

# The Rhetoric of Irony in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on Cross* (1987) and *Matigari* (1980)

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**Abstract:** Postcolonial African literature has been mainly concerned with the misfortunes engendered by slavery, colonization, imperialism, globalization, and neo-colonization in Africa as it uncovers the interactions between the former colonizing and colonized countries. Therefore, many African writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o have through fiction and magic realism, as natural outcome of postcolonial writing which must make sense of at least two separate realities - the reality of the conquerors and that of the conquered realistic representation - lay bare the devastating aftermath of these plagues. Unfortunately, most critics have been more interested in the issues that the authors exhibit rather than how they are displayed. As a committed writer, he has broached profusely some Africa's existential problems as reflected in many of his literary text (s), context (s), and pretext (s). In fact, leaning on axiology, as the philosophical study of value, ethics, and aesthetics - value theory and meta-ethics -, this article is a rhetorical reading of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) with a view to deciphering the underpinning ramifications of postcolonial irony in the two novels. To this end, it analyzes how text and form are interwoven in the two literary texts as the author sets out to depict the (post) colonial and neo-colonial effects in Africa and how they contribute to the understanding of his political advocacy and philosophy.

**Keywords:** Africa, Rhetoric, Irony, Colonialism, Neo-Colonial, Politics, Leadership, Existence

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## 1. Introduction

The notion of the myth of *in-dependence* in the post-colonial era has (re) defined what some scholars like Joseph Childers and Gary Henry (1995) have viewed and termed as "*author function, a product of [...] circumstances that converged to produce the text at a given point in history*" [1]. In fact, postcolonial literature encompasses a myriad of thematic concerns that diagnose Africa's environment in which the colonized people, after independence, have faced multifaceted challenges to take up in the social, economic, political, and cultural realms. That is one of the reasons why the concept of disenchantment and its underpinnings permeate many African writers' literary productions and justify their writing pretext (s). Among the motives of postcolonial trajectory, stands out an attempt to awaken the readership to 'calamities' such as Western imperialism, capitalism, liberalism, globalism, neo-colonialism, and corruption, authoritarianism, injustice, oppression, among others that undermine Africa's progress. To this end, irony, as

the use of words to express something other and the opposite of the literal meaning, is reflected in many African-authored texts.

Indeed, Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o is known for his political ideological activism and dedication that are in line with many African novelists who are inspired by Marxism ideology and its principles. Many of his novels such as *Grain of Wheat* (1975) *Petals of the Blood* (1986) and, specially, *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) delve critically into the socio-political setting of Kenyan people, in particular, and African people, in general, who live under the exploitative system of Western imperialism, capitalism, liberalism, and neo-colonization, and their destructive effects as evidenced in the symbolic words of narration contained in *Matigari* (1980), "*so say yes, and I'll tell you a story! Once upon a time, in a country with no name*" [2]. Tellingly, such a narrative tone implicitly testifies to the propagandist character-type-literature that pervades Ngugi's narratives as they delineate that ironical transition witnessed in both masterpieces, in which irony has been

allegorically fictionalized through the resort to temporalization of space, spatialization of time, and *symbolicalization* of representations, reinforced by debunking and denunciative connotations. Fundamentally, the rhetorical tone and implication of these recounting modes set up the atmosphere of both novels. M. H. Abrahams (1999) breaks down atmosphere as “*the emotional tone pervading a section or the whole of a literary work, which fosters in the reader expectations as to the course of events, whether happy, or (more commonly) terrifying or disastrous*” [3].

Therefore, Ngugi’s combination of fictional, factional, and satirical narratives give more indicative symbolism to the context (s) and pretext (s) of his two literary texts. His narrative style is explicative in that it is reinforced with rhetorical clues that project the understanding of his discourse to an even more considerable scope. The significance of rhetoric in grasping socio-political proceedings in literature is paramount when reading and analyzing his narratives. In fact, Robert Glenn Howard (2005) testifies that “*it is exhibited as part of an overall social matrix or ‘discourse community.’ Rhetoric, then, is strategic communicative behavior observable in human discourse*” [4]. As such, the resort to rhetorical styles and strategies in analyzing *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) helps to bring to light the mechanisms of post-independence ironical turning point. The patterns of literary language are all the more indicative as they create the sieve of his ideological, philosophical, and political embodiment. What do the literary patterns in Ngugi’s narrative texts foreshadow and indicate? What does the analysis of the characters’ discourse (s), essence, language (s), psychology, and existential situation vindicate?

The figurative language, playing a significant role, creates a close link between content and form, with the latter not only stylistically supporting the former but also frequently epitomizing the philosophy behind what is hinted at, said, and shown, and thus establishing various kinds of argumentative logic [5]. Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s two masterpieces, when dissected form a textual, contextual, situational, and rhetorical standpoint as we explore the interdependence, interconnectedness, and complexity of text and form, help to cast light on how postcolonial irony and satire are brought into play. To this end, this article is concerned with looking at how the Kenyan novelist’s use of humorous or sardonic literary style or form, expression or utterance, to display ironic statement (verbal irony), ironic situation (situational irony) or ironic sarcasm (sarcastic irony), are reflected in *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987). Therefore, uncovering Ngugi’s political and philosophical rhetoric requires borrowing some comparative, literary, and interpretive approaches such as hermeneutics, Marxism, mimetic criticism so as to delineate the extent to which interweaving text (s), context (s), pretext (s), metatext (s), and paratext (s) create and (re) fashion the author’s vision and political agenda.

## 2. Uncovering Postcolonial Praxis and Paradox: Political Tactics and Ideologies

Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s literary output has not built up any marginal bridge separating (hi) story, politics, and existence that have dramatically shaped and challenged the dynamism of postcolonial movement. The latter’s quintessence rests on what Simona Klimkova (2015) shrewdly typifies as “*advocate of revision, recovery, and mobilization*” [6]. This philosophy of reconstruction through deconstruction for social, political, economic, and cultural rejuvenation is abundantly highlighted in both *Devil on the Cross* (1987) and *Matigari* (1980). The two novels problematize the euphoria following Africa’s independence from European colonization that has been allegorically theorized by Ngugi as there was no night so long that it did not end with dawn. Closely looked into, ‘night and dawn’, which set the motion of his political, ideological, and philosophical analysis of his novels, may be seen as an ‘innuendo,’ read as a rhetorical representation of obscurity versus light. While the former hints at the agonizing decades of Kenya, in particular, and Africa, in general, from the nauseating shackle of colonization, the latter, by contrast, denotes ‘liberation’ or post-colonization. Strikingly, it is the questionable idea of ‘freedom’ that essentializes the notion of postcolonial irony, as succinctly exemplified in *Devil on the Cross* (1987) and *Matigari* (1980).

In fact, the national relief sounded as an incentive on the part of African leaders to pick up the gauntlet and rebuild the continent, thereby patching up the atrophying political, economic, social, and cultural apparatus for the sake of sovereignty recovery, Ngugi pinpoints failed leadership as a result of capitalism and neo-colonization, qualified as the ‘last stage of imperialism.’ The ways its paths have been weeded by the local elites and (mis) leaders, who are the irrigators of the neo-colonial soil, of whom the dehumanizing and exploitative system has made its pawns and representatives. This justifies the need and relevance to diagnose *elitism* which brings into play how irony, relentlessly castigated, has taken root in *Devil on the Cross* (1987) and *Matigari* (1980). In the work by Abis’s Paolo, (2001), Higley and Burton argue that elites are considered people occupying the top of powerful organizations, thus capable of affecting political outcomes both substantially and regularly. They see them as actors controlling resources, occupying key positions, and relating through power networks [7]. Symbolically, the socio-political stratification, as a result of British imperialism policy creed ‘divide-and-rule’ noticed in post-colonial Kenya, represents the picture of a society that is split into two layers: the governing minority ruling class that occupies the high-ranking positions and the governed majority that finds it hard to cope with an alienating system. Most interestingly, that unfair classification of society by the elites brings to the fore what Joseph Childers and Gary Henry refer to as “*agency, which is*

*capacity of thought and critique, and thus is also capable of choice and action*" (Childers and Gary Henry, 1995: 6).

It is also crucial to underscore how problematically and tellingly is foreshadowed the complexity of freedom and agency in its miscellaneous aspects. Satirically, Ngugi puts the veil off the trials and tribulations gone through by Kenyan people in the portrayal of the teacher in *Matigari* (1980) when he alleges that "*I also know that there are two truths. One truth belongs to the oppressor; the other belongs to the oppressed*" [8]. The teacher's lamenting analytically and allegorically clears whichever trace of ambiguity as to the aspect of miscarriage of power and paucity of agency Kenyan people are forced to live in. The symbolic representation of that absence of free speech expression is further featured as the story unfolds in the novels. These serious encroachments on the basic rights of the masses are not expected to be credited under a tyrannical system where citizens like Wariinga, Wangari, Muturi, and Matigari are desperately seeking justice and truth in their country. As a matter of fact, they are entrapped in labyrinth-like society where liberty and justice are luxury and privileges reserved for the strong, the oppressor, the colonizer, and its local bourgeoisie, who are representatives of the exploitative neo-colonialists' tycoons. This bears out Perelman's observation according to which "*we do not exert our freedom where there is neither the possibility of choice nor alternative*" [9].

Moreover, the notion of the rhetoric of paradox and contradiction is linguistically and allegorically inscribed by the systemic folklore and more glaringly simulacrum of despotic elites. At the core, the chauvinistic leaders are infected with the syndrome of 'pleasure principle' which is dissimilar to that of reality and compatible with imposed environmental conditions, as defined by Joseph Childers and Gary Henry. The pleasure of infringing the freedom of people is linked with the psychic apparatus of alienated leader like Ole the Excellency and his accomplices of the likes of John Boy who take great pleasure in subjugating their masses. To implement their subjugating policy, the local leaders make use of fallacious rhetorical tactics to lull them into not being dubious of their trustworthiness. Indeed, the mentioning of the group of words '*voice of the truth*,' which metaphorically and allegorically represents the people, is a case in point. Paradoxically, this *voice*, which is expected to act as the spokesperson of the voiceless masses, comprising the peasants and the workers, turns out to deliberately betray them. In so doing, it has breached their rights and sparked off a cult of personality and spirit of alienation that are ingrained in the local elites. The rhetoric and ideologies of oppression are symbolically disclosed by resorting to what Aristotle terms *ethos*, defined as an appeal to the authority or honesty of the speaker. Logically, the question derivative of this is what is the implication of Ngugi's inclusion of the '*voice of truth*?' The intensive explanation of *ethos* nails down the motive of its use. It entails the speaker's moral possession in the eyes of the listeners, the audience. It is the self-image that the orator presents to make himself credible in the eyes of the audience in order to win over them [10]. Therefore, the

capitalist elites, being aware of the masses' (mis) understanding of authority, instrumentalize it deceitfully and against their expectations to silence any pending desire for agency molding and rebellion. Actually, this illegitimate, biased, and distorted (mis) conception of power and leadership is the direct source of the proletariat's desperate lot.

However, the role of power in Ngugi's *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) is counterproductive, urging some postcolonialist theorists like Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin to scathingly castigate this dysfunctional power ideology: The system of a hegemonic construction of society basically means domination by consent insofar as when the demagogue, to whom he refers to as the politician, the leader, through such a channel which is that of bribery, happens to be in power, has reached the state of power against the principles of governance [11]. Prominently, *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) are both reflective of post-colonial Kenya, of what has been instrumental in power arbitrariness and desacralization. The tactics of domination is intrinsic to the structure of the existing system. As such, metonymically and hermeneutically, the alienation of the masses in both novels is metaphorically spotlighted through the lens of what Joseph Childers and *al.* put forth as 'legitimation,' from a textual and contextual perspective. 'Legitimation' from the above-mentioned theorists refers to "*the process by which the governing obtains the acceptance of the governed; it refers to the ways by which those in power encourage the support of those for whom they make and administer laws*" (Joseph Childers, (1995: 166).

Indeed, the relevance of the terminology in the analysis of irony in Ngugi's two literary texts is conceived from the politics of legitimation. This entices to ask the question whether the people freely consent to those who have power, or whether there is submission to power coerced as the theorists put it. The advocates of Marxism hit the nail on the head when arguing that "*ideology becomes the characteristic legitimization process of capitalist government with ideology legitimizing existing power relations by making them seem natural and right*" (Paolo Abis, 2001). Some characters like Guthera, Matigari, Wariinga, Muturi in *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) never approve of the tyrannical use of power by leaders like Ole the Excellence, Minister. The latter's interest and survival rests on the ideology of legitimation, belief in aristocracy, and dressing in 'aristocratic exploitative clothes.' Consequently, the likes of Ole the Excellence are actual 'native imperialists' and 'black skins white masks' as affirmed by Fanon. Wariinga's dreams about seeing the devil on the cross resuscitated by upper-class Kenyans is very much revealing of the fact:

Instead of Jesus on the Cross, she would see the Devil, with skin as white as that of a very fat European she once saw near the Rift Valley Sports Club, being crucified by people in tattered clothes [...] and after three days, when he was in the throes of death, he would be taken down from the Cross by black people in suits and ties, and, thus restored to

life, he would mock Wariinga (Ngugi, 19987: 139).

Symbolic is, then, Ngugi's description of how fickle the plight of the masses is. At this level, he does not dwell on metaphor, for the simile of irony is unequivocal. The only lurking force between crucifixion and resuscitation is that which is in the hands of the local bourgeoisie who are notably the lackeys of neo-colonialists. This is evidenced by Master of ceremonies, who confesses having returned the key to the country but still controls it. The non-empathic character of Kenyan post-colonial elites with regard to the predicament of their people is underscored in the concrete representation of how the edge of the socio-economic ordeals operates. They are the representatives of the middle class, typically with reference to their perceived materialistic values and conventional attitudes. From the Marxist standpoint, they belong to the capitalist class that own most of society's wealth and means of production. Their characteristics have been influential in Ngugi's depiction of the apex of local bourgeoisie and capitalists' ideology of 'reaping where they have never sown.' This is conspicuously typified through the binoculars of the concept of cannibalism which Karl Marx has theorized and defined as 'the accumulation of wealth,' most accusingly by the capitalists at the expense of their fellow citizens, the peasants and the workers, who are relegated at the bottom of the social and economic ladder.

Referentially, 'cannibalism' denotes here the spirit of materialism that is characteristic and typical of the ideology underlying the mindset of the watchdogs of capitalism such as Gitutuwa Gataanguru. As a contestant at the cave, he is bombastic about his imperialistic culture insofar as for him "*hunger x thirst = famine [and] Famine among the masses = wealth for a man of cunning*" (Ngugi, 1987: 99). Therefore, the materialistic nature of Kenyan leaders runs in tandem, to the core, with their corruptible mindset as to the tactics of wealth accumulation. Materialism, the twin brother of cannibalism, tears into pieces any development potential and becomes noxious to any society that deals with it. That prevailing conception of rapid wealth accumulation is worse than evil as confirmed by Wuthnow when stating:

Materialism is a generalized symbol that stands for evil in our culture. In a society that has ceased to personify evil in some tangible being (Satan), materialism has become the devil. Sensing that something is wrong with society, people easily point finger at materialism [12].

In the same vein, *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) mirror the individualistic ideology handed down to the elites by their (neo) colonial 'masters.' Ngugi's mimetic criticism, which is the reflection, or representation of the world and human life, and the primary criterion applied to a work is the 'truth' of its representation to the subject-matter that it represents, sets out to help the reader out to lay hold over the magnitude to which (mis) leaders like John Boy develop untamable belief in individualism. He contends that African people, being unable to adopt such an ideology, become the root causes of their own underdevelopment:

Our country has remained in darkness because of the

ignorance of our people they don't know the importance of the word individual [...] white people are advanced because they respect that word, and therefore honor the freedom of the individual (Ngugi, 1980:17)

Characteristically, Boy John is representative of the epitome of Kenyan post-colonial elites who are culturally brainwashed into taking it for granted that they have to work for themselves regardless of others. This cultural assimilation is pernicious in molding negatively the mind of the colonized subject. Such a (mis) belief is typified in *Matigari* (1980) insofar as "[...] *but there is nothing worse than slavery in this world. Ah! Slavery! The chaining of mind and of the soul!*" (Ngugi, 1980: 46-47).

The question of cultural dominance is very crucial in investigating the causes of individualism. Boy John is the prototype, product, and result of Williams, the representative of the neo-colonialists. He epitomizes the alienated leaders, whom he regards as traitors towards their people who have contributed to his travel abroad and studies. As such, this denotes a recollection of memory, with regard to being indebted to one's roots, to the past, "*don't you remember how people contributed money to your study. Has nobody ever told you?*" (Ngugi, 1980: 49). The community makes him be what he becomes, and the outcome is that he turns his back on them, calling them fools and reminding them that "*don't you remember that you intellectuals are greatly indebted to the very masses that you are calling idiots?*" (Ngugi, 1989: 49). He exhibits his properties and shows off his wealth, thereby turning his people into laughing stock. His individualistic outlook epitomizes that of Nding'uri who wonders "*what is a village? What is a nation? What's a people? [...] why are unable to take care of yourselves and your shadows?*" (Ngugi, 1980: 67).

Indeed, Ngugi unravels in *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) the mechanisms at the disposal of the capitalists and the local watchdogs which they use to gain people's acquiescence to the corrupt and theft and robbery, double-dealing ideology. As a strategic method, the foreign imperialists organize competition to single out the cleverest thieves and robbers. This tangibly illustrates that the citizens are living within corrupt venue where their leaders are ready to teach one another the secrets and strategy of robbery they have learnt from the neo-colonial 'masters.' Hence, the presence of the delegation hailing from the Western capitalist countries aims at appraising the theft knowledge efficiency they have instilled into their local puppets who, in turn, boast about this so-called expertise. With regard to the visual symbolic as Cook and Okenimpke term it, during the competition, the thieves and robbers are depicted as caricatural figures, whose appearances are made fun of and they stand as ridicule:

Gitutu had a belly that protruded so far that it would have touched the ground had it not been supported by the braces that held up his trousers. It seemed as if his belly had absorbed all his limbs and all the other organs of his body. Gitutu had no neck – at least, his neck was not visible. His arms and legs were short stumps. His head had shrunk to the

size of a fist. (Ngugi, 1987: 99)

Thus, the rhetoric of symbolic imagery turns out to be a very efficacious literacy device for Ngugi to shame on the greedy (mis) leaders who eat their bellies out while having the masses perish in misery. The writer, resolving to make the reader be acquainted with the grotesqueness and ruthlessness of these elites who eat up the sweat of the masses, resort to satiric comedy which H. P. Grice defines as “*ridicules political policies [...] or else attacks deviations from the social order by making ridiculous the violators of its standards of morals or manners*” (M. H. Abrahams. 1999: 39).

Polysemically, Gitutu's scornful and abject portrayal is suggestive of the distorted self-interest philosophy that has turned Kenyan political into a ‘Jungle Law’ “*where you eat somebody or you are eaten. You sit on somebody or somebody sits on you*” (Ngugi, 1987: 291). Naturally, in a jungle, weak animals tend to be the preys of strong ones. Similarly, the peasants, the workers, the lower class are representatives of the ‘the pot that cooks and never eats.’ Such a symbolic irony is allusive to the lot of the proletariat characters in *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) who suffer from the siphoning of the masses’ resources. Consequently, this makes the status quo prevails; the cities in both novels serve as allegorical ‘autopsy’ of a people that is socially knee-deep in the abyss of exploitation and social alienation. As a result, the gulf between the poor and the rich keeps widening:

Now look away from the rich  
At the poor, and at the children.  
They are all stagger-a-staggering on the highway  
Because their hearts are empty.  
They rich stagger because they over-eat 41  
And the poor because they starving (Ngugi, 1987: 56).

‘The sacred trinity of the capitalist system’ - the local watchdogs, those who have money and political power and those who have money without political power, and the European capitalists, the imperialists - use their political power of brutality with the complexity of the police force to capture and imprison citizens like Matigari Gathura, Muriuki who are locked up for challenging the unfair system. In the same respect, the [local] capitalists, being allergic to rebellion, fall back on some strategies consisting in branding rebels like Matigari, Muturi, and the other ‘crazy men’ supposed to be taken to the hospital to be cured. Such strategic modes of power maintenance and resistance curbed that can be traced back to the colonial period are foregrounded by Saliou Dione when bringing light over the very purpose of renaming-to-misname (changing the subject) strategy on the part of the British colonialists. In this regard, he argues that this is “*tantamount to censorship, division, and resistance so as to prevent any self-affirmation and self-determination attempt*” [13]. The mere fact of nicknaming crazy people those who claim for justice is justified by the systemic ideology of silencing rebellion for the sake of domination and exploitation.

### 3. Political and Cultural Rhetoric: De-legitimation and Leadership Agency

A rhetorical reading of *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) awakens the reader's attention to the precariousness brought about in the lives of Kenyan people by the imperialists. Matigari's mixed feeling of disgust and disappointment is increasingly acute, as the story unfolds. At times, his language tone turns exclamatory and interrogatory:

How the settlers have loved shedding blood! [...] What trials one had to endure on this earthly journey [...] and today? What of today? So a handful of people still profited from the majority, the sorrow of the many being the joy of the few [...] (Ngugi, 1980: 12-3-4-12).

This syntax of parallelism through the juxtaposition of statements of bemusement and lamentation by Matigari calls for urgency and need of resistance and genuine independence and not *in-dependence* for the Kenyan people. The rhythmic pattern of exclamation and interrogation is not fortuitously included, for as F. Odun Balogun (1995) contends, it gives “*the device of exclamation and interrogation [...] a formulary and unifying force as a frame*” [14]. Healing the festering wound of failed leadership and oppression, alienation in its miscellaneous forms, requires coming to grips with the causes that have given rise to them. Like Ngugi in his two narratives, Ayi kwei Armah in *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) raises his voice and throws an accusing stone at white sellers, whom he calls the “*zombies, whose aim is robbery with force: that is the predators' road that is the destroyers road*” [15]. Allegorically, his satirical rhetoric hints at the ‘institutionalized’ legacy of colonization in African *in-dependent* countries, specifically in Kenya. The bruising of indigenous cultural values has tremendously to do with the desperate situation highlighted in *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987). Thus, the (mis) leaders run their masses under the dictates of neo-colonialists who govern their countries from the outside. Paulo Freire accounts for this ruling method in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968):

The oppressed [...] internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, [...] only as they discover themselves to be “hosts” of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor, this contribution is impossible [16].

‘We have to be in order to be,’ Ngugi utters in *Moving the Center* (1993). From an essentialism perspective, human beings are by nature good but corrupted by evil injected into society. Allusively, in both *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987), the local elites, being alienated and transformed into ‘evil,’ cannot react any differently but be on their assigned mission of sowing the seeds of (neo) exploitation for them and the capitalists to reap the fruits. Indeed, cultural alienation has affected the psyche of the colonized subject; the latter has been stripped of the

grassroots of his society and its essence. In this way, Ngugi (1986) buttresses that “*The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves*” [17]. The bomb, being already set off, has not finished counting out its victims. Illustratively, Mwaura Ole the Excellency, the Minister for Truth and Justice are psychologically *robotized* into solely executing the orders of their ‘creators,’ the neo-colonialists, and the culprit of their mental disorganization.

Moreover, cultural alienation, being the generator of political subjugation, Ngugi affirms that there will not be the former until the latter has been made to take root. The side-effects of it has branched out into normalcy in Kenyan society, entailing scourges like unpatriotism, corruption, injustice, characteristically and equally, *un-equalitarianism*. Thomas W. Pogge (1994) highlights the prerequisites of a just and equalitarian society that the elites have failed to establish, contending that:

[...] requires that institutions maintain the fair value of the political liberties, so that persons similarly motivated and endowed have, irrespective of their economic and social class, roughly equal chances to gain political office and to influence the political decisions that shape their lives [18].

This is in tune with the sense of solidarity in indigenous times which have been turned into an inclination to self-centeredness; the clinging to the philosophy of individualism and inequity which is a threat to social justice in Africa. Citizens like Guthera, Wariinga, Waringa bear the heavy burden of injustice, whose impact drops them at the periphery of political and economic concerns.

Besides, the rhetoric of analepsis is profuse in both *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987). Interpretively, Ngugi ties it with a prophetic tone, past, present, and future, which expresses the Kenyan society’s three temporalities that its people need to combine and ponder over if they are to move forward. Wangari seems to be the voice of the past as an eyewitness of the present and from an *implicature* standpoint, which is a theory of implicit meaning, a foreteller of the future. As matter of fact, her flashback is pregnant with meaning in that the organization of home guards and imperialists would sing “*self-love and love and of the selling out among the traitors of the land the bean we steal from the people. We struggle to see who can grab it all*” (Ngugi, 1980: 39). From a rhetorical analysis, Wariinga’s speech is tainted with *logos*, a logical appeal Ngugi uses to describe facts and figures that are helpful for him to support his topic, and *pathos*, referring to the appeal to the emotions of his listeners, the aim of which is to make them act, behave in a given way or convince them through an emotional outburst. These two tools serve as recollection and pieces of warning about the present situation they face. It is also an urge to reach out for that culture of self-love that should govern their society. It metaphorically alludes to the need for the recreation of a new community-oriented political system which Aye Kwei Armah is nostalgic of, calling it

“*people of the fertile time before these schisms; we, life’s people, people of the way, trapped in our smallest self, that is our vocation: to find our larger, our healing, self, we the black people*” (Ayi kwei Armah, 1973: 32).

Therefore, for Ngugi, the survival of Kenyan people rests on the fateful challenge of the ‘de-legitimatization’ of the culture and philosophy of power manipulation, abuse, and centeredness. Respectively, citizens like Matigari, Muturi, Wariinga, and Wangari, being subservient to the rampant biasedness of the system, strive to topple it with a view to cleansing their society of the horrendous evil of the culture of materialism. Thus, for that restoration of values and a fair political system, citizens like Matigari Muturi, Wangari Wariinga take it for granted that they should get mobilized in times of struggle for liberation. As such, this instills in people’s conscience the notion of common cause, national destiny, and, mainly, of collective history to paraphrase Frantz Fanon. Slavery of the mind is the backbone of political and cultural subordination. The mother tongue of the colonized subject, being infected with virus of exploitative capitalist ideology, loses any touch with the ‘dialects’ of the community. The individualistic mindset of the neo-colonialists, the language of real, being couched in the worshipping of the ego, the self, and the individual at the expense of the people, becomes the root cause of all evils. Albert Memmi seems not to be at odds with such a rationale:

The colonized mother tongue, that which is sustained by his feelings, emotions and dreams, that in which his tenderness and wonder are expressed, thus that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued [19].

In delineating the effects of alienation, Ngugi, seemingly, broaches its worse impact on the (mis) leaders in that the latter, out of tricky, endeavor to entice citizens into adopting their lifestyles and systemic agenda. In so doing, they become caught out in their ‘disease’ and *dis-ease* of nurturing their ‘double personality’ that turns them into ‘evil’ to the point of ridiculing their people, considering them mere ‘toys’ for the (neo) colonizers. The assimilation by Western ways, and powers, makes them betray their own selves and policies as they reinforce the ‘outsiders.’ Symbolically, Wariinga’s impromptu encounter with the personified ‘voice’ is very much revealing. The latter asks her to give him her soul and he will guard it for her. Accordingly, this gives birth to a double-edged power at the disposal of the elites. One which empowers them in the face of their people through the way they exercise dictatorship without any impediment; another that weakens them in front of the capitalists in the manners they have allowed themselves to be their ‘feet’ towards the stairs of exploitation of the masses.

Intrinsically, Ngugi’s rhetoric of change is embedded in the way he makes his characters proverbialize their language for the purpose of sounding the alarm of revolution. *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) are ornamented with traditional proverbs, poems, riddles, and sayings that remind the reader of the spirit of communism that pre-existed in Kenyan society, in particular, and African one, in general.

The falling back on those components of orality is in no sense haphazard inasmuch as it serves as reminders of that spirit of brotherhood, sisterhood, and kinship that prevailed over any individualistic considerations. Citizens like Wangari, most importantly, Muturi are embodiments of this rhetoric of nationalism.

It our actions that show which side we are on and therefore what kind of heart we are building. For our hands, our organs, our bodies, our energy are like a sharp sword. This sword, in the hands of a producer, can cultivate, make food grow, and can defend the cultivators so that the blessings and the fruits of their sweat is not wrested from them; our actions are the bricks that we use to construct either a good or an evil heart. The heart becomes the mirror through which we can look ourselves and work on this Earth (Ngugi, 1987: 54).

Ideally, it is reminiscent of the existence of that 'man' in indigenous times; the 'man' who could use his heart and dedicate himself to the service and interests of his fellow citizens and his whole community. This comes down to the idea of molding a 'new personality' for the Afrocentric, Postcolonial, and Pan-Africanist visions which could obliterate that decadent soul of elites like Mwaura, whose neo-colonialist ideology is detrimental to their society:

I do not examine the world too minutely what did I say before? If it leans this way, I lean with it, the earth is round, and it changes. That is why Gikuyu said that the sun does not rise the way it sets. Caution is not a sign of cowardice [ ] Show me where money is and I'll take you there (Ngugi, 1987: 54).

In *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987), culture also plays a historical significance insofar as it is both a source of objectification, when it is turned against and rid of its owner, and subjectification, when it essentially becomes a uniting and developing force after it is valued and rejuvenated. Mutiri, Wangari, Wariinga, and Matigari are following the tide of cultural teaching and orientation as the shepherds of good governance and fighters against any forms of elitism, materialism, (neo) exploitation, (neo) colonialism, and capitalism.

#### 4. Conclusion

Postcolonial literature, for the most part, deals with satire through irony as a way of pervading many African writers' productions. Ngugi wa Thiong'o is well-known for his unwavering commitment to drawing a critical picture of the *status quo* noticeable in *post-in-dependent* Africa, on the whole, and in Kenya, in particular. To thoroughly understand the major issues the author deals with, it has been pivotal to lean on the use of rhetoric and the interweaving of text (s), context (s), pretext (s), and on his thematic concerns so as to uncover the extent to which plagues like colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and neo-colonialism have been detrimental to the development process of the African continent. The rhetorical reading of *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) has gone beyond the scope, delineating the above-referred issues. It has rather delved into

how postcolonial irony has taken rooted and ramified.

Ngugi has displayed in his two literary texts how Kenyan people have been subjected to a system that ironically steps on every fundamental human right along with the new elites depicted as despotic, accomplices, and paternalistic. They have not stood up for the voice of the masses but the curse of the people. Such a depiction characterizes many African countries where the institutionalization of injustice is the governing rules. The elites' strategies and tactics set down a culture of forced silence. It is through the resort to symbols and characterization that Ngugi has painted a corruption-ridden society that is handcuffed from the inside and outside by the forces of the neo-colonialists and their local pawns. The extent to which neo-colonization is sustained through the creation of local elites that protect the interests and nurture the perpetuation of exploitative machineries has been highlighted. The latter, given their biasedness, is the result of the miscellaneous alienation the proletariat has been made to suffer from.

A rhetorical interpretation has also itemized the ideology and tactics of the Kenyan (mis) leaders and their watchdogs. This is evidenced by an analysis of the way power has been wielded exploitatively, and how domination through undignified methods has been escalated to nurture the needs and interests of a majority at the expense of a minority: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Ngugi's pretext has been laid bare through the dramatic way he has depicted Kenya, in particular, and Africa, in general. This underpins the political and philosophical agenda of the detractors of the subjugating and exploitative system. The idea of ideal and utopian society has also been pinpointed through the way he has made his characters bear some roles; how the system has been challenged by some oppressed people like Matigari and Wariinga. However, his rhetoric of change has been sown in the way he has adorned both texts with the language of Kenya's indigenous times, the epoch of sharing the last bean, the period of communal solidarity, of tolerance, equality, and of all the values that shaped African socialist society.

The literary approach has finally deciphered how *Matigari* (1980) and *Devil on the Cross* (1987) are symbolical and metaphorical representations of the autopsy of a lame society which, according to Ngugi, should be cleansed both internally and externally; the prerequisite of which, form the writer's ideology and political stance, rests on revisiting African cultural heritage and driving off all the ubiquitous forces that keep the continent moving backwards.

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