
**THE PARADIGM OF A NEW SOCIAL ORDER OF
MUTUAL CO-EXISTENCE IN THE NOVELS OF
NGUGI WA THIONGÓ**

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Abstract:

*This research on the Paradigm of a New Social Order of Mutual Coexistence in the Novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o is drawn from the denotative dictionary meaning of the word "Paradigm". In Ngugi's literary craft, he uses a number of models and archetypes, which serve as patterns for mutual symbiotic coexistence of all mankind in a global context regardless of socio-economic, political, ideological, religious and racial differences. This exposition, which substantiates Ngugi's central premise for the mutual coexistence of all humanity in a global community focuses on his first five novels. The given textbooks are: *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child*; *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*. In specific terms, the Honia River and the tribal schools provide a confluence point of dialogue for two hostile villages in *The River Between*. In *Weep Not, Child* Ngugi uses three metaphors to emphasise the necessity for peaceful coexistence across social and racial lines. In *A Grain of Wheat*, the personality of Kihika, the songs of Uhuru day*

*celebration and the prayer of the Reverend Morris Kingori all combine to provide a point of synthesis between Christian and traditional religions. In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi reinforces this central thesis of finding a medial point of interaction between traditional belief and Christianity through Wanja's Christian mother and Wanja's aunt - a traditional religionist. Then in *Devil on the Cross*, the church Wedding of Gatuiria and Wariinga figuratively merges traditional African and Western Christian values to prove that it is possible to transcend all social barriers if goodwill is allowed to prevail. Indeed, emphasizing the need for team spirit and mutual cooperation as a central metaphor can provide a solution to overcoming all forms of ethnic, racial, religious and other dogmatic and parochial tendencies that threaten the human race in the twenty-first century.*

Introduction

The choice of Ngugi wa Thiongó's first five novels for this study is based on the fact that they share certain common themes and literary influences which run through them all. These sources of inspiration for Ngugi's artistry are: cultural nationalism, Biblical typology, Marxian literary aesthetics, historical reality and gender complementarity. In addition, the chosen novels for this research equally provide a number of paradigms which lay emphasis on nurturing a spirit of love, tolerance, and flexibility and on finding a common ground of peaceful coexistence for all humanity in a global context. This drive to promote mutual collaboration is necessary so that primordial differences that tend to alienate one group of people from the other can be minimized. Indeed, emphasizing

the need for team spirit and mutual cooperation as a central symbolism can provide a solution to overcoming all forms of socio-economic, political, ideological and racial differences.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's paradigm of a new social order consistently makes room for a point of compromise and synthesis between two conflicting religious and socio-cultural values. This literary technique permeates all his novels and naturally encourages the mutual coexistence of all humanity in a multi-religious, global community. In *The River Between*, Ngugi makes use of the Honia River and the tribal schools as a symbolic middle ground between two warring ideologies. In furtherance of this quest for a metaphoric medial point of compromise between two differing religious systems, Ngugi employs three symbols in *Weep Not, Child* to stress the point. These are the intimate relationships of Njoroge and Mwhiki, the meeting of Njoroge and Stephen Howlands during a friendly football match, and the Siriana Mission School, which functions as the symbol of love, tolerance and inter-racial coexistence. To Ngugi, all these serve as prototypes for the union of humanity across all religious and social barriers.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, the personality of Kihika, the songs of the Uhuru Day celebration and the prayer of Reverend Morris Kingori all serve the central purpose of blending the best elements from both Christian and indigenous African traditions. *Petals of Blood*, on the other hand, reinforces the author's stance on tolerance and

accommodation through two symbols. These symbols are the mutual friendship which binds Wanja's Christian mother and Wanja's aunt rooted in traditional religion, and Lillian's cosmopolitan approach to religion. Then in *Devil on the Cross*, the narrator presents the anticipated church wedlock of Gaturia and Wariinga as a symbolic admixture of the best cultural components from traditional African and Western Christian values. These issues are discussed below in sequence.

The Honia River as a Confluence Symbol:

In his art of fictional production, Ngugi wa Thiong'o has deployed various images, symbols, metaphors and other para-linguistic devices to emphasise the need for two beliefs to come to a point or convergence and dialogue. These literary models run through the entire length and breadth of his novels as a recurrent leitmotif to stress the need for moderation and accommodation in a world community. In *The River Between* one of such symbols is the Honia River. This river which provides water to sustain life for the two villages of Makuyu and Kameno located on either side of its banks is variously branded as "cure" and "bringing-back-to-life". The dark waters of the river flow slowly, majestically along its gentle gradient and meandering course. Therefore, it is seen and referred to as a snake symbol. In short, this river which

"flowed through the valley of life" (p.1) in perpetuity functions in Ngugi's artistic space and vision as a confluence symbol.

In the pre-Christian era, its waters nourished and sustained life for both communities. By the time Christianity came in as a divisive force and hostility set in between Kameno and Makuyu, the antagonism did not affect the people's survival on this primordial river of life. Indeed, a spot on the river bank serves as the site for the traditional rite of circumcision. For Nyambura, Joshua's Christian daughter, the area has become a praying ground because it is there that her sister, Muthoni, shed her blood during the ritual and paid the supreme price of compromise between the two mutually exclusive religions. For this tragically innocent and pathetic Muthoni, the Christ-like sacrifice enabled her to achieve a kind of synthesis of values through a symbolic merger of Christian and traditional cultures in her body before dying. This sacrifice is expressive of "the flexibility required by the tribe, the need to adapt to change in order to survive. Ironically, the sacrifice is lost on the characters who surround her" (G. D. Killam 24).

At another level, the river also embodies "the coming together of the tribe and the Christian religion, and is itself a symbol of that unity" (Lloyd Williams 64). It is this confluence symbol which Ngugi now elevates in order to set the tone for a metaphoric entente between traditionalists and

Christians. In this sense, the Honia River symbolizes life, hope, survival and love between the two communities engaged in a religious deadlock. It is this scenario of love across the social divide that Ngugi would later confirm in *Petals of Blood*. These affirmative qualities of social understanding which had earlier come to grief in *The River Between* and deferred in *Weep Not, Child*, are barely rescued through a symbolic reconciliation in *A Grain of Wheat*. But it is only in *Petals of Blood* that this life and love principle results in the literal marriage of equals between an African lady and a white man.

Indeed, to Ngugi, the concept of a literal marriage of equals could have been possible in *The River Between*. If only Waiyaki, the hero from the traditional world but rooted in Christian education, and Nyambura - the Christian girl - were given the chance to transcend the religious discord in which their society was embroiled, then they would have been able to achieve a union of "two human beings, untainted with religion, social conventions or tradition"(p. 76). To the narrator therefore, Waiyaki's attraction to Nyambura is not vacuous, for she is the symbol of all that is beautiful and stable in the midst of social upheaval. She is the embodiment of harmony and serenity symbolized by "the flooding moon and the peace around" (p.77). This explains why the tragic pair, veritable figures of rational compromise between two fanatical religious positions, are opposed by extremists who

seek to entrench "a religion that did not recognize spots of beauty and truths in their way of life" (p.141).

So far, it has become obvious that the fictional world of Ngugi's writing has dramatized clearly that African characters are more flexible and tolerant of European values. It is, however, to be noted at the same time that some early European colonizers and missionaries are portrayed as less flexible and therefore largely unwilling to accept African cultural practices. It is this background of lopsided cultural exchange in the context of the white civilizing mission which is mainly responsible for the uneasy relationships between European Christians and colonizers on the one hand, and colonized Africans on the other.

Indeed, Ngugi suggests, through the art of literary discourse, that the very nature of colonial domination is a catalyst for social disruption and disintegration. The East African novelist shows that Europeans, including some Christians amongst them, are the perpetrators of violence and intolerance of unprecedented magnitude, resulting in the dislocation of the recipient community. A few more explanations will suffice. Foreign Christian and European settlers are at the centre of the contention between the church and the tribe over circumcision rites. That is why the setting up of the *Kiamaas* a tribal purity organization in the wake of foreign cultural imperialism and the establishment of independent African churches form the plot of Ngugi's *The*

River Between.

By the time we come to *Weep Not, Child*, the alienation of Kenya's fertile lands, the imposition of hut taxes, the incarceration of African freedom fighters, the banning of African political agitation, the declaration of a state of emergency with its attendant violence and disruption of tribal cohesion - all at the instance of white officialdom - form the major themes of the novel. Other social problems directly associated with the colonial era in Ngugi's artistic space include the destruction of the sacred *Mugumo* tree and trampling on shrines and other revered objects as proof of Christian invulnerability to pagan powers. Along with these sacrilegious deeds goes the destruction of the shrine of *Mwathi* and its replacement with a museum and a church, the elimination of traditional cultural institutions, and the debasement of African womanhood. These negations have, in turn, engendered violent backlash. That is why Ngugi's literary creative and polemical works seek to create a regenerative image of Africa. All these details and more are present in *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross*, *Homecoming* and *Moving the Centre*, among others. Indeed, Ngugi who considers the craft of literature as an instrument of decolonization consciously sees himself as "first and foremost, a member of the colonized community. He is the voice of the voiceless, the source of inspiration for the suffering, the messiah of the masses" (Femi Ojo – Ade 178).

That is why Ngugi has set out to chart a new course of social stability out of this gridlock by proposing an alternative, humane value system of tolerance and peaceful coexistence as a model of a new world order in spite of differences in religion and ideology among men. Ngugi's implied message in the given context seems to stress the fact that if only the invading European culture had been as flexible and tolerant, perhaps the contact of Africa and Europe would have been mutually beneficial to both parties, devoid of friction.

The Tribal Schools as a Metaphoric Point of Contact between Africa and the West:

At another level, Ngugi's concept of a symbiotic coexistence of different beliefs in a wider world community is expressed at the symbolic level in terms of the tribal schools. According to a fellow Kenyan and political thinker, Oginga Odinga, the typical colonial mission School was rejected because of its double-edged effect:

On the one hand it created a category of educated men who were easily tamed because they had lost their moorings within African society; on the other it stoked up a revolt in the church that led to dramatic breakaway and the foundation of Independent African Churches that preached a gospel with strong political overtones (Oginga Odinga 68).

From Ngugi's artistry in *The River Between* the break-away African schools constitute a figurative point at which the best of Siriana missionary education merges with traditional values. The fusion of these values will create a balanced education which, in turn, will serve as a means of attaining political liberation and regaining the lost lands from white settlers. According to Charles Larson, the novel's hero Waiyaki intends

To unite the villagers - both the Christians and non-Christians - against the white man. This he believes can be done by the educational system which incorporates the best from the traditional culture and from the West (Larson 138).

If this theme of a synthesis of beliefs is to be appreciated from another perspective, Njoroge's early education both at home and at the village school in *Weep Not, Child* has made him think like the product of the break-away schools. Having been exposed to Christian teaching and traditional oral narratives, Ngugi makes his child-hero express this symbolic espousal of values in terms of archetypes. Here, Njoroge equates the Biblical creation story with the Gikuyu myth of human origin, and presents them as one: "The myth of Gikuyu and Mumbi has close similarities with the Christian myth of Adam and Eve, and as far as the young Njoroge is concerned, it is the same" (S. A. Gakwandi

114).Indeed, the boy-hero has effected such a facile association of the two cosmogonies that to him, "it did not make much difference that he had come to identify Gikuyu with Adam and Mumbi with Eve"(p.49).

The Mission School as a Symbol of Love and Tolerance

In his creative genius, Ngugi demonstrates in an interesting episode how the Christian school setting functions as a veritable symbolic bastion of love, tolerance and inter-racial coexistence in the midst of social upheaval. During a football match between the Siriana Mission School and the famous Hill School for European boys in *Weep Not, Child*, Njoroge engages Stephen Howlands, son of his father's white boss in a conversation. Through this dialogue, the boys come to the conclusion that social barriers which stand between them, like religious beliefs, economic disparities and racial prejudices, ought to be discarded. Njoroge states the point succinctly when he says that "it is strange how you do fear something because your heart is already prepared to fear because may be you were brought up to fear that something, or simply because you found others fearing.... That's how it's with me" (p. 110).

At the end of the discourse, the two boys are able to come to an understanding and to transcend the artificial social wedge which stands between them. To Ngugi, therefore, it is this type of entente reached by people across diverse

boundaries that will pave the way for general social understanding and progress. Still in *Weep Not, Child*, the narrator makes use of the virtues of love and mutual coexistence at the Siriana Missionary Secondary School as a paradigm to emphasise a point about unity in diversity. This unique school setting in a country embroiled in an orgy of violence and bloodshed looks like "a paradise where children from all walks of life and different religious faiths could work together without any consciousness" (p. 115).

Ngugi seems to indicate, at the same time, also that the Headmaster who inculcates such virtues in the students equally needs to overcome his own prejudices. This bias is especially directed "against all black politicians who in any way make people discontented with the white man's rule and civilizing mission" (p. 115). If the Headmaster can overcome his prejudices, along with other bigots in the society, Ngugi seems to infer that mutual love, respect and social equality can be achieved. The stability thus engendered will, in turn, create a humane society free of all vices. This fact is reinforced through another setting in the novel, the barber's shop. According to Nwankwo, it is a kind of people's rendezvous. The barber's stories are integral to the author's thematic concern. They constitute part of Ngugi's reductive strategy, pulling all humanity under a common mould in which no man's way is superior to the others (Chimalum Nwankwo 53).

Kihika as a Symbolic Synthesis of Indigenous Revolutionary and Biblical Christ – Figure

In sustaining the leitmotif of an admixture of western Christian values with traditional religious beliefs, Ngugidemonstrates this point in diverse ways in *A Grain of Wheat*. Through Kihika the hero-combatant, Ngugi shows that this persona is a devout Christian who "believed in prayer. He even read the Bible every day, and took it with him wherever he went" (p.21). At the same time, Kihika is the leader of the Mau-Mau resistance movement determined to dismantle white rule in colonial Kenya. Yet he rejects the biblical Christ - model because Kihika believes that the death of Jesus "did not change anything, it did not make his people find a centre in the cross. All oppressed people still have a cross to bear"(p.83). It is then that Kihika proposes an alternative Christ-typology relevant to the Kenyan situation. To the insurrectionist leader, the new sacrificial Messianic archetype is this: "everybody who takes the Oath of Unity to change things in Kenya is a Christ"(p.83).

In the given context, it becomes apparent that Ngugi has replaced the Judeo-Christian story "with an indigenized or hybridized Christianity aligned with liberation and justice", where Kihika has become, in Marxist parlance, an African version of "Comrade Jesus" (Synider 53). This portraiture of Kihika as a man of many roles is borne out by the fact that he is a revolutionary who carries "a Bible he knows as

intimately as the land he is fighting for".As a matter of fact, Ngugi's capacity for presenting a blended version of social reality is not restricted to his archetypal concept of Messianism realized in Kihika. Even the Mau-Mau pledge of loyalty emphasized this propensity for eclecticism. Indeed, it is clearly stated that "the oath of allegiance to the Kikuyu Central Association which came to be associated with the Mau-Mau was administered with a Bible in the left hand and soil in the right hand" (S.A.Gakwandi 114).

Uhuru Celebration as Symbolic Melting Pot of Religious Cultures

The occasion of Kenya's independence celebration provides for Ngugi, a ready paradigm for aesthetic expression. He exploits the art of musical composition, the singing of songs and the prayer said on Uhuru Day to make a point about an interface between traditional African and Christian religious beliefs. Apart from recalling the heroic achievements of their past leaders who won freedom from colonial bondage, as well as planting a tree as a memento "where Kihika once hung"(p.187) in *A Grain of Wheat*, Kenyans also "mixed Christian hymns with songs of initiation rites when boys and girls are circumcised into responsibility as men and women"(p. 177). It is interesting to note that the persona of Kihika in this narrative is essentially an allusion to Dedan Kimathi the charismatic and revolutionary leader of

the Mau-Mau movement in Kenya between 1952 and 1956. Indeed, "His capture and execution in 1957 led to the eventual defeat of the uprising by the British colonial government". (Wikipedia – Dedan Kimathi downloaded on 18/02/2016).

Later still in the course of the festivities, the narrator tells of Kenyan women "singing Christian hymns mixed with traditional and Uhuru songs"(p.187). Through this admixture of Christian and traditional religious tunes, Ngugi provides a common ground of interaction between two religious interest groups within a single national culture. But more than this, he uses the idea to promote a paradigm of a new social order where tolerance, equality and mutual respect for each other's values will serve as a basis for coexistence in a global community. An added dimension to the Uhuru festival which corroborates the idea of a medley of values is the prayer that Reverend Morris Kingorion gave on the occasion. In addition to the preacher's allusion to archetypal symbolic references which cast Kenya's grim struggle for freedom into the experiences of the Biblical Israelites in Egypt and their march to the Promised Land, the opening of the prayer is equally of interest to this study. The Reverend Morris Kingori prays to the "God of Isaac and Jacob and Abraham, who also created Gikuyu and Mumbi"(p.189). This prayer to the "unified" Gikuyu (*Murungu* - for God) and Christian God-figure dramatizes in concrete terms Ngugi's implied paradigm of a new social order. Here, he shows that it was the flexibility and

adaptation of Africans to changing circumstances in their environment, in the first instance, which made it possible for them to welcome and embrace Christianity and the western cultural heritage.

To Ngugi, therefore, the Reverend Morris Kingori symbolizes ideal Christianity which retains its spiritual essence. Yet it is also able to find an appropriate archetype in the local culture through which it relates the gospel message. In fact, Chimalum Nwankwo has reiterated this point clearly when he says:

The Gikuyu drew justification for their cultural predilections and national preoccupations from the Bible. Thus both Gikuyu organizations sought to weave or syncretize Christianity – particularly that of the Old Testament – with values and important aspects of traditional belief and practices (Nwankwo 18, 19).

Wanja's Mother – and – Aunt Friendship as a Marriage of Cultures Leitmotif

Petals of Blood is the one novel in which Ngugi particularly gives full expression to the concept of a wedlock of Western and traditional cultures at both the metaphoric and literal levels. But the former is of immediate interest to our quest. Early in the text, the narrator creates an episode in which this dualism of a Western-Christian and traditional ethos is embodied in mutual social coexistence. In a dialogue

with Munira, the anti-hero and one of the four main characters of the story, Wanja tells of her aunt whose "husband was a hard-core Mau-Mau"(p.65). But more than this, the aunt was quite supportive of the husband's escapades, to the extent that she "used to carry guns and bullets to the forest hidden in baskets full of Unga" (p.65). From Wanja's narrative perspective, the aunt is never known to be "a Christian and used to laugh at my mother's Jesus ways. But they somehow loved one another"(p. 65).

When the aunt eventually died, Wanja's mother was deeply affected by the incident because of the intimacies they used to share together. Ngugi, in effect, uses the episode to demonstrate, in figurative terms, that differences in religious beliefs need not polarize people into mutually hostile camps. Indeed, Ngugi shows here in subtle and allusive ways that true love and goodwill in friendship are potent, affirmative forces which enabled the two women to transcend their religious differences. In a given social context of this nature, it is pertinent to stress that the common humanity that unites all mankind is a virtue of inestimable value, and therefore must be appreciated above all other considerations.

Lillian's All-embracing approach to Religion

Ngugi also presents, in *Petals of Blood*, Lillian's cosmopolitan approach to religion. This prostitute - turned - revivalist preaches a new version of Christianity which

transforms Munira's life. Her sermons usually focus on "a new earth, another world, that knew not classes and clans, that levelled the poor and the wealthy, once they accepted the eternal law of God"(p.298). Apart from the lady's life-transforming messages, Munira who used to consort with her is enchanted and marvels at the new spiritual change that has come upon her. Ngugi's seeming approval of the lady's faith is justified by his allowing Munira to renounce Reverend Jerrod Brown's barren piety and worldly church. Munira then gravitates to Lillian's Church which embraces all humanity on grounds of equality, love and brotherhood. To the novelist, this idea of the oneness of humanity under God comes as a salutary counterpoint to developments generally in *Petals of Blood*; for it is a book in which Ngugi propounds, "in Marxist terms, the exploitation of ordinary Africans by international neocolonialism" (Ousby 112).

The Prospective Wedlock of Gaturia and Wariinga as a Symbolic Fusion of Christian, Modern and Traditional Influences

In Devil on the Cross Ngugi once more deploys a love relationship with auspicious prospects as a paradigm for a union of the best elements from Western, Christian and African cultures. Here, the narrator sustains this paradigm through the personalities, appearance and vocations of the lovers: Gaturia and Jacinta Wariinga as a kind of meta-

language to articulate his concept of a new social order. In the first instance, Ngugi presents Wariinga as a girl who has come to terms with her sinister past. Without going into the gory details, suffice it to say that Mr. Gitahi, also called the Rich Old Man of Ngorika, had seduced and impregnated her. The given episode resulted in the premature termination of her secondary education. With time, however, she decided on making a new start. She attended a Polytechnic, read Mechanical Engineering, and also trained in the martial arts to become an expert in judo and karate. With her professional training, she sets up a garage where she undertakes the repairs of motor vehicles. In effect, she is Ngugi's symbol of educated, self-reliant and liberated womanhood. But more than this, she does not become culturally deracinated on account of her learning. Her eclectic social disposition, which prefigures a marriage of cultures, is expressed in terms of her "wearing a blue weather-beaten jeans and a khaki shirt" (p.217) at the workshop. But on the day she is to marry Gatuiria at the church, "Wariinga was dressed the Gikuyu way" (p.242).

In his artistic space, therefore, Ngugi presents the approaching church union of the two as a wedding of the modern generation that is germane to the modern Christian era, yet is equally in touch with essential aspects of the people's cultural past. The narrator achieves this literary feat by dramatizing that Gatuiria, the University research student in

African culture, believes that "the struggle for national cultures is still a relevant struggle"(p.242). In his studies therefore, he reads about "Music and musical instruments and their uses" (p.59). Central to his studies is the desire to unearth the roots of Kenyan national culture which are to be found "only in the traditions of all Kenyan nationalities"(p.59). His aim in this quest is to contain the dominance of western cultural imperialism from Kenyan national life. This stance is anchored on Gaturia's firm conviction that "a foreigner can never become the true guide of another people"(p.58). He expatiates on this line of reasoning as follows:

It is cultural imperialism that gives birth to the mental blindness and deafness that persuades people to allow foreigners to tell them what to do in their own country, to make foreigners the ears and mouths of their national affairs (p.58).

Expressing a similar sentiment, Achebe once said that part of the inspiration for his creative writing had its origin from the conviction he formed in his undergraduate days. On reading colonialist literature written about Africa, especially Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*, he became persuaded that "the story we had to tell could not be told for us by anyone else no matter how gifted or well intentioned" (Chinua Achebe 25).

Then going back to the anticipated Church marriage of Gaturia and Wariinga in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, it becomes apparent the novelist intends it to be a perfect match

of complementary partners at both the literal and symbolic levels. This is particularly true of Gaturia who has renounced a privileged inheritance within the capitalist mould arranged by his father. To Ngugi, this repudiation of a privileged status is a necessary class suicide if Gaturia's identification with the commonalty must be complete. And it is only on this term of parity with Wariinga's socio-economic background that Gaturia can develop cultural authenticity for his people. While we realize that the much-awaited church wedding does not take place, this is due largely to Ngugi's intentional aesthetic purpose. The narrator has, all along, created a sustained dramatic irony which will result in the discovery that Gaturia's father is none other than the rich Old Man of Ngorika. This is the same man who had earlier ruined Wariinga's life. And Wariinga's elimination of him with a pistol shortly before the church wedding becomes symptomatic of the need to eliminate the destructive, haunting power of the past which the old man has come to symbolize. It is indeed, surprising and illogical that even at this advanced stage of the marriage preparations, the old man still proposes to have her. The open-ended story is therefore Ngugi's way of saying it is possible for a new revolutionary Kenya, symbolized by the young generation, to emerge from the wreckage of the old social order. But suffice it to say at this juncture that Ngugi has made his point about a blend of the best from Christian, African and Western cultural

backgrounds. This is the narrator's paradigm of a new social order which is demonstrated in the personalities and vocations of Gatuiria and Wariinga.

Conclusion

Thus far, this treatise has demonstrated through imagery, leitmotifs and other para-linguistic devices Ngugi's paradigm of a new social order. This is necessary for mutual understanding and inter-faith exchange to take place in a new global community. But it is only free, decolonized humanity that can bring about this new, tolerant and flexible civic society. This is a fact that Ngugi emphasizes in his quest to free his people from the shackles of domination and oppression in all facets of life. Indeed, Ngugi shares the belief of Edward Said, which is to the effect that:

We must strive to liberate all mankind from imperialism; we must all write our histories and cultures rescriptively in a new way; we share the same history, even though for some of us that history has enslaved. This, in short, is writing from the colonies co-terminus with the real potential of post-colonial liberation" (Edward Said 331).

In the given context of liberation as a frame of reference, Ngugi evidently espouses the view that tolerance and adaptation to changing social situations are innate African virtues which have always made for accommodation of new

ideas through the centuries. The reception accorded Christianity and western culture in the last century is a classic example. By the same token, however, Ngugi has equally demonstrated in his imaginative literary works selected for this study how rigidity, inflexibility and intolerance made some early European colonizers and missionaries show utter disregard for African beliefs. This was in their zeal to bring enlightenment to the "Dark Continent". Since Ngugi does not want to become an oppressor while liberating his people, he has proposed the need for dialogue in his writings. This preference for consensus through discussion synchronizes with Paulo Freire's assertion that "the correct method for revolutionary leaders to employ in the task of liberation is ... dialogue" (Paulo Freire 42).

As a matter of fact, this recourse to dialogue in order to enhance social understanding, cooperation and mutual coexistence in a global context between Christians, traditional Africans and indeed, peoples of other creeds and ideologies is essential, and this must be achieved without rancour or acrimony. Indeed, this assertion accords with the declared goal of the Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA), which states as follows:

The Interfaith Encounter Association is dedicated to promoting peace in the Middle East through interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural study. We believe that, rather than being a part of the problem, religion can

and should be a source of the solution for conflicts that exist in the region and beyond. ([www.https://interfaithcounter.wordpress.com](https://interfaithcounter.wordpress.com) downloaded on February 25, 2016).

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