

## Wanawake Wa Radi: A Socialist Ecofeminist Review of Ngugi's Wizard of the Crow and Devil on the Cross

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### Abstract

The urgency of a novel narrative which surmounts the polemics projected by foregoing feminist ideologies is a given. This study therefore, seeks to interrogate the attachment of women to nature in their patriarchal ecology which is exclusive of their biological makeup rather the subjugations they encounter on a constant basis and their effort to rise above these through radical means. Ngugi mirrors a new perspective of a feminist trajectory which defines the female gender recourse to partisan affiliations in her bid to survive the harshness of the society to which she is exposed. Using Ngugi's Wizard of the Crow and Devil on the Cross as primary texts, this work will make references to other secondary materials especially, earlier or later works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as it attempts to redefine revolution from the perspective of a female avant-garde approach which comes to term with the fact that the African female must deal head on with her patriarchal society with its attendant manacle, dearth and debacle, which only the Grace Nyawira and Jacinta Wariingacan rationalize.

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### **Background to the Study**

They competed over who could most denigrate womankind. Women had always been the thorn in the flesh of the human race. ... most of the men concluded, given their descent from Eve." (Ngugi, 2006, 225). The most vulnerable of the classes of the downtrodden in every society is women, and this has been traced to a very distant past; as far back as the time of Jesus Christ, where women and children were never counted. Little wonder, feminism originated from related reasons. This equally is represented in an assertion by Agyo (2017), who cites Bressler affirms thus "Gender discrimination may have begun with the biblical narrative that places the blame for the fall of humanity on Eve not Adam." (124).

Wanawake wa Radi' which is the Swahili translation of 'Women of Thunder' is the denotation of the perspective of Ngugi's two works under study. Through *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi reveals a spate of female revolutions that transcends not only a quest for political independence, but also, a desperate effort for mental and emotional independence. Ngugi joins most feminist writers in "... giving words to similar thoughts about the condition of women in Africa." (p. 83) These revolutions seek independence from the societal imbroglio that has as its major victims, women and children. Rising from the lowly class and having experienced sexual exploitation, deprivation, vagrancy and violence, these females in Ngugi's neocolonial world rise to the occasion when push finally comes to shove, in their different situations.

Within the purview of the Swahili title of this work, this research is an attempt to interrogate Ngugi's unswerving systemic approach to revolution in connection with his new perception of the African female who roars out of her dissenting opinion and decides to champion her angst and walk her talk; thus, affirming Okereke's description of "... the calculated resistance of this oppressive dictatorial agenda of patriarchy by conscious women. A revolutionary writer, Ngugi's stance against neocolonialism has never been in question, compromised, or misguided." (2013, 261) This research aims at authenticating Ngugi's voice that mourns the demise of communism and the incapacitation of Marxism.

### **Wizard of the Crow: A Work of Satire**

A work of satire, *Murogi wa Kagogo* translated as *Wizard of the Crow* by the author, Ngugi in his 2006 narrative expounds the tangibility of hyperbole, while mirroring a decadent imaginary society which he refers to as the Free Republic of Aburiria, whose leader is The Ruler – an autocratic, savage and greedy monarch whose words are iron and incontrovertible. Establishing a cabinet of greedy, corrupt and insensitive Ministers, the Ruler's draconian laws and irreverent projects, especially the *Marching to Heaven*. The latter is sabotaged by the *Movement for the Voice of the People*, whose prominent member is Ngugi's protagonist, Grace Nyawira – a beautiful female woman once married to a stalwart of The Ruler's political ambition. Coming in contact with a job-seeking Comet Kamiti, who holds a doctorate degree from an Indian University, Nyawira uses Kamiti's magical power to begin a 'spiritual' revolution that will rid the Aburirian republic of the bad elements in government. Kamiti's transformation to the *Wizard of the*

Crow begins like a gimmick and later snowballs into an uncontrollable enterprise which finally takes Kamiti to America at the request of the Ruler, for his magical powers. Ngugi's ingenuity in *Wizard of the Crow* is best described by Shija (2009), thus:

*... an attempt at comprehending the human nature in all its entirety  
.... The economic and scientific theories of the West are on trial in the  
fictional Republic of Aburiria in the novel ... daemons, spirits, djinns,  
witches and wizards ... philosophies of black magic, bhuddism and  
mysticism from India are made to provide alternative modes of  
interpretation to the Western Capitalist philosophy which is depicted  
in ephemeral terms as money and market. (245)*

Ngugi through the characterization, characters and the rising action of his narrative lampoons the Eastern African leadership. From the beginning of the novel, Ngugi refers to the illness of the Ruler which has been analyzed using five theories; (Ngugi, 2006, p.3) the fourth theory being a trapping of Charles Dickens' reference of the stagnation of Miss Havisham after her failed wedding in *Great Expectations*, "All the clocks in the house were frozen at the second, the minute, and the hour that she (Rachel, The Ruler's legal wife) had raised the question of schoolgirls; the calendars pointed to the day and the year." (p.8) Ngugi lampooned the Aburirian leaders whose ridiculous decisions exposed the vanity of their intent – Markus flew to Paris to enlarge his eyes " ... so that they will be able to spot the enemies of the Ruler no matter how far their hiding places ... Enlarged to the size of electric bulbs, his eyes were now the most prominent feature of his face, dwarfing his nose, cheeks, and forehead." (13) This earned Markus a new name 'Machokali'. Machokali's action inspired Sikiokouu who sold his Father's land and flew to a hospital in Paris to get his own ears enlarged. Other members of the Cabinet would followed suit but for Benjamin Mambo who went to elongate his tongue that finally dangled like that of a dog. (14-15)

### **Devil on the Cross: The Crucifixion of Kenyan Women**

Published first in Gikuyu language as *Caaitani Mutharabaini*, Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* marks the demise of his Marxist literary inclination and the onset of his lavish affiliation with magic realism. This work displays Ngugi's idea of a female revolutionary trend masterminded by 'trampled' women in his imaginary country, Ilmorog. The work which begins with a narrative by a gicaandi player, (Ngugi, 1982,7-9) a traditional lyrical poet, prophesies of the events which were later to unfold in the work. A declaration of the devastation which the Devil will unleash was aforesaid as the story begins. Ngugi's generous use of narrative techniques including writing in his native language, the oral traditional method (story-telling and the gicaandi player), biblical allusion, and also, the incorporation of archetypal entities. The feast organized by the Organization for Modern Theft and Robbery in Ilmorog drew thieves and robbers not only from within Ilmorog, but also, from France, Sweden, England, Japan, America, Italy and France. (78), was nothing short of comedy of errors. Devastated by the greed and inconsideration unveiled during the presentation at the feast by the members, an insurrection led by one of Ngugi's foremost female characters, and also, an abuse by the Rich Old Man in Ngorika of Jacinta Wariinga, Ngugi's protagonist, is triggered, leading to more insurrections which marks the end of the work:

*Wariinga left the room. People gave way before her. Outside the door she met Kihaahu wa Gatheeca and Gitutu wa Gataanguru. And suddenly, remembering Wangari and Muturi and the student leader – the people who had roused her from mental slavery – she felt an anger she had not felt as she killed Gitahi ... she shot at both Kihaahu and Gitutu splintering their kneecaps. (254)*

### **Theoretical Explanation**

Stereotyping women is the major reason that Feminism became a credible movement to be reckoned with. Sayed believes that:

*Feminism is the movement for the social, political and economic equality of men and women. It maintains that women and men are treated differently by society, and that women have frequently and systematically been barred from participating fully in all the available social arenas and institutions. (69)*

Feminists in Africa emerged from the female writers in the continent whose works seek to expose the plight of the female gender weighed down by patriarchy. In their bid to reveal these burdens, these female writers recount the sad stories of women in their creative works. Gradually, female and male students and aspiring scholars join the cue in illuminating the unfortunate circumstance of the African female living in the continent. These stories began with the fate of the African female in marital and consanguineous relationships; this was followed by the plight of the immigrant African female to other continents, and finally, her work and business tales of woes. In many instances, these feminists/ writers were themselves victims of this patriarchal scourge; hence, their ability to relate with the experiences which they attempt to expose.

Foremost feminist writers from Africa including Ama Ata Aidoo, Mariama Ba, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Sefia Attah, Abubakar Gimba, and many others, who have in different genres produced works that seek to address the unending subjugation of the female gender in Africa. Each writer addresses the peculiarities of the indignation which the female gender suffers in their own direct environment.

Ecofeminism was invented by a Frenchwoman named Francoise d'Eubonne“ ...called for an ecological revolution to be led by women in order to save planet Earth.” (Buckingham-Hatfield, 2000) The Ecofeminist critical theory is a recent emergence that is customizable to fit into the African Feminism. It is a brand of the Feminist literary theory that considers the evaluation of the rights of the female gender employing strictly her environmental factor. In Africa, the environment plays the largest role in shaping the fate of the female gender. It is basically her environment that dictates the cultures and traditions that limits and delimits her potentials. Buckingham-Hatfield (2000), insists that

*Ecological feminism believes that the patriarchal nature of Western society is to blame for the dominance of women by men and of nature by society, particularly through capitalism ... (34)*

In the first instance, patriarchal obsequies have taken the place of statutory laws which are meant to protect the human rights of every African citizen in his or her respective domain/country. This is the reason, a 19-year old in Nigeria does not understand that the age of maturity is 18, and at that point, has a say in his or her own affairs. I shudder when I see Aunties who confront 19-year old's for not praying with them, or parents who force their kids over 18 to study specific courses in the university, or choose partners for them – and in Europe and other advanced continents, no one has the right to coerce adults or minors. Yet these attitudes thrive in Nigeria, and Africa in great measures, because patriarchy says that older people in in the society must be respected no matter what the say and how that affects the next person'.

Two major strands of strands of ecofeminism emerged with its inception: cultural or essentialist, and social or constructivist. (Buckingham-Hatfield, 2001) The theory of socialist ecofeminism, also referred to as materialist ecofeminism establishes that "... women's identities are socially constructed, historically fashioned, and materially reinforced through the interplay of a diversity of race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, ability, marital status, and geographic factors ('social constructivism')." (Warren, 2001). The female is not closer to nature than men as a result of her feministic features, but due to the domination of the female by her patriarchal society which assigns her with roles which subject her to ecological peril. These environmental risks actually bring the female closer to nature than the man who is barely at risk, and is exonerated from most roles. This is the role which Nyawira takes up when she compares the stench from the police officer with 'the stench of uncollected garbage' on the streets of Aburiria. (122) While Brand (2015) avows socialist feminism as a term that "...examines the social recoding of nature and gender with the development of modern science, giving way to a new exploitation of nature and oppression of women", Buckingham-Hatfield (2000) accentuates thus:

*Social eco-feminism argues that because women and nature have both been subjugated by a society dominated by men, women, through the roles they play, are in a better position than men to speak for nature, because of this shared experience of domination. Social eco-feminists contest that there is anything more natural in a woman's body than in a man's and disagree with cultural eco-feminists' belief that there is something which constitutes a woman's 'essence'. (35)*

The tenets of Socialist Ecofeminism bring the female to a point where she looks out only for herself, and takes her own revenge where and when she deems necessary. Based on Ngugi's portrayal of the feminist lone and decisive revolution that seeks justice and equity on her own terms, a brand-new form of revolution is birthed at the end of Ngugi's Devil on the Cross, which is similar to the role of the women in the recent EndSARS agitation in Nigeria. This strand of feminism is remarkable for its two major characteristics including, lone revolution within the atmosphere of the marvelous real; and an extremity that is not typically women. Wariinga's engagement and thrashing of the male who derides her further, in Devil on the Cross affirms the determination of the woman to defend and avenge herself without any qualm of conscience. (1982, 221) It is against this background that a new brand of Feminism must be established to bear the weight of the emotional,

economic, and political obligation under which the African female is subjugated in their patriarchal ecology which she throws off her shoulders on her terms irrespective cultural expectations, social norms, statutory laws or conscience. Within this background, this becomes a given:

*Social eco-feminists argue that women, who, because of their social roles are less able to distance themselves from nature and who experience subjugation and discrimination based on their socially ascribed caring role, are able to share with nature a feeling of being dominated. This entitles women to speak up for nature against its domination. The first step towards ending the social domination of nature would be to dismantle other forms of domination, since social eco-feminists believe that the idea of dominating nature stems from the domination of human by human (Biehl in Merchant, 1996:13).(Buckingham-Hatfield, 37)*

### **Ngugi, the Marxist in his Female Characters**

Ngugi is the pioneer African writer who consistently rode on the back of revolution to address the endemic anomalies in the continent. This consistency is what Ker calls 'commitment' in reference to the modern African writer. Ker (2005), citing Watsberg (1965), in his work, *The Writer in Modern Africa* iterates the sad story of the indifference of the modern African writer thus:

*When the writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognize that his choice lies between denying himself totally or withdrawing to the position of chronicler and post-mortem surgeon. But there can be no further distractions with universal concerns whose balm is spread on abstract wounds not on the gaping yaws of black inhumanity. A concern with culture strengthens society, but not a concern with mythology. This artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the more and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time. It is time for him to respond to this essence of himself. (7)*

Ngugi's fight against capitalism will remain indelible in the hearts of the present generation of class struggle advocates and beyond. If nothing else, the impact of Ngugi's criticism of the African elite beyond Kenya impacts on the African continent as writers from the continent consistently borrow his energy and foresight in the criticism of their own governments. To this extent, Shija (2009) unequivocally avows thus:

Very few African writers are in fact better placed than Ngugi wa Thiong'o to respond to this turn of events (liberal democracy as a system of government in the face of 'enormous weaknesses of the core of the world's seemingly strong dictatorships'). Firstly, Ngugi has demonstrated an unparalleled passion for social and political events in his novels as he keeps track with the ever-changing political trends in both his country and the world at large. As early as 1973 when he had only written three novels, W. J. Howard noticed his tendency to use his art to respond to changing circumstances and situation in his

environment, with each work there is a noticeable change in the use of narrative technique, structure and imaging; internal evidence suggests that there is also a shift from a semi-autobiographical to a complex yet impersonal point of view [Howard, 95]. Thus, his first three novels ... which deal with colonialism and nationalist response to it, attempt to define a messiah, create a compromise of the two contending cultures and also, to redefine nationalism in a multi-ethnic setting, (242)

In his 2006 satiric novel, Ngugi dedicated an entire section titled, 'Female Daemons' to illuminating his female characters whom he imbued larger-than-life personalities. Likewise, Ngugi erects a larger-than-life female in Devil on the Cross who crossed all limits to assert a lone insurrection as she single-handedly executes The Rich Old Man who defiled and fathered her child when she was a teenager; despite the risk of losing the marriage to his son. Gaturia. (2016, 253-254)

Ngugi introduces a women-driven transformation in his bid to save the society; and this may denote that the men may have lost focus and/or control of Africa's apocalyptic and patriarchal society they created. Ngugi's gender narrative is uniquely special apocalyptic. It is no gainsaying that apart from Ngugi's Marxist approach, his feministic ideology has undergone a rebirth in the last three decades. Remarkably, Cloete (1998) accentuates that

*...Ngugi's basic artistic premise, which informs his portrayal of women in a changing world, by contrast, may be interrogated on the opposite grounds: he progressively views his novels as a means by which to express his Marxist political, social and economic ideology.(35)*

Right from the beginning of Ngugi's writing career, he did not buy the urge to present women hopelessly at the mercy of the men, even in the hands of their own men. Should that happen, the men mostly resurrect those women from their attempt at self-destruct that eventually, channels them towards positive energy and self-assertion, just like Zaynab Alkali does in her late works – to the assertion that 'it's a man's world', Safia had strongly refuted, “Not without women. No, never heard of that one before,” (Alkali, 2016, 112)

This is further amplified in centuries after the bible days, in literatures especially of African origin, beginning with the reflection of Achebe's toxic acceptance of Okonkwo's brutality towards his household as he arrogates to himself the privilege of molesting his wives (even when it is abominable to do so), “Okonkwo was provoked to justifiable anger by his youngest wife, who went to plait her hair at her friend's house and did not return early enough to cook the afternoon meal.” (Achebe, 1958, 23). Achebe's hero broke the Week of Peace and damned the consequence because he desperately needed to teach Ojiugo a lesson. In contrast with Ngugi's presentation of the man/woman situation, unlike Achebe, Ngugi mirrors his heroine, Wariinga considering self-destruct on many occasions when she attempted to commit suicide, (1982, 12).

Although both Achebe and Ngugi (early works) mirror the weakness of women, the presentation is uniquely varying – for Achebe, the woman's essence must be trampled by the man, while for Ngugi, the woman herself contemplates to trample herself from which she finally draws strength. It is easier to accept Ngugi's presentation as a fairly considerate stance as the woman allows herself to be broken and also, decides on her accord to pick up her broken pieces and trudge on, defending herself “Wariinga, daughter of the Iregi rebels!” (1982, 222)

Looking at the heroine of the novel, Kambili, the female gender is unable to redeem herself on her own terms and must hide behind a male gender to make a statement. Ngugi's female characters are in contrast with the personality of Adichie's female characters. Grace Nyawira, Me Katalili, Jacinta Waaringa and Wangari; although initially presented in their frailty, summon courage and oomph to face the challenges that tether them in particular, and the society in general with a revolution that was total, by the middle of the narrative. Unfortunately, Adichie's Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* (PH) recognizes the liberty and confidence which she deserves being a female; but is unable to extricate herself from the rope of complexities which the attitude and personality of her father webs around her. Kambili comprehends the woman that she wants to be, as embodied in Auntie Ifeoma, her father's sister, whose equanimity she describes in these words: “She walked fast, like one who knew just where she was going and what she was going to do there. And she spoke the way she walked, as if to get as many words out of her mouth as she could in the shortest time.” (Adichie, 2006, 79)

The compromising resilience of Adichie's female characters in *Purple Hibiscus* reflects a Nigerian feminist who is all thunder and no rain. This contradiction between ideology and lifestyle demonstrates the mentality of a typical Nigerian feminist who is still tied to the apron of patriarchy; and only postulates the merits of feminism only when it is convenient especially in public platforms. However, this in no way, justifies Osofisan's patronizing review of Adichie's heroine in PH described Kambili thus:

*Her heroine, Kambili, may be shy, and submissive but her reticence is the author's deliberate ploy to amplify her power of observation, sharpen her eye for detail and description, and empower her with a prose so fine and so distilled that it intensifies her eloquence and makes the pain even more incandescent. (PH: back page)*

There is a gaping trajectory that must be established if the African female must be redeemed from the literate society within which she is subjugated by every factor, is mostly designed to thwart her actuality. In many occasions, many female writers present women as vulnerable and unbelievably helpless in their works. Adichie's portrayal/development of Mama Achike (Kambili's mother) depicts an emotional unstable human who is unaware of her existence and this is demonstrated by her inability to own up to a crime she ruthlessly committed for which her young son took the fall. Ngugi's Wariinga is a better and more focused female character. Porter further accentuates and rightly so thus:



*Although it is an unfortunate truism that from Homer through the writers of the Bible, Chrétien, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Petrarch, Dante, Balzac, and on to African writers of the twentieth century, we have often seen negative images – even stereotypes – of women, it would be an oversimplification of literary history and, certainly, an affront to the female intellect to conclude, as some of these critics have done, that even female writers who create negative fictional women only do so because they have been blindly led to accept and depict things from the male viewpoint. (62)*

Using his personal experiences as a model, Ngugi creates Nyawira who became so militant to appropriately combat the Aburirian scourge that she became regarded as:

*... the woman who had awakened women's daemons, which in turn, had awakened Rachael's dream, now prowling her prison plantation at night, an illumination for all who lived around to see ... a woman who could raise female and male daemons, was dangerous; a menace to Aburiria. (269)*

Ngugi imbues his Marxist spirit in his female characters which is manifested in Nyawira's membership in the Movement for the Voice of the people, a major pressure group which detracts the government of the Ruler of the Free Republic of Aburiria and 'oppose the right of might with the might of right'. (210) Perhaps, Ngugi's incarceration by President Daniel Arap Moi in the late 1970s, and the struggles of his wife, Nyambura to keep the family for many years in his absence, added to his deep admiration of Ngugi's mother, Wanjiku culminates in this epoch transitional path which is the crux of this work. Every literature scholar will agree with the notion of the mystery surrounding Ngugi's conviction which has astutely survived the different winds of change which have embraced his literary career not only as an African, but also, as a Kenyan. His ideology remains the same even as he adopted varied approaches to sustaining his ideology which can be regarded today as an African ideology beyond his nationality.

The Wangari-led insurrection began to brew when Mwireri, one of the thieves confidently asserts that "Let's not be fooled by socialist cant. To banish theft and robbery from a country is to stifle progress ...it's fitting that property should be in the hands of the nation's successful men ... Wouldn't this be the same thing as throwing precious pearls to pigs ..." (Ngugi, 1982, 79) Wangari challenges him pronto and poses a teaser to him, "... You shamelessly call us workers and peasants 'pigs'?... He who sows and reaps, he who eat what others have grown – which of the two is the lazy one?" (80)

The study of Ngugi's transformational ideology can only be interrogated within the orbit of a clear understanding of the working of his creative mind. Ngugi whose writing career spans over fifty years, and has embraced Marxism as an ideology which is needed to redeem the Kenyan worker and peasant, has remained idealistic in his outlook and presentation of events in his works in general. His 'unrealistic' belief in the state of

perfection is fully demonstrated in all his works, especially in his late memoirs and fictions which are a ridicule of the Kenyan leadership and aristocratic class that has failed the people.

The mystery of Ngugi's conviction can only be interpreted within intrepid revolution. This he births in the fearless characters which he creates in his works, and the stoic personality with which these are graced is the most effective imagery that brings home the allegorical significance of his work. Using the heroic characters across his early and late fictions, this study attempts to elucidate Ngugi's affinity to an avant-garde disposition which spans from the beginning of his writing career, till his mid and late career period - a departure from the didactic style of Ayi Kwei Armah, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer and Meja Mwangi.

Ngugi in his late fictions, makes a conscientious effort to adjust the lacuna between the kiguundas, the Gathonis, the Wangecis and the Njokis in his early fictions and the Gutheras, the Wangaris, the Nyawiras, the and Wariingas, of his late fictions. After Wariinga's contact with Wangari and the long discussion in the matatu, Wariinga puts on her revolutionary panoply which spurs most of the actions in the play. Demonstrating the female power of Ngugi's female protagonists, he successfully mirrors the women's thoughts which resonates a recognition of the devil in the society which must be expelled using women as the combatants, is rife using their innate will and power, "Women ... may be silent, but, like silent streams, you can never tell their depth." (254)

This seemed to be the point at which the male explanation to 'women's lib' had reached at the point Ngugi wrote *Wizard of the Crow*. For the men in Ngugi's world, every coincidence involving women could be easily interpreted as being inspired by women's lib. Even when Tajirika's wife, Vinginia was arrested, Tajirika had wondered, "Has Vinginia become yet another wife of the rich and powerful, taken up to spreading her legs to just about anybody in the name of women's lib?" (225)

It is interesting to note, that Ngugi's literary paradigm remarkably reveals female heroic tendency, orature (oral tradition and literature), and language independence. As he proceeds on the unconventional phase of his writing career, Ngugi bequeaths his revolutionary mindset to his fictional and real female characters, "... Waringa ... Njoki .... My symbols of hope and defiance ..." (Ngugi, 2018, 239); an ideology he has held close to his heart for almost three decades since he penned *Devil on the Cross*.

### **Ngugi's Idea of the New Woman**

The enigma of Ngugi's mind is manifest in his presentation of the aura of the woman around the man. He accords her the savior status and this savior myth can be established in his late fictions. Ngugi sets out to correct the stereotypes wound around women by earlier African writers in his late works. Although in *Weep Not, Child* he exposes the patriarchal mindset of the Gikuyu male through the character of Ngotho, he rescues the woman on his own term. Sayed (2014) asserts thus:

Ngugi establishes a collage of all merits and qualities that women have in terms of leadership and messianic role in his *Weep Not, Child*, where he shows us that women's sound judgment and suppressed voice can be an effectively important factor in bringing liberation and equality to people's life. One of the traditional sufferings of women in the novel is polygamy. Ngotho has got two wives and he looks at women and judges them only in terms of their physical appearance. Love does not have the least consideration in his relationship with his wives. As he admits himself he has married one of his wives because he has "pitied her" and because "Nobody could have taken her" (*Weep* 26) - a humiliating justification that does not seem to be true. (170)

Ngugi's 2020 novel, *The Perfect Nine* in which he arrogates nine women with bespoke qualities and valiance. Ngugi's idea of a new African amazon, like Nyawira is one who understands her role and is disposed to choose the appropriate one in the appropriate situation, There are two kinds of saviors: Those who want to soothe the souls of the suffering and those who want to heal the sores on the flesh of the suffering. Sometimes, I wonder which is right." (94)

Launching Kamiti into the art of magic (which Kamiti had been exposed to earlier in his life), Nyawira's presence presents Ngugi's readers with the psychosomatic effect that comes with the presence of the woman around the man, and the sudden awakening which is scary. As soon as Nyawira discovers Kamiti's 'magical powers' (p. 129) and 'the rich and powerful denouncing scientific reason in favour of illogical mumbo jumbo' (p. 151), she went in search of Kamiti when he left her home at the Prairie where she encourages him to practice magic as 'the Wizard of the Crow'.

Arigaigai Gatherer summarizes his experience with magic when he physically combats with the words inscribed on Kamiti's door. (98) Porter () observes however that Ngugi 'traditional' portrays "brave, resilient, resourceful and determined women . . . (Porter, 65) and "...it is the positive and attractive qualities of the women that are always stressed." (69)

Women in Ngugi's world are no longer the ones who "...simpleminded and gullible, beautiful and naïve, shrewd and talkative, indecisive and independent ..." (Nwagbara, 2012, 132) in eyes of Soyinka in his earlier works. They are like Wariinga who, after two years of her encounter with Satan while she was sleeping during the Devil's feast at the Cave:

*... used to burn her body with Ambi or Snow fire to change the colour of her skin to please the eyes of others, to satisfy their lust for white skins; the one who used to think that there was only one way of avoiding the pitfalls of life: suicide... decided to be self-reliant all the time, to plunge into the middle of the arena of life's struggles in order to discover her real strength and to realize her true humanity." (Ngugi, 1982, 216)*

Apavigba (177), citing Onwuejogwu presents this disastrous circumstance by averring that "... women are compelled to reproduce even when their lives are at stake." In fact, he goes further in citing Weiss and Mane (178) in Idyorough and Ishor that "In developing

countries generally and Nigeria in particular, women hardly have control over when, where and how sex takes place.”

Ngugi “...presents female characters as powerful women who rather than being sexually and psychologically flattened by the African culture, choose to redefine their roles in supportive and mutual relations with African men and with their families.” (Masibo, 2009) Through the mind of Kamiti, Ngugi interrogates the rhetoric and esoteric impression which curls around the image of the woman in Africa in a long time when growing up, Kamiti used to hear stories of women who lived in the big waters who sometimes, appear alongside unsuspecting male swimmers and accompany them to the edges of the sea ... a few were lucky and escaped, but there were many others who were lost forever, victims of the alluring power of the female riders of the sea ... Was Nyawira one of these women of his childhood fears? Different images of her flashed through his mind ... there was something about her that did not add up, (89, 90)

Nyawira's rebellion is limitless as she strongly advocates the loss everything including marriage, “Today, one can walk freely out of this prison (marriage) if one so wants. Even in the past, women could always go back to their parents or choose to live on their own. There were women who married other women, even.” (429) Vinjina's resolve is more ruthless – death. A new revolution emerged from a consultation between Vinjina who sort to kill her husband, Tajirika with Nyawira who secretly operated as the Wizard of the Crow when Kamiti was taken to America by the government. “The rumours that Aburirian women were up”

### **Women of Thunder: Politics and Feminity**

Through his works, Ngugi raises women of thunder ready to match their challenges arm for arm; leg for leg. Thus, Ngugi appears to be a “... groundbreaking example of the modern African male author's shift from portraying women as objects to that of subjects ...” (Ngugi, 1986, 212). The reality of the incision which patriarchy through the society inflicts on women everyday cannot be overemphasized. Nyawira unequivocally recognizes this verity when she declares to Kamiti the fate of the woman who bears the brunt of every frustration of her ecology, “Women bear the brunt of poverty. What choices does a woman have in life, especially in times of misery?” (Ngugi, 2006, 83)

Prior to feminism, patriarchy defined the relevance of the female gender in her society; and actually goes further to delimit her psychological, emotional, economic and social advancement. This pedestrian situation is best captured by Bauer () thus:

*The male is the head of the family. No woman can rule over him. Women are placed on earth to amuse and comfort the man. She was meant to behave like the silent girls who help the magicians do the trick on stage. She must be kept in her place. When there is no propaganda that tells her to revolt, she can be very useful and pleasant. (65)*

Even Tajirika's very young child, Gaciru understands female power, ""Who told you that women cannot fight?" (p. 156) Nyawira's zeal as a member of the Movement for the Voice of the People remain undeterred by the summation that 'In Aburiria, politics was strictly a masculine affair'. (p. 219) Not long after, Nyawira became the most wanted person in Aburiria under the Ruler's order 'to take her dead or alive'. (215) She became a plague that must be hunted down by the Aburirian government, yet she was not deterred; Nyawira was so determined that "" ... she felt like singing to celebrate being a woman ... She knew that security forces would be on the lookout for the members of the movement, but she did not feel unduly concerned about her personal safety." (p. 219)

Her determination comes as a rude shock to Tajirika when he discovers Nyawira is a member of the Movement for the Voice of the People, an enemy of the state. In his opinion, she ought to put her beauty to other uses rather than lead a revolutionary group, "It was rare in Aburiria for a woman to have such strong morals, and it clearly indicated something not quite right about her (Nyawira) ..." (228) The actions of the women during the launching of the Marching to Heaven project in which they caused a stampede remained a mystery to the government, especially the Ruler. (22 and 235) This culminated in the action of the women during the procession at the unveiling of Marching to Heaven. Nyawira and other women had embarrassed the Ruler before foreign diplomats. (249-251), and thereafter, recognizably became an enemy of the government following the prize of getting her arrested. For her, the onus to save the people from bad leadership lied on her as a citizen, completely.

The uncompromising stance which the Aburirian women who were members of the Movement for the Voice of the people cannot be overemphasized. Technically defeating the politically-savvy Ruler, he accepts that "... all women, be they mothers, wives, sisters, or daughters, were an enigma and not to be trusted. Never trust a woman ... for woman is the source of all evil." (263)

### **Conclusion**

Ngugi's late writing career is marked with a swift affinity to escapism hidden within magical realism and fostered by female revolutionaries. Being a progressive, Ngugi recognizes the disparity between bullish fight and technical engagement. While the former is expounded by the male revolutionaries, the latter is championed by the female revolutionaries. Gracefully, Ngugi identifies these dynamics and he positions his characters appropriately. Unarguably, "The interpretation of social reality in a traumatized mind of a writer goes beyond empirical substantiation as it assumes a phantasmagoric dimension owing to its inability to grapple with irrationality." (Shija, 2009, 244)

Despite the sacrifice of women to humanity, her choices to subsist is grossly limited, "... She can bear children and bring them up. And be abused by her husband ..." (Ngugi, 83) Ngugi's late works encapsulates the totality of the perception behind this research work. The culmination of his perceptive assessment as contained in his late works presents all the women in his life as the real reason why the fight for a new and reformed Kenya is worth the fight and incarceration. Sayed (2014) observes rightly,

... as he wants to project the African woman as a survivor of the harshest conditions. It exposes a number of the patriarchal challenges and constraints imposed upon helpless women by traditional African societies. Actually, the central themes of female assertiveness and post-independence dilemma of the motherland permeate Ngugi's novels. His approach evokes a veneration of the African woman with "mountains on her back. (170)

Sustained completely by the memory of the women in his real and imaginary life - a systematic departure of overdependence on male revolutionaries typical of the African folklore, is uniquely championed by Ngugi; thereby introducing a new dialectical method to this established fact in the African narrative. This research attempts to recognize the conspiracy of a mutation of existing structures in the African ecosystem that debilitate the image of the woman in her environment. Ngugi creates women of thunder who like Wariinga " ... knew with her heart that the hardest struggles of her life's journey lay ahead ... " (254)

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