



HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AS UNFOLDED IN NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S *A GRAIN OF WHEAT AND PETALS OF BLOOD*

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ABSTRACT

Since the collapse of colonialism writers heralding from the erstwhile colonies are in search of their national and cultural identity that seems to have been lost in the aftermath of the colonial encounter. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, an African writer believes that a people's search for their identity must accept the past, the present and the future as an integral part of each other. He tries to reclaim Africa's past to understand the present and reform the future. In my paper, I have made a study of how Ngugi evokes the past, the present and the future history of Africa in a continuum thereby unfolding the historical consciousness through his female characters that I have accordingly grouped as, Traditionalist; Christian and Christian converts and the Rebels with reference to two of his novels A Grain Of Wheat and Petals of Blood. These three categories reflect the three stages of the African history i.e. the pre-colonial era; the colonial stage and the post colonial stage through which Ngugi explores the issue of true liberation.

Introduction

Ngugi wa Thiongo like many African writers believes in the committed nature of literature because after the colonial aftermath the Africans seem to have lost faith in their own customs, traditions and way of life, that had been undervalued by the colonialists. So Ngugi feels that there is a need to rehabilitate faith and pride in Africa's past. At the same time he does not close his eyes to the present realities facing Africa. Past for him is not something to be simply nostalgically revived, but a dynamic force, in fact the very building blocks for the future. As Ngugi says in *Homecoming*:

*we must strive for a form of social
organization that will free the menaced
spirit and energy of our people
so we can build a new country, and sing a new song (Ngugi, Home 50).*

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1P a g e

In his works the past, the present and the future interpenetrate to project the history of Africa in a continuum to highlight the fact that nothing has changed even after independence. The only change is that the white exploiter has been replaced by the black exploiter. So true liberation has not yet dawned, and there is a need to strive for it. It is mainly through his female characters in *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* that this historical consciousness is unfolded in his novels. In both the novels the female characters become a symbol of Africa exhibiting the three stages through which Africa has passed i.e. the pre-colonial era, the colonial era and the post colonial stage. The third stage also exhibits Ngugi's disillusionment with independence, thus embodying a need for a better future. However, it is important to note that these three stages are not chronologically exhibited in Ngugi's fiction. All his female characters are living in present Africa, but they become embodiments of the three mental states exhibiting the tendencies, features and influences of that particular stage thus affording us a glimpse of the historical process, which will make us conscious of reformation.

Traditionalists

The first stage that is evoked in both the novels is the pre-colonial era, when men and women generally worked as partners; when African society was essentially communal and matriarchal, in which land was the property of a community and not of individuals. Family was an integral part of a strong communal institution. There was a harmonious relationship between men, women and children in which individuals had a sense of belongingness and security. These very attributes of the pre-colonial era gets embodied in female characters through whom Ngugi seeks to evoke the ancient African heritage i.e. qualities of harmony, brotherhood, peace and justice despite poverty. These characters have been grouped as 'Traditionalists'.

In *A Grain of Wheat*, there are many female characters who are projected as upholders of African tradition. On the day of Uhuru all people are represented by different women in all colourful dresses. Kihika, even identifies Kenya with the image of a mother who has to be liberated. In this context the old woman whose son is deaf and dumb, symbolizes the image of ancient Africa especially through her traditional way of dressing with, "beads around her elbows, several copper chain around her neck" (AGOFW 8). The mother has now become old. There is loneliness in her eyes. For the present generation she has become an enigma, because of their rejection of all that African culture stands for. The scene of her son's death, who is physically strong but unable to hear the White man's threat might be taken as a suggestion that sheer physical power was, and is, still inadequate to save Africa. More significantly she confuses Mugo with her son thereby symbolizing Mugo's silence about his guilt. It is only when Mugo has confessed his guilt that the old woman's acceptance of Mugo as her son is complete. But then she dies on the very day of Uhuru. Another 'Traditionalist' is Wangari, Mumbi's mother-in-law. The relationship between Wangari and Mumbi highlights



“certain matriarchal qualities embodying all the good and natural attributes of an African community at its best” (Cook and Okenimkpe 80). Wangari’s sense of understanding and justice is revealed when Gikonyo is arrested and she becomes a repository of strength for her daughter-in-law. It is significant that after the old houses are burnt, symbolizing the destruction of old African tradition, Wangari together with Mumbi takes up the task of rebuilding old thatched huts while men are making buildings of brick and metal and thus becoming willing slaves to the White man’s way of life. A similar sense of justice and belief in her community characterizes Karanja’s mother, Wairumu. Through her Ngugi does express his dissent for certain old African practices like polygamy. She is the third of the four wives and is deserted first by her husband and later by her son. On the day of Uhuru, Wairumu is torn between her love for her son and her love for her community. But ultimately her sense of justice prevails and thus she reveals the strength of her character as sustained by her people and community. Mukami, Njeri and Wambui who are portrayed as traditional fighters, fighting against political dominance can also be included in the category of ‘Traditionalists’.

In *Petals of Blood*, the female characters who can be categorized as ‘Traditionalists’ are Karega’s mother, Mariamu; Wanja’s grandmother, Nyakinyua; and Wanja’s cousin. Mariamu becomes an embodiment of all the good values of African Community. Through her Ngugi raises the issue of exploitation of the natives by their own people. In this novel Ngugi turns his attention to his fellow Africans who have adopted the ways of the Britishers. He perceived of African society after independence as consisting of two strata, the socially privileged, politically powerful and materially affluent elite and the disadvantaged and deprived generality. He saw the former as, predator and the latter as victim in all their relationships. It is to the latter class that Mariamu belongs. She is a victim of double exploitation both at home and in the society. She is the second of the two wives, who had to slog not only on the fields but even at home. Finally she is beaten up by her own husband and she seeks protection under Munira’s father and begs for cultivation rights. He too tries to take advantage of her helplessness but Mariamu has too much self respect to trade her body for a piece of land. She had refused the dominance and injustice of her own husband, so how could she let Brother Ezekiel exploit her. After her refusal Brother Ezekiel feared that she might expose him to the world. But she is not interested in exposures. All she wants is an end to her state of drudgery. She has even lost her elder son in the fight for independence after which all her hopes are automatically transferred on her younger son, Karega to whom she tries to impart Western education. For now she believes that education would lead to her liberation from exploitation. And again disappointment meets her when her son is expelled from school. Karega feels guilty and helpless for not living upto his mother’s expectations. Both mother and son are naïve about the present social set-up. It is the capitalistic society of cut-throat competition, where material success can only be achieved through spiritual loss. Apart from exhibiting the exploited state of her class and sex, Mariamu becomes an epitome of all the

good values of Africa- culture-piety, sense of justice, honesty and sincerity that is an integral part of her life and character.

Through the character of Wanja's cousin Ngugi again highlights the corruption that is slowly impregnating Africa. Wanja's cousin runs away to the city to escape her state of drudgery. But when she later returns to the village as a prosperous city woman, economically independent and refuses the approaches of her cruel husband he tries to burn her. It is through Nya Kinyua, Wanja's grandmother that Ngugi evokes the past glory of Africa, especially through her narration of the history of Ilmorog, during the journey to the city. She narrates how Ilmorog was once a thriving village with a huge population, where peasants worked hard on their land, where there was prosperity and happiness everywhere, till the Britishers came and took all the youths of the village away from their homes, to participate in wars in far off lands. The villagers see her as a guiding spirit. She becomes a repository of legends, love, and secrets of the tribe, the preserver of bygone ideals. In a crucial scene she recreates the ancient mystique of the alcoholic drink, Theng'eta. She tells Wanja that in those days, it was not used, as it now today to drug people's mind against the meaninglessness and crudity of modern life. But was used in releasing creative powers and energies and was had only after a hard day's work. "Theng'eta. It is a dream. It is a wish. It gives you sight...only you must take it with faith and purity in your hearts." (PoB 210). But these very qualities of faith and purity are lacking in today's world. So by evoking the ceremony of Theng'eta-making, Nyakinyua again makes us aware of Africa's glorious pre-colonial era. Again when she remembers her husband, it is with pride and admiration for her brave warrior, with whom it was a relationship of equality and trust something missing in present Africa. She tells Wanja, "He was a man-he belonged to a race of men such as will never be" (PoFB 324). This is indeed a challenge that she throws open to all Africa. So through the category of 'Traditionalists' Ngugi seeks to emphasize the transitory nature of the Capitalistic system by showing that the traditional African values of equality, brotherhood and communal harmony existed and so can be brought about again.

Christian and Christian convert.

As an anti-thesis to the first category of Traditionalists is the category of 'Christians and Christian converts'. This group of female characters represent the second stage of the African history that is of colonialism and capitalism, an era that lead to a complete breakup with the earlier stage and ushered in an era of "cultural imperialism" which by displacing the native from his land and culture completed its domination. As Ngugi himself points out in *Decolonizing the Mind* "But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. 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."(3). Moreover the colonialists imposed their own values of inequality, exploitation, alienation,



loneliness, infact all the maladies of the modern western world. Female characters belonging to this category exhibit traits that a capitalistic setup imposes on a person's mental framework i.e. traits of submission to inequality and injustice and, acceptance of these as part of one's fate or even of the wider cosmic order. More importantly some of the female characters belonging to this category also exhibit individualistic traits with which Ngugi can never sympathize. This is because Commonwealth countries even after gaining independence are still in quest of their identity which has been uprooted because of cultural invasion by the West. Wambuku in *A Grain_of Wheat*, represents the extreme form of individualism. She believes that Kihika's salvation is through her, without realizing that personal salvation cannot be achieved in an environment ridden by destitution and tears. She sees Kihika's dedication to the cause of Africa's liberation as a "... demon pulling him away from her" (AGOFW 112). She yearns for domestic bliss with Kihika and cannot understand his yearning for independence. Ironically Kihika completely misunderstands her and thinks that Wambuku alone among all the people believes wholly in his fight for liberation. So he promises never to leave her. For a moment both are happy in their separate delusions. But truth dawns when Kihika runs to the forest to fight. Wambuku accuses him of deserting her. She seems to be a self-centered egoist who cannot think beyond her own vested interests and thus becomes symbolic of an extreme form of individualism. Another character who exhibits traits of submissiveness is General R's mother. She is so much blinded in living up to the image of an ideal wife, that society imposes upon her to facilitate exploitation that when her son tries to liberate her from the clutches of her tyrant husband, he is beaten up by his own mother. "slave treachery" (AGOFW 241) that is how he characterizes his mother's attitude.

Within the category of 'Christian and Christian converts' can also be included two European female characters-Margery and Dr. Lynd. The episode of Margery's unfaithfulness to her husband and the barrier of communication that grows between husband and wife highlights their relationship as that of alienation and meaninglessness. On the other hand through Dr.Lynd's episode, Ngugi raises the issue of gender inequality. Dr. Lynd belongs to the ruling class but she also belongs to a class which Simon de Beauvoir calls as, "the second sex", a class considered inferior to men. And so she becomes a victim of Koinandu in his attempt to assert his superiority over the Britishers. Symbolically Ngugi makes Koinandu encounter Dr.Lynd when Uhuru preparations are going on and he feels guilty. Through these two episodes Ngugi makes us to think about the subtlety of gender and social inequality.

Coming to *Petals of Blood* here the mother figure who exhibits all the characteristics of the category of 'Christian and Christian converts' is Munira's mother. She has accepted her husband's adoption of Christianity passively. At the same time she is also influenced by the capitalistic tendencies and so does not believe in community work. She cannot understand the feelings of her daughter who joins a group of workers for picking pyrethrum flowers. Munira's wife, Wanjiru turned Julia is represented as a converted Christian wife. It is through her character that "Ngugi mocks the determinedly well-to-do, kindred among whom

acquisitiveness has replaced conscience” (Cook and Okenimkpe94). Munira chose a tribal woman for his wife, in order to express his protest against his father’s Christian ways. But unlike her husband Julia ‘s passive acceptance of the new faith has turned her into what Munira characterizes as “ The cold incandescence of spirit” (PoFB 16) .

Wanja’s mother is the first Christian mother in Ngugi’s fiction who refuses to accept and support her husband in his race for power and money. So significantly the difference in the view point of husband and wife is nothing but the result of social circumstances which leads to their breakup and the ultimate ruin of their daughter. However it is through the figure of Mukami, Munira’s sister that Ngugi express his disillusionment with post-independence period in which he had hoped that domestic bliss and communal harmony would be integrated. Mukami as a living character does not figure anywhere in the novel. Her character evolves through Karega’s memory who had been her lover. Their union had been denied by her father because of Karega’s Mau Mau background. As a result Mukami had committed suicide. For Karega she was the, "dawn of innocence and hope." (PoFB 127). He remembers days with her as a world bathed in “flood tide and light of their innocence, promised eternal beauty and truth” (PoFB 197), which is shattered by Mukami’s death. So here is Ngugi’s statement through the character of Mukami. Unlike Wambuka in *A Grain of Wheat* she is not projected as a symbol of extreme individualism but of lost hope and purity. Her desire to bring about a reconciliation between Karega and her own father is just not possible. Ngugi’s firm belief now is that Africa’s hope lies in Africanization and not a reconciliation of the Western and African culture. In this respect Mukami’s death becomes significant. So through the category of the ‘Christians and Christian converts’ Ngugi seeks to expose the features and at the same time the mental conditioning imposed upon the Africa Psyche by the Western Culture in their attempt to assert their superiority.

The Rebels

The third category is that of the ‘Rebels’. Ngugi portrays some of his female characters as rebels and through them he expounds his idea of true liberation which is still enveloped in darkness. This is because, the process of exploitation and domination is being carried on by “comprador bourgeois” or black exploiters. Through the class of black exploiters Ngugi shows the absurdity of exploitation when the exploited himself becomes the exploiter. Comprador bourgeois is a class created by the Imperialists to divide the African society into the “haves” and the “have nots” and thus maintain its hegemony. So through the category of ‘Rebels’ Ngugi raises the complexity of the question of true liberation and paves the way for the fight that would see the light of true independence. In *A Grain of Wheat* Mumbi becomes symbolic of the rebellious figure who would regain the lost paradise. Unlike Njeri she is not a traditional military fighter but embodies a need for social revolution. However Ngugi’s earlier belief in a synchronization of African and Western way of life undergoes a complete transformation at the time of writing *A Grain of Wheat*. Through Mumbi, hope is now



suggested in a complete rejection of western values. This is especially highlighted in Mumbi's devotion to Gikonyo and rejection of Karanja. Gikonyo is a traditional carpenter whose attitude is essentially communal. For him carpentry is not simply a means of earning a livelihood but it is a way of life. As Mumbi tells him, "I once watched you in your workshop and it seemed to me you were talking with the tools." (AGOFW 106). Karanja on the other hand becomes an embodiment of the black exploiter. For him exploitation, callousness, selfishness is the way of the world. He tells Mumbi "Everyone in the world is alone and fights alone to live" (AGOFW 165-66). But for Mumbi love and sacrifice provide meaning to a person's life. And so she rejects Karanja and marries Gikonyo. Mumbi too craves for domestic bliss but unlike Wambuku, she realizes the futility for her dream in a land where true independence is still a myth. "Her eyes had a dreamy look...She yearned for a life in which love and heroism; suffering and martyrdom were possible" (AGOFW 89). Later she tells Mugo, "Even when I got married the dream did not die. I longed to make my husband happy, yes, but I also prepared myself to stand by him when the time came." (AGOFW 155). She believes in a Kihika's words that "whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my [Christ] sake shall find it (AGOFW 103)." Again she tells Mugo, "what is life unless you live for the person you love" (AGOFW 170). She epitomizes sacrifice and devotion both, for the black cause and for love. And so she is a rebellious figure in true sense of the word. Significantly this rebel act as a beacon of light for two persons who are ridden by confusion and guilt, Gikonyo and Mugo respectively. Gikonyo's disenchantment with independence and Mumbi after a long period of detention frustrates him. "return to silence" (AGOFW 133) that is how he now sees his relationship with Mumbi. He fails to realize that she is more a victim of this "change" rather than an agent. That she has not been influenced by, nor has she accepted but has been exploited by Karanja, who is an embodiment of the black exploiter. In expecting to find her unchanged during such turbulent period and all the time lamenting the lost past glory, Gikonyo is forcing his own wishful thinking. He has to accept Mumbi as she is, with Karanja's child. And then on the day of Uhuru, it is Mugo's confession that ultimately awakens him to the reality and he realizes that all past experiences, no matter how painful, are an integral part of a person's life; that sordid is infact part of beauty and cannot be ignored in the search for a better and bright future. And Mugo's salvation has come through Mumbi. His confession to Mumbi is what ultimately gives him the strength the courage to publicly confess his guilt. Now his death becomes more meaningful than his unsterile life. It symbolizes hope for Africa in facing the reality of present problems, to reform the future. "Mumbi has made him aware of a loss which was also a possibility" (AGOFW 267). So though the figure of rebellious Mumbi we have Ngugi's view of the role of a messiah or savior: that the responsibility of changing the faulty system cannot rest on the shoulder of one person who would sacrifice for the entire community, but it is the responsibility of each and every person in a society. Through Mumbi is also raised the question of gender inequality. As an African woman she carries the double burden of "racism and sexism". And so embodies the complexity of the issue of true liberation which

would dawn as Ngugi says in *Homecoming* when there is freedom for man to develop to his full potential:

*Political freedom from foreign rule,
essential as it is, is not the freedom
one freedom is essential. This is the
freedom for man to develop into
his full political. He cannot do
this as long as he is enslaved
by certain shackles(Thiong' o Home 23)*

The question of social and gender inequality is further explored through the figure of Wanja in *Petals of Blood*. The title of *A Grain of Wheat* is taken from The Bible, in the verse from *Corinthians* (I, 15:36)

*Thou fool, that which thou sowest is
Not quickened, except it die, and that
Which thou sowest, thou sowest not
That body that shall be, but bare
grain, it may chance of wheat or of
some other grain.*

And so in *Petals of Blood* the seed planted in *A Grain of Wheat* has borne flower – the flower of black Capitalism and this has led to the Nation's bleeding once again. The child carved by Gikonyo, towards the end of *A Grain of Wheat* is thrown by Wanja down the drain.

Petals of Blood is an expression of complete disillusionment with independence.. And again it is through one of his female character, Wanja that Ngugi dramatizes the continuation of the capitalistic and imperialistic system through comprador bourgeoisie. It is because of a faulty social set-up that Kimeria, a representation of the most repulsive form of capitalism exploits Wanja and sets her on the path of ruin and destruction. Not only Kimera but her own parents too are responsible for ruining her life. The constant fights between her parents highlights Ngugi's belief that domestic harmony is impossible without wider social harmony. As Wanja realises later, that the cause of constant fights between her father and mother was in fact a social one. While her mother believes in going back to her African roots, her father sees it as going back to ignorance and backwardness. As a child she is baffled by these domestic fights. Later, like Mumbi in *A Grain of Wheat* she realizes that social and domestic harmony are an integral part of each other. She runs away to the city to escape from the negative environment at home. She wants to take up a respectable job, but there is no job for drop-out school girls in this society. The only job that this society can offer her is that of a prostitute. So prostitution becomes a symbol of exploitation and inequality. Even Karega defines



prostitution as, “we are all prostitutes, for in a world of grab and take, in a world built on a structure of inequality and injustice”,(PoFB 240). Wanja becomes symbolic of both social and gender exploitation.

Through her Ngugi expounds the issue of gender inequality. He is of the opinion that true liberation would dawn with the eradication of both racial and gender inequality. Wanja becomes a symbol of the entire exploited class. Her fight is an attempt to change the present social setup. And it is through Wanja’s relationship with three men; Munira, Karega and Abdulla that Ngugi’s idea of true revolution is explored. All three men, like Wanja come back to Ilmorog to forget their unsuccessful past. Munira stands out in an aggressively successful family as a mere beggarly school teacher. He is a born loser and so he runs towards Ilmorog as a release. Abdulla fought bravely during the Mau Mau rebellion. After independence he naively hopes that his past patriotism will be rewarded, but all his hopes are betrayed as he is thrust aside as unemployed. Karega belongs to a generation later than that of Abdulla and Munira. His mother worked hard on Munira father’s land to pay for her son’s education but Karega is expelled because of his involvement in a strike. All these characters are trying unsuccessfully to forget their past. At one time Wanja tells Munira, “we all carry maimed souls and we are all looking for a cure.” (PoFB 73). For Wanja the cure is a child. With Munira she seeks to fill a void in her life. But the liaison between them fails. It only increases their angst. Wanja’s rejection of Munira implies rejection of inaction; of Christian concept of determinism, which reduces man to the position of a mere puppet by denying him responsibility to act and change things for the better. Wanja’s rejection of Munira also implies a rejection of an attitude that ignores the past experiences. Munira always has an uneasy feeling about the past. But for Ngugi, past is important in understanding the present and reforming the future. With Karega who represents the worker’s movement in the final move towards liberation, Wanja feels at ease but even Karega fails to accept Wanja’s past. He believes that instead of fighting for true liberation, Wanja has joined the race for power & money. Karega fails to realize that she is more a victim, and if people like her are excluded from the fight, true liberation will only remain a distant dream because even Wanja represents the exploited class. She became a prostitute and opened a brothel that provided employment to so many unemployed girls. Wanja is fact their saviour, their beacon of light. Prostitution now not only becomes a symbol of exploitation but also a means of survival. Karega’s failure to understand her makes him to reject her. And finally it is Abdulla who is, “the best self of community, a symbol of Kenya’s truest courage” (PoFB 228) who acts as Wanja’s saviour. He understands Wanja’s past. He neither wants to destroy her like Munira nor reject her like Karega but wants to save her. The difference between Karega and Abdulla is explained by Abdulla himself to the inspector.

*I thought he [Karega] was going too far
in overstressing the importance of
workers’ solidarity aided by small farmers.*



what about the unemployed? The small traders?...in a word, fair distribution of opportunities...(PoFB 320).

Thus Abdulla is able to understand Wanja's exploited condition. For him Wanja also symbolizes the source of a new creative energy that transformed Ilmorog from a village to a prospering city. Ultimately she is returned to the position of harmonious connection with the invisible law, a connection made manifest in the drawing she makes in the hospital when her mother asks her, as to who is the father of her unborn child, she makes a sketch of Abdulla. So finally she conceives a child fittingly fathered by the real hero of the book, Abdulla, proof that possibility of future happiness and growth lies in the revolutionary spirit (Killam 105). Ngugi suggests in the hope we have for Wanja and the child she will bear that love, friendship and decent human relationship may flourish (Killam 113). Moreover it is through Abdulla that Wanja accepts her past as part of her total self. The courage to face her past boldly is suggested in her plan of accepting Abdulla by rejecting all her rich and powerful lovers. But before she can execute her plan, her house is set on fire by Munira. In the fire all her rich lovers perish and she is saved by Abdulla. In her survival from the fire is suggested the image of a phoenix. Wanja emerges as a phoenix – the bird, as Munira tells us, “that is periodically born out of the ashes and dust” (PoFB 281). So fire becomes a symbol of recreation and hope. Through the figure of Wanja as a phoenix is also suggested the view of human history as a cyclic one—that there is a constant struggle between the exploiter and the exploited and in this struggle one group of oppressor is destroyed only to be replaced by another. Every time Wanja is constantly experiencing what she feels to be a new beginning but which is essence takes her full circle, back to where she started. First she escapes to the city; later she gives up the job of a barmaid and goes to her grandmother in Ilmorog, where she feels a new hope in her relationship with Karega. However after Karega leaves her she finds herself in circumstances very similar to those in which she started; as a proprietress of a brothel. Near the end of the novel when she is saved by Abdulla, she sums up of meaning of life: “Maybe life was a series of false starts, which once discovered, called for more renewed efforts at yet another beginning” (PoFB 337-38). So the ending of the novel remains quite ambiguous. On the one hand Ngugi makes us aware of the cyclical pattern of history, but at the same time hope is suggested through Wanja's acceptance of Abdulla. To act and fight is what makes our life meaningful. If Abdulla acts as Wanja's saviour, she acts as a beacon of light for the entire village of Ilmorog. Wanja awakens the village's slumbering soul and brings it to life, setting the entire village on the path of revolution. Through Wanja, Ngugi once again raises the issue of individual sacrifice vis-a-vis collective struggle by the entire community. The idea of individual sacrifice for the sake of the community as propounded by Kihika in *A Grain of Wheat* is now exchanged for a belief in a collective struggle by the entire community. As long as Wanja's fight is personal, she is unsuccessful and suffers from a sense of meaninglessness and depression. But when this fight become the fight of the entire community not only Wanja but the entire city of Ilmorog gains new strength. Thus we see

that the figure of Wanja is highly complex. This complexity is further emphasized by her name. Her name comes from “Wanjiku”, the mother of the nine clans of the Gikuyu people. Wanja also means ‘stranger or outsider’(Killam106) .She truly epitomizes the condition of Africa at the time torn between various struggles and conflicts and at the same time projects an urgency for reformation

Conclusion

To conclude we can say that while the earlier two categories make us conscious of a social setup already experienced by Africa, the category of the Rebels makes us aware of the fight that would see the light of true liberation. Unlike the Traditionalist the Rebels fight is for bringing about a change and not against a particular government. Unlike the individualist they realize the need of social revolution before domestic and personal freedom. Moreover they do not instil doubt in the mind of their lovers. But act as beacon of light and it is mostly through their relationship with men that the idea of true social independence is explored. Through these characters is also raised the question of sacrifice in the move towards liberty; and the view of history as cyclical in which individuals are not exempted from the task of action and exerting their will in shaping a better future. Acceptance of the past not as a static commodity but rather as a living experience from which things can be learned; acceptance of sordid as part of beauty; suffering as part of happiness are some of the added features that characterize the Rebels.

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- ___ *Homecoming*. London: Heinemann, 1972.
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- Abbreviations: GofW for A Grain of Wheat, PofB for Petals of Blood. Home for Homecoming.