Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.2 No.2 December, 2019; p.g. 133 – 143; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

IMPERIAL COMMERCIALISM AND THE MAKING OF LOCAL COMPRADORS: ENGAGING THE KENYAN EXPERIENCES IN NGUGI'S NARRATIVES

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Abstract
The Europeans' contact and voyage into African continent was largely based on trade and the expansion of their Business Empire and interest. This has been documented several times by scholars and authors across many disciplines especially in Humanities and Social Sciences. Notably among these include Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Claude Ake, among others. In "Pitfalls of National Consciousness" Fanon exposes the evils that attended imperialism in Africa and the aftermath effects that have ravaged and dwarfed critical developments in Africa East Africa because of its fertile topography was at the receiving end of these ugly trends which have dominated social, economic and political discourse in the region. The various crises that have attended East Africa are largely economic and political as a result of the imbalances in the distributions of social goods which have been brutally skewed against the mass of the people. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's entire writing career has been tailored along addressing the gulf created by the imperialists and their local-made compradors which serve as their conduit pipes against the peasants. This paper therefore aims at re-engaging the narratives of Ngugi by exposing further using contemporary issues the conspiracies that led to the emergence and the dominance of compradors in East Africa in general and Kenya in particular. It recaptures the experiences of the people in the hand of the imperialists made local compradors in the underdevelopment of Kenya society and the attendant struggle for economic freedom. Using Postcolonial theory tailored along Fanonian concept, the paper tries to examine the history of economic system in Ngugi's narratives as they affect Kenyan people and traces it to the contemporary happenings in order to establish its impact on the society. The paper employs critical close reading of four Ngugi's novels for its analysis, namely Petals of Blood, Devil on the Cross, Matigari and Wizard of the Crow. It establishes that the blunted development and growth of Kenya societies have been due mostly to the imperial commercial approach and the continued collaborations with their local agents known in Marxist parlance as compradors. It further reveals that every attempt by the people to free themselves from the shackles of this economic conundrum has been fiercely resisted by the imperial lords in cahoots with their local agents. This invariably has impeded the economic growth of the vast majority of the populace. The paper further brings to the front of international discourse the sustained roles of imperialism in the stunted growth of the African societies which has remained open-ended. Through its engagement, the paper reawakens the consciousness of the people to the grave danger of imperial commercialism and the collaborative tendencies of the local compradors which has taken different methods while retaining the original principles of exploitation and impoverishment of the masses.

Key words: Imperialism, Commercialism, Local Compradors, Kenyan Experiences, Ngugi's Narratives.

Introduction

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's literary discourse critically refracts and reflects on the historical dynamism that has attended Kenya as a country. He has mostly in his career projected the various intricacies that have shaped his country beginning with its contact with European imperialists. Kenyan contact with European powers led by the British just like most African countries has a serious effect on the eco-social, political and economic structure of the country.

Overview of Kenyan Economic History

The Kenyan coastal strip was integrated to the world economy through the ancient world trade routes that spanned African, Asia and Europe between 70AD and 1500 AD. Foreign traders brought their wares to Kenyan coast and left with African goods (1). After 1500 AD, Vasco Da Gama discovered a new trade route to Asia through South Africa. This new route began the process for the European countries dominion of the commercial and economic activities of the East African coast with Portuguese establishing themselves in the 16th and 17th Centuries. The Portuguese were to be later displaced as a major dominating force in East Africa commercial activities by Omani Arabs in the 18th Century. After some time the British took over from Omani Arabs first at the coastal strip in the year 1895 and later the interior trade routes all the way to Buganda Kingdom by the year 1920. In order to expand and make the economic trade more efficient, the British built a railway from Mombasa at the coast to Kampala, the then capital of Buganda Kingdom. The railway was constructed along the old trade route and was built by the Indian labourers. Major towns in Kenya were founded along the railway line backed by European settler farming communities. This features significantly in Ngugi's fictional setting and towns. The Indian labourers who stayed back after the railway construction were the first set of people to establish and own shops otherwise known as Dukawallah in the new towns along the railway lines as we see in the fictional town of Ilmorog in Ngugi's narratives. The farming European settlers and the Indian shop owners laid the foundations of the modern formal economic activities in Kenya. This they achieved by displacing the native traders during Colonial period among prominent Asian-Kenyan business owners whose businesses began as Dukawallah include Manu Chandaria and Madatally Manji (Hambata: 1993,97). Ironically, while Europeans and Indians enjoyed good and excellent business growth and expansion between 1920 and the year of Kenyan independence in 1963, Kenyans were robbed off their land and its resources, degraded and wrecked and forced to work for little pay or wage under the most dehumanizing and agonizing working conditions based on well-oiled system of racial segregation powered by imperialism (Ruth Catherine 1974:14).

After Kenya got independence in 1963, its first president Jomo Kenyatta developed as a policy; Africanization of the Kenyan economy, massive economy growth through public investment, encouragement and motivation of small holder agriculture production and incentives for private mainly foreign industrial investment. This by Ngugi's narratives has been largely a decoy designed by the agents of imperialism to deceive the people. The ignored "Sessional Paper Ten of 1965" written by Tom Mboya and Mwai Kibaki who later succeeded President Arap Moi emphasized seriously the need for Kenya as newly independent country to avoid the Western backed capitalistic economy, the eastern driven communism but to completely rely and focus on African socialism which they considered to be more culturally attuned to Kenyan reality. This is to ensure that Kenya's economic growth and development do not depend on any satellite economic and political relationship to any country or group of countries regardless of the temptation. They opined that such reliance on alien economic system would be highly inimical to the sustainable growth and development of Kenya. Ngugi refracts this very issue strongly in his narratives.

Despite the attendant growth of GDP at an annual average between 1963 and 1990, Kenya economic performance however began to cave in to imperialistic dominated economic structure as captured by Ngugi in *Devil on the Cross.* This led to economic decline as a result of the policies that favoured only the local compradors ahead of the people. Kenya's policy of import substitution which started in 1946 with European and Asian enterprises, did not provide the needed industrial and economic evolution results and the rising oil prices made Kenya and most African countries manufacturing sector non-competitive and inefficient beginning in the 1970 (Meilink Henk 1982, 17). The government of Arap

Moi began a massive encroachment into the private sector through lack of export incentives, high import and foreign exchange controls which rendered the domestic environment for investment less attractive. From 1991 to 1993, Kenya had its worst economic performance since independence as GDP growth stagnated and agricultural production shrank to a record low. This made inflation rate reached a 100 percent high in August 1993 with the resultant government budget deficit over 10 percent of GDP. As a result of these inter-connected problems, bilateral and multilateral donors suspended programme aids to Kenya in 1991 and strongly demanded for comprehensive reforms in all major sectors/Green house, Steven Micheal "Aid donors led by the USA insisted on Kenya reforms" *New York Times* Archives; Nov. 27 1991.

At the height of Arap Moi regime between 1980s-90s, the introduction of International Monetary Funds (IMF) and World Bank Sponsored Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was largely responsible for the massive decline and economic stagnation in Kenya for close to two decades. Some of the conditions attached by SAP were highly retrogressive for the Kenyan people, these include; structural adjustment loans and strict conditions regarding policy which were responsible for massive reduction in government spending on economic and social services, a reduction in education employment and which led to high rate in unemployment especially in the agricultural sector. (Rono, 2002: 91). As a result of lack of attention for the formal sector of the economy, it gave way to the rise and growth of the informal sector, living standards waned drastically and Kenya opened up to the global economy (Kinyanjui, 2014,12). Ngugi makes a strong depiction of the activities of IMF and World Bank in *Wizard of the Crow* which is a watershed of his literary discourse.

Succumbing to the international monetary orbit, Kenya again began a major programme of economic reform and liberalization. This was anchored by the new Minister of Finance and the Central Bank governor who undertook series of economic measures with the "assistance" of the World Bank and IMF. The roles played by the monetary orbit is captured in Ngugi's fictional Republic of Aburiria in *Wizard of the Crow*. In acceding to this, the government of Kenya removed price controls and import licensing, eliminated foreign exchange controls, privatized a range of publicly owned companies and brought down the number of civil servants and conservative fiscal and monetary policies were introduced. (Rono, 2002: 95). In 1997, however, the economy began to slow down and stagnant growth set in which to some extent was as a result of adverse weather condition and inactive economic participation. This was largely caused by the general election in December 1997. Also IMF had prior to the elections suspended loans to Kenya for three years because the country refused to fulfill the commitment made to the body. World Bank also suspended 90m dollar structural adjustment credit. Ngugi has consistently opposed to the involvement of international money lenders in the running of Kenyan economy. This to him has a more devastating effect on the people than any other factors, Rono submits. This has equally remained one of the major leitmotifs in his narratives.
However, between 2003 and 2008, under the newly inaugurated leadership of Mwai Kibaki, the economy witnessed an improved growth and recovery. When Kibaki became the president, he quickly established National Debt Management Department at the treasury, improved the efficiency to Kenya Revenue Authority to increase government revenue, reformed financial laws on banking, wrote off the debts of strategic public institution and ensure that proportionate percentage of government tax revenue was invested in economic development projects. This boosted more tax revenue in 2004 which helped the budget for the year. It also assisted the massive investment in infrastructure development which reduced the debt profile significantly. This of course cannot be divorced from the ideological persuasion and his understudy of President Moi as Vice President.

From the above overview of Kenyan economic history and their contact and relationship with international financial orbit, we can now conveniently connect the raw materials that produced Ngugi's literary thematic thrusts. Ngugi has reflected and refracted on the dynamism that has shaped Kenyan socio-economic and political system and laid the blame of his country's stuntedgrowth on the collaboration and conspiracy between the imperial powers and their local agents known in Marxist parlance as compradors.

In his "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness", Frantz Fanon (1963) submits that

> …the national consciousness of under-developed countries is not solely the result of mutilation of the colonized people by the colonized regime. It is also the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of the spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mould that its mind is set in… (119).

This suggests that the stunted economic growth of the colonized country is not solely because they were colonized but also due to the fact that the middle class refused to rise up to the challenges of nation building. This is brought about by their detached posture to the plights of the ordinary people in their country while looking forward to copy the style of the imperial masters. In similar vein, Anne McClintocks (2000,85) argues that post colonialism re-inscribes the colonialist discourse of linear time and progress and completely ignores the continuities of imperial power in the post-independence period. To her "the historical rupture suggested by the preposition "post" belies both the continuities and discontinuities of power that have shaped the legacies of the formal colonial empires (2000: 86). She equally opines that one of the problems of post colonial as a term is that it signals the privilege of seeing the world in terms of a singular and historical abstraction (87).

In Ngugi's narratives, he echoes Fanon on the fact that "the landed bourgeoisie refuse to take the slightest risks and hazard" (Fanon,124). This is largely responsible for the inability of the local compradors in Africa to take over the capital flows generated by the colonialists in Africa. The colonialists at their departure did not leave behind local compradors who were captain of industries but those who would constantly depend on importation of goods and services from the West. This principally has been the leitmotif of Ngugi's Neo-colonial narratives in which he has refracted his society massively.

The national bourgeoisie created by the colonialist according to Fanon "only recently come to know themselves" (132) albeit belatedly. Initially, they only sat back and created a utopia State in their minds which is the bane of African development. They were only interested in the exploitation and maximization of profits without the interest of the vast mass of the locals. They were quite clear from inception when negotiating for independence as what their objectives were and had decided to bar the way to national prosperity for the interest of the few. The coordinated effort of the masses to triumph over stupidity, hunger and poverty was dashed on the altar of greedy few. This amplifies the position of Ngugi in his narratives that Africans particularly Kenyans understand that their prosperity can only be achieved through what Fanon calls "upward thrust of the people, and under the leadership of the people, that is to say, in defiance of the interests of the bourgeoisie" (132). In order to achieve this, the paper opines that the people should stand and oppose the single party system. This becomes imperative in the sense that having become powerless economically, unable to bring about the existence of coherent social relations and structures and standing on the principles of its domination, as a class the bourgeoisie chooses the solution that seems to it the easiest way out which is the single party (Fanon, 134). Though the people of Kenya have replaced the single party system for the multiparty system the effects are still obvious and the bourgeoisie largely controls the parties' structures. This is demonstrated further by the party during the battle to control all the economic resources of the people, they have drawn to itself the whole nation and now the party seems to be falling apart and they quickly designed a multiparty system while retaining the principles of oppression and subjugation. The intellectuals, who on the eve of colonial departure rallied to the party, did it with no end in view other than to secure their slices of the cakes of independence. This made the party, either single or multi, a means of private advancement. This is the foundation and the factor responsible for the stunted growth of Kenya in Ngugi's narratives.

Textual Analysis of Ngugi's Novels

In Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*, we are presented with the brutal activities of the Kenyan compradors in the dislodgement of the people from their ancestral source of livelihood. This validates the position of McClintock argument that imperialist practices continue on into the post colonial era and are manifested in a variety of forms, particularly in guise of transnational capitalism in post-independence Kenya. In

aligning with McClintock's position, an analysis of post-independence situation especially the compradors' activities in Kenya requires an understanding of Kenya historical contexts which shaped neo colonialism in Kenya in specific forms with specific solutions. Ngugi's narratives are focused therefore on the processes and effects of neo colonialism on the oppressed masses of the Kenya nation-state. The neocolonial nation-state controlled by the local compradors not only exploits the oppressed economically but also deprives them of their humanity and history.

Petals of Blood conveys the story of the transformation of a rural village, Ilmorog into a commercial town. The novel also tells the story of four major characters who come from outside the village and play vital roles in the transformation. Munira, the school headmaster, Karega, a trade-unionist, Wanja, a prostitute and a barmaid and Abdulla, the owner of a bar and a former Mau-Mau fighter are the major characters that convey Ngugi's thematic thrust from the oppressed perspective. The four of them have unresolved pasts that have brought them face to face into the current reality of transforming Ilmorog. They lose out in the struggle to control the economic activities of Ilmorog to a more formidable and Western backed local compradors.

The temporal focus of the novel is post-independence Kenya in its early stage and the attendant intricacies of building a viable society. Ngugi, through his characters explores how the gains of independence have been effectively cornered by the local compradors, how the ideals of the national liberation are betrayed by the emerging ruling and economic classes who have aligned themselves with the exploitative ideologies of a transnational neocolonial bourgeoisie and how people like Abdulla who actually fight for independence are displaced and unrecognized in Kenyan history. The novel can be qualified as Ngugi's strong attempt at exposing the exploitative system of neocolonial capitalism and to speak as a representative voice of the marginal.

A major leitmotif that is extensively elaborated in *Petals of Blood* is the emergence of the local elite and the bourgeoisie as the new economic and political classes in the post-independence Kenya. These set of emerging classes ally themselves with the exploitative ideology of the imperial powers and betray the masses on whose behalf they attain their power. In the novel, the Ilmorogians form and send a delegation on a journey to liaise with Kimeria, their MP in the capital Nairobi. They are to request for a solution to their drought-stricken community. The drought has a significant meaning in that while it suggests the environmental fragility of the community, it also evidently represents the hardships the peasants are facing in post-independence Kenya. There is a practically deep disconnection between the political and economic class and the masses. This accounts for the continued neglect of Ilmorog by the ruling class until it is ripe for them to come and dislodge the villagers for their commercial activities. It is instructive to know that Ilmorog is a micro representation of Kenya. This negligence brings misery to the villagers who are representatives of post-independence Kenya. The departure of the British colonizers does not mean the end of imperial powers, on the contrary, the educated elites and middles-class like Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria who take over the political and economic controls from the imperial powers reconstitute and reorganize the colonial regime and begin to exercise brutal powers over their own people. By merely seeking to create connections with multinational businesses for their own advantages as we see in *Devil on the Cross*, they do not, in fact practically establish economic and political system that would transform the country post independence. Fanon again amplifies very aptly thus:

> The national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is not engaged in production, nor in inventions, nor building, nor labour, it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and to be part of the racket. The physiology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of a captain of industry (150).

By copying the role of imperial economic powers the national compradors in post-colonial Kenya function as "the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism" (Fanon,153). Instead of the local compradors being the voice of the nation, as they used to be during the Mau-Mau Emergency and the battle for

independence period, the elites betray the basic ideal and essence of the nationalist liberation movement and the hope of the people by fully accepting imperial commercialism. The MP in *Petals of Blood* for example, aligns himself with transnational interest at the expense of the ecological survival of his constituents. He gets capital from imperial investors, he buys the land, displaces his people from their ancestral land and transforms Ilmorog into a tourist attraction where tourists from outside come for young and fresh prostitutes. He is not interested in alleviating the suffering of his people but only concerns himself with the development of his business with imperial investors. As Fanon rightly says again that; "…the landed bourgeoisie refuses to take the slightest risk, and remains opposed to any venture and to any hazard. It has no intention to building upon sand; it demands solid investment and quick returns" (156).

Petal of Blood clearly demonstrates and at the same time critiques the processes and impacts of imperial powers on the subjugated masses and workers in Kenya who for Ngugi are the principal and the principled actors in the anti colonial battle. The interventions of imperialist powers manifest themselves in the forms of transnational corporations and international development organizations which are approved by the national compradors and the political elite as also portrayed vividly in *Devil on the Cross*. These organizations give loans to the peasants and encourage them to engage in all manners of big-scale farming with machines without the technical knowledge to sustain them. They import fertilizers and make them hire labourers. The workers are equally convinced to sell their plots of land and invest in commercial business without the basic knowledge for such instead. Incapable of producing agricultural products at the expected level, the peasants incur huge debts, and their land is thus confiscated by the bank and they are rendered landless in their own ancestral land. This is all planned out to deprive the people of their ancestral heritage which land represents. This is the second land robbery after the colonialists stole the land during their conquest. The coming of imperialist economic system inevitably leads to restructuring the mode of production alien to the people and transforms human and social relations and structures in post-colonial Kenya. Being the representative of a new Kenya affected by imperialist economic system, Ilmorog goes through a brutal transformation with only the local compradors and their imperial masters as beneficiaries.

The transformation symbolizes by Theng'eta production, shows that Ilmorog, once a drought-stricken community, has now fully embraced the ideology of capitalism and transformed itself into national economy controlled by international owners in cahoots with local compradors. The once communal drink made for ritualistic purposes is turned into a commodity produced to make profits in an international market. This illustrates vividly Marxist criticism of exploitative capitalism that "turns use value (Theng'eta made of local herbs with care by the locals for their own use during festivals and ceremonies) into exchange commodity value (Theng'eta commercially produced simply as a commodity to be sold for the greatest possible profit)" (Ngugi, 1999, 83). The profits from the drink never come to the people like Abdulla who are instrumental to the popularity of Theng'eta, but rather go to black businessmen who share them with the foreign investors. Looking at it from Fanonian viewpoint, it is clearly shown that Mzigo, Chui and Kimeria, who represent local compradors, do not produce anything, but borrow capital from foreigners and buy the Theng'eta brewing licence which is initiated by Abdulla. This demonstrates the fact that the local compradors merely act as the intermediaries who seek to construct Ilmorog (Kenya) in the image of the imperialist powers.

Ilmorog is thus transformed from a very serene community to a complete boisterous city at the expense of the land of poor peasants and the workers. This engenders a new social organization that alters human relations and consciousness:

> Within only ten years…Ilmorog peasants had been displaced from the land some had joined the army of workers, others were semi-workers, with one foot in a plot of land and one foot in a factory, while others became petty traders in hovels and shanties they do not even own, along Trans-Africa Road, or criminals and prostitutes who with their stolen guns and our used cunts eked a precarious living

> from each and everybody-workers, peasants, factory owners, blacks, whites-discriminately (*PB*,302).

Neo-colonialism through the activities of the local compradors not only manifests itself in terms of economic oppression, but also has a devastating psychological effect on the vast masses in Kenya. Ngugi is not only calling our attention to the plight of the peasants and working-class people in its materials aspects, but he also wants to demonstrate how the people are marginalized and subjugated by the local compradors in Kenyan historiography. Ngugi's concern is that the sacrifices made by the masses in the course of liberation struggle have been erased completely from national memory and consciousness of Kenyan people. This is depicted very clearly in the people's reaction to and reception of Matigari when he emerges from the forest in *Matigari*. This is equally and aptly portrayed in the character of Abdulla. He is one of the freedom fighters who make a change in Kenyan history from colonial to post-colonial, but he is not recognized by the state rather marginalized from the history and consciousness of the people.

> Abdulla had fought for independence…….he was now selling oranges and sheepskins to tourists and drinking Theng'eta to forget the force demolition of his shop……I was an accident…. I was a mistake, doomed to a spectator's role outside a window from a high building (*PB*, 297).

In sharp contrast to Abdulla is Kimeria, a local comprador, who makes his fortune by being home guard who transports bodies of the Mau-Mau killed by the British. After being rewarded as an MP, he benefits from the new economic development project of Ilmorog along with his fellow local compradors Chui and Mzigo. The very people who betray the cause of independence struggle are benefiting from the resources of the land while those who fight with their lives languish in penury. Ngugi uses *Petals of Blood* to address both the issue of the discursive representations of Kenya in history and material changes in the neo-colonial Kenya.

This material change dominates Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*. This he demonstrates in his belief that capitalism is a systematic robbery of peasants and workers and the creation of super rich and brutal local compradors. It is a robbery protected and supported by large courts, parliament, religion, armed forces, police and educational institutions. This is demonstrated by Ngugi to show how they all combine efforts and energy to undermine the positive material change in modern Kenya.

The seven representatives are the neo-colonial powers indulging in the most heinous corrupt practices and exploitation in cahoots with the local compradors. Each one wears shirts made of paper money of their respective homelands in order to show affiliation and reveals his grabbing of the Kenyan economy. They take away the resources by indulging in the brutal exploitation of the workers and peasants. One of the local compradors, Gitutu wa Gataanguru is a big-bellied who fattens on land at the expense of the masses. He proudly reveals how he has taken over vast estates from the White settlers, subdivided them into plots and sold them at high prices to the citizens. He puts it succinctly thus:

> The land wasn't mine and the money with which I had paid for wasn't mine and I had added anything to the land-where did I get the 220,000 shillings? From the pockets of the people. Yes, because the land really belongs to the people, and the money with which I brought it came from the people!! I myself had only switched things from one hand to the other. I had done a bit of multiplication and put the answer into my pocket (*DC*, 106).

From the testimonies of the local compradors, it is simply a contest to outdo each other in order to show who has impressed the imperial powers most in the act of exploitation. These testimonies cover every aspect of Kenya economic, social, political and cultural life. The local compradors have the full backing of the imperial powers who have assumed the "blacknisation of the colonialism" from the backdoors immediately the European left. The novel gets to its peak when each claims the crown of social crime and gives a new system of exploitation. Kihaaku describes the plastic puppets of White children he deploys to supplement White head ministers in enticing parents to enroll their children in the school.

Gitutu looks forward to the class instead of tiny toys, plots of land being solid, and citizens will queue up to buy near plots or trays of soil to grow for sustenance. He would also give air to the workers in the airtight bottles. Nditika suggests the conferring of the market in the human organs for transplants so that the elite will purchase the physical immortality and leave death to other who incidentally are the masses. This shows the brutality of the African local compradors backed by the imperial powers to wreck havoc on the masses. *Devil on the Cross* creatively shows how the Kenyan compradors exploit an army of workers, peasants, petty traders and students. They are described as the thieves, robbers, hypocrites and criminals. The novel establishes how the African wealthy men and propertied men acquired their money by indulging in the exploitation of their fellow Africans. By Ngugi's description, the trademark bulging belly, the arrogance of power, the uncurbed ambition and cynicism stereotyping Kenyan imperialist stooges in their quest for material wealth are the sad factors of life in today's Kenyan society in particular and African society in general. Ngugi shows that the local compradors would go to any extent to promote and sustain their commercial interest and hegemonic hold on the Kenyan economy. They have an inordinate desire to make money at the cost of moral fabrics of their society. It is as a result of their materialistic tendencies that they sell their motherland to the imperial powers and continue to do same into the neo-colonial era. Ngugi thus argues that the peasants and the workers in Kenyan society toil and produce resources which are never enjoyed by them due to the brutal activities of the imperial backed local compradors.

Ngugi in *Matigari* explores the intricacies of the collaborations between the local compradors and various institutions of government in undermining the development of Kenyan society. The main character, Matigari challenges the status quo that has seen local compradors system of subjugation, oppression and repression and reaping and enjoying what they do no labour for. Matigari considers this as a great injustice to his people and sets out to demand for justice and fairness. The more he forges ahead in the liberation of his people from the claws of the local compradors, the more the stark reality of the enormity of the challenges and the complexity of the capitalist system stares him in the face. Ngugi demonstrates in *Matigari* the resistance and counter-resistance culture that dominates Kenyan neo-colonial period. Though he wins the battle against the local compradors in the end by fictionally dismantling their base and structure, it nevertheless comes with lot of damage to both physical and social structure. Having burnt down the house of settler William and John Boy, he loses the vowed occupation of the house as his ancestral inheritance and therefore returns to the forest a second time.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi attempts to scuttle all flagrant abuse and manifestations of state powers by the local compradors and the ruling elite through Nyawira led Movement for the Voice of the people. For the movement, the *Marching to Heaven* project which is an ecological disaster symbolizes a brutally corrupt, mindless and unresponsive state apparatus, a state dominated by power-interested bureaucrats and headed by a power drunk and obsessed dictator called Ruler.
The movement's protest is aimed at upholding the economic interest of the ordinary people. This is the people's moral ideological values of the state, place, justice, Aburirian dignity and pride. It also provokes political interest, educates citizens about political issues and values and teaches members the most efficient methods to press their policy demands on the government propelled by the compradors. To this end, Ngugi makes a serious effort at bringing to our attention the intricacies and the activities of power drunk individuals in post-colonial Kenya in stunting the growth and development of their society. This they achieve by privileging their personal interest above the collective interest of the people. *Wizard of the Crow* is regarded arguably as the watershed of Ngugi's literary discourse in the sense that it brings and collapses all the thematic thrusts of his narratives into a single volume.

Ngugi again reinforces his concerns about the brutal collaborative tendencies between the West and African leaders in the decimation and alienation of the people from the resources of their land. In *Devil on the Cross*, the Robbers and Thieves Conference is basically to give account of their prowess in the destruction of the people's right to decent living but in *Wizard of the Crow*, it has graduated to plans of outrightly selling off the entire country just to destroy the ecosystem and escape to the supernatural. In

his opening remarks during the negotiation for loan to build *Marching to Heaven,* Machokali says the Aburirian:

> …masses are ready to forgo clothes, houses, education, medicine and even food in order to meet any and every condition the Bank may impose on the funds it releases for *Marching to Heaven*.…we swear by the children of the children of the children of our children to the end of world. Yes we swear even by the generations that may be born after the end of the world-that we shall pay back every cent of the principle along with interest on interests and infinitum (*Wizard*, 248).

This is absurdity taken too far, mortgaging the entire country just to pollute and violate the environment. Ngugi through Nyawira provides the readers with the aggregate of the consequences of the project thus:

> *Marching to Heaven* will swallow our land. Where shall we take shelter from the sun and rain? It will snatch water from the thirst and food from the mouth of the hungry. Skeletons will people our country. How shall we get back the body, the mind, and the soul of the nation"(*Wizard*,209)

The above is simply to satisfy the fancy of one man who goes on "trips abroad in search of food for the people, particularly in times of drought and famine" (*Wizard*, 249).

Another serious dimension from which Ngugi is calling our attention in *Wizard of the Crow* is the human angle to environmental pollution. Giving the level of gross unemployment as a direct consequence of land alienation, people now constitute environmental eyesore occasioned by the queuing for imaginary jobs. People now hold on to anything that suggests hope of survival. The endless queue is a serious attestation to the position of Ngugi in his ecological narratives. The whole country of Aburiria is now littered with people on the queue for non-existent jobs. An imaginary job, a rumoured job, provides hope thereby creating environmental nuisance all over the country. The Ruler's aides capitalize on the people's helplessness and sorry state to perpetuate the queue in order to deceive the Ruler into believing that the queue means acceptance of *Marching to Heaven* project; "…queuing as mass support for *Marching to Heaven* now had the Rulers blessings" (*Wizard*,165). This is without regard to the fact that the queue constitutes serious environmental concern. This perhaps explains in part what is wrong with the leadership of the land and the incredible turns Kenya has taken since independence. Nyawira has a deeper understanding of the motives of the Ruler plan when:

> …she'd told them that the Ruler and his Minister for Foreign Affairs intended to take the *Global Bank* missionaries to where the queue were thickest and longest to prove that the people were voting with their feet in support of *Marching to Heaven*… others argued that since the queue were the result of high unemployment, there was no way the people would abandon them (*Wizard*, 199).

This demonstrates the wide gap between the rich and the poor in Kenyan society to the extent that the rich see the slumped of the poor as graveyard and hellish. The outbursts of Vinginia when Nyawira invites her to Southern Santalucia confirm how the rich dread the slum-yard which is seen as environmental wrecks "Southern Santalucia? Virginia screamed with genuine horror. You mean the Southern slums where the poo…poo…people…sincerely appalled by the prospects of visiting a slum yard" (*Wizard*, 170).

Ngugi reiterates his concern about environmental degradation which has caused untold harm and hardship to human health and damage to non-human natural world in Kenyan. This has also led to the deterioration of the environment through the depletion of resources such as air, water and soil, the destruction of ecosystems, habitat destruction; the extinction of wildlife and pollution which have all brought serious economic hardship to the people. Its ecological exploitation moves to the space in the form of *Marching to Heaven* when nothing is left to exploit on the land again except frustrated, dehumanized and depressed and violated people and their environmental resources. The absence of natural resources leads to hunger in the land and complete lack of healthcare. People now resort to herbs to cure diseases as they can no longer have access to the rare healthcare facilities. Kamiti takes it upon himself to assist with his knowledge of herbs while studying. Food has equally become a rarity and absolute privilege in Aburiria as a result of the land dispossession and environmental degradation. Kamiti now finds it rewarding to heal people:

> It always refreshed him to be among plants and trees…His eyes roamed, and before he knew it his curiosity had been aroused by the abundant multiplicity of plants… searching out those he thought had medicinal properties … he was not looking for medical roots and leaves for their own sake but because there was a patient outside Nyawira's house waiting for a cure (*Wizard*, 131).

Unfortunately for Kamiti's efforts at saving a life, the medication cannot be used because it requires food. The patient's response to Kamiti's instruction on how to use the herbs exposes the reality in Aburiria; "…food? Did you say food? You think I have eaten anything for days? If the medicine depends on food, then it is not good for me" (*Wizard*, 131). With this, Ngugi is gradually calling our attention to the real consequence of land dispossession and ecological violation and the people's docile reaction before now. It also draws our focus to the colonial and neo-colonial agenda in Kenya, which is to completely annihilate and alienate the people from any claim to humanity, fertile land and harmonious environment.

Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the coming of imperial power through colonialism is largely responsible for the economic system and class in Kenya. Ngugi has used his narratives to reflect and refract the dynamism of the social interactions that have conditioned Kenyan people. In his early novels, Ngugi is mostly concerned with the erosion of the cultural beliefs of the people which colonialism undermined and the attendant resistance and counter-resistance. Later in his writing career, Ngugi brings to our attention what he calls "the blacknisation of colonialism" which he believes has assumed a more worrisome dimension to the exploitation of his people. From then on, he has concerned himself with issues that border on exposing the activities of the local compradors. To him, this is one major reason for the stunted growth and development of Kenya. Beginning from *Petals of Blood* to *Wizard of the Crow*, the paper is able to establish the economic intricacies and complexities in Kenya. In all these, the paper concludes that the people are at the receiving ends.

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