the shorter end of the stick. The level of humiliation subjected in such matters cannot be underestimated, to be reduced to a servant in a land that if a part of one's own blood and heritage is degrading to the highest degree, and hostile relationships were cultivated between the black man and the white man.

From Mr. Howlands thoughts we can derive his attitudes towards black people, not only did not feel any remorse at taking land that does not belong to him, he does not feel any shred of sympathy towards those employed under him, even if those employees suffered physical abuse and beatings at the hands of his wife, and the following quotation make his lack of concern for black people transparent "It was not just that the boys had black skins. The question of wanting to know more about his servants just never crossed his mind" (53).

During a worker's revolt, the passionate speaker Kiarie dove into the history of the Kenyan colonisation problem, and with pain and sadness. Time and time again Kenyans fought in the British wars, not only to receive no reward, but they came back to a shocking reality that their land was transformed into a settlement for white people, who they now had to serve and whose government they now had to pay taxes to "Our people were taken and forced to work for these settlers" (88). When people first protested these injustices, they were shot and killed as a way to subdue them using the power of fear and intimidation. Despite their numerous contributions to the wars, "we were killed, we shed blood to save the British Empire from defeat and collapse", black people were never treated with any kind of respect and dignity, their self-autonomy never acknowledged, and their liberties were trampled (88). The British therefore, were the first betrayers and brought this concept of betrayal to the African lands, as a means of exerting control over the resources of the African continent.

Eventually many black people began to covet the power and wealth possessed by the British, and started following the footsteps and precedent set by the colonisers.

The workers meeting is later interrupted by the police, and accompanying the police inspector, as they climbed onto the platform was none other than Jacobo “the richest man in all the land around, had been brought to pacify the people” (89). Jacobo benefitted from the ruling white people, so he had no intentions to alter the status quo, as he reaped the rewards of discrimination. Instead he symbolised one black brother turning his back on his fellow man, someone willing to sell out their entire nation for extra coin from the imperialists, and he was used by the police as a face that would calm other black people down and stop them from initiating a strike, but this kind of action backfired, as the people began to see through his deception veil as his true colours and association were revealed “Jacobos crystallized into a concrete betrayal of the people. He became the physical personification of the long years of waiting and suffering- Jacobo was a traitor... Jacobo on the side of the white people” (89). He was rightfully deemed a traitor because not only did he stand by and let the suffering occur, he stood to gain profit from the suffering of his people. And thus, class theory is brought into postcolonial theory, because racial unity was not enough to bind people together, differences in class, and the allure of power and wealth corrupted the minds of many Kenyans who took a similar route of exploitation as the colonist oppressors, “Rich Africans could also practice color-bar on the poorer Africans” (98). He became the security camera, the watchdog, the informant who would tip off any suspicious activity, but only if it benefitted him and served his agenda in some way “The Chief went from one hut to the next checking and patrolling” (103). He stood as a betrayer of his own people, treating his race with an air of superiority, ready to hand them over to the authority and capital punishment at any given chance, and due to his personal biases against Njoroge’s family, he incriminates them with

false criminal charges, bringing death and destruction to the entire family. His entire outlook and behaviour towards his own brother mimicked the attitudes of the white imperialists.

Mr. Howlands himself saw the betrayal of black people as an unworthy matter to ponder upon, because for them, the exploitation of black people was considered natural, as they were perceived to be sub-human by other white people. The lens they used to gaze at the Kenyans was through the lens of productivity and utilisation of their bodies as mere tools. There is a certain tone of ownership, and this idea of having rightful possession over other human beings, just as one would over an asset or an animal, became the subject of Mr. Howlands' internal thoughts "he had not thought of them at all, except as a part of the farm-the way one thought of donkeys or horses in his farm" (114). He was also extremely clever in his means of trying to retain his power, knowing the right kinds of actions that would cause disarray and disunity among the black people. He used Jacobo as his personal lackey as a means to spark outrage and cause division, knowing that such divisive tactics and strife among black people, distracted them from white exploitation, as it was still the colonisers that were pulling the strings from behind the curtain "Mr. Howlands despised Jacobo because he was a savage. But he would use him. The very ability to set these people fighting among themselves instead of fighting with the white men gave him an amused satisfaction" (115). When greed is the ultimate object of worship, and the accumulation of wealth becomes the goal of the people, mistrust and betrayal will naturally find ways to flourish, as people will step on top of each other to get ahead. And this infighting ultimately only furthered the colonists' agendas, as infighting between black groups only aided the colonists in still maintaining a steady system of exploitation, using other black people to do their dirty work on their behalf.

4.3 Resistance

Njoroge because of his access to education felt the pressing expectations of people to liberate their land through the powers of his intellect, and therefore when they all pitched in to support his education “He was no longer the son of Ngotho but the son of the land.” (148). The burden of retrieving one’s land and resorting it back to rightful ownership, is a heavy responsibility on one’s shoulder. And yet, wrongs must be righted and injustices must be penalised, and surrendering when the dignity and humanity of one’s people was on the line was not an option. Boro, Njoroge’s brother, and later the leader of the Mau Mau activists, fuelled by his hatred, vehemently expresses his views on never surrendering is expressed by Boro, who says, “Never, Never, Black people must rise up and fight” (111). This attitude of non-conformity to the authoritarian rule of the colonisers, is the attitude Frantz Fanon himself supported in his works. Resistance was the first step to victory, and if one did not equip themselves and fight back, they are entering a losing battle.

When white people drew the land up in borders and took over various stretches of African soil for themselves in their imperialist mission, they made sure to cherry pick the most fertile, yielding soil, the parts most rich in resources, and assigned the unfavourable portions of land to the Africans, even though by all rights, the Africans should have access and control over all parts of their heritage and home nation, instead they were duped or forcibly made to subdue to the white man’s will and gunpowder. “You could tell the land of Black People because it was red, rough and sickly, while the land of the white settlers was green and was not lacerated into small strips” (26). Mr. Howlands perceives his takeover of land as a “victory” as a domination and “taming” of what he has deemed as unoccupied territory, despite the fact that his farmland had a deep-rooted history with Njoroge’s family (55).

In one of the most profound passages of the book, we see an insightful take on the unfairness of the judiciary system as expressed by Nijeri, who spoke with tears glimmering in her eyes as she tried to explain the corruption and exploitation that was legalised under the British rule. It was the colonisers that created these arbitrary laws and imposed them on the Africans, taking their lands away without any consent or agreement. And if a black man should challenge these laws, he is punished and tried under those very arbitrary laws established to protect the colonisers interests, “Now a man rises and opposes that law which made right the taking away of land. Now that man is taken by the same people who made the laws against which that man was fighting. He is tried under those alien rules” (111). These foreign or “alien” laws should have never been applicable to the Africans in the first place, it was enforced on them, used against them and denied them of their human rights.

The only option for black people to do under these circumstances was to protest and fight back, but even that option was not quite simple, as they would be losing their lives and livelihood oftentimes for little to no progress in society. The book speaks about how it is not right to label those who are too afraid to fight back as “cowards” or “slaves”, because if they took action they would be risking a lot as they “too had children to feed and to educate”. Kiarie when he calls for a worker’s strike, attempts to use the strike as a means to enter into negotiations with the government for improved rights, with the stance that if all black people ceased to go to work, “All business in the country will come to a standstill” and this was because the entire nation was dependent on their labour to generate finances (80). When the businesses go into a loss because of the worker’s strike, profits will be lost and so the “Government and the settlers will call us back”, and at that instance they would negotiate for better worker rights and higher wages “Give us more money first. Our sweat and blood are not so cheap. We too are human beings” (80). Their sweat and blood however, was perceived as a cheap commodity by settlers like Mr. Howlands, who when he first came to learn about

the worker's strike, immediately threatened anyone who participated with the loss of his job, bringing into the page the character of the prototypical profit-drive, white oppressor. He was absolutely vehement at the workers for even considering acting out, as it would be an inference of business dealings, at the same time, he was gleeful about the repercussions black people would face should they act out, revealing his insidious, depraved nature "And yet paradoxically, as the strike approached, he wanted a strong government action- an action that would teach these laborers their rightful places" (81). These labourers were nothing but an extension of what he considered to be his property, and they needed to be reminded of their "rightful places", at the bottom of the ladder.

It is constantly emphasised that the white people did not take over using peaceful means, but that "The Bible paved the way for the sword", and brutality and violence was justified by the British using the moral grounds of religion (88). It was not black people who took the approach of violence first in fact they had been trusting of the Europeans, and had welcomed them, only to get stabbed in the back, "he blamed the foolish generosity of their forefathers who pitied the stranger and welcomed him with open arms into their fold" (88). According to Ngũgĩ, when an entire race of people faces violence, genocide and oppression, they must retaliate in kind, and win back their freedom, "No. Mau Mau is not bad. The Freedom boys are fighting against white settlers. Is it bad to fight for one's land?" (108). This is often the core argument in many of Ngũgĩ's works, that it was justified to stand up for one's rights, and take those rights by force if necessary. Previously black people had fought for the British in their catastrophic world wars, they were forced to engage in battle for wars they did not start, and had nothing to do with, so Ngũgĩ's argues that it is finally time to stand up and fight for one's own rights, instead of the white men's wars, "I would love to carry a big gun like my father used to do in the Big War when he fought for the British. Now I would be fighting for the black folk" (108). Real social change cannot take place without resistance,

however Ngũgĩ reminds the readers that it is crucial to keep in mind that violence was not a stance that grew out of nowhere, it is a direct response to the violence that has been enacted on black people for centuries, “Njoroge looked around and saw that they were surrounded by many soldiers who lay hidden in the bush, with machine guns menacingly pointed” (143). Boro’s entire reasoning for joining the Mau Mau movement was based on the necessity to seek revenge for his slain brother, a death he was not able to move away from, and turned to the resistance as an outlet for his pain and anger. He wanted freedom from the coloniser’s oppression, and he reminds the readers that it was the white man that had raised his arm first in violence that they are the ones that fight and kill using “gas, bombs, and everything” (145).

Chapter 5

Textual Analysis of *Matigari*

Matigari ma Njirũngi, is the protagonist of the book under his name, and is a symbolic tribute to the patriots who had freed Kenya from the colonial rule, such as the Mau Mau resistance. Matigari is depicted as a saviour, whose Second Coming is drawn parallel to that of the Christian biblical tales, descending upon his people once more to free them from the oppressive system keeping the peasant, workers and the protesting students from being exploited in the new age of neocolonialism. *Matigari*, represents hope and liberation of these working classes from class structure designed to prevent the African working class from escaping the claws of poverty and destitution. Ngũgĩ attempts to evoke the fighting spirit of the patriots who surrendered their lives for the land, as a means to oppose the new tradition of capitalistic enslavement that had allowed parasites in the form of the bourgeoisie elites to maul and destroy the people's soil once more. He sought to resurrect the need to fight back and resist against these corporate and political giants, as the situation of Kenya is no more improved than it had been during the colonial ages.

Slowly but steadily, Matigari develops a loyal following of supporters, willing to lay down their lives in order to see this vision of a free and just Kenya come to fruition. Though Ngũgĩ has stated that *Matigari* does not have a fixed location or time period, it is evident that the text was an allegory for Kenya's political situation at the time of the novel's release. *Matigari* is a tale of inspiration, together with the head of the labourer's strike Ngarũro, the prostitute who was failed to be protected by institutions that exploited her such as the church and the police force, and the orphan child, insurgence had been sparked and had taken hold of the nation, as the peasants and the workers band together under Matigari's name, keeping his fighting cause alive even after his death, as they advocated and resisted for the sake of truth and justice on the land.

5.1 Trauma

An extract from *Matigari* that would perfectly sum up the core message of the text is “We shall all gather, go home together, light the fire together and build our home together. Those who eat alone, die alone” (6). Here Ngũgĩ is able to incorporate all the themes he wants to iterate through his novel, the call for unity, a fire for resistance, the rebuilding and reclaiming of their “home” nation, as well as the warning that this is not a task that can be achieved all alone, only through unity can the people protect themselves, echoing the sentiments of Marx.

At the very start of the *Matigari*, under the impression that the dark ages of colonialism have finally ended, heads out in search of his people. While recalling the treatment of slaves and peasants in the colonial ages, he cannot help but shiver at the very recollection, and the causalities that piled up due to the forced labour during the creation of railway tunnels. The traumatic recollections, and sufferings have been depicted in graphic detail, an indication of how some events can psychologically haunt a person for life. “He remembered the explosions of dynamite and the screams of the workers whenever the walls caved in, often burying them alive. And the groans as some were flattened by the heavy rollers came back to him so vividly that for a time he thought he could still hear the blood-curdling cries of the dying” (8). These black labourers were the forgotten people, nothing but a mere body count for colonial development and infrastructure. And the creation of the railway benefited no one except the colonisers themselves, painting a very Marxist picture of the exploitation of the underprivileged, and how despite all their hard work, the true benefitters are the European settlers.

As *Matigari* contemplates the harshness of the imperialistic rule, and the set impossibly difficult restrictions and physical labour, “He thought of all those who had lost their limbs, of all those whose bodies and minds and hearts had been battered and broken

over the centuries while labouring with their hands” (9). The mutilation, the sacrifice and the loss of workers’ lives has not been forgotten by Matigari, he knew that the damage inflicted at the colonisers’ hands were not something that would fade from the nation any time soon, however he sets out to meet his people from all over the country and concludes that his first destination must be a factory “any patriot looking for his people ought to start where people worked” (9).

On his way he encountered a group of children behaving like scavenging a garbage dump, fighting over scraps of rubbish. These homeless children represented the most vulnerable group at the lowest rungs of society, but that did not prevent the guards from charging an entrance fee from each child to access the garbage pile, a brutal representation of how the weakest members of the society were prey on by men in power, and the kind of immorality capitalism promotes. “So these five were busy dividing among themselves the money they had taken from the children? So a handful of people still profited from the suffering of the majority, the sorrow of the many being the joy of the few? (12). The question of the few elites prospering using the suffering of the majority was also one of Marx’s central criticisms regarding capitalism, that only a small, select percentage of the population can thrive, while the rest are left to fend for themselves, drowning in misery and trauma. And this trend of undervaluing human lives had continued well beyond the colonial regime, into a one-party neo-colonial one. Though Matigari spent years fighting Settler Williams for the freedom and betterment of his people, those visions appear to still remain a distant dream, left unfulfilled.

Matigari next develops a steady friendship with one of the orphan boys Muriuki, whose father was also one of the patriots that gave up their lives lighting for the country, “for our land, our industries, our homes” (15). Matigari envisions himself as a protector of these homeless children, he sought to reclaim his house, so he could give all those that were lost

and marginalised a shelter, and together they would share this “common home” under the same roof (16). This also displays the strong Marxist influences in the text as the system of sharing, and having an equal, respected status, was one of the core principles of Marx. Despite having worked and slaved away his whole life, a worker has nothing to show for it, and this very flawed aspect of the society is the root of psychological disturbances of many people, as their humanity is stolen away, “A world in which the tailor wears rags, the tiller eats wild berries, the builder begs for shelter. You have hands of your own, you cruel and greedy one. Go build your own! Who deceived you into thinking that the builder has no eyes, no head and no tongue?” (21). Matigari addresses out the cruelty of Settler Williams and other greedy opportunists like him, how despite having all the means to work for a support themselves, they trap people into chains forgetting that the builder has “eyes”, “head” and “tongue”, they are able to intellectually and emotionally experience the damaging consequences of such degrading treatment just as any other human would. In the world of capitalism, no matter how hard one strived to become successful, success was only determined by the circumstances of one’s birth. No matter what kind of contributions were made by Matigari, everything went into the pocket of the white coloniser “it was Settler Williams who would take the profits to the bank and I would end up with the cent that he flung my way... I produced everything on that farm with my own labour. But all the gains went to Settler Williams” (21). This kind of injustice was ingrained into the societies formed around capitalism, the worker would never be able to retain the fruits of his labour as long as the capitalists were in charge of the process of production.

Muriuki, despite only being a mere child, was too touched by trauma and tragedy, having witnessed the death of his murdered and was powerless to prevent it. The mother was killed in a fire set on the house by a landlord when she could no longer pay the rent, and distraught the mother had spoken to the landlord “You can't throw me out into the wilderness

like a wild animal. Money isn't more important than life!" (25). She was proven mistaken however, because in this winner-takes-all society, human life had no value other than the monetary kind. Nothing was more coveted or was as enticing as money, power and prestige to the bourgeoisie. And it was those left behind, without money or inheritance to protect themselves, who became the pariahs of society.

Guthera, who we are introduced to as a prostitute, is too an outcast in the society's eyes. Her father had been arrested and killed on the accusation of treason, and afterwards their land was seized by the government, which plunged her and her siblings into extreme poverty, with no clothes or even food to fend off starvation. The police officer who held the keys to her father's cell had tried to force the religiously-devout Guthera into committing fornication in exchange for her father's life, forcing her to either yield or watch her father die, and caused her immense mental trauma and torment, "Will I let the blood of my father's house stain my hands?" (36). Because of her choice to not give in and retain her chastity, her father was hanged. Eventually starvation and near death of her siblings forced Guthera to go out into the streets and earn an income through prostitution, but because the weight of anguish and trauma caused by the law enforcement, she vowed to herself to never go to bed with a police officer. Guthera is a prime example of how a person's morality cannot be estimated just based on surface level facts, rather it is an indication of how society had failed to protect these women, and had driven them to the most desperate measure as a means of survival. The only time she had forsaken her oath is when she had set out to rescue Matigari from the fate her father encountered, rendering Matigari both touched and heartbroken by her sacrifice. Enraged, he questioned the leading priest of a church about the divine decree, and how the church can remain silent without condemning such actions, instead becoming an accomplice in these evil proceedings. Matigari in his frustration denounces the church and evokes questions on fairness and justice after being dissatisfied with the priest's placid

responses, “Where lies truth in this matter? Where lies justice? Where are truth and justice to be found on this earth? Because I know that, wherever that young woman is, she is in tears” (96).

One of the most passion filled speeches in the book, about the plights and manipulation of the poor is delivered by the organiser of the worker’s strike Ngarũro, who had been emboldened by Matigari’s inspiring words, and mustered the courage to speak up in front of His Excellency in front of a courtroom full of witness:

Our dispute is between the company owners and the workers. Ours is a dispute between labour and capital. But the owners of capital should always remember that even the capital in question comes from the labour of our hands. Your verdict only shows that you- the government and the ruling party- are on the side of capital... Where is our government, we workers? 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... Our strike action is just such a refusal. We cannot go back to work unless our demands are met. (109)

He also demands Robert Williams and John Boy Junior step down from their positions in the directory board of the factories, and be replaced by new appointees, claiming that the behaviour and mistreatment shown by those two are “worse than those who were there during the colonial days” (109). The real truth of the matter was the colonial exploitation of human rights were never ceased in the first place, the power of the people just had been transferred from one master to another, the white colonists passed on their reins to their corrupt black accomplices that severed as their servants, and turned their backs on black loyalty and solidarity “Our first independence has been sold back to imperialism by the servants they put in power!” (172). Ngarũro, tired of living a life filled with just blatantly

open exploitation, realised his own social responsibility in becoming part of a greater change. When he was going over the idea of ownership to Matigari, we could see their rather see how their sadness is amplified by the fact that a select, small percentage of people (or international businesses) have access and possession of the majority of the land area, just denying the African people their rights to their own soil “Does all this land belong to one person?” “Yes ... or to foreign companies.” (41). This domination exerted by foreign companies is the same kind of attitude that allowed exploitation to take place during the colonial ages, therefore history was simply repeating itself as the West still intervenes in African matters and economy. Even though Matigari considered the proof of his hands and the craftsmanship as the only necessary deed to prove that his house belonged to him, in reality it went to the son of the Settler Williams, who possessed high-profile who carried out the same colonial manipulation his father set precedent to, but hid behind his business titles as a means of justifying the unjustness “He is a director of Anglo-American International Conglomerate of Insurance (AICI) and Agribusiness Co-ordinating International Organisation (ACIO)” (50).

Freedom of speech and thought were brutally under the attack of the authoritarian head of the government, and since he benefited from the capitalism wreaking havoc in his nation, he would not allow anyone else to assert that there could be a better economic system, as that would challenge his criminal methods and weaken his hold over Kenya. Teachers found even discussing Marxist schools of thoughts were arrested without trial, such as one who stated “that the political and economic systems of countries like the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and many other socialist countries are based on the teachings of Marx and Lenin... If I can't teach the truth, what should I teach, then?” (54). When the educators of the society are mercilessly attacked and silenced, it is an indication of the oppressors trying to conduct shady practices without facing repercussions or dissent. The workers were given insignificant compensation for the toil and labour they put in, and moreover were taxed

heavily, so the majority of their savings went towards sustaining the luxurious life of political figures. Once the worker is no longer physically fit to contribute his labour, he is sacked without any retirement benefits and will reach “old age without a pension” and no means of supporting himself (59). Should the worker go on a strike to protest against these unfair times, he is simply arrested and removed, “I spent all these years opposed to strikes... If I go on strike and lose my job, what will my children eat tomorrow?” (60). These urban elites that were under the control of the western cooperation were simply dubbed as “parasites” by Matigari, those who fed off the hard work of deserving men and left them dry and resourceless, to which Matigari demands the soil be returned to the people, the true sons and daughters of the nation “Give back the keys to these houses and these lands which you took away from the people!” (78). Matigari shows frustration at the lack of change in the society despite the independence, one parasitic group was succeeded after another, and Kenya was independent in name while still remaining bound under chains, as the differences between colonial and neo-colonial blurred “Yesterday it was the imperialist settlers and their servants. Today it is the same. On the plantations, in the factories, it is still the same duo” (78). The proletariat class continued to struggle in the margins of society, the family of the peasants, workers and patriots continued to have their rights stripped away while they gave up their bodies for toil and labour. Being trapped in a continuous cycle of poverty stemmed into a generational trauma they could not escape from.

His Excellency, the leader of the one-party government, is a hypocrite in every sense of the term, he wants to distance himself from the socialist/communist regimes, committing crimes under the guise of democratic freedom “This is a free country, not like Russia or China” (112). While at the same time his regime is just as oppressive as some of the worst dictatorships, and he wants to control all the aspects of the peasants’ lives, depriving all their freedoms and going so far as to considering establishing “birth-control clinics where women

can have their wombs closed. No more children for the poor! Let us give that responsibility to the wealthy!... Fucking among the poor should be stopped by a presidential decree!” (119-120). It was a strategically common occurrence to see those in power wipe their hands clean of any responsibility and instead redirect all the blame on the poor for being the creators of their own misery.

For characters such as Marigari divide between the people and the opposition between the two factions clashing in society, each determined on preserving their version of the truth, “One truth belongs to the oppressor; the other belongs to the oppressed!” (121). Power had the tendency to corrupt, and when such rampant abuse of power was taking place at a physical level, economic level and psychological level, the trauma inflicted on the proletariat by the bourgeoisie was nothing short of a complete violation of human rights on a national scale. Characters like Guthera never had any choice and had to serve the whims of men around her, she never had any sense of autonomy over her own life, and instead was at the mercy of social forces that derived pleasure from intimidating and ruining women, and that is one of the reasons she so readily join Matigari’s cause, feeling for the first time that she has taken action out of her own free will “I have never done anything which came from free choice... I want to do something to change whatever it is that makes people live like animals, especially us women” (140).

Matigari characterizes this world as a topsy-turvy one, calling it “upside-down” due to the backward justice system, where “the wicked calls the righteous evil”, and innocent men are incriminated under the code of law (150). A sharp contrast existed between the wealthy and the workers as multinational companies took over, and independence neither brought any comfort or ease to the lives of the peasants, as public, private and religious institutions still continued to torment and inflict trauma upon the people.

5.2 Betrayal

Ngũgĩ's criticism of those betraying the patriots in favour of the colonisers, who sought refuge in capitalism and hoarded their wealth, and those in the administrative bodies who allowed exploitation to prevail, was abundantly evident. Now that the struggle for independence is over, a new struggle emerges, one against the capitalist system, and how the hypocrites in the church and in the courtrooms attempt to twist the laws in their favour to justify inequality. The disenfranchisement of the majority working class was carried out by a minority few belonging to the elite classes, as injustice that was prominent in the colonial times still persists under a new title and appearance. We can observe a ruthless vulgarity in the elite's habits of overconsumption, at the expense of the working classes, despite there being enough resources for all parties, greed enticed the bourgeoisie to hoard all these resources for themselves. After the colonial rule was over, these select groups of few began to covet power and privilege over acting on behalf of social justice. The workers were still forced to toil day and night, and the products of their labour was made available for foreigners to use and keep for themselves, instead of distributing those materials among the Kenyan public, who were badly in need of food, clothing and other supplies.

The leader of this new colonial era, His Excellency Ole Excellence, is one of the biggest traitors of the people, while being situated at the head of the country; as a self-glorified egotistical maniac, he attempts to wipe out any dissenting voices, and proceeds to announce false information through the radio in order to keep his rule intact. He enforces laws created to keep the masses in chains, so that the elite few can enjoy access to the entire country's wealth. Anyone considered a threat to his regime and political ideology was thrown into prison, without a proper trial, and were left there neglected without food or water. Any books which engaged the reader on political theory and prompted them to reflect on the nuances of politics, were immediately banned, in fact, the mere mention of Karl Marx in a

public setting was enough to get people incarcerated. When the government received loans from foreign companies, instead of using those funds to alleviate suffering and develop the country, His Excellency bought weapons, and more police gear to better keep the people suppressed, and retain control over them. These funds would be able to cover the basic needs of those in poverty, but instead are used as tools to keep people in check and enslaved by the word of law.

Authoritarian regimes allow these acts of injustice to permeate throughout the nation, therefore the primary act of betrayal is acted out by the government of the people.

Matigari, who symbolised the patriots and the revolutionaries, has to concede that the struggle for equality and fairness is made all the more difficult due to the traitors among their own race and nationalist, the black men who were prepared to sell out other black men. Characters like John Boy was a collaborator with the other Europeans represented as one of those who collaborated with the colonialists against their countrymen, people who have discarded their racial responsibilities and have cut off their communal bonds, trading their country's honour for financial and societal advancement.

All these repressive forces worked together in order to keep the people subdued by all means, using force if necessary. This legitimisation of physical force is carried out through the law enforcement officials and the army, which comprises other black men who have turned traitor to their own people as well, becoming a tool at the hands of the government "The guard sat on a stool... On the jacket were the words 'Guard, Company Property'" (10). This compromising of the law enforcement, who were supposed to protect the people, but instead became the bane of the peasants' existence, bred misery across the land; as Muriuki comments that he could not go to the police in order to seek help, that would bring him more trouble because "The police and these bandits work together. They are as inseparable as these fingers on my hand" (14). Matigari despairs at the mistrust and animosity which divided the people, knowing that division among the general masses acts as the distraction

that allows the true enemy to thrive, “What curse has befallen us that we should now be fighting one another... while our enemies watch with glee?” (18). When people are too preoccupied spending all their time, energy and resources to survive on a day-to-day basis, these traitors of the state are allowed to carry out corrupt measures without facing obstacles, as no one is there to hold these elites in check, “the sell-outs, they are too busy locking up our patriots in gaols or sending them into exile” and this is down foreigners and western institutions are let into the country, as these “outsiders come and bask in the comfort wrought by others” and enjoy the products manufactured by the peasant class (150).

This environment was particularly exploitive of women, who faced employment issues, abuse, sexual harassment, and were denied education and property, leaving them at the mercy of poverty. Women like Guthera became one of the chief victims of economic corruption and male gratification, worsened by the conditions of the capitalist society allowing such endangering of women. She was almost forced into giving up her virtue by the police, who held her father’s life as a bargaining chip to satisfy his lust, delivering her the ultimatum that, “You are carrying your father's life between your legs” (35). After her father had been slain by the policemen, she vows to never engage in any kind of sexual act with them stating how “cops’ money stinks of blood” (28). The policemen, due to her persistent dismissal of their advances, sought to teach her a lesson, by humiliating her and risking her life in the middle of a large crowd for the sake of public amusement “The dog would leap towards her; but each time its muzzle came close to her eyes, the policeman who held the lead restrained it” (30). Amid this horrific scene, Matigari intervenes and saves Guthera, becoming absolutely sickened by the entire ordeal, exclaiming his outrage to the bystanders that did not come to Guthera’s assistance “How can you stand there watching the beauty of our land being trodden down by these beasts?”, and he accuses the people of cowering behind their “silence”, letting their “fear” cloud their judgement (30-31). Matigari then turns to the

policemen directly addressing their corruption, using the law to bully the defenceless all under the pretence of “peace and stability” (31).

According to Guthera, due to her traumatic interactions with the police, in her eyes the policemen are the worst of the lot of traitors, that she would be in a more willing state to take money from “strangers, thieves, murderers” however she swore and oath to “never open my legs for any policeman, these traitors, no matter how much they are prepared to pay” (37). The concept of binary opposition and betrayal is again brought up by Matigari, in a society where class structures fuel the greed of the bourgeoisie and legitimises the exploitation of the proletariat, there will always be two warring sides at the opposite end of the spectrum; stating two kinds of believer “those who love their country, and those who will sell it”, and two kinds of soldier, “some are there to protect the people, other to attack them” (37).

It is a betrayal on a more personal, painful level, when these atrocities are committed by the very same people of your own nation and race, when the black man chooses to take the support of the white man, it is the betrayal of one’s entire history, heritage and identity. When Matigari emerges from the forest and witnesses John Boy Junior and Settler Williams, his observations are particularly striking “The riders too wore clothes of the same colour. Indeed, the only difference between the two men was their skin colour”, as John Boy was no different from the Caucasian man in terms of mannerism, ideals and cruelty. His colouring the only indicator of his race, and the ultimate symbol of his betrayal, as he rejects the alliances of his brotherhood in favour of the white man’s company (43). Matigari noted how even the manner in which both “held their whips and the reins- no difference”, and this sentence acts as a greater metaphor to indicate how traitors like John Boy were just as accountable for the enslavement, exploitation of his people using the whip and reins that were used by slave masters to lord over their slaves (43).

From this metaphor emerges the poignantly scene where we see Matigari be whipped by John Boy, a black man being subject to pain and humiliation at the hands of their brethren, as Matigari reminding him of his blood ties cries out “You've dared to raise a whip against your own father?” (48). When Matigari learns that the young man who has subjected him to whipping was the very same child whose cost of foreign education the members of the peasant community had funded, the boy who was projected to become one of the future patriots, “The boy for whom we sang: He shall come back and clean up our cities, our country, and deliver us from slavery?”, he was distraught by the knowledge that the person the whole community banded together to raise up, had now stabbed those people in the back by placing shackles on their wrists (48).

John Boy Junior justifies his betrayal by idealising the English standard, how he had gotten his degree at the London School of Economics where he had “learned how to dress like a gentleman” and had conformed to the British principles (48). John Boy Junior also spoke in behalf of the capitalist ideals, where the “individual” should prioritise his own desires, that selflessness and looking out for an entire community was meaningless as “White people are more advanced because they... honour the freedom of the individual, which means the freedom of everyone to follow his own whims without worrying about the others. Survival of the fittest”, and displays the every-man-for-himself mentality that rationalised exploitation and mistreatment of other human beings (49). He did not want to share his success and resources, or contribute to the people, as he believed in only preserving his individual needs and interest, that alliances such as “families, clans, nationalities, people, masses” only serve to drag the individual down (49).

There were other categories of traitors among the black people as well, such as the secret informant or snitches who passed on information to the government whenever there was a group of “twelve people gathered”, as the government employed a number of spies to

keep tabs on dissent and rebellion (64). The other Kenyan citizens soon catch on to the strategies utilised by the Europeans to keep black people in line, how they are able to tuck away their “stolen wealth” using the distraction of “their black overseers are busy taming the entire population with honeyed tongues or silencing them with police boots!” (79). There was another type of traitor that Ngũgĩ also scrutinised, and those were the intellectuals and the educators whose loyalty had been bought using money, who despite all their learning was prepared to betray their country for some easy earning. Ngũgĩ makes a mockery of these people, by depriving them of any real identity, and using the imagery and metaphor of a parrot, as all these men did was blindly and guiltlessly parrot the narrative set by the government in order to further strengthen the capitalist agenda and ideology “One was the editor of the newspaper the Daily Parrot. Another was Professor of the History of Parrotology, and the third a university lecturer who had a B.Ed., an MA and a Ph.D. in the philosophy of Parrotology”, the fact that these influential intellectuals so readily were able to compromise their integrity by repeating authoritarian propaganda, was a huge blow for the people of the nation as well (101).

Fear and paranoia were used by the government to seize control, as people were too scared of there being a secret informant to even whisper about possible insurgence, as the “ears of the government, and the eyes of the government are everywhere: in police and prison cells, in shopping centres, in workplaces, in schools, in churches, in market-places and even in the walls”, no place was deemed private and safe, and threats of this nature made people too scared to act out. Moreover, the people were terrified of the institutional justice and punishment they would bring into their lives and the lives of their families should they choose to resist as “Britain and the European Community have given this country a loan of several million pounds for the development of the administration of instant justice” (132). Brute force and coercion were common tools used by dictators in inspiring fear among the

masses, and so a large chunk of a country's finances was invested in protecting these leaders from the threat of uprisings, when people become aware of the extremeness of the exploitation. And so, His Excellency recruited the support of foreign powers, the military and the police, to secure his place as the nation's ruler.

5.3 Resistance

Matigari's rebirth and re-emergence into his nation is a symbolic hope hinting at the possible outcome of a rebirth taking place on a societal, national and economic level, saving the country from the corrupt. Matigari ma Njiruungi, his name translates to the "patriots who survived the bullets", meaning one of the heroes who had served in the liberation war. He celebrates the fighting for one's rights, and supporting your fellow countrymen in their plights, inspiring the people to act in search of truth and justice. Matigari's goals represent goals to strive toward, a land where equality can exist, and freedom is no longer a distant dream. However, this vision of a new promised land, cannot be brought about through words and speeches alone. In the end, the valiant must be ready to fight and lay down their lives for the sake of a better future.

Bound together by the collective experiences of their suffering, the people who have dealt with long-term pressure can organise themselves and stand up for their rights, with the guidance of a power leader. The brutal exploitation processes of capitalist societies force this kind of rebellion to take place, as people look for a way to achieve relief.

At the beginning of the novel we see Matigari adorn the belt of peace, after having laid down his weapons. He wants to return back to his home in good faith, with the hope that things have improved in his absence. He sets out to discover his family and to reclaim the home he had built, however much to his dismay, the country is filled with cruelty just as it had been during the colonial days. In the very first pages, the radio announces that there has

been an increase in worker strikes and riots, communicating to Matigari and the readers, the deplorable state of the government as it villainises these protestors and tries to suppress the outcry for justice, “All workers should disassociate themselves from those who are disrupting industrial peace by demanding increases in wages” (7). Even though the colonial days were now behind them, a new age of exploitation dubbed neo-colonialism has risen in its stead. The old oppressors were succeeded by their sons, as Matigari arrives at the realisation that his struggle with Settler Williams and John Boy was yet to be concluded, as their sons now reign terror over the country in their fathers’ absence. Upon his return Matigari informed that in “the police in this country were always fighting against students and workers”, that there was an ongoing crisis for the liberties of the peasant, and the stifling of their voices advocating for social equality. There was constant clashes between the university students and the government, as five of these university students were handcuffed “for taking part in demonstrations...outside the British and American embassies...protesting against Western aid to the apartheid regime”, and in order to put a stop to protests altogether, a presidential decree was passed that thereby made all demonstrations illegal by law (70). Another incident of protest suppression, where the law enforcement got violent took place at Robert William’s Anglo-American Leather and Plastic Works factory, where the police resorted to using tear-gas and “a number of workers were arrested” (70). Emerging from tradition of exploitation and longstanding dissatisfaction of the workers who were finally advocating for their rightful position, they declared themselves as the owners of the country, not the imperialists and their lackeys, but the peasants, farmers and factory workers.

Matigari himself heard the inner voice calling him to action, he was moved by the commitment Guthera and Muriuki displayed to him, and how “Their agony had become his agony; their suffering, his suffering” and he resolved that he would no longer leave his children roaming “homeless, naked and hungry”, and was determined that this era of

darkness must come to an end (88). As the protests begun to sprung up all over the country, so had the response of violence, as the government took brutal and inhumane measures to eliminate the dissenters, a student recounts his traumatic experience to Matigari describing, “As we were kneeling down, our eyes closed in prayer, soldiers and policemen surrounded us. Some of us had our arms and legs broken. Twenty-five students were killed instantly” and this shows the extreme lengths a people in positions of power would go to in order to preserve their authority, going so far as to killing their own people without mercy (90).

Matigari now realising the gravity of the situation has decided he can no longer passively preach for peace and justice from the side-lines, in a conversation with a teacher he declares that one can either be a part of those that accept the current condition of things, or they can be part of the world that wants to bring about change, and that everyone must choose between these two realities (91). Like Frantz Fanon’s approach Ngũgĩ also arrives at the inclusion that peace cannot be brought about without resistance and the armed struggle, as “differences between the robber and the robbed can only be settled in struggle”, there are no other alternatives that would amend this massive predicament (114). Ngaruro, at the time of his arrest shouted back that while they might be able to capture him, “the workers will never stop demanding back their rights!”, once this spark of revolution has been ignited, the flame will continue to grow, impassioned by people’s need for justice (123).

Matigari had arrived to the conclusion that, it was not just words not just arms that can defeat an enemy, one cannot fix the deep-rooted corruptness of the country simply through speeches, nor would senseless violence put a stop to the chaos, rather “One had to have the right words; but these words had to be strengthened by the force of arms” (131). Violence as a means of resistance was a justified reaction to take, because in order to dismantle colonisation and remnants of colonial oppression, Fanon believed that violence was the key to see anti-colonial results, and Ngũgĩ shares the same viewpoint on the situation as

Matigari thinks to himself “Justice for the oppressed comes from a sharpened spear”, or else this cycle of oppression will continue (131). These coincide with Marx’s theories of revolution as well, because he theorised if people are kept oppressed long enough, eventually they will reach their limit and used their combined forces to overthrow the capitalist system, sentiments embodied by Matigari and the rest of the characters who finally took measures to fight back “justice can come only from the armed force of the united oppressed. Boy will never again sleep in my house for as long as I live”, it was time to stamp to “the rhythm and let the bullets tinkle” and let their fears drown under “the staccato sound of our guns!” (139-140). The days of the oppressors and the imperialists were numbered, as people began to take ownership of their own nation.

The power of language and words cannot be emphasised enough as well, all songs and chants about Matigari and his heroics were made illegal by the law, as his very name gave hope to the oppressed, but despite the government’s best attempts songs of Marigari “spread like wildfire in a dry season”, on the lips of every peasant rang the words “Even if you kill us, / Victory belongs to the people” (127). These people took to burning houses, they warmed themselves using the fires of “Bad Boy’s” house, they sang about burning down the oppressors branded cars, burning the traitors, those who stole the property of the masses, those who took part in the parrotry culture, they wanted all these things to burn to the ground (167-168). They wanted to burn down and annihilate nationality-chauvinism, detention/arrest without fair trial, exiling of patriots, and prisons holding student’s captive, the people were in a state of fury and anarchy, setting fires all over the nation as a show of their righteous anger (168). Revolution has finally taken place, and the proletariat gathered together in a mass uprising.

Matigari’s fate is also sealed, at the end of the novel, he was gunned down on his way to retrieving his weapons by the soldier, shedding his blood into the soil, making his story

come full circle as, as his prophetic words become reality “What other deed do you need that is greater than the blood I shed?” (50). As he has laid down his life for his people and his nation, and as the soil soaks in his blood: his ownership and connection to the land has been permanently forged, his blood becoming the title-deed securing his connection to his motherland.

Matigari’s death did not signify the end of the battle, as the voices of the workers, peasants, students, patriots, people from “all the different nationalities of the land, singing in harmony: Victory shall be ours!” did not falter in the slightest, rather the strength of their remained ever the more powerful (175). Matigari’s mission is resumed by the next generation of patriots, represented by Muriuki who having dug up the weapons Matigari had buried, joins in on the battle cry of victory.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This chief purpose of this paper was to analyse the two different novels written by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and *Matigari* (1986), using Marxist criticism. Both in the colonial and postcolonial era, the power imbalance, and exploitation of the poor continued to prevail, and in this paper, I wanted to compare the similar themes of the two texts in regards to the working class, and the nuances of trauma, betrayal and resistance as portrayed in both novels. After a close reading was conducted on both texts, the parallels between the colonial era and the neo-colonial era in Kenya are staggeringly similar, as imperialism was simply replaced by capitalism, both promoting the same corruption in the society at large. The ex-colonisers and their servants had transformed into the elite urban class, as wide spread class discrimination sustained its grip on the country. Class, struggle and power dynamics were highlighted, as well as the natural response to enslavement and oppression as illustrated by Ngũgĩ.

The economic impoverishment in Kenya was a direct result of the capitalist powers allowing the unequal distribution of resources among the population, and in order to amend the wrongdoings of bourgeoisie elites Ngũgĩ suggest radical reformation through mass uprising. Ngũgĩ has succeeded in depicting the similar burdens that pre and post independent Kenya shared. Africans, under the threat of the white colonisers were forced to surrender their land to the Europeans during the first stages of colonisation, and from that point forth land became a central point of dispute between different interest groups. Ngũgĩ in his narratives, not only delves into the plights of the poor, but the role of the urban elites, the intellectuals, and the leaders that betrayed their African solidarity. Ngũgĩ, is able to perceive tremendous value in the organisation of workers and their collective struggle to win back their land, leading to a truly liberated Kenya.

Just as Frantz Fanon viewed violence as a necessity to conduct a thorough decolonisation process to remove all traces of colonialism from the land, Ngũgĩ agrees with this approach, that only an armed struggle focused on defeating the exploiters, would give way to freedom from capitalist chains. Ngũgĩ emphasised the importance of all the workers of Kenya becoming united under this common cause, that is to eradicate the exploitative class structure and establish a just society in its place, and let this vision of prosperity be their guiding motivation.

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